

N'APA 273

November 2024



The Official Organ

#273

Next deadline: January 15, 2025

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Procedure: Please Read:

Submissions should be sent to the preparer, Jefferson Swycaffer, abontides@gmail.com

N'APA is the Amateur Press Alliance for members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). As it is distributed in PDF format, there are no dues or postage fees. It is open to all members of the N3F. If there are members interested in joining who have no computer access, special arrangements may be possible. People who only want to read are welcome to ask to be added to the email list. Check with the official collator, who is George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609; phillies@4liberty.net; 508 754 1859; and on facebook. To join this APA, contact George.

We regularly send a copy of N'APA to the accessible (email address needed) N3F membership, in the hope that some of you will join N'APA. Please join now!

Currently the frequency is every other month, with the deadline being on the fifteenth day of odd-numbered months. The mailing will normally be collated in due time, as the collator is retired and the preparer has a full-time job. N'APA has been in existence since 1959, but has transitioned from being a paper APA to an electronic one.

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INTERMISSION #147

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, for EAPA, N'APA and others stuck in space. Our newstweets from @SFJournalen have been few (sorry, lack of time!). If your descent vehicle has problems, you have to stay in orbit...lucky you! For Sale: Typo, Often Used. Late Sep 2024.

Editorially: Thoughts on SF, Kiosk Paperbacks, Today's Battles

My report from Glascon (2024 Worldcon) resulted in a few comments, which I won't publish (have thoughts of opening for LoCs, we'll see - issues already too enough). One commenter basically agreed with much of the con critique but didn't want to go public as it won't give you many friends. If you remember I mentioned a few flaws with Glascon (bag search, no WiFi, very delayed program guide, no fannish program etc) as well as more general problems with today's Worldcons (too big, too much media fandom, too many boring panels, expensive beer, etc). Anyway, if you have intelligent comments on sf conventions of today shoot! Try an / E/=m/C/2 E-moC! (E-mails of Comment).

The History Corner will cover some skiffy or fannish connected cheap kiosk paperbacks. I'm interested in "cheap" literature and hackwriting, as I secretly believe it has some value (hush, don't tell!) lost for those who believe in stiff academic studies. Books should be engaging, colourful, stimulating...not boring and pretentious. Reading should be gosh and wow, not posh and yow.

I still have some unused newspaper clippings from my Royal Library dig. (It's getting difficult to track what's used in nearly 50 H-Corners, so forgive me any repetitions!) You get some insight into what newspapers thought about the sf genre 50-70 years ago, especially in the early 1950s when there was lots of buzz around sf.

In the early 1950s there was - I read it somewhere - at aonetime with no less than 30 (!) US sf magazines published at the same time! Titles like *Saturn*, *Satellite*, *Other Worlds*, *Infinity*, *Space SF*, *Orbit*, *Dynamic*... Many of them are available to download now as PDFs. Gernsback made a comeback with *Plus*^{*}, that didn't survive. (Maybe he was too occupied with his nudie and sex education mags?) There was fine-looking mags like *Planet Stories*, *Startling* and *Imagination* which one would have wished a longer life. Of course we had *Amazing*, *Galaxy*, *F&SF* and *Astounding Stories of Super*...sorry: *Analog*. (I wonder, if you address something to *Astounding Stories of Super Science* c/o Dell Mags, will it arrive?) BTW, there was a British mag named *Authentic SF* so were people seriously worried that Fake Science Fiction was being flaunted? (If someone has *Authentic* May 1953 with a story by young Swede Jack Ramström I'd be interested. The hug collection of <https://www.luminist.org/> lacks it.)

Skiffy was near escape velocity in the 50s but didn't quite reach orbit.

Ut it's in orbit today! Any publication you open is full of it, or what was used to be sf.

Take the Big Battles, Ukraine and Russia or Harris and Trump. One having snipers after him, one being a...woman! Of colour! Is the US ready for it? There have been far-fetched sf books about a women president. And in the biggest war in Europe for 75 years Russia has huge problems, losing 100 000s of soldiers and 10 000s of armoured vehicles. The Ukrainians have blown up huge Russian ammo dumps 10 000s of tons of explosives registered as Earth quake!

And more bad news awaits Putin. Sweden recently gave the yellow and blue her 17th (!) aid package, now getting spare parts for the Gripen jet. (The logic behind: The advanced Gripen E is being delivered. We have ca 120 of the second generation Gripen C and the future Swedish Air force is planned to be 60 Gripen E + 60 Gripen C with 60 Gripen C in storage for spare parts Ordering new spare parts means some of those 60 could go to Ukraine. Soon I hope.)

Russian troll factories working overtime can't hide their setbacks. Russian economy works on fumes. Banks refuse to work with Rubles. Russians soldiers rather surrender than fight. Their only

* One of only ten magazines in the world so superior it's allowed to add a "+" to its name...

tanks are 1960s Soviet leftovers, and they'll run out of them in 2025. Russian navy ships don't dare to leave port. Western media is slow reporting how close Russia is to the edge of the cliff. It's incredible that Trump still brown-tongues Putin or fantasizes he could be talked with! Old prez R Reagan would arise from the dead and haunt them if he knew. He'd begin bombing in five minutes.

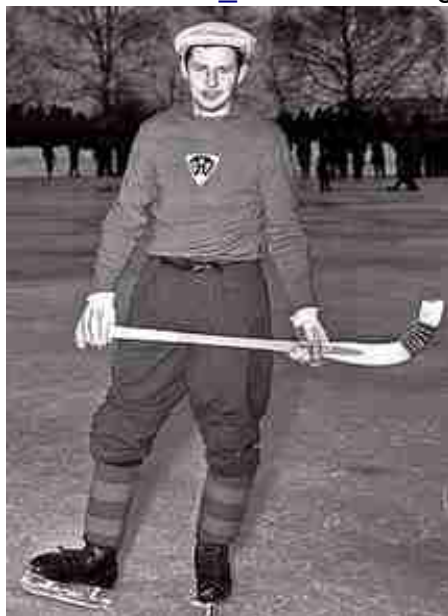
When Trump missed a bullet by mere centimetres I imagined he' have sympathy votes, so there were cause for pessimism, especially as Biden seemed old and tired. Things improved when he stepped down and Kamala Harris stepped up. Originally I wasn't too impressed by Ms Harris,. Didn't know much about her. She seemed to have done what was expected as a VP without shining.

But now she pushed the accelerator to the floor, picked up a governor with the gift of gab on roadside and gained speed. Then came the presidential crash or clash on TV, in which all Trump had was tired old half-truths and lies (eg the best US economy in modern times was under Bill Clinton: <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2020/10/business/us-economy-trump-vs-other-presidents/>). Cat lady Kamala – but not a cat eater - actually had some concrete policies to announce: cheaper medicine, abortion rights, honour US commitments, help to small businesses, cheaper housing. (But her weak spot: how to *pay for it all*?) Today I'm more optimistic that the Orange One With Small Hands shortly will get all the free time he needs to prepare for the court cases coming up. An observation: Harris and Walz want to prop up "the middle class". But the poor, lower class, are they to be left out in the rain? My ethics says those worse off shall have priority! The "middle class" is second!

The 1950s was a real science-fiction decade, with all those magazines, a huge wave of Earth-Invaded-From-Space movies, Sputnik, atomic power, the flying saucers craze, giant tube computers, Tom Corbett and Captain Video... The 2020s is equally science-fiction saturated. We've seen a pandemic, a major European war, focus on a return to the Moon, black hole photos, spacemen shipwrecked in orbit, vertically landing rockets, AIs creating art and invading our lives, Sweden and Finland joining NATO (who believed that three years ago?), a buffoon and a woman as candidates for the presidency, assassination attempts (not counting Israel making 4000 pagers explode – Tom Clancy never thought of that!), flying cars (the Swedish bid is called Jetson: <https://tinyurl.com/27bztj7>) and jet backpacks... One wonders what *other* science-fiction scenarios are awaiting us?

The Blabbermouth Author And Poetry

Few would disagree - himself excluded - when I say that one *Björn Ranelid* is Sweden's most blabbermouth author, at least among those known nationally: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bj%C3%B6rn_Ranelid Don't get me wrong: he's quite successful, with 30+ books that sells well, getting



"Snoddas" in his bandy outfit.

More on this hockey-like sport:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandy>

reasonable reviews, often appearing on TV and so on (he's also a former footballer who played in the top league).

But if you ask Björn himself, he is

the most successful *Author Björn Ranelid entertains the audience. He's not shy.* and best author ever in Swedish literary history! No one has reached a bigger audience, gotten more awards, been more creative. He expresses this in a flowery language full of flat metaphors where he strains himself to find what he believes is beautiful and profound - but it just sounds silly. This has become a term in itself: his language is known as "Ranelidish".



Mr Ranelid appeared on a local library Sep 6 and I watched. I must confess it was entertaining. He told about his life, his opinion on things, his career, in front of a packed audience that sometimes laughed with him, sometimes at him. But it wasn't boring, it was fascinating. Towards the end of it he stepped up and began to *sing!*

He gave us his interpretation of the 1950s redneck smash hit "Flottarkärlek" (approx "Logger Love", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXFzrMXKGkk>) a song that swept the country after a radio show in 1952. Mr Ranelid had earlier been in the Swedish qualification show for the Eurovison Song Contest, with this "talk-singing": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFzRigSk_o0 "Loggfer Love" was an unexpected sensation in the 1950s, sung by the bandy player "Snoddas" (approx "Rubber(ish)"). He broke all attendance records on his following "Folk Park" tour.

I took some help by ChatGTP to translate the song into English. Here it is:

*I was young once, long ago, a logger full of flair,
Girls were soft as wax and also a bit adrift
In every cottage, every village, I had a sweetheart fair,
From Northern Ridge down to Berg's bushy rift
Hadereean haderaa, hadereean haderaa,
From Northern Ridge down to Berg's bushy rift
I've played my squeezebox by the stream for loggers in a line,
I've played for girls on Näs, so sweet and small.
I've danced across the rapids with the fairies in their prime,
While the dew rested softly on the meadow's fall.*

*Hadereean haderaa, hadereean haderaa,
From Northern Ridge down to Berg's bushy rift*

Speaking of poetry, if the above qualifies (the last line being suspiciously equivocal), on Sep 14 there was a poetry festival I popped in to. We experienced an unexpected late summer warmth. (More sunspots let the Sun's magnetic field stop cloud-forming cosmic particles so more sunlight reached Earth.) I like poetry though I'm a bit at loss at its deeper meaning, been writing some filksong redsoting to hslf-rhymes. (BTW, any Stockholm readers, try an entry to Bokmaskinen.se *Poetry In A Day*, with a releas party Nov 9! - see my earlier reports.) People read poetry aloud in a very solemn stance, there were discussions and a market with book tables. The Romance Society handed out their magazine, ellerströms (lead by Jonas E known from Luncon 2, 1986 and on) was there, and gothic publisher Alastor Press (who just opened the "weird" Chimära bookstore in Uppsala). I strolled among the tables, grabbed freebies and candy, but bought nothing. I have enough of poetry from friend Comet-John Benzene Jr.



Lens Louse & book tables at poetry festival

HISTORY CORNER

I've always been interested in hackwriters, starting with those who were the backbone of the pulp era, (as described in Frank Gruber's highly recommendable *The Pulp Jungle* <https://annas-archive.org/md5/6311d60e6c36500faf0d59109d7fdd72>), but also later ones (google the unbelievable Harry Stephen Keeler!). This interest extends to hacks in eg music - remember my club Sunkit reports! - and movies and poetry. I have always suspected that hackwriters are better than many think and that the "mass market" for which they work is undervalued. Authors who are popular, productive and reach the mass market tend to survive to a higher degree (doesn't apply to Olof Möller, of course!) than narrow writers who win the prestigious awards - but few read.

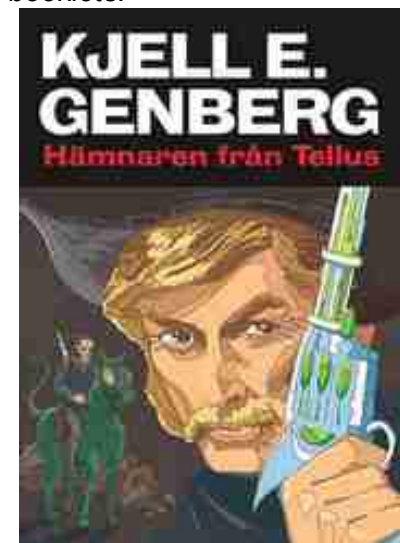
So from a freebie shelf somewhere I picked up a few cheap paperbacks in the 1960s series *The Man From UNCLE*, in Swedish translation. These



"kiosk paperbacks" were sold in the newsstands for the price of 1 1/2 hot dogs (late 1960s price SEK 2:72, about USD 0:50). The books were of course based on the TV series, which was on Swedish TV too. I casually googled the name of the authors, and suddenly found that the "Thomas Stratton" responsible for *The Invisibility Affair* ("Fallet med det osynliga luftskeppet" in Swedish, 1968) were no others than fen Buck Coulson and Geene deWeese!



Bertil Falk's debut in one of the popular 1950s 68 page kiosk booklets.



A western turned into Space Opera. In Avenger from Tellus Genberg just changed words and setting of one of his Ben Hogan books.

Sf fans have often drifted into writing cheap paperbacks. I mean, the sf genre itself was for a long time considered to be cheap trash. Robert Silverberg wrote truckloads of it. On our local market one Olof Möller wrote and even painted the covers for the long running X-12 series. Other fans have been translators of the "kiosk paperbacks" (like Börje Crona, Gabriel Setterborg and others). Ulf Westblom and John Ågren filled their *Du ska dö* ("You Will Die", 1974, using pseud "John West") western with tuckerisms and other fannish references, like Fandom Mountains and sheriff Pete Sulander (from fan Per Insulander). Much earlier the force of nature Bertil Falk actually made his literary debut with the short novel *Den maskerade ligachefen* ("The Masked Gang Boss", 1954).

Bertil who left Earth last autumn was also a fan of newsstand literature. It also showed that Coulson/deWeese's *The Invisibility Affair* had an sf translator in the form of the 1940's *Jules Verne Magasinet* editor Rolf Ahlgren! He did most of the translations in old 1940s *JVM* too, and after the magazine was killed by paper rationing (the government reserved paper for dollar-gaining exports) he made a living with translations and occasional journalism.

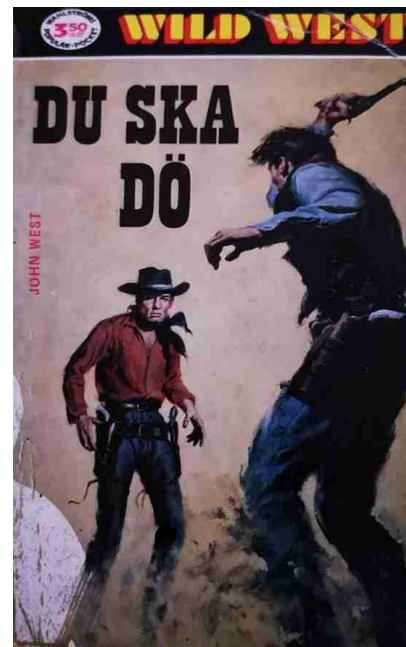
My colleague Kjell Genberg, Sweden's "most published author" produced 55 Westerns about the gunslinger Ben Hogan. (Plus crime fiction and much else among his 250+ titles. But he told me his very first literary attempts were short stories for the sf mag *Häpna!*) One of his Hogan books has recently been "transformed" into an sf novel. Kjell took the text and changed sixshooters to rayguns, saloons to space bars, etc. It became *Hämnan från Tellus*...

The plot of *The Invisibility Affair* isn't much to talk about. Agents Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin, an American and a Russian, work for the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement (=UNCLE) constantly on guard against the evil TRUSH organisation (= Technological Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and the Subjugation of Humanity). A house where a physics professor lives seems to disappear, though only became invisible for a short time as the inhabitant had invented a machine creating a field that

makes things invisible. The UNCLE agents fights back and forth with TRUSH for a while and end up on board an airship, a left-over Nazi zeppelin, to where the professor and his daughter have been kidnapped. She ship is to be used to drop parachute TRUSH troops over a Latin American republic to take over control of the country. It become easier if the transport can be made invisible. Solo and Kuryakin thwarts these plans and frees the kidnapped. End of story. I didn't become aware of any tuckerisms in it, but I'm not acquainted with all North American fan names. ("Tuckerism" is of course from Wilson "Bob" Tuckers habit of using fen names for story characters. From what I understand, the term gained had some spread outside the sf world too, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckerization> .)

Coulson and deWeese were famous for faanfiction like *Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats* (1974) and *Now You See It/Him/Them* (1975).

I'm not only interested in trashy paperbacks, I've also made a failed attempt to enter this glorious



Pete Sulander draws his gun

market! In the early 1980's fan David Nettle was on a visit. We must have been chatting about such literature when we suddenly thought: How difficult could it be to write something like that?

Vile inspiration (and probably some wine) made us taking turns at my typewriter. After the mere weekend we had decided to allocate the result was *Blodets brödraskap* ("Brotherhood of Blood") following the rule: every chapter must have a sexual encounter or an awesome fight. We filled it with tuckerisms of Swedish sf people. Unfortunately, the paperback publishers weren't keen on it. Maybe it became too weird with a plot involving overwintered Nazis lead by an evil leather lady and former beauty queen having a secret base in the Bermuda triangle.

However, this was also towards the dusk of the kiosk paperbacks - they began to be replaced by "quality" paperbacks and an endless stream of crime fiction (Stieg, what have you done!) sold on airports, train stations and even in groceries. Out masterpiece was soon published on stencil, in #21 of the fanzine *Göteborgs Faanvheckliga*. I have later made a computer file of this literary experience (in Swedish, ask me kindly for it, but don't spread it around!)

I would like to hear about fans writing cheap paperbacks? (Not Silverberg. We know him.) Even better if you have links to PDFs of it! Much older and "cheap" or "unimportant" work tend to be available freely.

Now, time go back a long time for some rocket research. First we go to a "A Fraudulent Genius" in Dagens Nyheter 22 Apr



1902 with "a postcard from our Berlin correspondent" 18 Apr:

By arresting the "inventor" Herman Ganschwindt the police finally ended a for many years ongoing fraud in Schönberg near Berlin of fortunately rare proportions. Named Ganschwindt claimed to be an inventor and the numbers of his so called inventions were numerous. Two years ago he even had an exhibition that

Opening of Brotherhood of Blood.

encountered both jest and trouble. His exhibition showed everything between heaven and Earth, from fire pumps and motor boats to dirigibles. Yes, he even claimed to have invented a "spaceship", or what to call it, a contraption by which earthlings could make small visits to neighbouring planets. Unfortunately his "inventions" were of the same simple types as his "spaceship", which didn't stop him from relieving many credulous people of hard-earned money hoping for a huge profit when the inventions came into practical use. To some he sold licences to inventions, others was offered to invest in experiments with the dirigible. He pout many ads in the newspapers and thereby used the names of prominent persons who endorsed in glowing praise his enterprises. High-level officers, the general staff, the minister of war, yes, even the emperor.

But Ganschwindt wasn't a fraud. Wikipedia writes:

...he developed concepts for a space vehicle based on the principle of repulsion. His two-stage vehicle was designed to be driven by a series of dynamite explosions. Since it was to be taken aloft by way of a carrier vehicle, he designed a helicopter as early as 1884...In July 1901 the maiden flight of his helicopter took place in Berlin-Schöneberg, which probably was the first heavier-than-air motor-driven flight carrying humans...In 1902, Ganswindt was accused of fraud and arrested because he had added a safety bar to his vehicle to

prevent it from rolling. After spending eight weeks in pre-trial custody he was released after a flight demonstration proved his innocence...Ganschwindt's work is considered to be ahead of his time...he kept in touch with Austrian rocket pioneer Max Valier as well as with German rocket pioneer Hermann Oberth, who shared his knowledge of Robert Goddard's work with him. In 1975, the city of Berlin recognized his achievements by naming a bridge (Hermann-Ganswindt-Brücke) in Berlin-Schöneberg. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) named the lunar crater Ganschwindt in his honor.



The tabloid Aftonbladet revisited Ganschwindt in Dec 10 1940 and told more about space travel - misinterpreting an Italian vessel! - in "Silence about Goddard's MOON ROCKET":

But in Italy they continue develop rocket flight - Trip to the Moon: utopia, becoming a reality? After many years. After many tears of silence on the "rocket front" the world is today surprised by news from Italy, where the known aviator Mario Bernardi has been awarded after successful trials with a rocket airplane invented by the engineer Campini. A speed of close to 1000 km/h is said to have been achieved and by that a giant leap is taken to realize the demanding dream of a exploring space. The physicist Newton believed in rocket flight, but the pioneer in the area is the German Ganschwindt. Already in the 1870s - before airplanes, airships and Jules Verne's books - he planned a spaceship, powered by dynamite charges continuously feed into the combustion chambers. Ganschwindt's project remained a fantasy. The famous professor Goddard in America tried to test the theories in practice. In 1919 ha published "Extreme Altitudes Reached by Rocket Power" and began experimenting. He managed to send an unmanned test rocket almost 100 km into the air. /No. Goodard said rocket could reach that, but his real rockets reached ca 2 700 metres at most/ After this the newspapers had sensational headlines about that the professor's next step was to send a giant rocket to the Moon. Goddard's plan was an 8 metre tall rocket shaped like a torpedo. It would be powered by exploding nitrocellulose that would be feed to the explosion chambers under the machine gun principle. The rocket would be aimed to be caught by the Moons attraction. It would crash on the surface upon which a powerful magnesium flash in the rocket nose would be lit. This flash would be observable from Earth. The whole world waited anxiously for the experiment to commence. It was announced for December 1925 /Did papers of the time really believe that?/ and the month passed without anything happening. In many months it was silent from Goddard and his rocket, but in the spring the world was told that the experiment was postponed to the summer, and he was improving the rocket so it could take a human with it. This lead to that people from all over the world reported willing to come along with the rocket and be immortal - or suffer a glorious death on the Moon surface. But also this time the world was denied this sensation - once more it



Caproni Campini No 1, the motorjet (=compressor powered by a piston engine) which is the "rocket plane" mentioned. It never reached 1000 km/h but a more modest 375 km/h.

was silence around Goodard and his spaceship and this time it was definite. There are many guesses about why the experiment was discontinued. But also Europe dealt with the rocket problem. The German professor Oberth presented plans for a spaceship in 1925, but was forced to scrap the plan for lack of money. Oberth's construction had some advantages compared to Goddard's. Eg Oberth's rocket would be powered by liquid oxyhydrogen which is three times as powerful as nitrocellulose. Another feature was that the rocket was in three parts. The passengers were in the top part that could be freed from the others as their fuel was consumed... With the German astronomer and aviator Max Valter a more practical man enters the stage. His goal is also space but he understands you must learn to crawl before you can walk. Valter managed to interest the known car maker Opel for his ideas and together with him and a supplier of rescue rockets for shipwrecked they began working on the first step - a car powered by rockets. In April 1928 they were ready for a test of the first rocket car on the Opel industries private racing arena. The vehicle looked rather like an ordinary car but lacked an engine. Right behind the driver there were containers with rockets - 50 kg of explosives. enough to blow car and drivers to smithereens if ignited at the same time. At the start the driver pressed an electric switch on the dashboard - a huge stream of fire shot out from the car with an eye shattering sound, and the car shot out like an arrow and disappeared behind a cloud of smoke.



Here's a film of Opel's rocket car <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrMKfxM6yXs> And here's a film of Goodard's rocket experiments <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KnIqblQEeM> But we must seriously doubt that Goodard thought he could reach the Moon with an 8 metre rocket. It sounds more like sensational newspaper speculations!

Note that Wernher von Braun and the Verein für Raumschiffahrt isn't mentioned at all. When they began working for the Nazi government, their activities were kept under wraps. Now more from the newspapers!

Critic Roland Adlerberth was one of the first to introduce sf in Sweden, from the late 1940s and on. Here's what he wrote in a review column, "The Future in Your Pocket", in Göteborgs-Tidningen Aug 17 1966:

The good thing with sf is that anything can happen in it. It has been said before but a good thing deserved being repeated, especially as some misinterpreters stubbornly insist having a different opinion. Sf is far from being only spaceships, death rays and exploding planets and even less it's not what many anti-sf writers think - simple gutter literature about how a monster from Mars kidnaps beautiful Earth girls but always bites the dust in the last act. Such critics have seen some of the worst sf covers from the 30s and 40s and have no idea that that type of fiction died off good many years ago, missed by no one all the least by the sf enthusiasts. The have higher demands on language, psychology and creativity for their writers and most readers of entertainment literature.

Adlerberth would always be on our side! Another favourable critic (and author himself) was Sven Christer Swahn, who is interviewed to share his Words of Wisdom in "Framtidsvågen - sf is it only trash or is there valuable literature among the future visions?" (headline cut away to save space), Aftonbladet 30 Nov 1975:

Science fiction - books about the future - has been around as long as there has been a connection between literature and technology. The term sf was coined by an immigrant to the USA in the early 1900s. He also founded an sf magazine which became very popular. There's roughly two types of sf, the type getting closer to reality trying to give us a perspective on our own time and the type making us dream away from reality. In Sweden the sf fever aroused in the 1950s. Sf-clubs were founded all over the country. They work like the Sherlock Holmes clubs for crime fiction. The sf lovers exchange views, publishes magazines, give tips and writers sf short stories. With the 1960s came a slump for the sf interest. But it didn't last long. Already in 1968 the genre flourished once again. /INFLUENCED BY OCCULTISM/ A more modern type of sf came - strongly influenced by the underground and pop culture. In later years the genre has also been influenced the occult wave in the western world, which however haven't hit Sweden. Does the sf genre have a bad reputation. Sven Christer Swahn is one of Sweden's foremost sf experts here explains why the sf genre become what it is. "I'm not going to be a defence lawyer for sf. The genre may be what it is in the public eye. You may point to why it is so. Science together with fiction has been around for a long time if you think of the combination of technology and literature.



An AI's impression of Goddard shooting rockets in the desert.

The mundane literary world has often had an evil eye towards our misunderstood genre. We shouldn't play by *their* rules. Sf needs to be independent, to continue being bold and creative. In later decades we've seen an increasing amount of mainstream academia studies being applied to sf, but seldom with good results. I haven't seen any of them understanding eg the concept of *Sense of Wonder*. And with mainstream academia – I was about to say "anaemic" – the postmodern rot of today sneaks in...Having your own ghetto under rules adapted to science fiction is better!

But let's jump from the US to the USSR, with the article "*Russian Science Fiction*" from Svenska Dagbladet 14 April 1972. The writer Alex Mitis was an Estonian-Russian author, translator and active in opposition to the Soviet Union, as far as I can make out from Google:

/Above headline: There's a big interest for sf in the Soviet Union. After flourishing in the 1930s the genre looked dead during the Stalin era, but it was revived during the 1950s. Alex Mitis in this survey notes that Russian sf raises social criticism, and gives recent examples of how work that has gone far along that way has seen the magazines where it was published being confiscated./

The elevator suddenly stops working. It refused to go higher than the 12th floor in the skyscraper of bureaucracy, that through the years has only become taller. The last who went higher up were three channelisation experts, who were to check the sewers of floor 12 but by mistake landed on floor 70. Since then all contacts with the higher parts of the skyscraper are cut. All above floor 12 is quiet and secretive. One day they manage to repair the elevator and two men are sent to floor 75 to check the situation. Up there is the states colony for Unexplainable Events. The three channelisation experts has grabbed the power over the colony and formed a powerful troika that administrates Unexplainable Events in the colony. There are speaking lice, ghosts, demons, vampires, old Russian mythological beings and a man from outer space who has crash landed with his saucers. Behind a lake with the monster belonging there in the notorious Murkand Swamp and a bit away the Enchanted Place - a beautiful grassy spot with a little cabin, where a farmer lives who owns cows, calves and ghosts But the bureaucratic troika has now power over this place. When you go there by car to fetch milk the place distance itself from it at the same speed as the car comes closer and it's impossible to get near and just "pop in". The players on floor 12 has brought along a portable "renormalisator", a little device fitting within a pocket, with a force field that may be aimed at any person, a field forcing this person to make morally correct decisions. But the members of the troika are so corrupted by power that the field doesn't affect them. That's how the Tale of the Troika starts, by the brothers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky from Moscow. It was published 1968 in issues 4 and 5 of the magazine Angara, but the censorship pulled back the magazine and fired all the editors. The same happened with the magazine Bajkal what in issues that in issues 1 and 2 1968 published the brother's novel Snail on the Slope. The publisher Posser in Frankfurt am Main has now published the two stories in one volume in Russian under the title Ulita na Skolne There is a big interest for sf in Russia. The publisher Molodaja Gvordija made a poll among its readers and published the answers in the collection Fantastika 1960. A 20 year-old electrician writes. "This literature should predict new social trends, new inventions an philosophical world vies". A 36 year-old doctor thinks that the most important with sf is its philosophical-social inclination. This sort of literature should with other words be socially oriented. The reader should see the world with the eyes of another person, who has seen the world from another angle and been surprised and forwards this surprise to the reader." A 27 year old female teacher thinks sf makes us think about the problems of the world, removes us from the daily life and makes us see ourselves and our background from the side, eg from the future or the past, which gives our actions new values. And Russian sf has social criticism. It's the same development as for literature in general. In the 1920s right after the revolution "scientific fantasies" as sf is called in Russian had a short but intense boom. Eugen Zamjatin wrote his famous novel We and Mikhail Bulgakov published The Fatal Egg. Bulgakov is otherwise mostly known for his The Master and Margarita, recently translated to Swedish. Then followed the Stalin Ice Age. The only thing allowed to be published was social realism placed in everyday life and with positive heroes. The task of literature was to show good examples to the people to make them perform huge feats to build socialism. The sf genre looked dead but it wasn't entirely buried, and it was revived in the 1950s with the political thaw. The first by some measures prominent work was Ivan Yefremov's Andromeda Nebula from 1957. The book has no major literary qualities but became a success since it painted a future communist society to be compared with the contemporary Soviet one. In literary terms the best Soviet authors of the 1960s are Alexander Kazantsev and the Strugatsky brothers. The Pole Lem is also very popular (translated to Swedish and published by Hedenlund). Lem is seen as almost naturalised and has founded his own school. If we made a ten-in-top list the most popular authors would be Lem, the Strugatsky brothers and the American Ray Bradbury. Arkady and Boris Strugatsky write together as a collective. They have published several novels like The Land of Crimson Clouds, The Way to Amalthea, Escape Attempt, Snail on the Slope and Tail of the Troika. Others eg Lem usually shows a bright future. The Strugatskys have themselves in an interview explained they are more interested in the actions of people, their morals and values. They look for goals and means that won't distort Man and his goal. The central problem with Lem is "understanding and non-understanding" while the Strugatskys deal with commitment and non-commitment. Their sf isn't antropocentric but relativistic. The

under strecket:

Intresset för science fiction är mycket stort i Sovjetunionen. Efter en intensiv blomstring på tjugotalet såg genen ut att gå under Stalins tid, men vid mitten av femtiotalet återupptogs den. Alex Milits konstaterar i denna översikt att rysk science fiction är mycket samhällskritisk, och ger ryska exempel på verk som gått så långt på den vägen att de tidsskrifter där de tryckts har blivit indragna.

Av ALEX MILITS

RYSK SCIENCE FICTION

...Häven, när påståendet i stycket. Den vägnar att på något sätt till löfte väntades i den äldsta 1988 sköckskapen, som under årens lopp blivit till befogen. De stas som dit bäst upp var tre kandidatinspektioner... som skulle innehålla utvalp på vägnar 12 av 1000 till hänsyn på vägnar 70. Sedan dess har all kontakt med sköckskapen avstannat avbrutit. AVI omöjligt vägnar 12 är 100 och hemligtstyrt.

...Så dåz lydnis från roparna hären och kända vid 2000 upp till vägnar 70 för att utlösa något. Däruppe är Stalins ledning för de obekrädda föreställarna bekänt. Det vänt sig att de tre kommissionsexperterna skgl makten i helheten och bildat en utvärderat styrels, som tämligen administrerar de officiella föreställarna i kollektiv. Där finns en mängd vägnar, spöken, demoner, vapen, gammalryska svavelsen och en man som yttre tynden, som nämligen med sitt talar...

...Så finns ett enatid intresse för science fiction i Ryssland. Tidningen Kozmos (Vardagskonventioner) är också bland utläsarna och publicerats vägnar i samarbetsformen. Färdställen 1981. De 20-åriga elektriska verk var där: "Denna berättelse blev utvald som special föreställning för tekniska ingenjörer och fysikaliska vetenskapsintresserade".

...Den första av dessa är "Mästarna och Margarita". Den vägnar med en annan påkostad 1988 i nummer 4 och 5 av tidningen Angara, men emmaran 1989 i helheten och avslutade hela serien. Deras enda utgåva med titeln i Baltisk, som i nummer 1 och 2 år 1988 publicerat broderns förtroende för berättelsen. Nu har författaren Desyat' Franchet som blev skrivit till dessa berättelserna i en volym på ryska utvärderade tillräckligt på ryska. Det finns ett enatid intresse för science fiction i Ryssland.

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Bild ur boken "Stjärnvägar" av A. Sokolov och kommunisten A. Leonov.

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Alex Milits

stories are loosely anchored in time and space which gives them a "relativity dimension. The language is of the modern Soviet type expressing contemporary political and social relations. Behind the often foreign sounding names hides a local content. The troika's collaborator sounds Italian with Vybegtski, which in Russian has to do with the word "vybegti", ie to go all the way. A cooperater or Quisling in other words. The security boss in Snail on the Slope has a name sounding German but in Russian it reminds of "home turf blind". The society has all faults and advantages there are in today's USSR. At the same time there are talking and thinking machines beside extinct dinosaurs and old Russian fairy tale figures and sagas. This relativity across time and space give the readers different associations and ideas that let the thoughts wander off in the most unexpected directions. In their Snail on the Slope the hero is named Perez, which sounds Spanish but means "pepper" in Russian. Perez has as an outsider landed in the Forestry Administration, a fantastic, bureaucratic institution, a whole city on the top of a mountain, out of sight of the thing they are taking care of, ie the forest. The administration is a goal in its own right and lives a life of its own as long as it can issue orders and directives. After a fantastic series of events, where talking machines discuss how to take the power over Man who has lead society astray, Perez becomes the chief of the administration. The secretary comes to him with a thick bunch of directives to sign. Perez refuses. He realizes it is all nonsense. The secretary Explains. "There is administrative work which is the basis of everything. it didn't come today opr yesterday. It goes way back in time. Until today of is materialised in the form of orders and directives. But it also stretches far into the future where it awaits to be materialised. It's like building a road along a stretch. When the tarmac ends the surveyor stands there looking into the theodolite. You are like the surveyor. A straight line through the optical direction of the theodolite shows the unmaterialised administrative stretch. which only you of all people can see an dit must be materialised... Don't try top understand it, because it only breeds doubt an doubt means no movement and this means the fall of all administrative actions and that means the downfall for you and me and everything." Perez refuses to sign and says there be meaningful directives instead of this nonsense. He utters a sarcastic joke he thinks the secretary won't understand: "Why not let the entire liquidation group perform self-liquidation?" "That's genius!" the secretary exclaims and writes down the new directive in a hurry: "Members of the Liquidation group are ordered to perform self-liquidation with firearms before 24.00 hours."

I have also some insights into Soviet sf myself. I began corresponding with Eastern Europe in the early 1980s (like the Bugrows in Russia), read some their work (usually published by Sam J Lundwall) and have actually met the Strugatskys and interviewed them (on Conspiracy 1987). To me this article doesn't sound entirely correct. Soviet sf could have some social critique, but there were definite limits to it. The sf genre may have reached a certain popularity after Khrushchev, but there were few sf books published! When the USSR collapsed the number of sf titles - and fantasy became very popular, just as in Sweden - skyrocketed. Russian sf fans I have talked with had estimate the numbers reached over 500 original Russian titles/year (compared to maybe 100-150 in Sweden, incl fantasy). The Soviet output was 1/10th of that, which on the other hand lead to huge printruns since there were few titles battling each other (which gave Sam J fairy tales about incredible popularity of Soviet sf...big printruns due to very few titles). I'm not very updated on Russian sf under today's Putinism, but it seems to have become very nationalistic with a tendency towards military themes and some of their best authors, like Dmitry Glukhovsky and Boris Akunin, have been forced into exile.

There must of course be balance to all this about Russia. So below about American sf. The early 1950s was the time when interest in skiffy exploded. Hollywood began with Earth-invaded films, we had those illusory saucers, things like atomic power, computers and space rockets began being realised. *Life* magazine had big article about skiffy, below, from May, 1951. It tries to go into the fanslang, being a bit shaky (who have heard of "fanferece" before?). *Life* counts it to 25 sf mags and 2 million fans, incl fennes. But why mention this blasted "Shaver" thing? We learn who serious scientists some of the sf writers are - Asimov is labelled as "cancer specialist". Some are illos missing and I rearranged the layout to save space.



MESMERIC CREATURE in *Man from Planet X* hypnotizes earthling who is eventually rescued by Scotland Yard. This is same film shown on previous page.



VEGETABLE BABIES, in RKO's *The Thing*, are examined by scientists. They sprouted from seeds scraped from hand of vegetable visitor from "another world."

The Fad Is Made for Hollywood

MOVIES SEIZE ON IT TO PACK OUTER SPACE WITH SOME WEIRD TOURISTS

No fad can sweep the country without arousing a lively interest in Hollywood. So it is no wonder that, with science-fiction sales zooming, the bright eyes of the movie moguls should have started to sweep east of the sun and west of the moon. On these pages are some examples of what

they have seen out there. Most ambitious of the science-fiction movies is Paramount's *When Worlds Collide*, which shows the destruction of our planet and the colonization of a new one. A more popular theme is the invasion of the earth by creatures from other worlds. Mostly they

are repulsive (*above*). But 20th Century-Fox, in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, provides a contrast: one creature is man-shaped and has an English accent, and he spends much of his time making uplifting sermons about extending the United Nations on an interstellar level.

Through the Interstellar Looking Glass

The fastest-growing folklore of the machine age is science fiction, which reflects a world crowded with slans, deros, bems, androids and sometimes even people

by WINTHROP SARCEANT

A LITTLE more than a week ago two North American fen and one fanne left for London as delegates to a big gathering formally billed as the Science Fiction Festival Convention but more intimately described as a fanference. They were participants in Europe's first important bout with an infection that had been spreading in this country like an epidemic ever since the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima.

The Americans probably found this convention, which history may refer to as the Loncon, a more decorous affair than the Torcon, the Cinvention, the Philcon or the Chi-

con, where fen sometimes appeared dressed as androids, slans, robots or Buck Rogers. The U.S. delegates could take comfort in the fact that the English do publish a great many prozines though fanzines are infrequent on the other side of the Atlantic, and cardzines practically unknown.

Sad to relate, however, some of the European delegates were probably insurgents rather than true fen. Probably none of them had ever been in a slanshack, and there were only a few completists among them. But the Europeans could be counted on to take the long view, and many of them would probably

turn out to be real fen and fenne after all.

To the 20,000 or so Americans who constitute the advance guard of the science fiction-reading public, the preceding paragraphs are clear English and pregnant with importance. These 20,000 are the "fen" (plural of "fan" derived by analogy from the plural of "man"; female fans, however, are not "wofen" but "fenne"). They are apt to be found in any urban center from Maine to California. Their lives revolve about STF (pronounced "stef" and derived from the longer fenese word, ScienTiFiction). "Insurgents" are the casual readers of STF: they lack the dedication of

true fan. Some fans have built themselves clubhouses or "slanshacks" ("slan": a superhuman biological mutation). From time to time they gather in great numbers at "fanferences" (fan conferences) like the one in London and usually refer to them by the abbreviated and elided name of the city they take place in (the Torcon took place in Toronto, the Cinvention at Cincinnati, etc.). At these fanferences they meet their favorite authors and auction off manuscripts of stories from "prozines" (professionally published STF magazines) as well as original paintings for prozine covers.

Between fanferences they communicate by means of "fanzines," or fan magazines, which are usually small mimeographed publications devoted to amateur STF, criticism and gossip. Fan not quite up to publishing fanzines often content themselves with getting out typed postal card publications, which are known as "cardzines."

All true fans are, of course, omnivorous collectors of STF, and a "completist" is one who tries to collect every piece of STF ever published. The "long view" is the attitude of mind common to the fan. When one takes it, one's horizon is bounded by infinity, and the cares of the mere present, whether individual or international, sink into insignificance. The fan is not worried about taxes, inflation or the possibility of a third world war. Their battles are fought in dark intergalactic spaces where the earth is merely a pinpoint in the distance.

The fan may be regarded as a loose freemason or a manifestation similar to the jitterbugs of the hot jazz of the American public (estimated at two million) which reads science fiction. The omnivorous appetite of this public for its chosen form of literature has made it, at the moment, one of the most spectacularly booming departments of the publishing business.

Fiction with a scientific basis—real, quasi or downright pseudo—is by no means confined to the pulps which produce STF in quantity. One of the most highly praised and popular novels of the last few years (George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) was a fantasy laid in a technologically bedeviled future. This year two dozen anthologies and full-length books of high-brow scientific fantasy have already appeared. Slick paper magazines have lately been printing science-fiction stories. In the durable low-brow field of U.S. pulp fiction, rocket travel, interplanetary war and the heroic rescue of beautiful and scantily clad women from hordes of evil, space-defying humanoid are crowding the western and detective magazines on the newsstands. Hollywood, which took a scientific flyer last year with *Destination Moon*, is now marching into the field in force (pp. 128, 129).

The product of all this creative activity ranges from the philosophically pregnant to the incredibly moronic. In its upper reaches it deals with profound problems in the tradition of great satirists like Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*) and Samuel Butler (*Erewhon*). At the other end of the spectrum it approximates comic book profundity.

SCIENCE fiction is of course a venerable art. Nearly everybody over 30 remembers the earnest technological novels of H. G. Wells and the rollicking, but now hopelessly dated, scientific romances of Jules Verne (*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *A Trip to the Moon*, etc.). The father of science fiction, most authorities agree, was the Greek writer Lucian, whose *True History* (written about 150 A.D.) recounts a trip to the moon and provides an elaborate discussion of the mores of its inhabitants. Similar accounts of lunar travel were written by the great astronomer Johann Kepler (1571-1630) and by Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-55) who, besides being a character in a play by Edmond Rostand, was a flesh and blood man and a prolific writer of science fiction complete with very ingenious inventions. Science-fiction fans point out with pride that Cyrano reported reaching the moon by means of a device that involved the principle of today's ram jet. (On the way Cyrano met the prophetic Elijah, who was accomplishing the voyage by a somewhat morbid mechanism. Elijah sat in a cast iron chair, hurled a boulder of magnetic iron into the air, waited for the magnetic iron to attract the chair upward and then repeated the process.)

The world depicted in today's science-fiction magazines include a vast variety of phenomena vaguely related to every known science and pseudo science from atomic physics to dianetics. Their stories tell of superhuman scientists from Mars, complicated vehicles for space travel, "interdimensional" voyages to remote eras in time interplanetary war, robot societies, cataclysms caused by planet colliding, degenerate mutations of the human race, solar and other untapped varieties of energy, mysterious changes in personality by hypnotism or brain or glandular surgery.

There are at present about 25 magazines devoted to science fiction. The aristocrats of the group are *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Galaxy Science Fiction* and *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. A step lower in intellectual rank are *Amazing Stories*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Planet Stories*. From here on down one descends to the type of cosmic romance known to the trade as "space opera," which differ from the old-fashioned western merely in the fact that its heroic ride rockets instead of palominos and carry paraguns (shootin paralysis-dealing rays) instead of six-shooters.

Since it tries to keep ahead of science, which regularly become dated, science fiction inevitably suffers from a high rate of obsolescence. The immortal masterpieces of the genre, as literature, or almost invariably those works (like *Gulliver's Travels*, *Frankenstein*, *Travels and Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen* in which the satire, humor, humanity or philosophical message outweighs the science and invention. But the modern science-fiction fan tends to be a little suspicious of any contemporary STF writer who like Ray Bradbury, gives moral ideas and human problems precedence over invention and discovery.

To the true fan an incorrectly split atom is a far graver fault than a clumsily developed plot or an unconvincing character. His man relationships tend to bore him, but he will enter into long

discussions on the relative merits of explosive propulsion versus gravity-defying metals for interstellar travel. He will not tolerate any meddling with known scientific fact. His favorite writers must describe things like planetary vegetation, conditions of Venusian meteorology and the structure of rockets without contradicting what is scientifically known about them—though he will welcome purest fantasy on what is unknown. He lays great stress on the prophetic accuracy of imaginary inventions and is fond of pointing out that science-fiction writers of the past have anticipated, in addition to Cyrano's ram jet, such things as the periscope (Jules Verne), the tank (H. G. Wells) and the firing mechanism of the atomic bomb (Cleve Cartmill).

Present-day science fiction, except on its lowest levels, is as innocent of sex as a betatron; boy sometimes meets girl, but when he does it is only to say hello before catching the next time machine to the Paleozoic era. Most of it is completely lacking in humor. What the STF fan looks for and admires is something known as "extrapolation."

Outside of science fiction, to extrapolate means to plot or imagine a situation or relationship that does not as yet exist on the basis of one that does exist. It is what an insurance expert does when he calculates probabilities, or what an industrial executive does when he calculates the graph of a future business upswing on the basis of a present trend. A very simple and much-used example goes as follows: In the 1920s radios were cumbersome affairs with large tubes and other space-consuming paraphernalia. Today we have compact bedside sets as small as a shoebox. Therefore it would be reasonable to suppose that in the future radio sets could become small enough to be set in a ring and worn on a finger.

IN science fiction extrapolation is pursued with a nonchalance that would scandalize an old-fashioned crystal-gazer. Any known fact, gadget or hypothesis may be extrapolated into fantasy. From present-day phonetics, for example, one may extrapolate a universal language communicated by means of whistling. From the present calculating machine, one may extrapolate a world in which all thinking is done by machinery. From the present, rather rudimentary atom bomb, one may extrapolate explosive mechanisms capable of demolishing whole galaxies in one sizzling flash.

The science-fiction writer may extrapolate to his heart's content, Bembs belong to the semiliterate underworld of science fiction where comic strip characters like Buck Rogers and Superman rub elbows with those of the low-brow space opera pulps. They are the dragon- or octopuslike creatures who kidnap luscious maidens clad in scanty space suits. They and the maidens often adorn the covers of prozines, and the fan are willing to tolerate them as subjects for cover pictures. But as ingredients of STF they are frowned upon as corny, unscientific and childish, and no self-respecting editor of a high-class prozine would permit them inside the covers of his magazine. It was, in fact, the exploitation of a special type of bem that led, several years ago, to the most celebrated rumpus that rocked the world of science fiction—the Shaver hoax.

The Shaver business mainly concerned a race of malformed, subhuman creatures called "deros" (from "detrimental robots") who inhabited a vast system of underground cities all over the world. The original name of their habitat was Lemuria, and they had once been slaves of a Lemurian master race. But this master race had long since disappeared from the earth, leaving the ignorant and malicious deros in control of the great cities and wonderful machines it had built. Since then the deros had occupied themselves mainly in persecuting the human race who lived on the crust of the earth above them.

THE deros were responsible for all the evil in the world. All catastrophes, from shipwrecks to sprained ankles, were directly attributable to their influence. They often appeared on the surface of the earth and were sufficiently human in appearance to pass unnoticed in a crowd. But they performed most of their harassments by telepathy, rays and other remote-control devices from their subterranean homes. Their underground cities communicated with the surface through various caves which were extremely dangerous for human beings to enter.

The deros first came to light in a story called "I Remember Lemuria," published in 1945 in *Amazing Stories*. The story was purportedly the work of a Pennsylvania welder named Richard Shaver who, it was alleged, had a "racial memory" capable of recalling events that had happened to mankind since the beginning of time. The "racial memory" idea, it turned out later, was an editorial device thought up by Raymond Palmer, editor of *Amazing Stories*, to lend verisimilitude to Shaver's account of Lemuria.

The device proved unnecessary. Practically everybody seemed to remember Lemuria. The deros were apparently as familiar to *Amazing Stories* readers as they were to Shaver. Letters to the editor poured in at 10 times their usual volume. The letters stated that Lemuria still existed, that the ground beneath dozens of American cities was honeycombed with dero communities. Some identified their neighbors as deros; others reported or hinted at personal encounters with deros carried out under conditions of incredible danger. The deros were referred to as "the fifth column from Hell."

"For heaven's sake drop the whole thing!" wrote an excited ex-Air Force captain. "You are playing with dynamite. My companion and I fought our way out of a cave with submachine guns. I have two 9-inch scars on my left arm. . . . My friend has a hole the size of a dime in his right bicep. It was seared inside. How, we don't know. But we both believe we know more about the Shaver mystery than any other pair. . . . Don't print our names. We are not cowards, but we are not crazy."

Editor Palmer expressed skepticism over these letters but confessed with an appropriate show of reluctance that the mounting evidence of the existence of deros seemed overwhelming. Circulation zoomed. In the interests of science Palmer went to visit Shaver in his home and came away hinting darkly at strange happenings. Welder Shaver subsequently paid a return visit to Editor Palmer, and after he left, Editor Palmer experienced an incredible visitation of fleas. Queried, Welder Shaver insisted he had never been bothered by fleas. Obviously it was the work of the deros.

Expeditions were planned by readers to certain caves that were thought to be entrances into Lemuria, but anonymous telephone calls warned the participants of the danger of death. Editor Palmer reported that the keys of his typewriter had been mysteriously mutilated and later revealed that his life had been threatened. By this time deros had been hooked up with virtually every mysteri-

ous or unexplained occurrence reported in the news. They were held responsible for the disappearance of Justice Crater, for the mysterious "air raid" over California just after Pearl Harbor, for the reports of flying saucers. They were reported as far north as the Aleutians, where they were said to be using cigar-shaped space ships. A colony of them was detected in caves on Mount Shasta.

Finally the fan couldn't stand it any longer. Editor Palmer, in their eyes, was debasing the ethics of science fiction in a shameless bid for circulation by presenting fiction in the guise of fact. The Queens (N.Y.) Science Fiction League passed a resolution expressing the opinion that the Shaver stories were actually endangering the sanity of their readers and brought this resolution to the attention of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Delegates to a Philadelphia fan conference threatened to draw up a petition to get the Post Office to ban *Amazing Stories* from the mails. The fanzines belted for Editor Palmer's scalp. At this point somebody, according to Palmer, convinced his publisher, William B. Ziff of the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, that the theories of Shaver and Palmer were in flat contradiction to Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity. This, obviously, was too much. The Shaver stories were discontinued; Editor Palmer, still affirming his faith in the existence of deros, resigned his job.

More recently the fan have been turning their guns on John W. Campbell Jr., the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*. Like other science-fiction editors, Campbell has got into trouble walking the fine line dividing fantasy from fact. It was *Astounding Science Fiction* that published Cleve Cartmill's story describing the method of setting off the atom bomb. The story appeared during World War II when this whole matter was considered top secret, and then some. Army intelligence suspected a leak. Apparently, however, Cartmill's story was not the work of spies but simple coincidence. Campbell convinced Army intelligence of *Astounding Science Fiction's* good faith, and the incident has since been widely regarded by fans as one of those great occasions when science fiction got the jump on science.

Later Campbell published "The Aphrodite Project." This had to do with an experiment in which Cal Tech astronomers sent a rocket to the vicinity of Venus, and was presented as an abstract of a government scientific bulletin. Campbell, of course, could claim that any intelligent person should know automatically that it was fiction, whether so labeled or not. But the fan began to grumble.

Whatever the Russians think, editors of science fiction can congratulate themselves that many of the nation's scientists read their magazines as avidly as cowboys read westerns. Cyberneticist Norbert Wiener has confessed to being a fan. So has Nobel Prize-winning Geneticist Herman J. Muller. The libraries at Los Alamos, Brookhaven, Oak Ridge and the other centers of U.S. atomic research handle much more science fiction per customer than those in average locations.

Scientists also write a considerable amount of science fiction. Eric Temple Bell, noted mathematician at Cal Tech, is known to millions of science-fiction fans for his stories under the pseudonym John Taine. Isaac Asimov, a teacher of biochemistry at Boston University and a cancer research specialist, writes numerous novels and stories dealing with robots. Robert S. Richardson, an astrophysicist at Mt. Wilson and Palomar observatories, writes science fiction under the name Philip Latham. Writer H. Chandler Davis teaches mathematics at the University of Michigan. J. J. Coupling is the pseudonym of John R. Pierce, a radar expert at the Bell Laboratories. Raymond F. Jones is a government weather bureau observer in Phoenix, Ariz.; George O. Smith is a radio design engineer. And such science-fiction writers as Murray Leinster (Will F. Jenkins), Robert Heinlein, Ray Bradbury and Ted Sturgeon, who are not practicing scientists, probably absorb more scientific literature in the course of their work than most scientists do.

The science-fiction reader—whether he is an "insurgent," a fan or a simple space opera enthusiast—is apt to maintain that science fiction is not fantasy at all. He will point out that we are living in a very strange world where the most bizarre hypotheses are being proved right practically every day. Calculating machines are actually replacing human beings to a considerable extent. Robots of many kinds are already in use. Five years ago the U.S. Army Signal Corps did touch the moon with a radar impulse. The electron microscope (LIFE, April 23) has recently made molecules practically as tangible as bales of hay. Methods for utilizing atomic power are now on the drawing board. Rocket propulsion has already solved the major problem of space travel, i.e., how to voyage through a vacuum. Only a few details concerning fuel and finance remain to be worked out before man can actually voyage to the moon. Fantasy? Why, today a man who has got his eye on a neat little bit of acreage alongside the Copernicus Crater of the moon is no crackpot; he is just an unusually progressive realtor.

This is, of course, the optimistic view. A great deal of today's science fiction—especially at the more intellectual levels—takes a dimmer view of scientific progress. It depicts man as the helpless victim of his own machines.

Out of five stories in a recent issue of *Galaxy Magazine*, for example, three are overcast with unmistakable gloom. In the first, an interplanetary visitor is pained by the lack of international and interracial cooperation on earth, hopes to remedy the situation by uniting earthmen against a common enemy, fails and concludes that earthmen are just no good. In the second, a hapless human named Love finds that in a world dominated entirely by calculating machines his name is a dirty word. In company with a group of other ingratiating outcasts, he escapes to another planet where love is recognized as a virtue. In the third story, laid somewhere in the remote future, moral values have sunk so low that all intelligent people are slaves to morons, and civilization has generally gone to pot. A real estate salesman resuscitated from 1988 A.D. offers to help the intelligent people, starts a campaign advertising rocket trips to Venus and cajoles all the morons into rockets which leave the earth and conveniently blow up in outer space. Rid of the morons, the intelligent people then discover that their benefactor, the man from 1988, has become a dictator, so they send him out to blow up in space too. This sort of thing, one can assume, is not entirely fantasy either.



LUCIAN, Greek writer of Second Century A.D., was founder of science-fiction literature.

Luckily, I don't have to translate articles in English. Just read it!

Below is *Washington Post* also writing about the early-50s sf boom. About 1 million copies of the sf mags were at the time sold monthly of the two dozen sf mags offered on the newsstands, we learn. But fans, as we know them, were only 2000-2500. I have lost the exact date but the year is 1951:

Belles-Lettres Go Out of This World as Science Fiction Grows Up

By William Hines

There's a wonderful family named Stein. There's Gert, and there's Ep, and there's Ein; Gert's poems are blank, Ep's statistics are junk, and no one can understand Ein.

This well-known limerick emphasizes one aspect of the Stein "family" but overlooks another, vastly more important one: Each "Stein" is the patron saint of a strange new art form—and of them all, Ein is the Stein whose influence on the arts is likely to be the greatest and longest lasting.

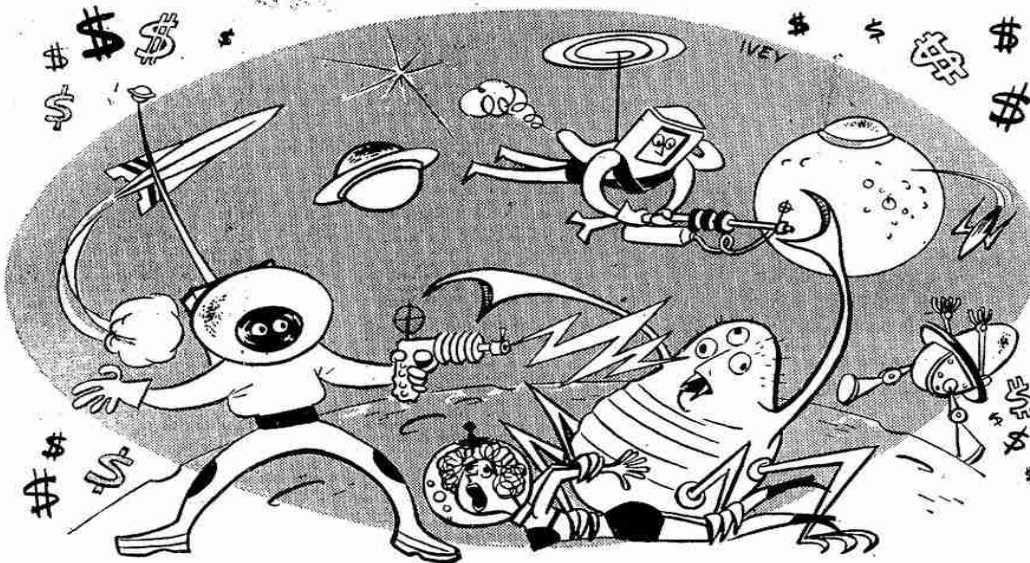
If it had not been for Prof. Albert Einstein and his famous equation on the interrelation of matter and energy, it is improbable that science fiction would be the rising star of literary respectability it is today. There have been science-fiction writers (in the space opera sense of the term) since Roman days, and some of them have been great, H. G. Wells and Jules Verne are examples. But until the late 19th century science fiction became widely read, and Dr. Einstein can be thanked—or blamed—for its emergence. When the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan in August, 1945, science fiction came of age, according to its best-known editor and authority, John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of *Astounding Science Fiction Magazine*. And in less than seven years, science fiction has grown from an obscure type of pulp magazine writing to a literary form familiar to most Americans.

Occasionally, the news columns carry such headlines as indicate that this new literary form may be more science and less fiction than one ordinarily would think. "The flying saucers" stories are an example. Another, which quoted a reputable scientist as predicting the establishment of a military lookout post 1,000 miles up in space, made front pages last week.

All-Pervasive

Ignored by major publishers and magazine editors before World War II, science fiction today has invaded the "biggest book houses," the pages of comic magazines, the television channels, the radio waves, the comic books—then, with renewed, post-Booker Rogers vogue, the newspaper comic strips. From just a few thousand aficionados a decade ago, science fiction's market has grown to the point where about 750,000 persons buy 1 million copies of science fiction magazines monthly and where the television space opera, "Captain Video," runs neck-and-neck in listener popularity with the celebrated puppet show, "Kukla, Fran and Ollie."

Yet even among writers and publishers of science fiction there is no close agreement on what science fiction is. One authority says George Orwell's "1984" was a prime example



To the average reader, science fiction is the stuff in the center of the picture; to publishers, it's the stuff at the corners.

of the craft; another says it was political satire and not science fiction at all. A book publisher asserts that science fiction is escape literature; one of the top writers in the field says that science fiction attempts to explore the future of the race on the basis of what we know now, and adds, "if such is an insurance policy." Even the broadest definition of science fiction—that it is a branch of fantasy—has its opponents, who contend that there is nothing basically fantastic about science fiction, as long as it is founded on well-known physical laws. Some will go so far as to say that a soundly scientific report on a future trip to the moon is no more fantasy than tomorrow's tide tables—and a good deal less than tomorrow's weather forecast.

Popularity No Riddle

But regardless of what science fiction is, it is easy to determine why it has become so popular. And that gets back to the third member of the "Stein family," Ein.

When the first bomb was dropped, it was convincing testimony to the correctness of Einstein's theories of the cosmos.

By unlocking the atom, man inevitably unlocked the universe. And it became apparent that technology finally had caught up with, and had overtaken, humanity itself.

Early science fiction accented the machine. Its authors were preoccupied with gadgets. Now, however, the spotlight is on people—their effect on the tools of spacecraft and the gadgets' effect on them. This sober and relatively adult philosophy may someday make science fiction great literature.

Although there are no great writers in the field yet, there are good ones. And if trash is still being printed in the guise of science fiction, the proportion of really good writing is increasing rapidly. Credit for this development can be given, largely, to three magazines among the two dozen or so currently being published. Oldest and largest—and best known—is *Astounding*, with a circulation estimated (by its opposition) at about 100,000 a month. Its 41-year-old editor, John Campbell, says *Astounding Science Fiction* is aimed at people who think for a living and who like to think for relaxation. It contains scientifically sound stories and an oc-

casional technical article of the highest authenticity. Many of these articles are virtual "learned papers." *ASF*, more than any other magazine, has built up the stars of science fiction—Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Murray Leinster, A. E. Van Vogt, and the like. At several engineering and technical schools, Mr. Campbell says, astounding outsells such mass circulation magazines as the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Who Copies Whom?

Younger than *ASF*, and smaller, but appealing to the same audience, is *Galaxy*, with a circulation of about 75,000. The editors of the two books are at odds on the question of who is copying whom, which may give an idea of their similarity. At any rate, *Galaxy* is a widely read and well-edited periodical.

The youngest of the big three, but probably the most significant from the literary point of view, is *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, a bi-monthly that is scheduled shortly for monthly publication. "This book, as its name implies, prints two forms of out-of-this-world literature without attempting demarcation between the two. It has a rather curious set-up: A member of Lawrence Spivak's Mer-

cury Publications, it is edited at Berkeley, Calif., by Anthony Boucher, and J. Francis McComas, but editorial supervision is maintained at New York by Charles Ansoff, executive editor of the chain. Mr. Ansoff says this works out fine; the Messrs. Boucher and McComas each go to New York once a year, but otherwise run the show from the West Coast. *F&SF* is reputed to have a circulation of 60,000 to 75,000 copies an issue.

A particularly interesting thing about *F&SF* is the number of widely known general fiction writers it has presented to science fiction readers. Among them are Oliver LaFarge, Andre Maurois, Elizabeth Bowen, James Stephens, Jan Struther, James Thurber and Robert Graves. *F&SF* magazine also has discovered strange tales by Daniel Defoe and Charles Dickens, and is grooming its own new talent, such as Winona MacClinton and Richard Matheson.

Hard Core of Fandom

Much has been made of the science fiction fan and his effect on this literary form. Practicing writers and editors, however, are inclined to discount the importance of the true fan, who joins clubs and adds a jargon of his own. One editor thinks there are about 2,000 fans in the country, another says 2,500. Neither figure is a substantial part of the thriving market.

To the man in the hard-scabble book-publishing game, however, the true fan has one value: He can be depended on to buy almost anything that is published. Milton Goodman, head of Merlin Press, a science fiction house in New York, says he needs 7,500 sales to make his "nut"—the cost of putting the book on the market. One-third of the nut is assured when a science fiction book is published, making the venture somewhat less hazardous than some other forms of publishing. In addition to Merlin Press, Shasta (a Chicago house) also specializes in science fiction. And the science fiction output of the bigger houses is growing, too. Scribners, Doubleday, Little-Brown and Simon &

Schuster are among the publishers on the hardwood.

When science fiction is not too far out of this world, it is a good gamble for publishers of 25-cent pocket-type books. These need a sale of perhaps 200,000 copies to make the nut. Many publishers who have relied in the past on mysteries are offering space opera to the railroad station trade and having no trouble selling 250,000 to 300,000 copies at a quarter a throw.

The Heinlein Output

Robert Heinlein is to science fiction what Erle Stanley Gardner is to whodunits. He is a prolific writer and is going over big in the pocket editions. He is, however, much more of a craftsman in his field than Gardner is in his, and as such deserves special mention.

Part of Heinlein's success as a science fiction writer comes from his sound engineering background. A graduate of Northwestern, Heinlein understands the physical principles he writes about, and weaves them unobtrusively into convincing story lines.

To non-fan readers, even to those who ordinarily would not touch science fiction with a 10-foot pole, Heinlein is acceptable because his stories are basically about people. He is the compiler of the "future history" of the science fiction which covers the period 1975-2600. His history unfolds reasonably—so reasonably that the reader finds nothing strange about a history of things that have not yet happened. It is, according to Heinlein, a good many years after 1975 before space travel begins, and then it starts logically—first to the moon, then to the nearby planets. His characters get themselves into the same situations we do today and why shouldn't they? Is there any reason that men in 2052 should behave or react differently from those of 1952—or 1852? Heinlein says no.

Challenge for Whodunits

Some literary men predict the eventual ascendancy of space opera over whodunit—as soon as the availability of writing talent in the latter system apparently is not far off. *Fantasy and Science Fiction* was cited five times in a recent short story survey as a bit of a collection of 10 science fiction stories published recently came half from science fiction magazines and half from slicks. Mr. Ansoff predicts that it will not be long before Harpers and Atlantic start using science fiction. Under his editorship in the 40s, the old American Mercury became one of the first quality magazines to toy with this story form.

Science fiction definitely is growing up and in the process it is abandoning the Bug-Eyed Monster (or BEEM, as science-fictioners call him) unless there is some good reason that he should be both bug eyed and a monster. A revealing example of this was in the serial, "Revolt of the Triffids," in *Colliers* a year or so ago.

The author took note of the fact that the atmosphere of Venus is largely carbon dioxide, a gas that would suffocate any form of animal life. But carbon dioxide nourishes plants. So the triffids—minutants of Venus—were intelligent plants with the power of locomotion. Impossible? Well, there are plants on earth that have something like a low form of intelligence—the Venus fly-trap for example. And this same plant's ability to snap its leaves shut on an insect is certainly directed motion of a sort. The triffids were just vastly smarter, vastly more mobile plants. And why not?

Anyway, that was the author's story, and several million readers were stuck with it.

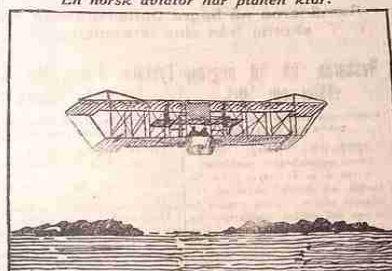
This article seems rather insightful. It thinks Einstein and atomic power explains the boost of sf (in the early 50s). "There are no great sf authors but there are good ones", e.g. Heinlein. We learn there were a couple of dozen sf mags at this time, totalling 1 million in circulation, which gave each +30K in sales. But some had more like *Astounding*, at 100K+ (but "outselling Saturday evening Post" sounds unlikely). Paperbacks are said to sell 200-250K which sounds huge, but the number of active fans (according to sf editors) were only 2-2.5K. Few of them could attend Worldcons. It was still too expensive with transcontinental flights. The article is rather positive towards skiffy.

Finally, before we raced to the Moon, we raced the Atlantic. Charles Lindbergh wasn't first, but first with a solo flight, in 1927. First were Alcock and Brown, already in 1919 in a Vickers Vimy WWI bomber. But it could have been a Norwegian! An engineer Kulbeck had plans for a 1917 trip in a flying boat of his own design. Newspaper *Social-Demokraten* tells us more, 4 Oct 1916 in "Who Will Be First Flying Over The Atlantic - A Norwegian Aviator Has A Ready Plan. I'll summarise:

One engineer Kulbeck planned to use a "flying boat" (ie it could land on water) to go from Falmouth, England, to Newfoundland and eventually New York, to win a prize of \$50 000 set up by a newspaper. There were several prizes. Lindbergh

Vem flyger först över Atlanten?

En norsk aviator har planen klar.



Kulbecks maskin.

Tänkes på att med inflyskigt eller "barn" Alcock och Brown flygde över Atlanten 1919 var det den amerikanska konstruktören och flygaren Curtis mörning att Kulbeck ska stå sig i England. Både och tiden för flygningen var redan bestämd och på grund av ett missade underprov

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won one of \$25 000 specifically for going to Paris./ Kulbeck hoped to get ships stationed along the route in case of emergency. As he had a "flying boat" he could land in the sea and wait for help. His airplane (Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis in parenthesis) had a wingspan of 19 metres (14), empty weight 0.90 ton (0.97), engine 250 hp (223 hp). You see an illustration of his machine in the article.

I have no idea what happened to his plans, because Kulbeck (first name unknown) isn't mentioned anywhere with Atlantic crossing plans. I suppose he ran into problems of some sort. In fact, I find nothing at all anywhere about an engineer Kulbeck. If you know more, let me know!

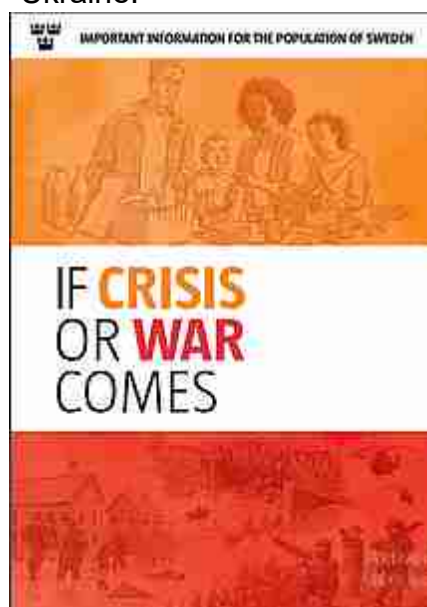
This Norwegian is one of the forgotten aviation pioneers.

If the War Comes

As a Certain Maniac known as Mr P threatens the world with nukes, it may be wise to have a look at the pamphlet the Swedish government published in 1918, *If Crisis or War Comes*. Well before Covid and Putin's war it was distributed to every household and done in several languages, incl English:

<https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/30307.pdf>

We learn for instance that beside military conscription there is also civil conscription, where you up to the age of 70 may be drafted the help out in the civil defence (first aid, preparing shelters, distributing help, air raid work etc). The military presently uses "selective conscription", ie everyone - incl women - are called to a draft board for tests and interviews and the best (presently 8 000+/year) are selected. Military service is voluntary for women, but they may be drafted to compulsory civil defence duties. You may also be required to stay in your job position if deemed important for society. Not mentioned is the Home Guard, comparable to the US National Guard, which is voluntary, presently consisting of ca 40 000 reasonably well-armed and trained men and women. When the regular army was downsized in the 1990s much of their heavy weaponry went to the Home Guard. They go through a basic course - many are BTW trained previous conscripts now too old (but still fit) - and train regularly over a week or weekend. Home Guard applications spiked after Putin's invasion of Ukraine.



Below what you are recommended to have at home to be prepared. A die-hard prepper wouldn't find much missing!

All built up areas have sirens to signal "be prepared" or "air attack" and those are tested 3 o'clock the first Monday every quarter. One Hans Lundberg even wrote an alt history about the sneaky Russians launching an attack one of these Mondays, *Monday Three O'Clock*. There are shelters for ca 70% of the population, the rest are to be evacuated to the countryside, where for instance three two million summer houses Swedish families have maybe used. Below we also learn about different forms of attack and find the famous words:

All information to the effect that resistance is to cease is false.

The infographic is titled "Sweden's defences" and is divided into several sections. At the top, there are illustrations of two fighter jets. The main title "Sweden's defences" is in a large, bold font. Below it, there is a paragraph: "Sweden's defences are in place to protect the country, our freedom and our right to live as we ourselves choose to. All of us have a duty to act if Sweden is threatened." The infographic is divided into three main sections: "Total defence", "Military defence", and "Civil defence". Each section has a brief description of its role. At the bottom, there are illustrations of various emergency services: a fire truck, a police car, a ambulance, and a construction crane. The overall design is clean and informative, with a color palette of reds, oranges, and greys.

Sweden's defences

Sweden's defences are in place to protect the country, our freedom and our right to live as we ourselves choose to. All of us have a duty to act if Sweden is threatened.

Total defence

The term 'total defence' denotes all activities that are needed in order to prepare Sweden for war. Sweden's total defence consists of military defence and civil defence.

Military defence

Sweden's military defence consists of the Swedish Armed Forces, including the Home Guard, and a number of other authorities whose main duty is to support Sweden's military defence. The Armed Forces defend our territory and our borders.

Civil defence

Civil defence deals with the whole of society's resilience in the event of the threat of war and war. Civil defence is the work that is carried out by central government agencies, municipalities, county councils and regions, private companies and voluntary organisations. This work aims to protect the civilian population and to ensure that, for example, healthcare and the transport system continue functioning in the event of the threat of war and war. In the event of the threat of war and war, Sweden's civil defence also has to be able to support the Armed Forces.

Duty to contribute to Sweden's total defence

The Swedish population has a duty to contribute to Sweden's total defence. This means that everyone who lives here and is between the ages of 16 and 70 can be called up to assist in various ways in the event of the threat of war and war. Everyone is obliged to contribute and everyone is needed.

The duty to contribute to Sweden's total defence has three forms:

- Conscription into the Armed Forces.
- Civil conscription into organisations controlled by the Government.
- General national service involves serving in organisations that must function even in the event of the threat of war and war. This means that you continue to do your normal job, work in a voluntary organisation or that you are tasked by Arbetsförmiddlingen with performing work that is of particular importance to Sweden's total defence.

Those with a duty to contribute to Sweden's total defence can be given wartime postings. If you are given a wartime posting, you will have received wartime posting orders or another form of confirmation from your employer about this.

For many years, the preparations made in Sweden for the threat of war and war have been very limited. Instead, public authorities and municipalities have focused on building up the level of preparedness for peacetime emergencies such as flooding and IT attacks. However, as the world around us has changed, the Government has decided to strengthen Sweden's total defence. That is why planning for Sweden's civil defence has been resumed. It will take time to develop all parts of it again. At the same time, the level of preparedness for peacetime emergencies is an important basis of our resilience in the event of war.

Food

It is important to have extra food at home that provides sufficient calories. Use non-perishable food that can be prepared quickly, requires little water or can be eaten without preparation.

- potatoes, cabbage, carrots, eggs
- bread with a long shelf-life, e.g. tortillas, hard bread, crackers, rusks
- cheese spread, soft whey cheese and other spreads in tubes
- oat milk, soy milk, milk powder
- cooking oil, hard cheese
- quick-cook pasta, rice, grains, instant mashed potatoes
- precooked lentils, beans, vegetables, hummus in tins
- chopped tomatoes to, for example, cook pasta in
- tins of bolognese sauce, mackerel, sardines, ravioli, salmon balls, boiled meat, soup
- fruit purée, jam, marmalade
- prepared blueberry and rosehip soup, juice or another drink that can be stored at room temperature
- coffee, tea, chocolate, energy bars, honey, almonds, nuts, nut butter, seeds.

Water

Clean drinking water is vital. Allow for at least three litres per adult per day. If you are uncertain about its quality, you need to be able to boil the water.

If the toilet is not working, you can take strong plastic bags and place them in the toilet bowl. Good hand hygiene is important for avoiding infection.

- bottles
- buckets with lids
- Plastic bottles to freeze water in (do not fill to the top as the bottle will crack if you do)
- mineral water
- jerry cans, ideally with a tap, to collect water in. You can also have a couple of clean jerry cans that are filled with water as a reserve. These are to be stored in a cool, dark place.



Warmth

If the electricity goes off at a cold time of the year, your home will quickly become cold. Gather together in one room, hang blankets over the windows, cover the floor with rugs and build a den under a table to keep warm. Think about the risk of fire. Extinguish all candles and alternative heating sources before you go to sleep. Air the room regularly to let in oxygen.

- woollen clothes
- warm all-weather outdoor clothing
- hats, gloves, scarves
- blankets
- sleeping mats
- sleeping bags
- candles
- tea lights
- matches or fire-lighter
- alternative heat sources, e.g. LPG heaters, paraffin heaters.

Other

- spirit stove and fuel
- torch, head torch
- batteries

Communications

In the event of a serious incident, you need to be able to receive important information from the authorities, primarily Sveriges Radio's radio station P4. You also need to be able to follow how the media are reporting events, remain in contact with relatives and friends and be able to reach the emergency services..

- a radio powered by batteries, solar cells or winding
- a car radio
- a list of important telephone numbers on paper
- extra batteries/power bank for devices such as mobile phones
- mobile phone charger that works in the car.
- cash in small denominations
- medicine cabinet and extra medicines
- wet wipes
- hand sanitiser
- nappies and menstrual products
- paper printouts of information such as insurance policies, bank details, registration certificates
- fuel in the tank.

Mailing Coments and LoCs:

First EAPA, then N'APA. BTW plz JOIN an APA! You'll be fandom nobility and you are needed! News: After much hesitation I've decided to run Letters of Comments. Hesitation due to that Intermission issues are already too long... Since I had some complaints about the Glascon Worldcon, it'd be only fair to open for other opinions about Glascon. I also have some WAHF (We Also Heard From), but mostly short ones. Since I don't know if they expected publicity I'll only give you the initials: BS, PC, FL – who reminded me of R Kipling's airship story "With the Night Mail" (I may dig up more on airships in the future!) – SB, JC, HG. If you have comments, be To The Point. I'll edit comments, but less babbling means less editing.

Henry Grynsten: "Lots of interesting stuff - you never run out of things to write about!" Rarely. I read a lot, follow news, read things on the net, watch TV, and I have a rather wide interest in things (science, literature, history, culture, language, technology, etc) so things to write about always pop up! ☆☆☆ You tackle one of the hardest questions in life - what is consciousness? My attempt: It's an emerging quality of an information system of enough capacity and complexity and the right design. There may be several viable designs, but one design we know works is the neural network. ☆☆☆ The answer to the suggestion "A god created the world" is: it says nothing because if a god created everything, who or what created that god? A supergod created god who then created the universe! Well, who created the supergod then? (and so on). ☆☆☆ Crime fic "structure is the same: there is a crime, a murder, and someone has to find out who" dunnit. That's only one strain of crime fic, the classic whodunnit. Genres evolve. We have now also the police procedural, the psychological thriller, the cosy crime, etc ☆☆☆ "It's difficult to see how it would be theoretically impossible to replicate one info system in another" (=uploading the consciousness to eg a computer). It may be very difficult, yes, staggeringly difficult bordering - but not crossing over into - the impossible, but theoretically it could be done. As information handling is media independent, a certain biological body is unnecessary ☆☆☆ That there would be processes in consciousness having a "quantum state" is just a theory. I have my doubts about that theory. Quantum states deal with single elementary particles, but the structures carrying consciousness uses millions and billions of atoms and their elementary particle - quantum states drowns and play no role in such a mass. ☆☆☆ Star Trek "transporters" are probably unattainable - reading the properties of



If Sweden is attacked, resistance is required

We must be able to resist various types of attack directed against our country. Even today, attacks are taking place against our IT systems and attempts are being made to influence us using false information. We may also be affected by conflicts in our region. Potential attacks include:

- Cyberattacks that knock out important IT systems.
- Sabotage of infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, airports, railways, electricity cables and nuclear power stations).
- Terror attacks that affect a large number of people or important organisations.
- Attempts to influence Sweden's decision makers or inhabitants.
- Severed transport links that result in a shortage of foodstuffs and other goods.
- Military attacks, for example airstrikes, rocket attacks or other acts of war.

If Sweden is attacked by another country, we will never give up. All information to the effect that resistance is to cease is false.



Heightened state of alert

The Government can decide to put the country on a heightened state of alert in order to improve Sweden's chances of deterring threats. In a heightened state of alert, peacetime laws apply, but other laws may also be used. For example, the state can requisition private property that is of particular importance to Sweden's total defence.

In a heightened state of alert, the whole of society has to gather its collective forces in order to ensure that vital services continue to function. In a heightened state of alert, you may be called up to help in various ways.

Information about the heightened state of alert will be broadcast on radio and TV. Sveriges Radio's radio station P4 is the emergency channel.

all the particles in the body in one moment can't be done. ☆☆☆ "Making a copy, however exact, does not make the consciousness the same". I say it does. It would pass the Duck test. Consciousness B would behave, contain, walk, talk and swim the same. ☆☆☆ "a computer...will not be the consciousness process of a person" You try word magic. Consciousness is BOTH a thing, phenomenon and a process, thought processes can't be duplicated you claim. Yes they can. Just put the things copied in the same positions and press Start! ☆☆☆ "consciousness process is tied to a specific body" I doubt it, as info processes are media independent. ☆☆☆ "you cannot make a copy that is the original" The only things that matters is that the copy works exactly the same. ☆☆☆ "We change throughout life, and a baby is almost unrecognizable in the old man, while the consciousness remains the same." No, it isn't the same. We all change a bit all the time. The trick is that the change is so *slow* that we get the illusions of being the same being throughout, but I'm rather sure that my consciousness now isn't the same as when I was 10 years old. ☆☆☆ As for the question if a robot may have a consciousness, your argument goes something like this: A robot may be programmed to do this or that, which makes it a slave and we would never accept a conscious being as a slave. My reply: But we would! Men have been made into slaves for thousands of years. It's another matter if it's ethically sound. Ethics is BTW nothing that influences status or processes in the physical world. If it's possible for an electronic robot brain to have a consciousness it isn't made impossible by something thinking it would lead to unethical consequences. The robot brain will be what it is and do what it does no matter the ethics. You for instance say "Do you then mean that humans are to be treated as machines? Or that machines should be treated as humans? Both positions are ludicrous." It's as if you think robots can't have consciousness because machined can't be treated as humans... But they can! (As for how "moral subjects" should be treated, it's a very complicated question. Preliminary, any being carrying self-consciousness is a moral subject which requires certain treatment. Note how I usually let higher primates, elephants, dolphins etc be an "open question" regarding this.) ☆☆☆ "being conscious means robots are just like humans...conscious robots are humans" No, I don't think so. Consciousness may have variations. An alien or robot may have consciousness but NOT be "just like" humans. BTW, I use the concept "moral subject" for when ethics apply, not "being human". ☆☆☆ "Chimpanzees aren't conscious like humans /AE: they may be, to some extent! / ...remote controls to make them do what we want...completely impossible and unacceptable" It'd be impossible presently, as no such technology exist. But if it did exist some would use chimps that way, as many have no qualms about having slaves, ☆☆☆ "consciousness will not pop up because a program is complex...nothing to do with the amount of things but the quality of things" It need to be of the right construction too! The right construction adds quality. ☆☆☆ "we don't even know the recipe of the tasty dish" (consciousness). But we do know, but at least are beginning to know it. The recipe is: build neural networks and train them. ☆☆☆ "No they don't. There is no consensus at all about what consciousness is." The successes of trained neural networks ("large language models") moves a lot of scientists towards consensus. ☆☆☆ "consciousness can't be reduced to just information processing" Much points towards that it can. We get a situation where the Duck principle applies. If something behaves as expected by a consciousness, in every tiny detail, it IS consciousness. ☆☆☆ "My idea is that it /consciousness/ depends on a duplication of sense input combined with memory." Sensory input and memory are things machines excel in! ☆☆☆ "I don't think that even if we built a Rube Goldberg machine the size of the galaxy it would become conscious." It would, if correctly constructed, though It may be very slow. Here's BTW a video about a very simple "computer" using rolling marbles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BOvLL8ok8I>

William McCabe: I hope your health issues sort themselves out! ☆☆☆ Sf claimed not to be sf? It used to happen before, a few decades ago, but is less common now. We have for instance Swedish author PC Jersild wo used to write sf-but-not-sf but has changed his mind. I heard him myself during a meeting in the SF Bookstore admit that much of his stuff was indeed skiffy. ☆☆☆ Yes, the Russians still run their space program. A new crew with a Russian + Americans went up to ISS and two cosmonauts and an astronaut went down in a Sojuz. <https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/nasas-spacex-crew-9-to-conduct-space-station-research/> ☆☆☆ Europe has a space base in French Guiana, South America. ESA satellites are launched from there. Shortly Estring in Swedish Lapland will also be launching satellites. It's satellite-ready, the facilities for it are already in place.

Heath Row: Finncon used to have 5-8000 attendees, but that was because it was co-organised with Animecon (Japanese animated films). Lots of young girls turned up. Finncon has now skipped Animecon, and 1000-1500 attendees remains. The Finncons have always been the biggest in the Nordic region. My Finncon report was a bit thin is due to that most of the program was in Finnish. I think I reported on all the non-Finnish program I actually attended. (Swedish national cons tend to have more in English.) ☆☆☆ Thanks for the APA list link! ☆☆☆ I've made a complete "scan" (in reality snapping the pages with a mobile) of *Vår Rymd*. It's of questionable quality but everything is readable. complete "scan" (in reality snapping the pages with a mobile) of *Vår Rymd*. It's of questionable quality but everything is readable.

Garth Spencer: As an outsider, I have only two thoughts about CUFF: 1) The winning delegate should attend an sf con, 2) it would be good if CUFF was based on traditional, fannish fandom. ☆☆☆ Nice the see that all that fannish material in the form of the VCON tapes will be taken care of, and to be digitalised. No fannish material should be thrown away. I see fandom, traditional fannish fandom, as an interesting social and cultural phenomenon and material about it must be kept for future studies. I'm also impressed by Fanac.org's scanning of old fanzines. They claimed to have 500 00 fanzine pages scanned. A gold mine for researchers, and AFAIK all of it is available for download! That's something eg somebody like me want to access and do research with. Fan Tomas Cronholm has to a lesser degree scanned some historical Swedish fanzines, incl a full run of SF Forum. ☆☆☆ I didn't understand the piece of faanfiction you had in Brownian Motion...

Jefferson Swycaffer: Normally, you don't use AI through "AI software". It's far too complex to find place in downloadable software. You go to an AI site on the net. Here are some sites: <https://www.canva.com/ai-art-generator/> <https://deepai.org/> <https://www.crayon.com/> <https://www.freepik.com/ai/image-generator> - but there are more, some free, some require subscription fees. Sometimes you get a few "credits" to use per day. ☆☆☆ When I

went to Poland for a con (early noughties) and most Polish fans i spoke to didn't like Stanislaw Lem. He was seen as a smart-ass sitting in an Ivory Tower. Lem also had a dispute with the SFWA in the 1970s (which emphasizes the smart-ass aspect) <https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/notes/notes12/notes.html> ☆☆☆ I believe in "influential times" theories of history. That resembles what is otherwise known as "Zeitgeist" ("Spirit of the times" in German), ie an idea that influences society for a long time - several decades minimum - which many therefore are ready to uncritically adopt because it's popular. Several Zeitgeists may be around at the same time. Communism is one example, being influential from the early 1900s until the 1970s. Environmentalism is another one, from the 1960s and to our days (many are still under its spell). "Trumpism" or the idea of a "deep state" has been around for the last 2-3 decades and will be around for some time more. Etc. ☆☆☆ FDR did mostly no harm and had good intentions, but the fact is that the Great Depression wasn't reversed until the US industry began rearmament and draft began so job positions increased, sometime around 1940.

George Phillis: Intermission #146 had some faanfction.

Adrian Kresnak: Nothing to report...

Mark Nelson: I found Åke Swartz of *Vår Rymd* after a tip from a friend who had bumped into the guy in UFO circles. But it took a while to find his E-mail address. ☆☆☆ I liked to hear about where "blurb" comes from. Unexpected. ☆☆☆ To me "literary fiction" is something like "a book by an author fitting acadenmia's literary studies criteria from a reputable publisher".

Samuel Lubell: I left Scotland the day after Glascon. You stayed and seemed to have a good time. (Nice to see a little of the Scottish countryside. I haven't seen much of that., though I visited Scotland a total of four times.) ☆☆☆ I believe the view of the scientist changed a lot due to *modern communication technology*, a process taking a few decades. Modern printing presses and the Linotype would spread stories about scientists. Movies would show scientists in labs among test tubes and sparkling electric coils. Scientists would hold lectures via radio. The most important person for a new view of the scientist was Albert Einstein, around 1920 when relativity was confirmed.

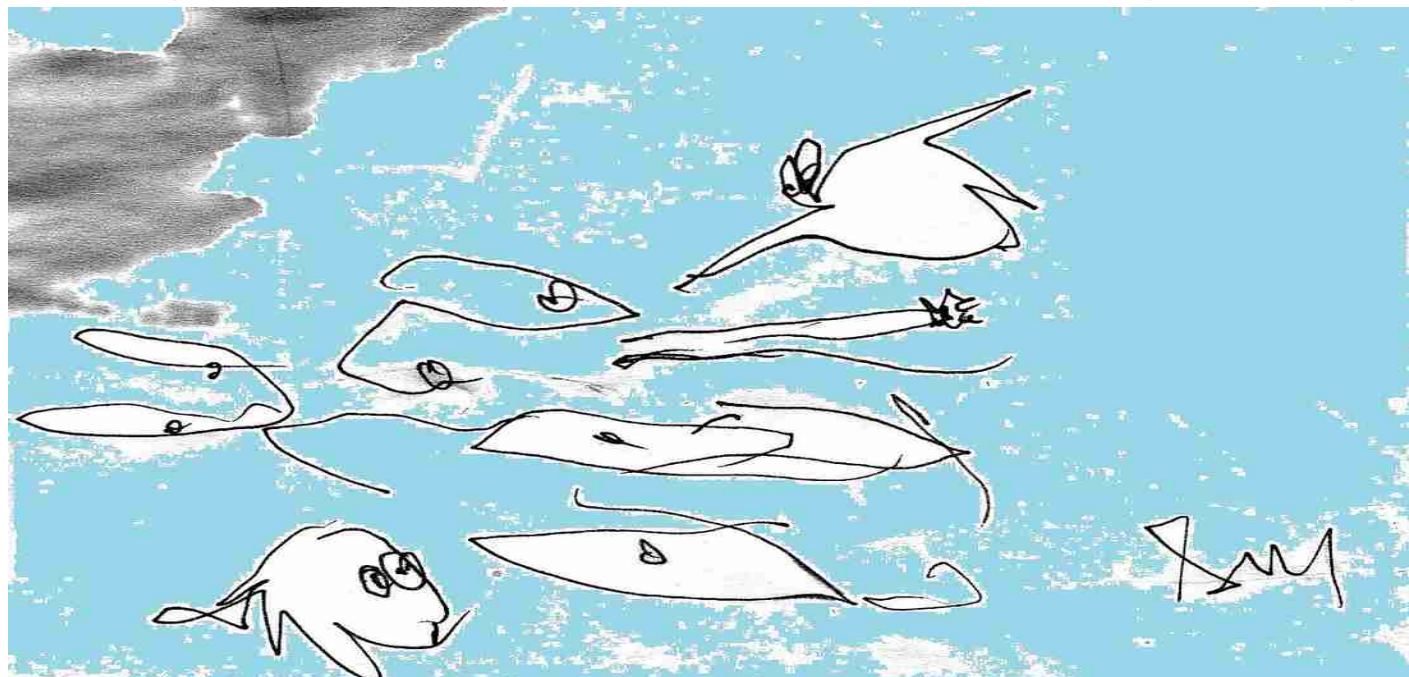
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Joseph Nicholas: Yes, there were problems with the organisation and management of the recent Glasgow Worldcon - it would be unrealistic to expect that an event of such a size, when run on an entirely voluntary basis by people who also have day jobs to pursue, could proceed without a few (large or small) hitches somewhere. That the large size of the event made it difficult to find particular people, or to find them again, is just something one has to work around, perhaps (for instance) by making arrangements to meet up (when, where, for how long) in advance of the event. The bag searches on entry every time may have been irritating, but they had nothing to do with the venue's staff expecting a younger and rowdier crowd: bag searches are now common in venues throughout the UK, and have been undertaken at many of the larger venues (museums, art galleries, theatres) for many (many) years before they were rolled out everywhere else. (I presume from your context that bag searches are not common, or not undertaken at all, in Sweden.) But some of your complaints struck me as old fartish whinging that Things Just Weren't The Same As They Used To Be -- for example, that the term "fanzine" has been appropriated by many other subcultures and is no longer exclusive to ours; you clearly don't like that, but there's no going back. For another example, that the convention catered for groups other than those who read books -- like it or not, science fiction is now such a broad category, with such a broad meaning, that it will and does include gamers, followers of TV shows, comics people, and many other groups. (As The Guardian newspaper put it some years ago, "Science fiction has powered its way to full spectrum dominance of the cultural battlefield".) For yet another example, the adoption of a code of conduct, which you see as infringing on free speech and being used to exclude people from the convention, but which I see as a corrective to the everyday misogyny and racism which still persists in the wider world, by creating a safe space for those who might see themselves as oppressed or discriminated against. (Bear in mind also that it's not just SF conventions which have codes of conduct for attendees: they, or variations of them, are deployed in and for other participatory events and conferences.) There were no tables of second-hand books for sale because there are no second-hand book dealers - the margins are too small, the dealers have retired, what second-hand book "trade" there still is now takes the form of donations to charity shops (which ruthlessly weed out and send to landfill ninety percent of what they're given). And although you may be "tired" of panel discussions, there will always be new people for whom they are a novel, interesting experience. (That some panellists don't prepare themselves properly beforehand is regrettably a fact of life.) (FTR, there were lectures at the convention, on a variety of subjects, by experts in the relevant field(s). Perhaps you didn't find them because you didn't have a printed copy of the programme?) I didn't read the fanfiction (or "faanfction", as you have it), because I have a blind spot for it. And Glasgow only has one underground line because underground lines are bloody expensive things to build. (The central section of what is now the Elizabeth Line, in London, cost an estimated £18.8 billion.)

Ed: *Yes, I'm guilty of being an old fart thinking things were Much Better Way Back, eg thinking fandom is for books and fanzines. I don't want bag checking seen as something natural. Intrusions into people's lives and movements must be a rare exception under well-motivated special circumstances. As for CoCs, you only need to read through them to see how twisted they are!* China bans and harrasses deviating opinions, sf cons shouldn't.

*The "Code of Conduct" (=CoC, <https://glasgow2024.org/about/policies/code-of-conduct/>) begins with a load of /c/r/a/p definitions as if concocted by an evil AI. Then it declares itself to "discourage anti-social behaviour", but left undefined it means the con's Secret Masters of Totalitarianism can do anything. They "prioritise marginalised peoples' safety over privileged", ie you are left under the bus if you're not from a collective being favoured. CoC further claims to have jurisdiction over any electronic platform anywhere! If anyone claims to be "bothered" you are "required to stop" at once. It includes "attempt to weaponize the CoC" (what does that even mean?). You are not even allowed to talk about ("advocate") what the CoC claims as bad "behaviour"! And speaking of talk, they rule over your language as you cannot "misgender", which means they rule over science too. You're banned from recording sound or pictures around you (perfectly lawful, otherwise). If someone claims to be "bothered" by clothes or something you wear - off with it! And shut up with comments "intended to belittle", "reinforce social structures of domination", "choices around disease mitigation", about "another's body" and "microaggressions" (ie *all talk* is suppressed if someone claims to "feel bothered"). CoC wants "reverse discrimination" - any ordinary Joe Fann becomes a target for anything - and encourages "criticising racism, sexism, cissexism". We get a section where the

Leigh Edmonds: I saw *Intermission 46* on efanazines and downloaded myself a copy. I enjoyed reading it and thought I'd drop you a short email to let you know how much fun I got from it. /Thanks!/ Not that I enjoyed your mention of the Russian invasion of Crimea or the other things going on in the middle-east. I really didn't notice the Olympic Games, partly because it took place on the other side of the world from me so sports fans had to stay up really late or get up really early to see it live. I am not one of them so missed most of it although I did notice the way the Australian media went off like fire crackers every time a local won a medal. The main thing I enjoyed was your convention report. I wasn't there but a lot of my Australian fannish friends did go. I got the impression that it attracted many fans because it was really the first accessible WorldCon since covid and everyone wanted to get



Lars LON Olsson illo! Is it a shoal of fish? A flight of birds? Or a cloud of insects? Why does English have different collective nouns for every species? What's the collective noun for sf fans? A cask of fen?

back to them. Most of my friends who were there would agree with you that there was too much programming. I suppose the problem is that people want to have their day (or 45 minutes) in the sun and time had to be made for them. I also agree with you that almost everything that could be said in a panel program has already been said, so why say it again. People had also mentioned to me the bag checks but not made much of a fuss about it. /AE: As they had several venues you had to go pass bag checks maybe 10 times/dag. It becomes annoying! I've given some thought to going to the WorldCon in Seattle next year to experience for myself these gigantic conventions, but really I like smaller conventions so I'm planning to go to Corflu and the British Eastercon next year to see what they are like. Covid really knocked the stuffing out of conventions in Australia and when they got going again they were not large. I guess that the membership of the annual national convention in Canberra last year and the one in Melbourne this year would not have had more than 200 members. That's a big drop from some of the bigger ones a few years ago. However, that small size does mean it's relatively easy to catch up with all your mates there. Thanks also for the faan fiction. I too have suffered from somebody thinking that I wrote media based fiction copying tv shows when they found out that I wrote 'fan fiction'. I tried to explain the difference to them but their eyes glazed over and they had no comprehension of what I was talking about. Their loss I reckon. The Tucker story was amusing but was probably much funnier to members of the SF League at the time who got all the allusions. I also liked your piece with all its fannish allusions but found it a bit preachy. All trufen know what's wrong with media fandom but, in Australia at least, a few good fannish fans started in media before the scales fell from their eyes. Thanks again for keeping me amused and informed by your fanzine. I'm attaching the latest copy of my fanzine as a trade, although you might already have noticed it on efanazines.

Ed: I can't help preaching against media fans, masqueraders, gamers and such. They are not only shallow imitators - copying comic book costumes, producing "fanfiction" based on other writers, building starship models from TV - but also embarrassing poseurs. In interviews they go gosh-wow-boy-oh-boy. They have little interest in science and technology - so called steampunkers are mostly into clothes and jewelry. Some want medieval times back (forgetting plagues and famine) spending years forging chainmail. They march through the streets in their silly dresses like exhibitionistic children playing. It gives the real sf fandom a bad name, as media falls for the superficial effect seeking of fringe fans. They walk like geeks, dress like geeks, speak like geeks, and they truly are geeks. Unbearable!

Слава Україні!

CoC lies about UK law. Actually pornography, and some other things, aren't illegal, but on the con it's banned even to talk about it! Just a few examples of **FUGGHEADED BULLSHIT!** Worldcons criticise China for banning and harrassing deviant opinions, while theydo the same! George Orwell wrote 1984 on the island of Jura, just west of Glasgow. There he had plenty of inspiration...

**Ye Murthered
Master Mage 273**

**George Phillies
48 Hancock Hill Drive
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Commentationes

N'APA 272

Archive Midwinter: The Eclipse covers are professional, and ran a bit over a thousand dollars each. FanFic is a recruiting lure for the N3F, a lure that so far has not worked as well as might have been hoped.

Shepdon First is FanFic, all serial numbers erased, is a sequel to The Midwich Cuckoos. However, I open up the range of plausible responses to include the outside world.

Analog? I submitted a story there recently, the odds being very much against acceptance.

Intermission 146: Your fanfic lives up to the standards of classic fan fiction, though perhaps not quite up to the brilliance of The Eye of Argon, with its multi-fauceted red emerald. (No, I did not make that one up.) The tonnage of references in The Last Fan was truly impressive.

RAIL #2: A complicated museum from the sound of things. Do the trains have tracks that run between the levels? That would be asking a lot of them.

Your superhero tale is very clever, at least so far. People persuading things to happen by talking about it rather than by punching opponents out is a nice change. Your writing is solid. Please keep it up.

Brandy Hall: That was a fascinating list of SF shows. I started with Captain Video (rarely seen because the Dumont Network was not available in Buffalo, where we lived; I only saw it when we visited my Grandparents in Ellwood City. The shows I saw fairly continuously were Captain Z-Ro and then Commando Cody—Sky Marshall of the Universe, followed by Rocky Jones Space Ranger and iirc Superman.

About the time I became President of the N3F N'APA was to of our wonderful fen exchanging emails. I decided that we should revive it as a real APA, and had fine fen in support. The full set of issues from that time forward is on our web site N3F.org.

Your airplane story sounds like an analysis that would easily have been done wrong many times.

Snow Poster Township: My Fan Fiction in #271 was in its own zine, which may be in hiding someplace. Thank you for your kind words. On a different note, your supply of old motion picture ads is remarkable.

Samisdat: Thank you for your kind words. Your photos of Scotland were great! Your adventures in con attendance and touring Scotland were entertaining. Edison's War on Mars in the original series in newspapers, or in the much later hardback, had phrenology. The reprint in the back of the Perry Rhodan novels had that edited out.

Brownian Motion: Fan Fiction about few—a noble gesture! Fannish heaven is not quite what I would have expected, but your description was truly creative. As a secret plan to conquer the world, running science fiction conventions to make money is at least unique.

If you ever remember a brand name for the USB+5.25" drive, please advise. I am relying on alleged technical experts saying such a device is not commercially available.

I hope that the ad trade with FanActivity Gazette works.

FanFic will continue to advance.

Fan Fic

George Phillies

I will do a bit more of this, primarily to see if I develop any interest from people who are not regular contributors in publishing their fan fiction in N'APA.

"Do I want to know how they managed the kidnapping part?" Thornberry-Thistlewaite asked.

"Without the rest of you knowing and taking corrective action."

"I gather the American slang is 'they slipped her a Mickey'," Edward answered. "Every evening she'd stop at the Hart, buy a lemon soda, and go off someplace to read. So they almost bought out the lemon stock, left one behind, and somehow drugged the one bottle. She went off, fell asleep, and found herself way off out of town. They didn't get the drug dose right. She woke up early, learned what they were plotting, and made one of them kill the other two. The survivor was the ringleader. She ripped his mind to shreds."

"Truly evil of them. But why kidnap one of you, not some street child in Birmingham, wherever? That makes no sense."

"Thrill of the chase," Edward answered. "She looked. This trio had a long record of doing things like this, in third world countries, while affecting to be working for M.I. 5. When they were sent here, they got bored."

Mark stared at a puff of cloud. "So much," he managed, "for the 'excellent vetting and careful choice of agents'. Have you told my superiors?"

"We didn't know what to do. This happened a few weeks ago. We wanted everything to stay peaceful so people would keep liking us. Some of us wanted to disappear, vanish from town. Others said stay put."

"I'll communicate with Headquarters. There were some odd notes about the trio. And I think I can arrange a pardon for Penelope. Wait. How is she taking this? It must be incredibly traumatic."

"Telepathy can fix that. She let us fade her memories." Edward helped himself to a biscuit.

"Charlotte was certain you aren't planning on killing us," Edward continued. "So what do you want? Yes, we both know...we could read your mind. Carefully. But we'd rather talk. Yes, I could tell what you're thinking. The why is harder to find, but you could tell us."

"What do you know," Mark began, "about how and why you're here?"

"Some nuclear mutation," Edward answered. "That's what they – some boffins from the local polytechnic – told our parents, soon after we were born."

"And they believed that?" Mark responded. "Mutations don't work that way."

"We don't all agree," Edwards said. He paused to fling a petal skipping across the inlet. "Some believe it. Charlotte thinks something else is going on. She's the real brain of our nest."

So much, Thornbury-Thistlewaite thought, for claims they're all about equally smart.

"She's right," Mark answered. "It's a somewhat long story, most of which I suspect I don't know. Did anyone ever mention the day everyone fell asleep?"

Edward shook his head.

"It's a long story," Mark began. "You see..."

Rather later, the bag of cookies depleted, Mark finished. "That's what I know."

"But why do you think there are space aliens?" Edward asked. "Radar tracks of UFOs?"

"For once I have to ask you to read my mind," Mark said. "It's two photographs. Caution. They might be extremely frightening." He described the two images.

The characteristic glow formed near Edward's eyes.

"Yes, I see them. Ugly, aren't they?" Edward said. "I never had a clue they existed. And your bosses had these photographs, but we never found out."

"I infer that my higher-ups are extremely cautious about who gets to visit your village. They must have been cautious when you broke up that spy ring, too."

&&&&

--- My actual fiction writing recently was a tale for
Chris Nuttall's Fantastic Schools series of short
story collections.

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 273

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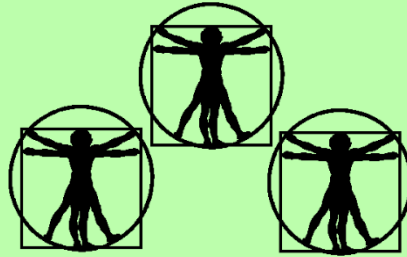
2 November 2024

Comments:

Cover: Jose Sanchez: Magnificent! Historically accurate, and breathtaking!

Ahrvid Engholm: The U.S. election will be over by the time you read this... It's probably best for me not to discuss it, although, like most people in the U.S. – and probably world-wide – I have some very strong opinions. I do agree with your historical aside that Trump was not the worst President in U.S. history. Andrew Johnson, for one, was worse, giving the Old South the go-ahead to create the Ku Klux Klan, leading to the murder of thousands. That's squarely on Johnson's head. He gave tacit permission for it to happen. James Buchanan was also a very bad President, and poor John Adams, for whom one might have as much sympathy as blame, was also a true mess. We started out so well, with George Washington...and then stumbled badly with our second Chief Exec.

Delightful History Corner! I'd never heard of Christopher Polhem before, but he seems to have been a sterling polymath, not to mention a brilliant mechanic and artificer!



Ahrvid Engholm: Great write-up of Glascon! And the History Corner was great fun, with the history of the Beanie, with and without the Propeller!

Fun fanfic re REH vs HPL, and the feuding varieties of Fandom. I've seen the Litfans vs Mediafans tension at work, and, of course, I've been right at the heart of the creation of – and backlash against – furry fandom. I also witnessed Robert Asprin's rise and fall with the Mongol Horde as a subset of the SCA. One thing fans are good at, and that's feuding!

George Phillies: I'll send you notice via email, but, alas, the 2024 N3F Short Story Contest will almost certainly need to be canceled, as, even this late in the year, we have no submissions.

The Martian War Machine from AresCorp sounds like fun. I will note that April Fool's Day is some distance behind us, but this is an excellent spoof, and a delight to experience!

Fun bit of FanFic, very personable. You do dialogue quite well, and your depiction of genteel society is superb.

Adrian Kresnak: Nifty pics and write-up from the Cincinnati Museum Center!

Rect me, the X-Babies are lots of fun! I'll look up Agents of Chaos and Shri! Thank you for letting me know!

Fun segment of "The Foxhaven Disaster." Good dialogue and characterization, although no action, just conversation.

Mark Nelson: Fun autobiography and personal origin of your involvement in fandom! We all seem to have arrived by a quirky route! The origin of a fan is highly contingent, and often "unlikely" in a statistical sense. If there are "alternate realities," there are probably only a few in which fans are, in fact, fans!

"I've realised...that I am incapable of defining literary fiction.." I'll gladly join you there! I can define "mainstream" fiction, simply as fiction about real people in the everyday world doing ordinary things. The Great Gatsby comes to mind. But what makes a novel "Literary?" Is it allusions to other literary material, such as having a character named after a Dickens character? Is it linguistic, with some special attention to grammar? Is it "Introspection" and hyper-awareness of cognitive and emotional status? ("Jack wondered, and then wondered about wondering. He took this to the third degree, and then the fourth. Is there any limit to this, he wondered.") I sense that there is a kind of pretension, of self-awareness, of intent, to some literary fiction, as if the author is deliberately trying to be "Relevant."

Heath Row: Nifty that the old jerk-rag Hustler can have imaginative and historically interesting articles for their Halloween issue! I had thought that Hustler lacked depth absolutely, and I'm pleasantly surprised to learn otherwise! A retrospective on Scream Queens sounds like a jolly lot of fun!

Thank you very kindly for the link to CMRO Travis Starnes! I will make definitely use of that as a collecting check-list! I have most of the comics on that list, kept in plastic in a location separate from my regular collection in large bins. I really ought to dispose of most of my collection, as it is merely sitting and slowly degrading. Sell it or just throw it away. Comic books are the ne plus ultra of mortality!

Aye, DC's Vertigo brought us some lovely stuff! Sandman was consistently brilliant, right from the get-go, and Hellblazer certainly has had moments of sheer genius. I like the way they push right up to the edge of "Horror" but never quite make the leap. This is fine with me, because I can't handle horror, but I'm completely good with Vertigo-style near-horror. The current Hellblazer title, "Dead in America" is mixed, half the time being brilliant, and half the time being rather dull.

rect Sam Lubell, I can give high praise to Haldeman's "Forever War." It's quite good. It's also fun for being a "rebuttal" of sorts to Heinlein's "Starship Troopers." It's a public debate, in the form of duelling novels! Thesis, counter-thesis! And there are others involved in the same game, such as David Gerrold, in his "War Against the Chtorr" series (currently languishing in a state of incompleteness.)

(I have played this game! "Not in Our Stars" was a deliberate rebuttal to Keith Laumer's "The Glory Game." Fun!)

re fan feuds, yeah, I bin in 'em on occasion. The pages of N'APA were marred, any number of years ago, by some very persistent unpleasantness. A third member of the APA stepped in as diplomat, and negotiated an end to it, for which he ought to have won the Nobel Peace Prize!

Samuel Lubell: rect me, well, I'm glad you perceive a gateway and path to publishing for new authors, because I see only its lack, alas.

re Hemingway, ick! I totally despised every single effing word I ever read of his. Bloated trash.

There is most definitely a ^dispute^ between those who hold that Fandom Is A Way of Life and those who hold that Fandom Is Just a (G.D.) Hobby. But I never really perceived that as a feud, as opposed to some of the long-running natiness you saw (in professionals!) between, say, Harlan Ellison or Jerry Pournelle, which actually got to the level of physical violence. Both of those worthies are on record as punching people at SF conventions.

Delightful travelogue and beautiful pictures! That sounds like a great vacation in all ways!

Thoughtful and insightful section of the essay on the perception of The Scientist by acclaimed authors. The public perception of "Science" is, alas, under attack these days, but will probably pull through, as science actually shows results, which most other systems of knowledge don't, quite. "Philosophy" is a wonderful following, but it doesn't light or heat our homes.

Garth Spencer: re CUFF, in my opinion, you're over-thinking things. The various fan-funds are merely crowd-sourced charities, where a recipient, democratically selected, is given the funds to travel to distant conventions. I see no "responsibility" or "representation." Just a chance for someone, presumably worthy, to travel, who otherwise could not. It's a lovely idea, but, really, devoid of higher meaning.

re computers, and writing, and preservation of knowledge, yes, it definitely frightenes a very good many people that our current forms of archiving depend on energy. "The Cloud" is a useful concept, but it isn't as "independent" as it pretends, and no one knows how often backups are performed, on what medium. The first 19 years of my working career were as a "Tape Ape," starting with old reel-to-reel tapes and moving on to various cartridges and

cassettes. I worked at night, backing up the day's database and files, and, yeah, it was occasionally a darn good thing, as there were times that restoring from backups was vitally (!) necessary.

Of course, conventional libraries are vulnerable to fire, and a lot of information is lost, contextually, as languages change or even become extinct. (A quick Google search finds a claim that languages are becoming extinct at a rate of one every three months or so.) File types also become extinct. I will always be thankful to Microsoft for preserving "Word Perfect" backwards compatibility in Word. I can still open my old ".wp" files!

In the 80s and 90s, there was a vocal group of Microfiche Fans, who claimed that their efforts were vital in restoring civilization should nuclear war occur. I do not see as much activity from them these days, but I laud the concept. Archiving information is precious and holy to me (the source of the title of my zine!) A college professor once told me that some institutions that are dependent on long-term data storage, such as banks and other lenders who need to maintain data on lifetime home mortgages, sometimes use etched glass as a storage medium. Think of "compact disks" that have a VERY long lifespan. (There are rather a lot of 1,000 year old church windows!)

re George Phillies' works, aye, they are delightful reads to be sure! I know of no one who writes better "Economics" in fiction. "Mistress of the Waves," for instance, is a story about the creating and expanding of a shipping enterprise -- think of Aristotle Onassis. Sounds dry and dusty? Far from it! It's educational and entertaining too, with a protagonist you just can't help but like! George does "Likeable" very well; his characters are, almost without fail, people we would love to invite into our homes for dinner and conversation!

Election Notes

Well...it could have been worse. My prediction was that Harris would win...and that the Pennsylvania legislature would over-

rule the citizens of that state and appoint their own electors, launching the greatest constitutional crisis in U.S. history. At least we were spared that!

INTERMISSION #148

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, for EAPA, N'APA and others who don't eat their dogs, nor the cats! I promise to get better with @SFJournalen's newstweets if you just follow. A Case of Conscience: the Prosecutor or the Felon? For sale typo: Offen used. Late Oct 2024.

Editorially: Computers, Election, War

In this issue we will take you back to the early days of science fiction through computers. Sf folks have always leaned towards all things binary ("non-binary" is incompatible!). The skiffy writers have dealt with all kinds of information systems: Asimov gave us robots, Clarke had HAL, Bill Gibson invented Cyberspace, and so on. And there are strong sf connections with social media.

The first social media was the e-mail lists, starting already in the 1970s on ARPAnet (that later developed into what we call Internet). Outside more internal technical E-mail list, the pioneering list was *SF-Lovers*. Rich Z who was around even before "micros" (as they once were called, since they were smaller than the PDP minicomputers) had landed on the desktop, will tell you about SF-Lovers.

We also go into freedom of expression (or not) on the 'net, with a Swedish science fiction author getting in trouble. He called a film maker a Soviet spy, on the network built by an old sf fan, resulting in a court case catching everybody's attention. Finally, meet JG Ballard making computer poetry!

If you ever doubted that the Russian military is a bunch of brutal war criminals, just watch videos of how they intentionally drop drone bombs on Ukrainian civilians in towns behind front line. Not on troops, but on grandma walking on the street, aunt taking a bus, sis riding a bike...bzzz-BOOM!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEDKGI7-NCK> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZqg-8fk2lg>

Savages, bastards, low life! And along the front the Russians enjoy themselves by executing PoWs. *These people, or lice rather, must be stopped!* I know that the Ukrainian intelligence community do their outmost to identify all war criminals involved. When Putin has been ousted and the Russian invaders crushed, he and his murderous cohorts will be rounded up, brought in chains to the Hague and thrown into a dark hole never to see sunlight again.

We must support the valiant Ukrainian defenders. *Give them all the tools they need to get the job done!* It's a mystery how the narcissistic liar Donny "Old Fatman" Trump can cuddle with the hangman of Kremlin and, as has been revealed by Bob Woodward (the one who took on Nixon), having Putin on speed dial or at least frequently phones the bastard.

Which brings us to the US election. Kamala Harris isn't perfect. Some things she promises sound expensive. Compared to Europe she seems more like a Social Democrat rather than just a Democrat and I'm weary of SocDems, who tend to like bureaucracy, more politics and more public spending. I want people who champion the individual and fight bureaucracy. But at least she doesn't shout "*They eat the dogs. They eat the cats. They eat the pets of the people that live there!*".

One would think the Orange Clown would be an easy match to overtake, but polls and odds put the candidates uncomfortably even. *What the heck?* The US presidential election could end in a nightmare. I hope not, but it could!

The only explanation I can think of is that the offensive(ness) of the woke crowd has gone so far that many Americans are desperate for any antidote. (And it's not difficult to agree. Study the near-



dystopian "Code of Conduct" for the latest *Trump with dictator buddies sings in a new AI video. Link below.*

Worldcon, for instance.) But all that's available is a moron, serial-criminal, an egotistic truth-slayer who has never regretted leading an attack against the election process and the democratically elected officials of the US Congress. We also learn how he likes Hitler's generals. Sad,

The election results will come after this issue. Will we sob and cry or sigh of relief in nextish?

It will be the most extraordinary election in US history. Not only are the candidates "unusual": a criminal - surviving assassination attempts, twice! - against a prosecutor and...black woman. It's science fiction stuff! Add to this a spaceman, who builds huge Mars rockets, hopping up and down on stage with the criminal. And we have troll factories and North Korea meddling in a big European war. Tom Clancy should write a thriller about it. I mean, he seems having no problems continuing writing even as dead. (BTW, if North Korea sends Putin troops, the West should have the right to send troops too.) In all this Als are faking news, videos and talking smoothly from their positronic brains. We have nifty viruses and hurricanes washing the costs (caused by the Sun's magnetic field regulating cloud-driving cosmic particles, but not if you ask Greta) while we build quantum computers and flying cars (check <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tu8ZiwNtlm4>) It' an sf world!

And I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw this new Super Group, inspired by "USA to Africa" from 1985. Donny, Vlad, Kim and the guys sing "We Kill the World": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRXkFaungKg>

--Ahrvid Engholm

Ps. After being reluctant about it (fear of it taking too much space) Intermission now accepts LoCs. Use ahrvid@hotmail.com, not the distribution address. Be reasonably brief and to the point!

Fandom on Whall Shtreet...

Last spring the SF Bookstore (SF-Bokhandeln in Swedish) issued new shares, to eg fund a fourth store in the University city Linköping (a few hours drive south of Stockholm).

Wow! A chance to play Bernie Madoff I thought! The shares were ca \$35 each and Yours Truly acquired 120 of them. The bookstore has issued ca 120 000 shares through the years, I read in one of their info mails, which means I own about 1/1000th of the bookstore. It's a start!

The offer was rather popular. I saw that eg Sam J Lundwall bought shares (daughter Karin is now CEO) so he's among the 390 new share holders. Most bought the minimum bundle of 10 shares. One of my ideas behind getting the shares is to use some as prize in the Fantastic Short Story Competition, one share each to the winners on the podium. During the pandemic the bookstore made a little loss, but I believe it'll bounce back into profit again. The SF Bookstore has often been cited as among Sweden's most profitable bookstores Stock shouldn't be a bad investment, especially as they recently won an award for "Sweden's Best Shop"!

The SF-Bokhandeln Aktiebolag (= "Limited Company") must now by law add "Publ" to its name, since shares can be traded by the general public . (That is not the same as entering the official Stock Market. There are no plans for that. It's for bigger companies.)

Because of new shares there was an extra shareholder's meeting 14 Oct, at the Stockholm bookstore. (In the staff area, in a room with a large computer screen. I've been there before, to Scandinavian Association for SF's annual business meetings.)

The physical meeting was a bit of disappointment. Only seven turned up, incl board chairman Malte Andreasson (from the realm of fandom in the 1980s) who of course "must" be there. I had thought that if only 25% of the shareholders came we'd be 100... Only seven was a bit deceiving as many



SF-Bookstore chairman Malte Andreasson, co-founder Lennart Uhlin & and a 1/1000t owner. The "propeller thing" on the table is the 2024 Best Shop award!

all of us (ie we who painted the walls and built bookshelves). I'd even claim it was a miniature version of the famous LASFS HQ on "Bixelstrasse" in the 1940s. You should have been there!

Beside books there were intricate intrigues and peanuts and jelly raspberry candy and Lipton's teabags and the failing offset printer and the TeaDrinkingParty(the party for a better tea culture) and the secret Feminac meetings and the late debates during the book circle evenings and the police when Hans shot a starter gun in the street outside and me and Värnamo fandom crashing there during Sercon and Stieg Larsson who looked worried while a cruddy "SFSF oneshot" was being made...

Ah, those were the days!



17 Oct I attended a panel about "The Hunt for Alien Planets", in front of a packed audience. In the panel astronomy professor Marcus Jansson (left) and sf academic Jerry Määttä (right), and moderator Anette. If you know Swedish it will RSN be available as a pod from SVT. Not that the panel informed me of anything I didn't know from before... The 40 metres Extremely Large Telescope built by Europe will be ready in 2028, and then we'll be able to find alien planets even better!

AI's and The 25th Fantastic Short Story Competition!

Sweden's oldest - As Far As Known - writers' E-mail list SKRIVA, established in 1997, has announced the results of its 25th Fantastiknovelltävlingen ("Fantastic Short Story Competition", "Fantastik" a word often used for sf/f/h), which also is the oldest short story competition (As Far As Known). The prize podium offered an E-book reader as 1st prize, some cash + a share each for the SF Bookstore chain. 72 hopeful entries - 51% by tough-skinned blokes and 49% from artistically fine-tuning ladies, if you must know - fought for the three top spots :

1st Prize: "Ormens väg" ("The Way of the Serpent") by Ellinor Romin

2nd Prize: "Tunnelskeende" ("Tunnel Event") by Lizette Lindskog

3rd Prize: "Väktaren på Tunnbindargatan" ("The Guardian of Cooper Street") by Erika Johansson

Honorary mentions went to *Tobias Robinson, Jolina Petré, Mattias Kuldkepp* and *Camilla Olsson*. Selected citations by the three in the jury (all themselves published authors) on the winners:

Karolina Bjällersted Mickos on Romin's story: A fine-tuned story that goes to your heart. The prose is skilled and the message interesting as the reader meets a man who wants to abandon his human form and turn into a snake. It's about love and longing to be who you want and be in harmony with nature. In a limited space there's efficient world-building with a lot of feeling.

Niklas Krog on Lindskog's story: A deeply unpleasant - in the best way - story of a haunted man roaming a train-tunnel system while he tries to get his past life in order. He carries a huge guilt. He has also seen things nobody wants to see. But the heaviest is the guilt. Written in a tormented way all through.

Pia Lindstrand on Johansson's story: The I-narrator Inez's sad story of how her successful career as a demon guardian suddenly ends, told with a lot of humor. Nighttime she threatens the undead with weapons but daytime she just looks like an ordinary old lady with a walker and hearing aid. When the daughter finds Inez's hidden machete and rifle she in horror thinks her old man have succumbed to dementia. A wonderful, nifty written short story.

The jury judged the entries with no names of the authors. The three winning entries will shortly appear on the SKRIVA list. The 26th contest starts coming spring (sorry, only entries in Swedish) unless a madman in the Kremlin has blown up the world. (And if the world still stands, we are always looking for sponsors of this glorious competition! Next spring will also open the next run of *Bertil Falk's Space Opera Contest*, in honor of the monumental skiffy force Bertil who left us last year. He was a fan of space adventures and *science fiction set in space* is worth promoting.)

Now, your dear editor, administrator of the contest, decided to use the latest hi-tech to squeeze out some extra information about the winner, using Artificially Intellectualence. HAL 9000 was on vacation, so we had to make do with ChatGTP. The request was phrased - how to ask Ais useful questions is an artform! - like this: *What is the conflict in the short story below /last/, of which we give the beginning, its readability index, which authors does the text remind of and what can be improved?* Our silicon servant would only accept input up to 4096 characters, so only the start of the story "The Way of the Serpent" to be provided. The ChatGTP reply:

Conflict in the short story

The main conflict in *The Way of the Serpent* is an internal and mystical one, with a focus on identity, transformation and human nature. The wanderer seeks out the village to undergo a magical transformation into a snake, and this raises questions about why anyone would want to abandon their humanity and their memories. The narrator, who runs an inn and observes the world around him, faces an ethical dilemma. He remains silent in the face of the Sorceress and the Wanderer's strange magical project, but it is implied that there may be an underlying conflict between following his role as neutral host and a desire to question or intervene.

Readability index

To assess the short story's readability index (LIX), which indicates how easy the text is to read, we can look at sentence lengths and the number of long words. This text contains varying sentence lengths and a vocabulary with some more complex, expressive expressions. If I run an exact calculation of LIX, the result would probably fall into the range of medium to difficult reading, which is suitable for a youth or adult audience.

Author that the text reminds of

The text recalls several classic and contemporary authors, including:

J.R.R. Tolkien: The fairytale-inspired tone and presence of magical creatures such as dragons and sorcery is reminiscent of Tolkien's world-building in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Ursula K. Le Guin: Her works, like *Island World*, also contain magic, dragons, and deeper philosophical themes of identity and transformation, similar to the wanderer's desire to turn into a snake.

Tove Jansson: The simple yet poetic language and the quiet, everyday consideration of magic and mystery are reminiscent of her style, especially in the *Moomin* stories.

Neil Gaiman: Gaiman's *Stardust* or *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* have similar themes of magical realism, mixing the magical and the mundane in a way that is also found in *Way of the Serpent*.

Suggestions for improvement

Clarify the core of the conflict: The conflict surrounding the wanderer's desire to become a snake and the ethical or moral issues that arise can be explored more deeply. The narrator's internal struggle between being a neutral host and wanting to question can

be highlighted more to create a clearer emotional tension.

Develop the characters: The Storyteller, the Wanderer, and the Sorceress have the potential for greater depth. A deeper understanding of their background and motivations would create stronger emotional involvement. Why does the wanderer want to transform? How does witnessing this magical transformation affect the narrator?

Build the atmosphere and mood further: The descriptions of the dragons and the inn are atmospheric, but the environment and world can be further deepened to enhance the feeling of being part of a larger, magical reality.

Dialogue and Interactions: Giving the Storyteller more dialogue exchanges with the Wanderer and the Sorceress allows their relationships and thematic tensions to develop more. This would also make the text more dynamic.

*In summary, *The Serpent's Way* has an interesting premise with a fascinating world and magic. Deepening the conflicts and characters would make the story more engaging and deeper.*

By the way, if you're looking for short stories to your top-notch publication and are interested in any of the contest stories, drop a line and I'll put you in touch with the authors. Asimovian translation robots are today getting rather good, so you would get decent help making an English version of any story. (Actually, there are winner stories back to at least 2007 - a year hosts were switched - in the SKRIVA archive!)

And below the opening of "The Way of the Servant", in computer-aided translation from Swedish.

There was a time, when I was still young, when I owned an inn. I can't say it was particularly popular, but I got enough visitors to get by. I had moved to a village three days' journey from my own, and on the outskirts of it I built the inn.

It was a time when dragons still lived in the forest, when there were magical herbs and sorcerers who knew how to use them. The new village was next to a lake, and many who wandered from one village to another approached me for a room for the night.

It was a simple life. The dragons laid eggs on my roof in the spring, and at the end of the summer they hatched. In the late summer I woke up to the sound of chirping king dragons, and when autumn and winter came I got to follow their upbringing. I watched them learn to walk, learn to take their first wing beats. Sometimes I could even make out their mother flying in among the clouds waiting for their return.

There are many myths about dragons today. My generation is the last to remember them well. They are said to have been as large as horses, and are said to have been used as weapons in war; even the smallest of the hatchlings must have been deadly fire-breathers, unable to control the flames that poured out of them at so much as a sneeze. The full-grown ones are said to have laid waste to entire cities, but funnily enough no one seems to be able to name exactly which ones.

The truth is that a full-grown dragon was rarely bigger than a cat, and its young not much bigger than guinea pigs. Their fire was not ripe until they had already learned to fly, and by then they had returned to their parents, far from the land of men.

It is not as exciting as the deed from the fairy tales, but such were the dragons I remember.

That summer was the third year the eggs had been laid on my roof. The dragonlings would grow up and learn to fly, and by the time they got their fire they would have already been reunited with their parents long ago - far from my village and my inn.

But my guests were often uneasy; above all those who applied to us for the Sorceress's services.

"You don't have to worry," I said, showing them the sheet I saved from my hometown. "This comes from a premium stable. It protects the home from damage."

It was, of course, a complete lie, but already during this time the false stories had begun to spread. Those who sought magical help were rarely familiar with the forest and its creatures, or how magic worked; the leaf I saved from my home village reassured them.

Over the years, they had also become more and more numerous. She was skilled, our sorceress, and stories of her exploits spread far and wide. At first, most of her undertakings had involved undoing failed spells—restoring noses that had grown too large, or making redundant tails disappear. But soon she began to receive requests that put both her own skill and the laws of nature to the test, whose executions could almost be called experimental.

His spell was one such.

It required seven ingredients, gathered over the course of a year, and the spell required so much power, so much manipulation of reality, that some of the energy had to be borrowed from the moon.

He was a wanderer. I saw it on his watch, the day he appeared in my tambourine. He lived from the forest; of its berries, its mushrooms, its animals.

He didn't say much at first. What his spell was supposed to do I was told by the Sorceress: He had come to our village to be turned into a snake, with no memories of ever being human.

I met the news with silence; I met all matters to her with silence. My role was to give the guests accommodation, not opinions. I offered food, company, maps and a place to sleep at night. It was not my place to question, though I could find it hard to resist.

History Corner:

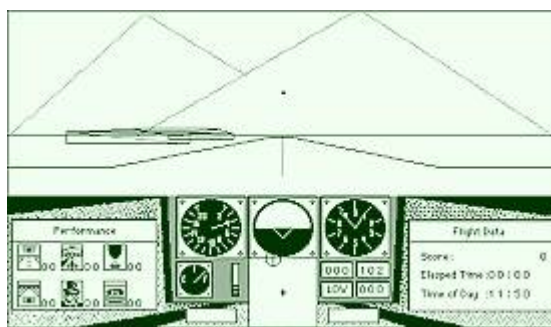
or: I Spy the Net

I remember the early computer days in the 1980s. I had a short encounter with binary beings through the early 1980s *lousy* computer education of Stockholm university, where the main machinery was *printing terminals*, ie a keyboard with a matrix printer with output only on paper (no screen), and textbooks

from...1969! Early desktop computers, like the Commodore PET and Apple II had arrived, but not at the university. A friend brought his Apple II to me on which we spent the whole evening with the early 80s Microsoft



Early computer users, up to the 1970s, had "dumb" printing terminals. No screen, no graphics.



Flight Simulator 1.0.



Jacob Palme, 1941-

Flight Simulator 1.0 with a chessboard world under triangular mountains...

There are a lot of computers in sf, but the authors often missed important things, like miniaturisation., Sf computers tended to have radio tubes and take up a couple of rooms. But one who almost got it right was Murray Leinster (an often underrated author in my modest opinion) in "A Logic Named Joe" from 1946. There he describes a smaller computer, with multimedia, using some kind of network of computers connected to each others. See <https://www.uky.edu/~jclark/mas201/Joe.pdf>

IBM PC wasn't the top performer. It came to Sweden in early 1983 and it became thre top choice since the muscles of Big Blue set it as a standard. It's open architecture - highly unusual for IBM! - made clones possible,

arriving in the mid 1980s. That pushed technical innovation, prices dropped and we got an ocean of software, all compatible with any of the clones. The wonder machine - made in Taiwan - I got in 1985 immediately doubled my writing speed (a reason for today's sf being worse - word processors encourage babbling word sallad and overlong books) though I still used the typewriter to cut stencils for the mimeo for a while. The first truly computerised issue of my newszine had to wait a further 1.5 years. On one of the fangatherings a buddy demonstrated a modem for us, and in the late 1980s I

got a modem myself and began hanging on BBS'es



Women Planet by Eskil Block.

(Bulletin Board Systems). I even hosted what I called SF BBS for a while, until the hard drive of the hosting PC crashed. I then found Internet and sent my first Internet E-mail, March 6 1990.

In Sweden we had computers since the early 1950s, with eg locally built BARK (1950, electromechanical) and BESK (1953, fully electronic, for a couple of month the world's fastest computer, achieved by a higher clock speed from choosing components that tolerated it). One young man by the name Jacob Palme went to our local fandom's early cons, like Stockon 2 (1958) and the club meetings of the days. He'd appear in the fanzines, wrote sf stories (later crime novels) and I remember him in eg Bertil Falk's re-

Wechselmann stämmer efter påhopp i databas



I mitten av juni inleds en unik rättgång i Stockholms tingsrätt.

Där avgöra vad man får lov att skriva i en databas och vad som är förbjudet.

Orsaken till att frågan nu ställs på sin spets är ett yttrande i databasen QZ där FOA-anställda Eskil Block i det närmaste anklagar samhällsdebattören Maj Wechselmann för att vara landsförrädare.

Det hela började med ett inlägg i QZ-basen som har sitt högsta inom FOA, Förevarers forskningsanstalt, i ett meddelande i systemet skrev Eskil Block:

"Felet med Wechselmann är att hon, liksom Jane Horney, tror att man kan hålla på och blanda sig i en massa konflikter utan att väja sida - utan att i längden avslöjas. Kanske är det ill för henne att resa hem. Vi kunde ge henne i utbytte åt Sovjet - de behöver ju faktiskt någon som kan skola med deras militärer, minska deras enorma penningutgiftning för mordredskap, i Murmansk eller Kronstadt kunde hon göra nytta."

Wechselmann tog mycket illa upp över påhoppet där hon enligt sin advokat Lars Vikund betraktas näst intill som en landsförrädare.

Genom sin advokat stämmer hon Eskil Block i Stockholms tingsrätt på 25 000 kronor.

- Förtälet blir allvarigare eftersom dot även är ett påhopp på yttrandefriheten. Vikund hävdar att det blir allvariga-



ANKLAGAD. Eskil Block stäms på 25 000 kronor av Maj Wechselmann efter ett påhopp i en databas. I basen "krävde" Block att Wechselmann skulle skickas till Sovjet. BILDER: ÖRJAN Björkdahl och Åke Malmström (lilla bilden).

re i och med att Wechselmann står för kontroversiella åsikter i utbytesfrågan. Samtidigt som Wechselmann anklagas sker även ett påhopp på yttrandefriheten.

Lugnar sysop:ar

Vikund lugnar dock sysop:ar. Det finns ingen risk att de ansvariga för databaserna kommer att rika illa ut. Även om grova påhopp sker genom databaser:

- Jag ser det som en rent akademisk fråga utan reellt intresse. En sysop Datormagazin varit i kontakt med säger att sysop:ar måste se upp med vilka som skriver vad i databaser genom att ha hårdare kontroll på användarna.

Detta kan ske genom att varje användare registreras separat och lösenord söckas ut till nyblivna medlemmar med brev. Detta för att ingen ska kunna gå in i någon bas och i falskt

namn kunna förolämpa någon annan. Det finns heller ingen risk att systemoperatörer skulle förläsa för någon annans påhopp. Det har tidigare diskuterats om ansvariga utgivarens roll även gäller för sysop:ar.

Men den regeln gäller strikt för tidningar och etermedia som exempelvis radio och TV. Och inte databaser. Datormagazin har följdes sökt Eskil Block för en kommentar. Lennart Nilsson

launched *Jules Verne Magasinet* where he had a computer interview with a drunk Jules Verne driving a submarine... He made an academic career, finally becoming computer science professor.

In the 1970s Jacob and one Torgny Tholerus began developing what they called the Kom system, which opened in 1977. It was a conference system with users from universities and government organisations, but also computer clubs who got a special price for using it of connecting after 8 pm when the workload was lower. In 1985 the system had 300 conferences (groups) and 3000 users writing 200 000 posts/year. Kom of course had a science fiction conference. I was once given a printout from it with several hundred entries, a lot discussion about favourite books for instance. One member was Eskil Block who had a (small) background as an sf writer, publishing the anti-feminist novel *Kvinnoplaneten* about an all-women planet (a not too rare topic, earlier used by Anderson, Wilson, Wyndham and others). And it was on Kom Eskil Block of the Defence Research Agency got into trouble.

Dom i Stockholms tingsrätt om

ärekränkning i KOM

Arkiverat 9 juli 1988

[Läs originaldokumentet \(skrivmaskinstil\).](#)

Som en av de första domarna om förtal på Internet blev denna dom på sin tid mycket omtalad.

[Andra KOM-möten från denna tid • Om ÅÅÖ i dessa filer](#)

Dom meddelad i Stockholm 1988-07-04

Kärande Maj Wechseltmann, advokat Lars Viklund

Svarande Eskil Block, advokat Göran Luserkort

DOMSLUT:

1. Eskil Block skall till Maj Wechseltmann betala 10 000 kr jämte ränta enligt 6 paragrafen rättelagen från 1987-04-13 till dess betalning sker,
2. Eskil Block skall låta införa tingsrättens dom i Fritt forum inom KOM-systemet,
3. Eskil Block skall utge ersättning till Maj Wechseltmann för hennes rättegångskostnader med 22 875 kr, varav 17 500 avser ombudsarvode, jämte ränta på förstnämnda belopp enligt 6 paragrafen rättelagen från 1988-07-04 till dess betalning sker.

BAKGRUND

Inom varje högskoleregion finns en datorcentral, för stockholmregionen Stockholms Datorcentral QZ, med uppgift att utgöra en gemensam datorresurs för forskning och utbildning inom universitetsväsendet. Datacentralerna är offentligt ägda men i stor utsträckning självfinansierade. Bland tjänster som Stockholms datacentral QZ tillhandahåller finns det s k KOM-systemet, ett datakommunikationssystem avsett att vara ett medium för åsikts-, tanke- och

Court Ruling Wechseltmann Vs Block.

Wechseltmann incidentally was brought up. She saw the program and became so upset that she sued Bloch for defamation. Such cases are rather rare in Sweden as the freedom of speech constitutional protection - from 1766 and on! - creates several hurdles to overcome.

I won't go into more details, but Wechseltmann actually won the case. The court ruling from 9 July 1988 is here:

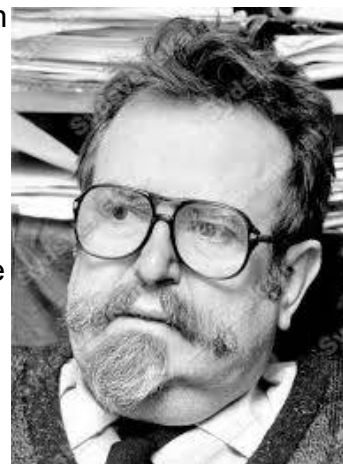
<https://people.dsv.su.se/~jpalme/qzkom/domen-juli-1988.html> Wechseltmann had claimed ca \$2.500 in damages, but only received \$1 000 (probably because the Kom system was relatively small) but was also awarded legal costs of ca \$2 000, so Block was hit with ca \$3 000, which probably didn't hurt too much - as a researcher he had a decent salary. (Swedish legal damages are not as in the US, where you get 10 million if you spill some hot McDonald's coffee...)

This also had some consequence in that the public and politicians became aware of electronic

Maj Wechseltmann is well-known left-leaning film maker and author, eg making films criticising Sweden's military aircraft development (as being too expensive). It should also, to be honest, be noted that Wechseltmann had produced articles and other material rather apologetic to the USSR. In Kom's "Free Forum" there was a discussion about the Soviet submarine that in 1981 ran aground just outside our main navy base in southern Sweden.

Wechseltmann heavily argued for the minority opinion it was due to faulty navigation. Most people realise it was a deliberate operation (for spying or testing our defence). It required very deliberate navigation to reach the spot were it got stuck. The submarine had three navigation systems which all must be faulty at the same time. Government commissions excluded the possibility of navigation mistakes. Wechseltmann didn't concur.

In the debate around the submarine intrusion Eskil Block early december 1985 made comments implying that Wechseltmann was a Soviet spy and traitor. Block has always been rather outspoken and he did work for an agency affiliated to the military. A couple of months later there was a TV report about the Kom system where the debate around



Eskil Block 1932-2013



messaging systems, that also existed in the form of private BBSes. It led to new legislation in the early 1990s about Being Careful What You Write In Cyberspace.

Let's have a look into other sf-related computer stuff! We're not finished with computers and sf.

One Rich Zellich sent an E-mail about the early



Space War, 1962, 1st graphic computer game, on a PDP1.

Maj Wechseltmann, 1942-

days of the important SF-Lovers E-mail list. E-mail lists (whatever you write to the list, bounces to its subscribers through a list server) is the first "social media". Outside smaller internal tech lists, science fiction was the topic of the first more general E-mail list, starting already in the 1970s and Rich was around at the time. Over to him:

I noticed a statement about SF-Lovers being [one of] the first mailing lists. SF-Lovers is notable in many ways, though, not least the explosive almost overnight growth of its subscriber list.

Roger Duffy had his hands full and, in the process of running the SF-Lovers managed to invent sending to the huge subscriber list using multiple servers and the Digest form of email. I was pretty deeply involved in email at the time, coming in late in the game to assist in development of the ARPANet's email protocol, and later being assigned as the Army's rep. to the IEEE Working Group on Electronic Mail. I had quite a few interactions with Roger Duffy and later Saul Jaffe over SF-Lovers, Net-People and my world-wide SF Conventions list that Saul carried as a special list for a few years. I remember the rec.arts.sf-lovers interface and Roger working pretty hard to make the two-way gatewaying work. Eventually, some internal bickering on usenet kinda killed the SF-Lovers gateway.

But I still regularly got together with a lot of them at SF cons, especially Worldcons. We regularized the concept of @-sign parties, and you had to say what your @ address was to get in. There was even an SF-Lovers T-shirt, with sort of a green BEM on it - I still have mine somewhere at the bottom of one of my T-shirt drawers. SF-Lovers turned out to be seminal technologically, but it was pretty much the first non-technical mailing list that appealed to just about everyone - techies tend to be SF lovers and creating a mailing list called SF-LOVERS was like dropping a nuclear bomb, it caught everybody. It started relatively fast, but something happened to cause the subscriber/contributor count to suddenly multiply by at least a factor of 10, maybe even 100, literally overnight. I went on a vacation trip to the US Southwest with my father and was off the ARPANet for 2 days. When I signed on the second night, I went through an entire 4 rolls of thermal paper on my acoustic-coupled TI portable terminal, just printing out the SF-Lovers output from those 2 days - I still don't know what triggered that explosive growth of the mailing list somewhere in those 2 days.

At one point, SF-Lovers came to the notice of DARPA, who kicked it off the ARPANet for a couple of months, as not having anything to do with the ARPANet's official mission. Roger convinced them (legitimately, in my opinion) that SF-Lovers and Human-Nets were a relevant exercise in email technology research, and they relented and let SF-L back "on the air".

Indeed, Roger invented much of the way that email groups/lists work today. In 1983, when Roger left MIT someone else picked SF-L up and moved it to Rutgers - this person was not affiliated with the Rutgers IT staff in any way, and the Rutgers powers that be objected to this, so Saul Jaffe picked it up at that time, and continued running it.

Saul first ran SF-Lovers on the Rutgers mail servers, and eventually, due to problems with the mail software which IT management refused to fix, and problems with IT management itself, moved it to a personally-owned Pentium server running Linux and physically in his home. To do this, he unexpectedly had to fix many software bugs and write some new software, making the transition harder than he had expected. He spent much of his own money, in addition to the man hours, in keeping SF-L going for many years.

Back to your trusted editor:) Any reader having memories of SF-Lovers, drop a line! That SF-Lovers was the first non-technical more "general" E-mail list is what eg Bruce Sterling says (in *F&SF*, 1993) https://sodacity.net/system/files/Bruce_Sterling_A_Short_History_of_the_Internet.pdf). I remember it as a group on Usenet, *rec.arts.sf-lovers* (where I found it in 1990) and remember attending the 1990 @-party at ConFiction. Compared to guys starting in the 1970s I was late in this field...but probably earlier than 99% of all others. Skiffy and computers have always been connected, from robots and Multivac and Altair 8800 and HAL 9000. Technology is a "core value" of science

fiction! Gernsback was right in that.

And we're still not finished with computers! Did you know that JG Ballard dabbled in computer generated poetry already in the 1970s! Some even claimed ha "predicted ChatGTP", but that may be overstating it. Check <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/sci-fi-writer-jg-ballard-predicted-chatgpt-through-computer-poems-50-years-ago-5640529>

Ballard highlighted in his autobiography 'Miracles of Life' that he, along with a psychologist Dr Christopher Evans, published a "remarkable series of computer-generated poems" in a literary magazine in the 1970s. If there was one thing that fascinated novelist and science-fiction author James Graham Ballard, it was the capabilities of computers back in the 1970s. At the time, Mr Ballard decided to use compute technology, still in developing stages, to generate poetry.

*Ballard...along with a psychologist Dr Christopher Evans, published a "remarkable series of computer-generated poems" in *Ambit* - a literary quarterly magazine where he was a prose editor during the 1970s. As per a BBC report, at least four items from the series to which Ballard referred were seemingly produced by computers and published between 1972 and 1977. The 1972 collection was named "The Yellow Back Novels", and the 1974 collection was titled 'Machine Gun City'.*

Now, decades later, Mr Ballard's early experiments with computer-generated poetry appear to have foreshadowed the rise of generative AI.

JGB hardly predicted ChatGTP but computer poetry is interesting. I have myself tested "poetry generators" which aren't much AI. They simply have internal dictionaries, and and pick words by random to put in ready-made templates. When I edited the *Nova SF* magazine I remember publishing a computer generated short story by KG Johansson and Gunilla Dahlblom, who explained how they've used a simple BASIC-program with randomised phrases. (It wasn't just one short story but examples of the millions the algorithms could produce.) Here's a Ballard poem (sometimes they called such texts stories) from 1972 believed to be one of the above mentioned computer generated:

Leninticular Mass
by Marsha "X"

**The Rush of he Voona-Drive blanketed the crows.
The old man drew back in horror.
Vesta blandish stared as the car erupted.
The notepad was opened
"It was the gorilla!" Anita stammered.
Then Spake Llewellyn, the dinosaur God: "Let there
about swiftly be anger within these tribes!"**

This is from the link below, where there is more about Ballard and computer poetry. The poem above is as expected constructed by a simple program putting random words from dictionaries into templates. Endless of poems could easily be produced: *"typing at a rate of ten characters a second, this would take (rather roughly) 10 000 000 000 000 000 000 [a hundred quintillion, or ten to the twentieth power] years which would probably see the Universe come and go a few times". The generation of poems by this machine is, in other words, without any real limits.*" We also learn that Ballard had touched upon the subject already in 1961, in his story "Studio 5 the Stars", about an avante-garde magazine where the poets use automatic "Verse-Transcribers"(more below).

<https://theconversation.com/novelist-j-g-ballard-was-experimenting-with-computer-generated-poetry-50-years-before-chatgpt-was-invented-228638>

Asked why he had computer poetry in the magazine (as prose editor of *Ambit* at the time) he said:

*"I wanted more science in *Ambit*, since science was reshaping the world, and less poetry. After meeting Dr Christopher Evans, a psychologist who worked at the National Physical Laboratories, I asked him to contribute to *Ambit*. We published a remarkable series of computer generated poems which Martin said were as good as*



Speaking of history, here's the oldest tree in the world: Old Tjikko (named after the dog of the science couple who found it). It grows on Mnt Fulu in the province of Dalecarlia, Sweden. What's seen overground is younger, but the root system is carbon dated to over 9500 years old! If the tree above ground withers away the roots sprouts a new spruce.



the real thing. I went further, they were the real thing.

Ballard also experimented with other types of computer generated texts. At least there are hints of other types of short stories:

Much more interesting is this computer generated material from Chris, which I strongly feel we should use a section of. What is interesting about these detective novels is that they were composed during the course of a lecture Chris gave at a big psychological conference in Kyoto, Japan, with the stories being generated by a terminal on the stage linked by satellite with the computer in Cleveland, Ohio. Now that's something to give these English so-called experimental writers to think about...

We learn that "he was clearly impressed with the innovation and what it suggested about creativity. Keeping his eye out for odd developments, he was intrigued by the new types of composition". Ballard's interest was likely to have been piqued by these events as he had written a short story featuring machines that could perform the exact task of writing poetry some 11 years previously, "Studio 5 the Stars".

The short story itself seems to present a more questioning take on what it would mean for a computer to write and create prose. Written in 1961, Ballard's story

features an editor of "an avante-garde poetry review" working on the next issue. Sounds familiar. The poets he edits regularly are all using automated "Verse-Transcribers", which they all refer to with established familiarity as VTs. These VT machines automatically produce poems in response to set criteria. Poetry has been perfected by these machines and so the poets see little reason in writing independently of their VTs. On being passed one poem hot from a VT the editor in the story doesn't even feel the need to read it. He already knows that it will be suitable. The poets have become used to working with their VT machines, but their reliance upon the machines for creative inspiration starts to become unsettled by events. At one point the editor is asked what he thinks is wrong with modern poetry. Despite seemingly being a strong enthusiast of the automation of creativity he wonders if the problems are "principally a matter of inspiration". He admits he "used to write a fair amount ... years ago, but the impulse faded as soon as I could afford a VT set.

Talking about computer poetry and AI, I asked ChatGTP to give us a fandom poem. But as I wanted to be sure not getting rubbish about Captain Kirk, video games, comics or elves I made the request rather detailed, asking: *Write a poem about science-fiction fandom, the literary fans who produces fanzines, have a history going back to the 1930s, like bheer, discuss sf magazines and books but also engage in lighter things (which is called being "fannish"), as described by Harry Warner jr in the books All Our Yesterdays and A Wealth of Fable. Detailed, as said! Computer poetry is usually rather bland but this time I think the result wasn't too bad...*

ODE TO THE FANDOM ETERNAL

In smoky rooms with bheer in hand,
Where mimeographs once ruled the land,
The fans of yore, with hearts so bright,
Did dream of stars and endless night.

With fanzines crafted, page by page,
Their passion poured, their minds engaged.
They'd type, they'd print, they'd mail away,
The news of futures far away.

They talked of worlds, of ships, of doom,
Of Martians born in cratered gloom.
Debated tales from Astounding's press,
Each issue marked with keen finesse.

Yet fannish joy would often bloom,
In laughter loud that filled the room.
For not just books did fuel the flame,
But banter, puns, and witty game.



Me and Jerry Määttä, from the planet hunting event.

From Worldcon halls to clubroom floors,
They swapped their books, debated wars
Both those on Earth and stars above,
Bound by the genre that they loved.

The 1930s gave them birth,
A group that spanned the planet's girth.
And still today, their legacy shines,
Through digital files and printed lines.

For science fiction's beating heart,
Is not just worlds, but fandom's art.
In fable's wealth, in yesterdays,
They forged the path for future ways.

So raise a glass to fandom's might,
To those who dream by day and night.
With fanzines, bheer, and laughter bright
They fly on wings of purest flight.

Mailing Comments:

William McCabe: I sincerely hope you stay as healthy as possible! ☆☆ Cons almost always have names with “con”, “vention” or similar, at least *one* word, not an entire slogan. ☆☆ The first fan fiction was actually about Sherlock Holmes 100+ years ago. Fa(a)fiction came to sf fandom in the 1930s. ☆☆ “Jules Verne event from his lifetime complete with costumes”. You imply some sort of Verne fan-activity – interesting. If you know more, please tell us! ☆☆ The zine site you found may have been Fanac.org. They have many scans. Half a million and counting.

Henry Grynsten: *How can you develop from an animal without having any superstitious beliefs* I can't see any reason why you couldn't! ☆☆ *I don't think it's a straw man. I talk about limits to progress, but you deny those limits. “Foreseeable” is often defined as “indefinitely” but not “forever”.* The meaning of “Foreseeable” is evident: what seems possible to foresee. As old sf fans we have some experience with that! A good estimate would be that you can foresee things at most maybe 1-2 generations ahead (that's 25-50 years). Beyond that “foreseeability” is minimal. And it is a straw man to argue that the opponent in a discussion make claims to foresee things we all know is impossible! I'm not “denying” limits to progress, only that they don't seem to exist in the *foreseeable* future. ☆☆ *ChatGPT sounds like a duck. Does it have life then? Besides, Jacques de Vaucanson in 1764 made a duck ...that could only mechanically imitate some very few duck movements - out, by the Duck Principle! No, I don't think ChatGTP has “life”.* ☆☆ *I don't think they (consciousness, intelligence) are just information operations...it isn't just about information. But I agree that in principle at least machines could become conscious. However, that would require mechanical senses and technology that would be unimaginably complex* I think you underestimate mankind's ingenuity! We can make “unimaginably complex” machines. The latest CPUs have ca 150 billion transistors! And for the time being there's still room for CPUs to grow. And when Moore's Law soon reaches physical limits, we'll find out methods to still make computers even more powerful by other means (more parallel function, dedicated AI-circuits, 3D architecture, or other things?) ☆☆ *Pigs have lived with humans and human food (leftovers) for almost 9,000 years* Yes, but the evolution of pigs have been under intense selective evolution, which makes them rather special. ☆☆ *It doesn't matter if we improve our DNA, people need to make an effort as well. Besides, it would make us even more dependent on technology, which is what reduces intelligence to begin with.* I agree that a decrease in IQ may be under way, but very slowly! (And still not 100% certain. For past times we only have indirect data and guesstimates.) But from where do you get that people won't make efforts? For important things we tend to make the effort and technology frees time and resources. We may get “more dependent”, but to also creates new resources to mitigate any dependencies or bad effects. Example: When the telephone was invented, we of course became more dependent on it. But was it bad? The telephones save a lot of time. It created new jobs, business grew, wealth increased. It was win-win. ☆☆ *There can be no technological solution to decreasing intelligence.* Genetic engineering would work! ☆☆ *But they /Schools/ don't improve!* I guess you are right, for Sweden. (We learn that schools in Finland are improved. They have the top schools in Europe.) The decline of Swedish schools is a local policy problem using flawed pedagogics, creating what we call the “flum school”. (Google fails to translate “flum”, an adjective meaning populist laziness, to “drift around without achieving anything”.) No grades (it's “unfair” that some pupils are better than others!), fewer tests (to get to know where you stand causes unwanted stress), less room for important subjects (like math), less teacher teaching, pupils shouldn't know facts but “learn to find it on their own”, there's no right or wrong... All that blasted “flum” crap have been seriously detrimental to our schools. But it can be fixed. Just follow Finland. ☆☆ *The majority of science fiction takes place in the future with a lot of new technology...they are still based on the idea of unlimited progress.* No, to have advanced



P'haps not sf (unless you believe aliens abducted him), but here's 13 year old Elvis Presley, posing outside a photo store in Tupelo. A woman had one shot left on film roll she was getting developed, saw Elvis (whom she knew) outside and asked him to pose for her.

prank your friends, air guns, etc. As for radio, the “national” (state governed) radio company has the digital *SR Memory* channel, which runs old radio shows, from the 1940s and on. There weren't much sf on radio back then, the only examples I remember is the popular figure Efraim Alexander doing time travel (1940s) and one “Pelle Krinkonkvist travelling to the planets” (early 1950s). However, from the late 1950s and on there were some sf radio theatre plays and of course the scary “The Man in Black” stories. (I have covered some of this in my history column earlier.) ☆☆ Henry is a big Pink Floyd fan so that's why the title ALHASH. ☆☆ (In comment to Heath Row:) *I don't think it's natural or inevitable at all that development will lead to a world government. Voting would be abysmally low, maybe in the single digits. It would have to be dictatorial or authoritarian to survive. You make the mistake of trying to speculate beyond the foreseeable future. There won't be a “world government” within 1-2 generations, and beyond that we don't know and can't speculate. What says we would have a “government” in today's sense, BTW? Why not let the private individual be his own “government”! Everyone his own government, working under a minimum set of behavioural rules guarded by a juridical force.*

Garth Spencer: *English has been replaced by something that sounds similar* No, it has been replaced by something that sounds dissimilar, and it's the fault of all us foreigners. We learn English but speak it with our own dialect, even inventing new English... (Do you know what “AW” is? Restaurants in Sweden are full of signs inviting to “AW”. It stands for the old Swedish expression - with roots in Old Norse - “After Work”. You gather for an AW, a beer, after work. But the expression “AW” is unknown in the US or UK, we're told.) ☆☆ *I always thought the key issue with convention names was that they had better be trademarked* Spare us! Sf cons shouldn't work ass commercial companies and care about having their names “trademarked”. ☆☆ You had some interesting thoughts about Ais, biological beings etc - but I have discussed this so much with Henry G that I leave it with that. AI development is fast and the contours of it becomes clearer by time.

MoC

=*Mail of Comment. If you MoC your favourite zine try to be To the Point. Note that the RZ mail was moved to the actual History department. Drop a line if you have interesting memories of the SF-Lovers list! WAHF: PC Jörgensen, Bruce Schneier, Jerry Kaufman, Ture Storm.*

Fred Lerner (fred@fredlerner.org): Thanks for this issue, which I found especially interesting. I was surprised that in your discussion of airship stories you didn't mention “With the Night Mail” by Rudyard Kipling . It was first published in 1905, in McClure's Magazine. Subtitled “A Story of 2000 AD”, it is presented as though it were a first-person narrative in a turn-of-the-21st-century magazine, accompanied by advertisements, newsbriefs, letters to the editor, and the like. (When you read the story be sure to find a version that includes all this material.) Sixty-odd years ago, when I interviewed John Campbell for my “Exploring Science Fiction” radio series, he spoke of Kipling's role as a pioneer of science fiction storytelling technique. “With the Night Mail”, he said, introduced the use of worldbuilding detail that, while extraneous to the actual plot of the story, contributed to the reader's understanding of its setting. This technique was refined by later writers (most notably Robert Heinlein) who incorporated the social and technological background into the narrative. (My interview with Campbell may be heard on the fanac.org website, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC-o9z-E010>.) Kipling had to develop ways to provide his readers with necessary background information, because so many of his stories were set on an alien world called India, a place that was largely incomprehensible to ordinary English readers. Read his novel “Kim” and you'll see several examples of this.

Ed: Good interview! “SF gives us the opportunity to explore the different cultural postulates” JWC says, and it rings quite true! Anyone claiming that is “fascism” doesn't understand simple English words. Kipling was a JWC favourite. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29135/29135-h/29135-h.htm> , says it's a part of Kipling's "Aerial Board of Control series and takes the form of a narrative combined with fictional newspaper clippings, weather forecasts, and other pseudo-documentary elements, offering a glimpse into a world where aerial transportation is routine and regulated”.

Cy Chauvin (peterpumpkincat@juno.com): Thank you for your fanzine,



An illo to “With the Night Mail”.

which was an unexpected pleasure. I recall the days when I often got an unsolicited fanzine in the mail, rather than go to our electronic newsstand at e-fanzines.com and search for something interesting. Electronic or physical, it's the thought that counts. Your zine contains the first conreport of the latest worldcon in Scotland that I've seen. It does sound like it was rather large; the worldcons in the UK seem to be the largest, larger even than those in North America. The last one I went to, in Chicago in 2022, was of a reasonable size, although of course it was not too long after the pandemic. Second hand paperbacks are rarely sold at world conventions because I suspect the margin of profit is too low. Also, the nice small 'pocket' paperback format is rarely being used in science fiction, just 'quality' sized paperbacks.

I agree that lectures and one person talks are usually more interesting than most panels; there is something of a guarantee that the person giving the talk knows what they are about. Bill Higgins (whom you feature) is always excellent. I tend to gravitate toward panels and talks about hard science, since the information is usually new to me. A local convention featured an unexpectedly brilliant talk on the near impossibility (even in theoretical terms) for near light speed travel, and the related difficulties of finding some kind of feasible interstellar spaceship drive. It should be repeated at a worldcon. The person who gave the talk was someone I hadn't heard of before. But programs at worldcons depend upon what members request to a great degree, especially with interactive panel information on worldcon websites. This is something for which we all need to be more proactive. And of course, many people just want to be on program items, and panels soak up more people than lectures. Similarly, if you don't nominate stories for the Hugo award, of whatever kind you like, by whomever type of writer you prefer, they can't win because they were never nominated. I must admit that I am guilty of this. It is largely because, like yourself, I find I prefer older science fiction. It is difficult to find anything I consider worthy to be nominated among the current crop. Newer readers probably don't have that problem. Should I just nominate instead the "almost good" stories I read, rather as we vote for our political candidates? And the last novel I truly thought was Hugo quality was fantasy, not sf: Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi*. At least it got nominated. I think the reason I don't like much current sf is one James Blish suggested many years ago: it lacks a sense of conviction. Or at least, the authors don't convince me of the validity of their stories. It was amusing to see the photo of you and Bruce Schneier, since Bruce was a frequent attendee at local Michigan conventions, where I live. I am really delighted by your information that Ray Nelson not only wore the first propeller beanie, but made the first one as well. I just came across an article in a railroad magazine reprinted from 1957, called "Rail Fandom Elite." It was a humorous take on those deeply involved with railroads, and featured a cartoon of a family with a kid wearing a propeller beanie!

Ed: I suspect that used paperbacks are gone because the economic gain per kg (or lbs) is lower than for new books and that matters considering transportation. Many cons today is too serious and boring. Give us some fannish frolicking!! The Hugos are getting increasingly irrelevant. People don't have energy for relevant nominations and voting (ie reading most of the stuff!), so they push for entries by names they like or contents they guess they'd approve of. And what to do about anyone being middle-aged and male having very limited chance? When will some realise that constantly using quotas for candidates that are ideologically correct may damage quality and the genre itself? While Blish may have a point, my problem with today's story telling is that it's linguistic manure. Word salad prose should be ruminated down from 500 pages to the 250 a novel used to be. Damn the word processors!

Rich Zellich (rich@zellich.com): In #146, I noticed a statement about SF-Lovers being [one of] the first mailing lists. SF-Lovers is notable in many ways, though, not least the explosive almost overnight growth of its subscriber list. /The rest of this LoC goes in the History Corner column. It's about history after all! And let's hear from anyone having interesting memories of SF-Lovers!)

Слава Україні!

An finally: Though not American I root for Harris and Walz. The US election matters a lot to the whole world! Vote as you like, just give a little thought to Eric Blair!*

* George Orwell's real name.

Brandy Hall Issue 9 (November 2024)

Brandy Hall 9 is produced for N'APA mailing 274 (November 2024) by Mark Nelson.

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This is West Riding Press Publications ??? This is West Riding Press Publications (Australia) 26

In my first issue I followed in the spirit, if not the flesh, of Garth Spencer (*BROWNIAN MOTION* 1, mailing 263), by discussing my involvement in non-SF fandoms. In my second issue I followed Garth more directly by discussing my interactions with SF fandom. In my third issue I discussed my involvement with APAs. In the fourth and final instalment, appearing in issue five, I reminisced about attending science fiction conventions. In the sixth issue, inspired by Ahrvid Engholm, I reprinted two articles from the Australian newspaper *The Age*. The first was published on Saturday 19th March 1932 with the title "The Automatic Pilot. George The Robot in the Air". That article was a red herring. The article that Ahrvid quoted from was published on Friday 20th September 1935 with the title "Meet Mr. Robot. Not Forgetting His Master". In the seventh issue there was a short spin on a YouTube video with the title "Top 10 Best Sci-fi Movies". In the eighth issue I wrote about how I became a fan of science fiction, focusing on SF on the TV. The culprits are threefold: Dr Who, Star Trek (The Original Series) and Blakes 7.

How I became a fan of science-fiction: movies

In the last installment I discussed my formative experiences watching SF on the small screen. My fascination with SF owes its origins to: Dr Who, Star Trek: The Original Series, and Blakes 7. (In my discussion of other TV series I forgot to mention *The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy*, though I was already aware of HHGTTG from the radio.) How about SF on the big screen? This gives me the opportunity to reprint some material, slightly edited, from *Mathom* Volume 2 Number 1 (December 2002) and Volume 4 Number 4 (October 2024). These were distributed with ANZAPA mailings 210 & 341 respectively. The content before "The one, the only... Star Wars" comes from *Mathom* 4(4). The rest, excepting the postscript, comes from **Mathom** 2(1).

The account given last issue was all about science fiction series written for the TV. What about science fiction movies? Did they play a role in my becoming a science-fiction fan? As far as I recall, none. It was a very rare event to go out to the cinema. How about science-fiction movies on the TV? I must have watch plenty of them, particularly black & white movies shown on a Sunday afternoon. However, the titles of these movies have long ago faded from my memory.

There is *one* SF movie that I remember watching on the TV. That's *Silent Running* (1972). Why do I remember this one? It seemed that there was a period in the 1970s when it was shown every Christmas or it may have been every Easter. At least there was a holiday season and it was a regular fixture on the box.

How about science-fiction on the big screen? I remember watching four SF movies at the cinema in the 1970s. One was a Godzilla movie. Or was it? Was there an American Godzilla movie produced in the 1970s? I couldn't find one on a quick search. Maybe we actually saw *King Kong* (1976)?

I do remember watching *Damnation Alley* (1977). Then there's *Flash Gordon* (1980), if I can stretch a point and call 1980 the last year of the 1970s. However, the big science-fiction movie of the 1970s was...

The one, the only...Star Wars

- **1977** It was *not* the Age of Aquarius.
- **1977** It was the year of *Saturday Night Fever* and the Bee Gees. It was the year Elvis Presley and Charlie Chaplin died. It was the year of the Silver Jubilee and God Save the Queen (her fascist regime).
- **1977** It was the year of the Lib-Lab pact, the year that speed limits were increased to 70 mph on dual roads, the year that Red Rum won a third Grand National and the year of Mull of Kintyre.
- **1977** It was the year that Apple Computer incorporated and Radio Shack created the TRS-80 computer. It saw the first flight of the Space Shuttle and Rocky winning at the Academy Awards.

But 1977 means only one thing. It was the year *Star Wars* debuted (26 May). And this light shines so very very brightly that in my memory all the other events of 1977 have been reduced a dim outline.

Star Wars opened at a mere 32 theatres. Within a few days this had expanded to over 200. As the lines went around around the block *Star Wars* became an instant phenomenon: even being reported on the BBC News! But the instant news coverage of *Star Wars* belayed the long gap between a film opening in the States and opening in the UK. The eventual premier in London ((I've not been able to track down a date for the UK premier. It was probably late 1977, most likely October or November.)) did not signal the end of waiting. Unlike today when a film rapidly spreads across the country after being premiered, in 1977 the prints slowly diffused across the country. Each day brought with it the news that *Star Wars* had inched its way further north. In time a succession of towns fell: Northampton, Kettering, Leicester. Eventually, after an eternity, *Star Wars* reached Derby.

But the waiting had not yet ended. And the waiting that had been endured as the movie made its way from California to London and then ever northward was nothing to the waiting once the film opened in Derby. A succession of friends gleefully reported that *their* family *had* seen *Star Wars*, whereas ours was still waiting. Intolerable!

Going to the cinema was not part of our family life. The publicity and TV coverage that *Star Wars* received was unusual, films were not hyped the way that they are today. You certainly didn't expect the BBC to report upon a film as a news event. So it was decided that *Star Wars* was an event and we should see it. But because *Star Wars* was so popular there was no point trying to see it

in the first few weeks after it reached Derby. Instead we waited until the queues were sure to have died down. So we waited and waited and waited. And waited.

Eventually the waiting was over and it was time to watch *Star Wars* at the local three-screen cinema. But despite the plan to avoid queuing, the necessity of queuing was still required to obtain tickets. Finally the waiting was over: we sat down, the curtains opened and the opening credits rolled... 'A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away'. *Star Wars* had started and things would never be the same again. And in 1977 *Star Wars* was *Star Wars*, not *Star Wars IV: A New Episode*. I was nine years old when I saw *Star Wars*. I don't remember anything about that first viewing, aside from being blown away by the special effects and an agreement that we had experienced something. My mum has never been keen to rewatch movies but when, a few years later, we bought our first video machine she insisted that we had to have *Star Wars*.

In 1980 *The Empire Strikes Back* was released and another family outing ensued. I don't recall any details. When *The Return of the Jedi* (1983) was released my mum offered to take my brother and myself to watch it. (Why was my sister and dad excluded?) I was of an age to accept a free lift into town to 'hang out', but considered watching the final *Star Wars* movie beneath me. The reasons for scorning the opportunity may have been wrong, but the decision was correct; as I was to discover when I saw it on TV.

Two words. Bloody stupid Ewoks. ((The darts commentator Sid Waddell once said ``There's only one word for that: Magic darts'')). It's strange to say that the *Return of the Jedi* is a dumbing down of *Star Wars* as the latter is not known for its depth, yet what else is there to say about the plot of the final movie, in particular the introduction of the overly cute furry factor? These oversized Teddy bears, suitable only for a good spacing, were introduced only for the merchandising possibilities and indicate the true target audience of the movie. Whatever happened to feisty Leia? From leader of the Rebellion to a cloths horse. And surely the most important weapon in the universe might have given a better defence the second time round? There might only be seven archetypal stories, but was *Star Wars* such a masterpiece of story telling that the plot needed to be recycled a second time?

By 1999 times had changed. Instead of my parents taking me to the latest *Star Wars* movie I took them to the latest *Star Wars* movie. The small three screen cinema in which we had watched the original *Star Wars* movie had long since been converted into a bingo hall. We watched *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* at the multiplex. Times had changed as there was no queuing to watch this movie. In fact, only a few weeks after it had opened, we were a significant proportion of the viewing audience. Times had changed. The hype which preceded *Star Wars: the Phantom Menace* was not the word-of-mouth astonishment of moviegoers who had never seen anything like it, but the self-generated hype of a well-oiled Hollywood publicity machine dreaming of the dollars rolling in.

Although *Star Wars: the Return of the Jedi* is weakest of the original trilogy the dumbing down of *Star Wars* did not stop there, it reached new depths with *the Phantom Menace*. The selling point of the original movie were the special effects. These were a quantum leap over what was then considered state-of-the-art and it took a long before other movies reached the standards that *Star Wars* set. Between 1977 and 1997 state-of-the-art made incredible advances. What was possible in 1997 could not have been dreamed of twenty years previous. Yet despite these stunning advances

the special effects in *Star Wars: the Phantom Menace* were much less satisfying to me than those in *Star Wars*. How can this be?

This wasn't simply because I was much older and less easily impressed in 1997 than I was in 1977. Watching the original *Star Wars* I knew that I wasn't seeing real space ships. I knew that these were special effects, but this knowledge didn't distract from my enjoyment of the film. The special effects had the air of realism. That wasn't the case with *Star Wars: the Phantom Menace*. I was unable to eliminate my knowledge that the Trade Federation army was computer generated, that Jar Jar Binks (who should be spaced before the Ewoks, but after Wesley Crusher) was a special effect. The special effects no longer said realism to me, they said computer animation.

The original movies were re-released in the mid-to-late 1990s, containing the special effects that George Lucas claimed he would have included the first time around if he'd had the technology to do so. Just another ploy to milk the fans for money.

I left the cinema with a strong sense of disappointment. To such an extent that in the twenty-five years since I watched it on the big screen I've not shelled out for it on DVD, not watched it from start to finish on the little screen. (In 2025 the little screen is no longer so little). I'd rather watch *Return of the Jedi*.

I find it difficult to evaluate the original *Star Wars* movie. I saw it for the first time at an impressionable age and it made an impression on me. I've always included it in my top 10 SF movies list. ((That's what I wrote in 2002 when I could still remember which SF movies I included on my top 10 lists in the 1980s and early 1990s)). Could *Star Wars: the Phantom Menace* have had the same impact on a nine year in 1999 that *Star Wars* had had on the nine year-old me in 1977? I don't think so. No magic, just stupidity.

Star Wars: Episode II --- Attack of the Clones was much better, except for the love story between Anakin and Padme in which the dialogue was so cliched you could predict the next line before you heard it. The special effects were much better, not getting in the way of enjoying the movie. There are problems. Is it pedantic to wonder why in *Star Wars* Darth Vader doesn't recognise the planet his mum died on? Or that does C3PO does not recognise the Skywalker's farm?

In the future we may have the technology to surgically remove all the romance scenes from *Star Wars: Episode II --- Attack of the Clones*. But despite the atrociousness of these scenes it's a thumbs for *Attack of the Clones* for pulling the franchise up from the two previous movies.

Looking back, did the success of *Star Wars* put a curse on SF cinema? Many of the films that were released in subsequent years were lightweight affairs, dull and stupid, with a premium on the special effects, and little thought given to scripting.

"Luke, you're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view." Obi-Wan Kenobi.

"Sometimes things aren't exactly black and white when it comes to accounting procedures." George Bush (9th July 2002)

Postscript added in 2024

I watched *Star Wars: Episode III --- Revenge of the Sith* (2005), *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) & *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) at the movies. But by the end of *The Last Jedi* I had had enough. I'd lost interest in the franchise. I haven't watched the subsequent movies, neither at the cinema nor on the TV. I've got no interest in watching them.

The Mathom House

Intermission 145 (Ahrvid Engholm)

The dust has now settled on US Presidential election. Donald Trump has returned to office. The surprising thing is not that he was elected, in the run up to 5th November that seemed very much to be on the cards. No, the surprising thing that he has been elected with a majority of the popular vote. He failed to achieve that in both 2016 and 2020.

Interesting as ever to read your thoughts on what you dislike about modern day conventions (Finncon and the Glasgow Worldcon). Similarly enjoyed reading your choice of words from *Fandboken*.

Archive Midwinter (Jefferson P. Swycaffer)

Ryctm

It's always pleasant, in a guilty sort of way, when one's beliefs/views/opinions/prejudices are backed up by popular opinion. It has been my opinion since 1968 that 2001: A Space Odyssey is the best science fiction movie ever made -- frankly, the best movie ever. Fun that I'm not totally alone here, even if your own view was slightly more lukewarm.

I've recently been flicking through some Australian SF fanzines from 1968, the more sercon of which naturally contain reviews of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. (I'm considering reprinting some of those reviews in a later issue.) I've never seen *2001* on the Big Screen, but I'm convinced that almost sixty years later it would still be a magical experience to see it there. I'd certainly include it on a list of "Most Influential SF movies" and even "Best SF movies", but not on my personal top ten for the simple reason that I don't want to watch it again. (Except on the big screen.)

Ryctm #2

I personally believe that Aliens is slightly a better movie than Alien, but Alien is more iconic and more "important" in terms of film history

I also really enjoy *Aliens*. The film-makers were clever in not repeating the plot of *Alien*. However, I've slowly become disenchanted with the franchise. I've neither watched nor have any intention of watching the most recent movie, though it has received good reviews. With each instalment, the idea that humans would survive any encounter with the 'Alien' species seems more preposterous: my suspension of disbelief has worn too thin.

Thanks for recommending Stanislaw Lem's "*Tales of Pirx the Pilot*." I have added this to my list of books that I'd like to read. It's not an uncountable long list (to use a little mathematics), but it's sufficiently long that I will never reach the end of it. Talking about books I've not read, or rather authors I've not read, let me segue into one of your comments to Samuel Lubell. I've only read two

plays by Shakespeare: *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, which I read in the third year at Secondary School (age 13-14), and *Romeo and Juliet*, which I read in 2003 (age 35) when my first Australian girlfriend gave me a copy; she was a huge fan. I started *Henry V* when I was a doctoral student, inspired by the Kenneth Branagh movie, but never finished it. I've seen a couple performed in the flesh and various movie adaptations. I always think that I should read more, but when will I have the time? And if I ever found the time to catch up on my reading, I'm not convinced that Shakespeare would be my first choice of author.

Another classic author that I'd like to read, but probably won't, is Charles Dickens. I've read *A Christmas Carol* (1843). That's it. I saw a production of *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839) at the school my dad taught at. (Don't remember when, late 1970s or early 1980s.) I have never watched an adaptation of a Charles Dickens novel for either the big or small screen. I have watched the Charles Dickens episode of Dr Who (*The Unquiet Dead*, the third episode of the first season of the relaunched Dr Who) several times. If we're talking Dr Who, worthy of mention is the Christmas episode that was inspired by *A Christmas Carol*: the eponymously named *A Christmas Carol* (aired 25th December 2010).

Since I wrote the previous paragraph my wife and I have been to the post office to collect some parcels and then we went to childcare to pick up our son. Along the way I remembered that I don't have a stand-alone copy of *A Christmas Carol*. It also came with *The Chimes* (1844).

Intermission 146 (Ahrvid Engholm)

But the far left have pushed many to the Trump camp, with "identity politics" and all that crap, so the final result of the election is yet unpredictable.

I'm sure that in years to come there will be a tidal wave of papers and books that attempt to 'explain' why Trump won. That wave has already started. In words associated with an earlier Presidential election, "It's the economy, stupid". Not that the economy was the only issue, one of many. Perhaps first amongst equals. Whether the following is true or not, I don't know. But there seems to be a perception that the Democrats are more interested in "identity politics" rather than bread-and-butter political issues.

As ever, enjoyed reading your thoughts what makes/breaks a convention: in this case the 2024 GLASCON. Unfortunately, I imagine that bag checking is a security feature that's here to stay for larger conventions.

One of the larger academic conventions I've attended in Australia is MODSIM (International Congress on Modelling and Simulation). Keep in mind that mathematics conferences in Australia are small. The last couple I attended ditched a paper program and went with the program being available via an APP. This had many attractive features. However, years afterwards I am unable to check the program. But I suppose that the number of individuals who want to be able to check a program years after the event is very small. Still, a paper program is a historical record of an event.

Thanks for the link to GLASCON's code of conduct. Ten pages. I suspect that in years-to-come the length of such codes will only go in one direction. Like you, I do not know what the phrase "social

structures of domination” means. It’s not part of my everyday lexicon. But that’s not the only part of this sentence that is problematic:

“Making comments that are *intended* ((my italics)) to reinforce social structures of domination.”

So, it’s OK to make such comments provided that you do not intend “to reinforce social structures of domination”? I wonder how the convention committee proposed to determine the *intent* of the speaker? In any case, it would have been useful for specific examples to have been provided.

I noticed that there is also that there is a prohibition on “Displaying sexual or otherwise inappropriate images in public spaces”. The phrase “sexual images” is not defined. ANZIAM (the professional body for applied and industrial mathematicians in Australia and New Zealand) has a similar phrase in its code-of-conduct. I have wondered about this. A number of ANZIAM events are held on university campuses. Most universities contain not only art galleries, but art exhibited across campus. Some of these images might be deemed sexual. Would they be considered “OK” because it’s not a member of the event that are displaying them?

You commented upon the very few second-hand book tables at GLASCON. I wonder how many book covers from decades ago might be considered to show either a “sexual image” or an “inappropriate image”? Perhaps if the convention committee were here they would say that such things have to be considered on a case-by-case basis?

You have good ideas on replacing panels by other types of events. You know, I feel that you should organise your own convention...

That said, over to my unsorted notes about Glascon. I counted to over 400 pictures on my phone after the con, and after long deliberations I have selected over 30 of them, a bit randomly, with captions that hopefully will lead us through Glascon.

According to the code-of-conduct...

“Taking unwanted photography or making unwanted recording(s) of anyone without their consent.”

That would seem to prohibit the taking of any photograph that includes an image of someone else without first obtaining their consent...

Any complex system will have built-in contradictions, which Kurt Gödel discovered already in the 1930s

It’s time for me to put my mathematics hat on and say: No, he didn’t. Perhaps you are misremembering his various incompleteness theorems? These show that in any sufficiently complex formal mathematical system (such as arithmetic), there will be true statements that cannot be proven within the system itself. This put the sword to Hilbert’s (1862-1943) plan to formulise the foundations of mathematics. Amongst other things Hilbert strived to create a mathematical framework in which you knew *a priori* that any statement was either true or false. Gödel showed that’s not going to happen in any mathematical system that is sufficiently ‘interesting’, or complex if you like.

Male writers constitute ca 85% of all sff writers but get less than half of that level of nominations or awards. That a big majority is left out of recognition and awards and nominations goes to some who otherwise wouldn't be there...

I'm sure that you are right, this is due to reverse discrimination. However, I can't help but put an oar into the conversation by suggesting that perhaps talent isn't uniformly distributed and that maybe there's proportionally more talent in the 15% of non-male writers...

I really enjoyed reading your Glascon report. I'm look forward to reading your report the next time Worldcon returns to Europe. Here's a final thought. I assume that you've written reports of all the Worldcons that you have attended? I would be interested in seeing those collected into a fanzine!

Ye Murthered Master Mage 272 (George Phillies)

Ryctm Archive Midwinter.

I haven't read *Wuthering Heights*. The nearest I've got to reading it is visiting Haworth as a child as my parents had a friend living there.

Ryctm

Top ten SF movies:

Interesting list. The absence of films from 1920 to 1970 is noteworthy. Forbidden Planet, War of the Worlds, and This Island Earth come to mind.

Forbidden Planet is one of my favourites and I've also seen War of the Worlds (both the 1953 and 2005 versions). Never heard of *This Island Earth*.

R.A.I.L. 2 (Adrian Kresnak)

I liked your two photographs of the Cincinnati Museum Center and the Dragonfly fossil.

Ryctm. I have seen *Arrival* (2016). I didn't have a chance to watch it on the big screen, but heard so many good things about it that I bought it on DVD. It's an unusual SF movie, because the plot's so intelligent. I know it's based on a novella by Ted Chiang. I've heard good things about this work, but have yet to read any. Now, even though it was a very intelligent movie... well, the bit I don't like involves being able to experience memories of future events. It's not quite time travel (which I really dislike as a plot element), but near enough for me to put a mark against it.

Snow Poster Township 18 (Heath Row)

The first 36 pages of 88 in this edition were also reprinted elsewhere—in either Alarums & Excursions or eAPA. That means that almost half of this N'APA distribution isn't original work. I can understand and appreciate the benefits of placing fanzines in multiple apae, but that seems like a large amount to reprint.

I have to confess that I sometimes I the same content in both my N'APA and ANZAPA fanzines. My discussion of SF TV shows in *Brandy Hall* issue eight was original, I ran a revised version in *Mathom* (my ANZAPA zine). N'APA and ANZAPA have alternating monthly deadlines, which is very convenient. I don't have any hesitations about reusing content since I'm the only member of

both apas. Even if there were more joint members, I doubt I'd have any qualms about running revised content across both zines.

Ryct Jefferson P. Swycaffer (*Archive Midwinter*)

Is writing for a shared-world tribute anthology the same as writing fan fiction? I wouldn't think so.

I agree, though I am not sure I can articulate way.

Ryctm

In your mailing comments, the phrase "Answers on a postcard please..." gave me much pleasure. I'll have to remember to use that myself.

That was an often heard phrase on British children's TV programmes in the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s when children were asked to post in answers to a question. I suppose today it would be "Answers in an email please..."

Ryctm 2

Other than bulletin board systems, my first experiences online were during college, editing email using emacs, and utilizing Gopher, Archie, Veronica, Fetch, and Usenet. I think I miss Gopher and Usenet the most.

I did *try* and learn emacs, but I didn't stick at it for very long. (Emacs Makes All Computers Slow, I remember that!) I returned to using vi, which remains my editor of choice on any unix platform. The only one of the other things that you mentioned that I used was usenet. Haven't thought about the rn command for a long time. I suppose the world wide web made usenet redundant?

Ryctm 3

"I also quite enjoyed Peter Milligan's Shade, the Changing Man and The Sandman..."

I remember reading Shade, though I don't remember what I thought about it. What can one say about The Sandman? I'm guessing that I started reading it when it became a Vertigo title, that was issue 47 (January 1993). At some point Vertigo started reissuing the early issues, one a month, and I bought those. It's one of the very few titles where I think about shelling out for the collected editions and reading them from start to finish. (I kicked my comic addiction in the Summer of 1997: In November 1997 I went to work in New Zealand for a year.)

Samizdat 27 (Samuel Lubell)

I took the train to the Exhibition Center and walked to the University of Glasgow and saw the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery. The museum had an exhibit about how it was really bad how these collectors stole from native peoples, and it was wrong and we know better now and won't do it again. I thought they were trying to have their cake and eat it too, but there was a mention of some exhibits that they did return.

Only a few days before I read your comment, I read a short article (three pages) written by Adam Kuper with the title "Collections and objections". This appeared in the **Times Higher Education**

(2nd February 2023). **THE** is the leading tertiary education journal in the UK. Here's the blurb for the article.

“Debates rage about the appropriateness of objects displayed in many anthropological exhibitions amid accusations that they perpetuate poisonous imperialist narratives. However, Adam Kuper believes institutions should be wary of capitulating to activist demands.”

Let me know if this is of interest, I should be able to send you a PDF.

I hadn't seen any healthy food since arriving in Scotland.

Naturally, there is healthy food to be found in Scotland. However, it's a widely held stereotype that Scottish food is unhealthy, as reflected in the popularity of the deep fried Mars Bar.

The UK has lots of Indian food.

Not only is there a large number of 'Indian' restaurants, there are a large number of high quality 'Indian' restaurants and these span the full range of prices. One of my wife's friends is Fiji Indian and when she went to the UK she came back full of praise for the quality of the Indian food she'd ate. (I don't remember if they made it to Glasgow, I suspect not, but she did visit Edinburgh).

I went to a panel on Dark Academia which I found most interesting for what the speakers said about the European higher education system and how it is growing more expensive. Only the rich can afford to study the traditional liberal arts while everyone else has to study content that can help them earn a living.

(I should preface my comments by noting that you are only reporting what you heard at the panel).

OK... what I know about the 'European' higher education system is what I've learnt by reading Times Higher Education, which I've been reading for... more years than I like to remember... but off and on for just over thirty-five years. I would make the following comments. Firstly, there's no such thing as the European higher education system. Now, there have been some moves to integrate the national higher education systems into a European higher education system. The most notable of these forms was The Bologna process. This aims to create a unified model of higher education with students taking a three year undergraduate degree followed by a two year Master's degree. There are also agreements about how much study is required to receive an undergraduate degree. (I've never been on top of the details.)

However, national higher education systems remain very important. For example, it's national governments which make decisions on funding.

I agree that there has been a general trend shifting the costs of studying from governments to individuals. This is sometimes couched in language along the lines that it's not fair for general tax payers to pay for individuals to enter higher education when it's the individual that receives the long-term benefit of higher education in terms of higher salary. (I do not believe that argument stands up to detailed scrutiny.) However, there are wide variations in fees charged to students and in the financial support that's available to students.

Finally, it's hyperbole to suggest that “only the rich can afford to study the liberal arts”. It might be true in some countries (I don't have detailed knowledge about every European country) but it's not

true in many. At this point I'd like to provide an Australian perspective. I couldn't remember the exact details, but I remembered enough to ask ChatGPT to fill them in. Here's a slightly modified version of what ChatGPT told me.

In 2020, the Australian government, led by the Liberal-National Coalition, introduced significant changes to university funding and fees under the *Job-ready Graduates Package*. The goal was to encourage students to pursue degrees with better employment prospects, particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, by reducing fees for those courses while increasing fees for others, especially in the humanities.

The package made humanities degrees among the most expensive, increasing fees for courses such as history, philosophy, and political science by about 113%. In contrast, fees for fields such as mathematics, agriculture, and teaching were reduced. The government aimed to create a more "job-ready" workforce by steering students toward fields with perceived high demand.

However, the strategy had mixed outcomes. Some universities saw an increase in humanities enrollments, despite higher fees. This may have been due to a persistent interest in humanities subjects, career paths unrelated to degree choice, skepticism about job market alignment or student choices not being influenced by the cost of studying. Notice, decreasing the fees for STEM subjects whilst increasing the fees for humanities actually gave universities an incentive to increase the number of places offered on humanities degrees.

Then I went to Provand's Lordship. This is thought to be the oldest house in Glasgow dating to the 19th century.

I had to look this up, it seemed very unlikely to me that the oldest house in Glasgow would be as recent as the 19th century. I think you have a typo, Provand's Lordship, one of four surviving medieval houses in Glasgow, was built in 1471.

I very much enjoyed reading your post convention report. There was a period of time in which I travelled back to the UK reasonably often and went on holidays with my parents. Two such trips were to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The one time that I travelled back to the UK with my wife, we visited Edinburgh with my parents. Some of the places you mentioned I've visited, others I haven't.

Brownian Motion 10 (Garth Spencer)

Ryct Snow Poster Township16 (Heath Row)

I have debated buying or subscribing to the pro SF magazines, but usually shied away due to cost.

In my case I'm not interested in subscribing since I'd have zero time to read them. I don't even have time to keep up with the professional journals I receive.



Art from Openart.ai

...LOC on NAPA 272

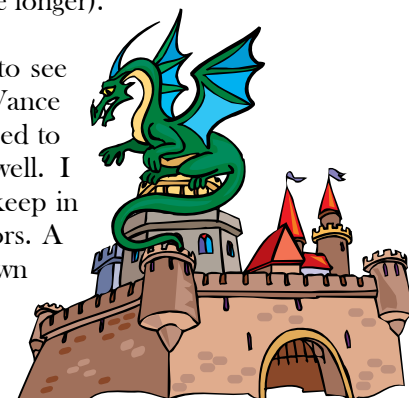
Intermission #145 - If that's what you feel about Trump from all the way in Sweden, just imagine what those of us who live in the U.S. think! We'll have to live with him for the next four years! Checks and balances will be weakened since conservatives control the Supreme Court and now the Senate (and probably the House by the time you read this). Yes, Trump is all but certain to pull out of Ukraine. NATO in space makes sense.

As a con-runner I strongly disagree with your statement "They invent "Codes of Conduct" when common sense and ordinary social rules is all we need." The problem is that common sense isn't all that common and people disagree on what the ordinary social rules are. This is especially true when people from different backgrounds and generations interact. No con committee develops rules just because they want to control people. The rules develop because someone at a con did something that made the rule necessary. If your comment about "A US fan was kicked out from a Worldcon" refers to the 2016 "State of Short Fiction" incident, it was a lot more complex than the simple

"successfully chaired a panel" you state as the reason. And I was at this year's Worldcon. There certainly was a fanzine lounge and fan programming. And I've run programming at cons. We try to pick subjects that are interesting to the audience. If a topic doesn't get a lot of people, then we don't use it in the future. Large cons have a variety of program items including single person lectures. So people who don't like panels can go to something else. I've noticed that panels on interesting subjects have no difficulty filling the room. Some cons do have film programming. I know Balticon does and the Worldcons have films and frequently videos too. And cons have academic programs because the universities don't do a good job (although they are improving) with science fiction/fantasy. Again, if people didn't attend this programming, cons wouldn't keep running them. As to beer, this is a matter for the hotel and convention committees have little control over this (at least in the U.S. hotels are now run so that each division now needs to make a profit instead of dropping costs in one area to get more people in). Fandom, like everything else, has to change and evolve or it ossifies. We cannot expect everything to remain what it was when we were young.

Your history about Sweden's first SF writer was interesting. I like your glossary of old fannish terms. Remember that books and magazines are media too. Fans of movies and TV have been part of fandom since Star Trek, if not before. I disagree that older stories and writers are better; it's more that the bad older ones are mostly forgotten. A lot of older science fiction (before the New Wave of the 1960s) was weak on characterization and literary quality of the writing (admittedly, putting those in has forced books to become longer).

Archive Midwinter July 2024 - It will be interesting (in the Chinese curse sense) to see what happens with Putin and Ukraine now that Trump is elected. If you like Jack Vance fanfic, look at stories by Matthew Hughes (who appeared frequently in F&SF). I need to read more Stanislaw Lem. For openart.ai try <https://openart.ai/> Yes, Balticon went well. I learned a lot and if someday (not until after I retire) I run another Balticon I will keep in mind the lessons I learned. I agree that a lot of sf is in dialogue with other authors. A person reads a story, says that isn't what would happen, and then writes their own version. This is most clear with a lot of stories in response to Ursula LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," but others are more subtle. Probably every robot story has connections to Asimov's robots. I need to get back into my projects. I've fallen short lately. I've not so sure that fanfiction is safe "fair use." Yes, the



writers aren't making money directly, but some fanfiction sites have advertising and pre-Internet, a lot of fiction fanzines charged money.



Intermission #146 - I hope Ukraine can continue to successfully defend themselves even after Trump cuts back on aid. I attended the Glasgow Worldcon (sorry to have missed you). I had no problem with the slogan, "A Worldcon for Our Futures." I thought it was a nice inclusive name. The checking of bags was a security thing and the Worldcon had no control over it. Note that the hotels, even the one next door, did not check bags. I had no trouble with the Wi-Fi. I agree that there should have been more printed materials. There was a program schedule that appeared on the second to last day; it would have been nice to have had that sooner. I think Codes of Conduct are needed when you have so many people of different backgrounds and generations, not

all of whom have the same understanding of what people should and shouldn't do when in close proximity. Having written rules is helpful when someone tries to say, "No one told me I couldn't do X". Worldcon tries to be a general convention and fights against recent fannish tendencies to splinter. I think exposing fans to other fandoms is a good thing. I'm primarily a literary fan, but will listen to filk at night and occasionally will poke my head in the Japanimation room to see what that's all about, and sometimes play a game or two when I'm not busy. I think it is good to have a variety of program offerings. The shortage of used book dealers is in part due to the Internet making it easier to find used books without waiting for a con. There does seem to be more book dealers at US Worldcons than the two UK Worldcons I've attended. If you think there are too many panels, no one forces anyone to attend them. There are plenty of other things to do. But considering that all the panels I attended were packed (and a few weren't letting people in because the room was filled), you seem to be in the minority here. There were plenty of films and presentations. Compared to Dragoncon or Gencon or many Comicons, a 7,000 person Worldcon is not that large. I didn't get to see the press room. I did pick up a couple of books from the freebie table. U.S. cons still have room parties. Having parties in the convention center is a U.K. tradition.

I disagree that the awards are discriminating against white, male authors. I help run the Compton Crook award for best first novel so have a first-hand view of the selection process. The last white male winner was in 2014, not due to an organized conspiracy but because the interesting first novels tended to be written by minority and female authors. I've also been involved in the WSFA Small Press Award which cannot have bias since the stories are read and judged without any author's name attached. In the last decade, only a couple of winners have been white males.

I liked your article about the propeller beanie.

Ye Murdered Master Mage 272 - Most lists of the best of anything suffer from a strong presentism bias.

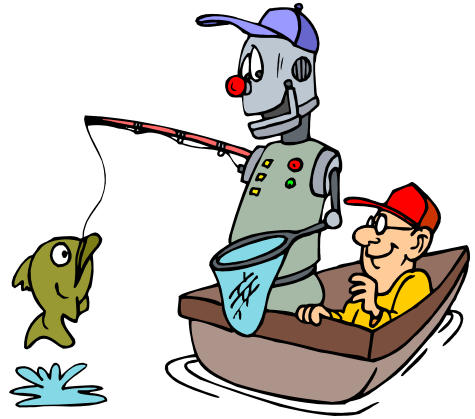
Rail #2 - No, *Progressive Capitalism* didn't address Effective Altruism or Accelerationism. I don't know what these are.

Brandy Hall Issue 8 - As a kid, I didn't watch Dr. Who because I thought it was too scary with all those monsters. SF shows I remember watching as a kid - *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *the Bionic Woman*, *Battlestar Galatica*, *The Powers of Mathew Star*, *Greatest American Hero*, and lots of Saturday morning cartoons. Interesting point about literary fiction being the fiction left over when all the genres are excluded. The problem with that is what



counts as a genre? And some literature overlaps with some genre. Are we to exclude *Frankenstein* from literature because it is science fiction? Do we exclude Jane Austen for being Romance and *Wuthering Heights* for being Gothic? Do we exclude *Moby Dick* for being a sea adventure?

Snow Poster Township #18 - Walter Jon Williams is one of my favorite writers. He has tremendous range. I disagree that new writers have no path to publication. I run a contest for best first novel and every year over 100 books qualify. I'd argue that cozy fantasy is just as much fantasy as any other fantasy novel. Not every fantasy has to be about saving the world or even just the kingdom. A shared world tribute anthology isn't quite fanfic. It's more like licensed tie-ins as the publisher has the permission of the copyright owner (or the estate). Joe Haldeman is well worth reading, I recommend his *The Forever War*. It is still relevant today. I don't have numbers for Balticon, but we dropped somewhat during the pandemic (there was one year that was only online) and our numbers have been going up but are still not at pre-pandemic levels. If you like Robert Putnam, have you read his recent book *The Upswing*? It is more positive on how America can reverse some of the negative and isolating trends. Certainly the "rivalry" between Isaac Asimov and Harlan Ellison was mostly pretend.



Samizdat #27 - It is worth noting that *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* has published another issue, the "Summer 2024" issue that came out in September. They announced the magazine would now be quarterly (due to increased printing costs) and skipped the Spring issue. (But I haven't seen any signs of a Fall 2024 issue and we're halfway through November.)

Brownian Motion #10 - Good luck with CUFF. I like the idea of using it to have different fandoms communicate with each other. I hate ending stories with "And then he woke up." That always struck me as too much of a cheat. Your list of awards is missing the WSFA Small Press Award and the BSFS Compton Crook Award for Best First Novel.

...Author Spotlight: Tim Powers

Tim Powers is an unusual, quirky fantasy writer with his own style and voice. It is hard to imagine a Tim Powers novel being written by anyone else. Much of his writing falls into the Secret History subgenre in which the events of history as we know it happened but for different reasons (involving supernatural forces) than history reports. His writing is anything but straightforward, often cryptic with more hidden than revealed. His work merges fantasy with horror (and sometimes sf too). His characters are not conventional heroes but flawed individuals trying to understand a strange and confusing world.

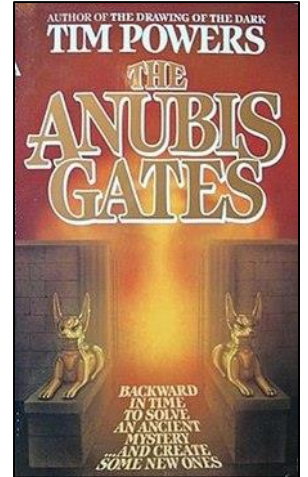
His first novel was *The Skies Discrowned* in 1976, but his career caught fire with *The Drawing of the Dark* in 1979, about the 1529 Turkish siege of Vienna (in order to capture the brewery that brews magical dark beer) and *The Anubis Gates* (1983) a wonderfully over-the-top novel about time travel, beggars, poets, Egyptian magic, and a whole lot more. *The Anubis Gates* is one of my all-time favorite novels and I strongly recommend it. Other major books of his are *On Stranger Tides*, about pirates seeking immortality (it became the basis for a Disney Pirates of the Caribbean film), the *Stress of Her Regard*, about vampiric succubi who serve as muses for English Romantic writers, and *Declare* about cold war spies. He also wrote the Fault Lines trilogy by taking two unconnected books - *Last Call* about poker and the Fisher King and



Photo of Tim Powers by Roberta F.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25902866>

Expiration Date about ghosts - and then writing a third book, *Earthquake Weather* that was a sequel to both. More recently, he wrote a more conventional trilogy, *Vickery and Castine*, about the supernatural side of California that combines ghosts on California highways and UFO hunters.

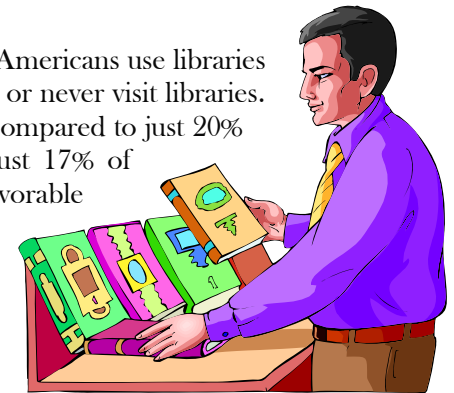
He frequently worked with writers James Blaylock and K.W. Jeter and was a close friend of Philip K. Dick. He won the World Fantasy Award for *Last Call* and *Declare*. *The Anubis Gates* and *Dinner at Deviant's Palace* won the Philip K. Dick Award. People new to his work should absolutely read *The Anubis Gates*. Seriously, if you haven't read it, stop what you are doing and get the book right now. It's that good. He has a recent story collection, *Down and Out in Purgatory*, that is more horror focused. And don't skip *On Stranger Tides* due to the Disney movie (they only adapted a few elements and used their own characters); this is clearly a case of not judging a book by its movie. Oh, and I picked him up at the airport once and drove him to a con.



...Libraries and Book Bans

Book bans are a growing problem in the U.S. *The New York Times* reported that the American Library Association found that book bans in public libraries rose 92 percent between 2022 and 2023. States are banning books from libraries. Groups like Moms for Liberty call for even more censorship, especially books by or about gays, lesbians, blacks, and other minorities. Many libraries are quietly consenting to this censorship, weeding out challenged or controversial books, sometimes ignoring their established challenge process. In Florida, over 700 different titles have been removed from school libraries in 2023 alone, including *1984*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and horror books by Stephen King after the state passed a law making it easier for parents to force school libraries to get rid of books.

The Washington Post had an interesting article on who uses libraries. Only 23% of Americans use libraries daily/weekly/monthly and another 24% a few times a year. Half of Americans rarely or never visit libraries. Interestingly, 30% of those with incomes of \$100K and up visit libraries frequently compared to just 20% of those under \$50K and 24% of those in-between. 30% of Democrats, but just 17% of Republicans are frequent library visitors. Democrats are more likely to have Very Favorable views of librarians (61% to 35% Republican), Libraries (67% to 46%) and bookstores (56% to 30%). Since bookstores are private, it seems that Republicans' negative views towards libraries aren't because they are public or tax-supported. They just don't like (or trust) books. The article does say that the gaps in library use could be due to the urban-rural divide. Since Republicans are more spread out and Democrats are concentrated in cities, they have less access to libraries. And 41% of minority religions (Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, & Buddhists) frequent the library compared to 31% of Catholics and 19% Protestants. Surprisingly, older people are least likely to be frequent library patrons. Just 15% of 65+ and 16% of those 45-64 are frequent library patrons compared to 35% of those under 30 and 30% of those ages 30-44.



Only 7% of Americans read more than 100 books in the past three years (not per year but total for the 3 years) and 40% got at least half from the library. Another 5% read 51 to 100 books (39% got half from the library). A depressing 30% read zero books and 17% read just 1-4 books. (Source, Andrew Van Dam, "Who uses public libraries the most?" *Washington Post*, October 4, 2024 citing a YouGov Survey on Public Libraries conducted April, 2024).



This is slightly different from an earlier YouGov study that found 46 percent finished zero books in 2023 and 5 percent read just one. 10 books put a person in the 79th percentile and 20 books at 88th percentile. 50 books is the 99th percentile. Almost a quarter of Americans own at least 100 physical books including 7% at more than 500 and 3% at over 1,000. 20% read at least one history book, 20% mystery, 15% fantasy, and 12% science fiction. (Andrew Van Dam, "How many books did you read in 2023?" *Washington Post*, January 5, 2024).

...Status of Projects

Past readers of *Samizdat* will remember that I have launched a series of projects to better my life. Between going to Scotland, Capclave, the Jewish holidays, and working on the Compton Crook Best First Novel books I haven't made much progress. Here's my latest report.



Project Classics – I read *Corrag* by Susan Fletcher. This Scottish novel is about an English woman who is accused of being a witch in the late 17th century. Her mother taught her about the healing powers of plants but not how to live among people, she eventually finds what she thinks is an isolated spot in the Scottish Highlands, but it turns out to be land owned by the MacDonald clan. She witnesses the Massacre of Glencoe (and tries to warn people about it) in which over 30 members of the clan were killed by British troops because the head of the clan did not take the oath of allegiance to King William and Queen Mary after a Jacobian revolt. (I saw the site of the massacre during my August trip to Scotland.) The plot of the book was framed around Corrag telling her story to an investigator who gradually comes to sympathize with her, despite initially believing she is a real witch. I'm also reading *Rob Roy* by Sir Walter Scott. The book is set in the early 18th century. Frank Osbaldistone, the son of a wealthy banker, wants to write poetry instead of taking over his father's business. So Frank visits family and one of the cousins, Rashleigh, joins Frank's father's business in Frank's place. Much of the first half of the novel is slow going as Frank has a long visit with his cousins and falls in love with Diana who is staying with them. But when Rashleigh steals credentials that could bankrupt Frank's father, Frank goes to Scotland to investigate. In Scotland he encounters Rob Roy. That's as far as I've gotten. I'm finding the book slow going considering Scott's reputation as an adventure writer. Part of the problem is that I cannot sympathize with Frank's rebelling against his father for the sake of poetry, which he rarely bothers to write.

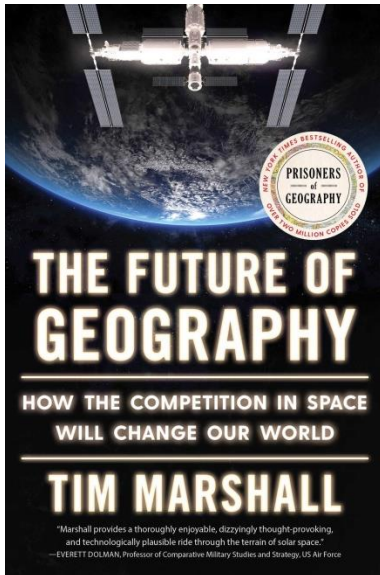
Project Non-fiction. I listened to an audiobook of *Mary, Queen of Scots* by John Guy. It is very much a pro-Mary account as the author is convinced she had nothing to do with her husband's murder and spends a great deal of the book analyzing the letters used against her by the English investigation. The author is convinced that parts of these were forgeries or assembled out of other letters. The author makes a good case but I would have liked to have seen a more even-handed treatment. I also read *Scotland: A Very Short Introduction* by Rab Houston,



Scott Monument in Edinburgh, Scotland

Scotland: A Concise History by Fitzroy MacLean, and part of *Scotland: A New History* by Michael Lynch, which was by far the most complete of the histories.

I also read *This is How They Tell Me the World Ends: The Cyberweapons Arms Race* by Nicole Perlroth. This tells the story of hackers' efforts to find exploitable holes in software called zero-day exploits. At first, hackers gladly told Microsoft, Google, etc. about these holes. Then they started to want money from these companies. And later, hackers found that nations, criminals, spies, and terrorists would pay more money to learn these secrets, especially if they won't tell anyone else. Some supposedly friendly governments (and departments within our own government) have been hoarding these secret vulnerabilities. The book also shows how counter-terrorists have been trying to protect our software infrastructure. Then, the author describes how hackers got a hold of NSA's own code-breaking tools. This is fascinating and scary too.



The Future of Geography, How the Competition in Space Will Change Our World by Tim Marshall. This book is not really about geography, but covers the space race and the problems that he claims will prevent (or at least hinder) further exploration of space. There is some coverage of geography in discussing the best places on Earth to launch space missions and how geographic features of the Moon and Mars might affect exploration there. But much more space is devoted to politics and efforts to use the legal system to regulate space.

The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth by Zoe Schlanger. This book shows that plants have a form of intelligence, or perhaps agency might be a better word. The author shows how plants can mimic other species, summon wasps to drive off caterpillars that eat their leaves, and even communicate with other plants.

Project Video - I watched the *Dune: Part Two*, the 2024 movie by Denis Villeneuve. I liked how they expanded Chani's role. This is more coherent than the earlier single Dune movie and contains more of the book (although child-Alia and Thufir Hawat are completely left out. Paul kills the Baron instead of Alia). Unfortunately, the movie takes the easy path of a conventional story of Paul as the savior-hero fulfilling his destiny and obtaining revenge on the killers of his father without capturing Frank Herbert's doubts about messiah figures. Hopefully, the third movie (covering the second and third book) will touch more on this. I also watched *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* which I thought worked better as a collection of connected sketches (which were often funny) than as a coherent whole. It couldn't decide if the movie was set in medieval times (in which case what were cars and modern police doing there) or in the present day with Arthur and company being delusional (in which case how were there so many other people - those in the other castles, the Black Knight, the peasants, and the crowd at the climactic battle scene) - acting as if they were in the medieval times too. I watched Disney's *Pinocchio*, which was rather different from how I remembered it. I had completely forgotten about the villains (Honest John and his lackey) who kept diverting Pinocchio from the right path and how Pinocchio was less of a bad boy and more of a naïve follower who just did whatever someone told him to do. The animation and music were great.



Project Activities - I went to Capclave, the DC-area literary SF convention and produced the program book. I also did the count of attendees at program items. For my birthday, I went into DC and saw the Museum of the American Indian, which I thought should have been called the Museum of White Peoples' Interactions with the American Indian. It had nothing about the many years of history before the whites came to America and instead had exhibits on whites breaking treaties with Indians, whites' use of Indians on product labels and names, the legacy and image of Pocahontas, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, etc. (There was some exhibits of Native American art, but nothing predating 1492.)

No progress on Projects Shakespeare, Clean-up, and Exercise.

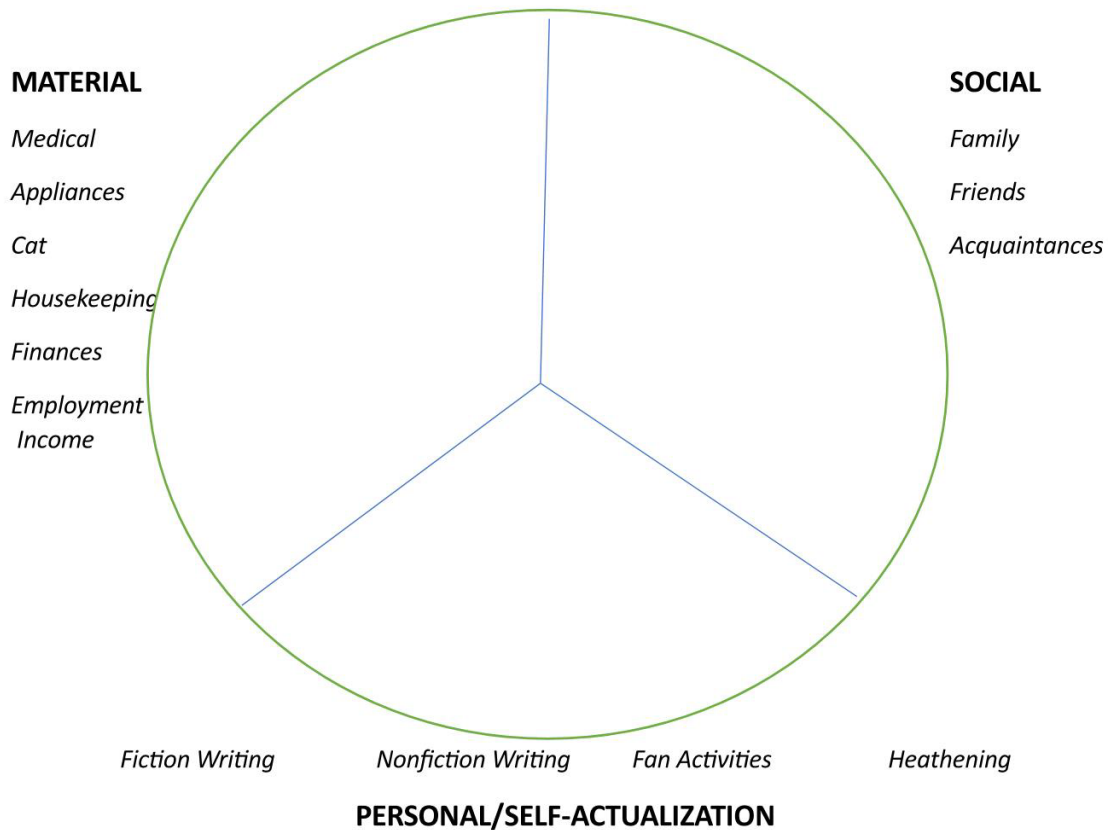
...Author's Note

Samizdat is a production of Samuel Lubell who is solely responsible for its contents. Nothing here should be taken as the views of any employer, client, or organization to which I belong. This zine was produced during Samuel Lubell's non-work time. Graphics are from clip art discs and the Internet. Photos are from my Scotland trip in August.



Brownian Motion #11

An apazine from Garth Spencer
For N'APA #273, November 2024



Learning to Adult

I'm going through a phase in which I think I have finally – after retirement age – figured out that adulting means pursuing several simultaneous long-term projects, or tasks. Most of them fall under general headings such as Material Needs, Social Needs, and Self-Actualization Needs (yes, just like Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

I have a compulsion to get things like this explicitly identified, listed, their goals/ deadlines and “for this will you need” checklist spelled out. Maybe I'm autistic, or maybe I simply spent most of my life working as a secretary; either reason would explain what I'm doing.

Financial: For the moment I am working part-time and benefiting from some government pension plans, and paying down my taxes and credit card. Of course it's all a house of cards, until and unless I have more savings.

Work: I still work as a sort of on-call part-time secretary, for just a few clients. Maybe I should be promoting myself aggressively, but ... aggression and self-promotion are not within me.

Medical: I am healthy, have received COVID and influenza booster shots, and give blood about as often as I can. Maybe I have to get my eyes checked for conjunctivitis.

Social:

Did my duty and voted in the provincial election. Due to inclement weather (and consequent flooding and power outages in some places) BC's electoral results took longer to tally than the results of other provinces.

I also serve as a house rep and outreach support worker in Unity Housing, the subsidized housing society of which I am a resident member. This allows me a measure of regular social contact, if only at semiformal business meetings; and other activities, such as CSFFA or writing workshops, also allow me contact with others. But in other respects I am a hermit. I don't relate to very many people – nor even communicate with others easily, despite my command of English. (Perhaps **because** of my command of English?)

It is as if I barely learned the AngloAmerican.1975 social operating system, if you can put it that way, and I haven't been updating it regularly. Not having a manual to assist me, I am trying to invent my own, even knowing that I'm not well equipped, even knowing that professionals have adequately covered life skills and common knowledge and social training already. And I've told you about all this before. Maybe I should just make my manual a satirical handbook, like others in the self-help or humour bookshelves.

Appliances: Not having found a workshop or a supplier where I could find parts and make my own pocket computer, I finally bought a small tablet, intending to find a small keyboard to complement it, which I did. Then the tablet's battery went toes-up and I had to do the same thing over again. Now I find this lightweight tablet-and-keyboard assembly, which I hoped would be a more compact and lightweight alternative to a laptop, is slow and reluctant to serve either as a word processor, **or** as a web surfing machine, even now that the keyboard communicates with it. GAAAAH!

I have another tablet, which I use as an e-book reader and which has a port for a micro-SD card, but so far it fails to read the card I loaded with e-books from my desktop. Either this is an incompatibility between Windows 365 and Android operating systems, or the card is too high-density to be read.

Fandom:

I serve as secretary to the committee overseeing the national Aurora Awards. So, now I know with how to transcribe minutes from Zoom meetings.

As to another fan project, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund ... I have to revisit this in 2025. Fandom in my neck of the woods just *isn't* fandom as I knew it ... not like the fandom that supports fan funds, anyway. Maybe a travel fund that enhances communication *between fandoms* can be reinvented? (That was my idea of reinventing CUFF, and at least one mediafan expressed interest, but at least one fan as old as I am expressed disbelief that mediafans would accomplish anything along these lines.)

As to other fan activities:

I keep putting out a personalzine every month, *The Obdurate Eye*. As a matter of habit, left over from a 1980s newszine I used to distribute, it features a bit of fan news and a few op/ed articles if I can get them and, well, whatever might interest and amuse fans.

I keep I am down to less than ten members in eAPA, and would like to attract more members. eAPA is at present a monthly online APA, which is completely open to any subject as long as it's semi-rational and not offensive material. The cost of participation is, well, participation – in the form of monthly PDF contributions by the first of each month. There are more details on the eAPA index page on eFanzines.com (<https://efanzines.com/eapa/>), and in the thumbnail description in the newly-updated Blue Moon directory (<https://tinyurl.com/bluemoonspecial2024>).

There are other APAs I engage in: Stipple-Apa and Apaplexy (both hexaweekly), and N'APA, every other month.

As to websites ... I am finally taking steps to erect “Across the Fandomension,” my own long-promised Canadian/Pacific Northwest Fandom website.

There used to be a gentleman in Seattle who kept up a "Northwest SF Resources" page, but he stopped updating it in about 2000. There were probably good and sufficient reasons, like expense, or illness, or sheer loss of energy or no one else to pick up the reins.

My webhost, the Vancouver CommunityNet, offers webteam services to supply a webpage format, and to tutor me in using Wordpress for my web pages. But it begins to look as if I will make faster progress by just hosting it on Wordpress. As it is I have posted my current fandom reference information – mirrors of “Across the Fandomension” – on Discord, MeWe, Mastodon, and most recently, on Facebook. (I got my Facebook connection back!)

Fiction Writing: I am going through another patch of low confidence in my storytelling ability. (I didn't think I would be so sensitive, or so discouraged by writers' workshop critiques.) Then again, the faults of my writing entirely aside, this seems to be an unusually competitive and difficult time for writers to gain acceptance for submissions; for that matter publishers – and printers! – have been suffering pressures from a deflating market for printed fiction, and even from reduced availability of pulp paper supplies.

Oh well. Maybe animated graphic stories published online will be the Wave of the Future.

§

It dawned upon me recently that I often find it *painful to listen to people*.

After some experiences – studying Latin and other languages, and taking courses in linguistics, and other responses to people too vague to communicate effectively – I came to believe that words are clearly precision components for devices that convey information.

But I am surrounded by people who think of words as ... I don't know ... something like clay, and they keep clumsily slapping gobs of words and phrases at whatever thought they're trying to express, until they hope they've covered it and people will grasp it. Even middle-aged managers with degrees talk this way, and I have to compensate for their failures of articulation.

Beside that issue, picking on people's grammar and spelling is trivial, and the inability to read handwriting is unimportant.



THE JADE RING Part III

James Bond shivered in his hospital bed, hearing the screams and explosions and seeing the flying body parts he repeatedly left behind when he escaped the evidence of his several missions. The crushing guilt of his repeated murders – the shocking loss of confidence and inner strength, when his breakdown finally occurred – crept back over him as his latest round of medications dissipated. He wondered how soon the nurse would come to dose him up again.

The worst of it was, he knew the Crown would have simply given his name and number to another agent with the same skill set ... and the same neurological disorder. God only knew what level of carnage they would leave behind, allegedly preserving peace, order and good government, until the day when they also cracked, as he had.

A young woman came up to the bed, and he turned his head up, hoping that it was the nurse. "Is it time?" Bond asked. "May I have my medicine now?"

The girl with the long dark hair wore no uniform, and she shook her head. "I'm sorry, I'm not the nurse," she said. She sounded American, more or less. "What place is this? I think I'm here by accident."

Alarmed, Bond tried to focus his eyes on the girl. “You aren’t here to ... Wait. You don’t even know where you are? Who are you, how did you get here?”

The girl sighed. “My name is Polly Johnson. I’m a student in western Canada. I don’t quite know how I got here, I was volunteering at a hospital in Spuzzum and thinking about my boyfriend’s favourite thriller novels and how covertly sexist they are, and next thing I know I’m walking through this, this institution, wherever the hell it is. You sound British. Are we in Britain?”

Bond frowned, feeling his old habits of concentration and suspicion and situational awareness coming back to him. “If you’re American, how did you get here?” He seized her arm. “Who are you working for and what is your mission?”

“Let go of me,” Polly said evenly.

“Not until you answer my questions!”

Polly said, “I’m Canadian, not American. I don’t know how I got here. I don’t have a mission, and I’m not working for anybody.” After a pause she said, “You can let go now, or I can show you something I learned in tae kwon do.”

Bond let go. “That wouldn’t work, I know how to defeat tae kwon do measures,” he said absently. “If you’ve penetrated this far, you’re going to have to answer to some very tough security personnel here. Very soon. Again: how are you here and why?”

Polly sighed again, clearly exercising her patience. She held up her hand; there was a green ring on it. “My friends and I have been having strange experiences, since almost as soon as we started wearing cheap tourist trinkets as a trademark. It’s as though we get displaced, not just in space but into other worlds, sometimes into other story universes. But nobody just disappeared, we’ve always come back home to Spuzzum—”

“What is Spuzzum?” Bond interrupted. “The place you came from?”

“Yes, a college town in Canada, on the West Coast.” Polly rubbed her forearm. “What’s your name?”

“James Bond,” he said.

Polly’s eyebrows rose. “Oh, well that tells me what story I’m in now.”

Bond guessed that the young lady was really telling the truth as she knew it, whether it made little sense or not. What was actually happening was another question. If she were deluded, he would have to investigate this the hard way ... No. wait a minute: he wasn’t on the job any more.

Polly looked around the ward in which Bond was sleeping; he seemed to be the only occupant in a hall of otherwise empty beds. “This looks like a hospital, or sanatorium,” she said. “Why are you here, yourself?”

Bond looked at her silently, wondering if she were some kind of goat or stalking horse. “You may be better served not to know,” he said.

At that point, the doors at the end of the ward were unlocked and pushed open. Several armed and armoured men darted in, brandishing rifles and screaming “Down on the floor! Now! Now!,” mostly aiming at Polly.

Polly grabbed Bond’s arm, and they vanished.

§

This time, Hrothgar appeared intentionally in the transporter room of the *Enterprise*. Immediately he hopped off the transporter pad and approached the operating officer. “Hello,” he said, “I apologize for appearing without contacting the ship first, but I had no way to do so. Would you please contact the bridge, to say that Hrothgar Weems has returned with an interim report? I will wait here.”

The operating officer goggled at Hrothgar and hit the intercom button almost before he finished speaking. “Intruder alert!” he shouted. “Transporter room 5A!” He snatched a phaser out of his hip holster and took aim at Hrothgar. Hrothgar raised his hands obediently.

They stood silently facing each other for five seconds, until red-shirted Security personnel arrived. The Security personnel were equally silent until they marched him into the same decontamination and detention chambers he entered the last time. Hrothgar was docile, compliant, and patient, awaiting interrogation.

When Spock and Saavik and a Security officer came to interview him, Hrothgar rose. “Sit down,” the officer ordered. Hrothgar sat down.

“Why did you stand up?” Spock asked curiously.

“I was taught to rise when a lady enters the room,” Hrothgar replied, turning a hand to Saavik. Spock raised an eyebrow.

The Security officer shot an irritated look at Commander Spock. “I’ll ask the questions here.” Turning to Hrothgar, he demanded, “Why are you here, and who are you working for? What is your mission? And how did you escape detention the last time you arrived?”

Hrothgar said, “I am working for myself, and I don’t really have a mission – I’m making up what I do as I go along. The reason I came here is to report some things I think I’ve learned, and to ask for some advice. I’ve learned some things to do with this, this *displacement* I guess I should call it, this way that I sometimes disappear from my home town to some place I only know about from books, or from television series. That should be impossible, according to everything I know. But, as Mr. Spock and Lieutenant Saavik know, I honestly know about the *Enterprise* and the Federation from a 20th-century television show.”

He held up his left hand, with a green ring on it. “Now, these events started a little while after my friends and I started wearing jade rings, just as a joke or a shared trademark. My friends also experience these, um, displacements. Now, I think I know why.”

Hrothgar described the way he, and Ernie von Ulm, and lately Polly Johnson had thought abstractedly about story universes, and walked into them; and he watched as disbelief and exasperation crept over the Security officer’s face. Saavik and Spock were harder to read. Before long, the officer exploded, “What is this crap? Do you seriously expect me to believe—”

“Excuse me, sir,” Spock put in calmly. “Have you read my report, and Lieutenant Saavik’s, on the first encounter with this Weems person?”

Sullenly the officer said, “Yes.”

“And the report of the first transporter officer who encountered him?”

“Well, yes, but—”

“How many impossible things have you read of, or heard of, or witnessed for yourself, since this tour of duty began?”

The Security officer breathed deeply, and relaxed. “Seven or eight,” he said unhappily. Spock’s dancing eyebrow went up again. “Fascinating. Most of us encounter fifteen or sixteen at least.”

Spock turned to Hrothgar. “You mentioned asking for advice,” he said. “Should I hazard a guess that you are seeking strategic or tactical advice for dealing with these ... excursions from your reality?”

Hrothgar nodded gratefully. “Yes. Both,” he said belatedly. “And we’re dealing with people who, as I put it, might as well be living in another reality. My friends and I are used to dealing with life in terms of working with limitations, but now our endeavours are threatened by people who think enough promoting and advertising will conquer everything, including lack of manpower or experience or finances.”

Lieutenant Saavik frowned at this point. “At your period in Terran history,” she put in, “you were still living in a scarcity economy, is that right?”

Hrothgar hesitated, thinking the term over. “I think you’re right,” he said slowly. “Especially in the 1980s, when we had a recession...”

“If my continuing studies on industrial economics taught me anything,” Saavik went on, “they indicated that the general welfare, including the availability of loans, depended on factors that were unpredictable, until some modern policies were adopted. Policies that your society hasn’t conceived of, yet.”

Hrothgar turned his eyes to the ceiling. “That’s only too true!”

“Then some party or parties from outside your timeline can be supporting the deluded people you are talking about,” Saavik concluded, “simply by shuttling them back and forth between your timeline, and a closely related one with a more exuberant economy, where loans are much more accessible and sufficient promotion easily overcomes financial objections.”

Spock turned to Saavik. “That makes the large assumption that some agency outside Mr. Weems’ timeline is duping his opponents, and can deliberately create the displacements he describes,” he said. Turning to Hrothgar, he said, “I should like to examine that ring, if you please.”

For the first time Hrothgar felt a touch of panic. Without the ring, what if he were stranded in the Federation’s timeline? Then he asked himself, well, what if he *was* stranded? He hesitated, then pulled the jade ring off his hand and extended it to Spock. Spock did not hold out his hand. After a second Hrothgar placed the ring on the desk.

Spock held up an instrument which Hrothgar did not recognize; it was not a standard tricorder. After examining the ring at length under a microscope-like attachment, Spock ruminated, then asked, “May I examine your hand, please?” Hrothgar complied, and Spock used a standard tricorder and the unfamiliar instrument, concentrating on the ring finger.

Hrothgar found himself looking at both Saavik and at the Security officer, but could not read their expressions.

After several minutes, Spock put the instruments away and gestured for Hrothgar to take back his ring. “There are very few possible ways to explain the events that you describe,” Spock said. “There are even fewer strategies or tactics which I can suggest. But from the trace evidence I have recorded, you have encountered a kind of ... not energetic exchange, but a space-time inversion, which occurs under very rare circumstances.” He gestured at the jade ring. “Minerals such as jadeite and nephrite, normally inert, can react to such events. The stability of space-time, normally very resistant, can be subverted. There have been numerous transient events, on Vulcan and on Earth and on other planets, that can only be reported anecdotally and have never been successfully replicated in controlled conditions ... and they conform to the outline of your story.”

“Mr. Spock—” the Security officer interjected.

“The executive officers on this ship have experienced events such as these personally,” Mr. Spock told the officer. “You have not been read into the reports, partly because of their classification but mostly because the events are vanishingly unlikely to occur again.” He turned to Hrothgar. “But if there is an agency which can create space-time displacements deliberately, and select which continuum their agents appear in ... they can do great good, or great harm. In either case the selected continuum is faced with events far beyond their control.”

He paused, thinking matters through. “I must report to the Captain,” he said. “We have executive decisions to make.” He looked at Hrothgar again. “It was courteous of you to come back to us, and communicate to us,” he said. “If possible, would you please stay on the Enterprise for a time? We may have to ask you to do us another great favour.”

(to be continued)



Mailing Comments

Intermission 145, by Ahrvid Engholm

Re American politics: a couple of fans in Vancouver said that they would not attend the Seattle Worldcon next summer if Donald Trump won the U.S. presidency. Well, he won the election.

I know at least one paranoid acquaintance in Vancouver who wants to start a prepper community, and prevails on me to keep improving a sort of investment proposal for prospective members/investors. (This is a trial because English is his second language, and his proposal letter shows it. So does the inefficient way he keeps me dinking around with the contents and organization and neat ideas he keeps wanting to insert.)

Now I find at least one of my fannish friends is getting paranoid, and wants to keep his family's current location and contact information offline. (Makes it hard to send a birthday card to his daughter.)

Anyway. Not being wedded to political correctness, and because a friend has reserved a room to share, I am going to Seattle. If I can pile enough money together, and obtain a passport in time.

Of course this sort of reminds me of the writer, Robert Sawyer, electing to attend the Worldcon in China, believing that he would influence the Chinese government to Do Good. I have no such aspirations.

For my part, I would like to believe that the American electorate will part with its illusions in time to dump an ill-chosen president, but we will just have to wait and see. Not my circus ...

Re Canadian politics: it appears that the current Liberal administration – or at least, the Prime Minister – now has minimal credibility. Does this mean a return to a Conservative government in the next election, as seems likely? That raises the spectre of Pierre Poilievre, and less visible radical conservatives, pulling Canada in the same direction as the United States will go ... maybe I will live just long enough to end up in a measureless depth of ordure, for some of the political attitudes I have shown and expressed.

It may be my country, but I'm not in charge.

Re Russian politics: the issue with the current Russian leadership, as I understand it, is really an issue with Russian culture – that is, the tendency to choose authoritarian, even oppressive administrations, as if the alternative were necessarily chaos. Until and unless their culture changes, a change of administration in Russia may be merely cosmetic. Again, we will just have to wait and see.

Re Talossan politics: The micronation of the Kingdom of Talossa, which I joined in the mid-2010s, will also be undergoing another election soon. (They seem to do this every six months, as far as I can determine.) I have been trying to register a new party I call the “Anarcho-Surrealist Party,” but it seems a bit of a slog to try and contact the registering officers. I should complete an anarcho-surrealist platform sometime.

Re Swedenborg: I've heard about a number of alternative worldviews, ranging from cults, and conspiracy theories, and pseudosciences, and a few weird Canadian communities no longer in operation. For a time I was aware of a group called Technocracy, which used to have an office on a major thoroughfare in Vancouver. (There are still major offices in Vancouver for Scientology and the Sokka Gakkai/Nichiren Shoshu movement.) But the Swedenborgian movement seems to be invisible in Canada, at least in this city. Maybe I should delve into it for story material.

Re conrunning cons: funny, I never perceived these events as ways to *disappoint* fans, or to bureaucratize fandom. In fact, my early experience of conventions convinced me

that many fans on convention committees *barely paid sustained attention to their conventions for ten consecutive minutes* – apart from the proverbial two or three fans in every committee, who predictably overwork themselves to compensate for everyone else. So when conrunners set up something like ConComCon, in the Pacific Northwest – an effort to compare notes with other conrunners – I raise a cheer! Alas, due to factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, ConComCon has been suspended for a few years. More is the pity. And, as I am given to understand, the longstanding SMOFCons (ironically named for the misconception that there are Secret Masters of Fandom) tend to fall into the illusion that they're supposed to concentrate on the art of Worldcons.

Re Glascon and GRRMartin and humorless fans: Look, Ahrvid, I think you're just running into fans who aren't on your wavelength, who don't do fandom the way you do; and then you mistake them for representing fandom in general. I don't know that these individuals represent anything more than themselves. I am not convinced there are Secret Bureaucrats Likewise, I don't suppose that George RR Martin's frustrations with the Glasgow Worldcon, or that the US fan who hosted a panel and then got kicked out of a Worldcon experienced anything more than one unrepresentative idiot on one convention committee. I can be convinced, but I don't have enough evidence.

Re the 17th/18th-century Swedish engineer Polhem: you do find original characters, don't you? Granted that Polhem's worldview sounds as ... offbeat as Swedenborg's, I also had problems suspending my disbelief when I read Heinlein's expository lump about "Speedtalk." I simply don't buy the idea that one phoneme can equate to one word in any core vocabulary, however small, much less to Basic English. (Maybe to Toki Pona, but that's a whole 'nother kettle of fish. Maybe I'll write about that another time.)

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer

Re your comment to Heath Row, sparked by John Thiel – Damn straight, SF has no business bringing readers or viewers comfort. Yet, as I recall some British fanzine pointed out, *Star Trek* didn't challenge people; it comforted, it gave people what they expected. In some ways, I suppose military SF and space opera generally does that – it doesn't present the shock of the new, the novel, the unexpected, much less food for thought.

Re your comments to Ahrvid Engholm –

Yes, he does come up with unexpected fanhistorical narratives. I really must get on with my Canadian fanhistory material, and do the same.

As to the story about the parents who burned their son's fanzines ... I am saddened. But not surprised.

Re your comments to me –

Thank you for your condolences on the passing of Fran Skene. By this point I think I have accepted that everyone's life is temporary, it's just one of the facts we build our lives upon. Little wonder, then, when fictional mouthpieces such as Gandalf say things like "all we have to do is decide how we use our lifespan." Or something like that. As good a way to evaluate life as any, and better than some. In that spirit I am constructing a life and have drafted a will.

Thank you also for enjoying “The Jade Ring.” Yes, there are two stories going on here: one based on an actual convention fiasco, and a concurrent satire on “fans” who really do think and act as if they live in another reality – or at least come from one. The moral of the story, if there is any, is that periodically people like this simply *will* barge into convention-running with vast ambitions and half-vast performance: armed with no seed capital, no prior experience, and heads stuffed with misconceptions.

At the time that people like this came ~~down like a wolf on the fold~~ upon my fan community, I was shocked that grown adults who walked on two legs and seemed to talk coherently, like real people, could actually be *blind* to practical necessities ... necessities such as *having enough prior experience* working on conventions to build some credibility; or *having enough seed money in advance*, not counting on tons of advance memberships just because you advertised a new convention; or making contracts with hotels and Guests of Honour in a timely fashion, and *paying money in full as agreed, and on time*; budgeting for a *realistic* number of congoers; distributing progress reports ... well, you get the idea.

What the hell, I was young and naïve then. I had to adjust to human foibles the hard way.

Re your comment to Heath Row – there’s a missing distinction here.

“Fanfiction,” as media franchise fans defined it (and spelled it with one ‘a’), uses characters and settings from published (and copyrighted) fiction, or from commercial (and copyrighted) movies and television. No, I *don’t* think this falls under “fair use;” at least some studios have come down on mediafans like a ton of bricks, for using copyrighted characters and settings without legal license. (The fact that Paramount Studios simply ignored Star Trek fanfiction, while Lucasfilm and other studios threatened fans with legal action, illuminates nothing about copyright law but everything about different policies from different parties.)

“Faanfiction,” as fannish fans defined it (and spelled it with two a’s), uses characters and settings from SF fandom, sometimes thinly disguised with pseudonyms, and not using published or broadcast materials.

The fact that people keep missing this distinction has to do with both kinds of amateur fiction originally appearing in fanzines. Before the Internet, fanzines were by definition small-circulation amateur publications, and commercial organizations could safely ignore them. After the Internet and the World Wide Web appeared – and especially when e-books and e-magazines appeared – the *print-number distinction* between small-circulation, amateur/small-press publications and large-circulation, commercial publications disappeared. The “fair use” doctrine used to be based on a specific small number of copies being made of a commercially published work. (The editor Stanley Schmidt once editorialized on some schoolteacher blithely, and ignorantly, copying samples of his work for one of their classes.)

I know a little about this because I was collecting SF market information during the transition, from the 1980s through the 1990s. Before, submission guidelines said that periodicals offered to pay for First North American Serial Rights; afterwards, more and more guidelines started talking about “First English language” or “First electronic” rights, without reference. By now, the “fair use” copy-number distinction has disappeared.

One source that tries to clarify the current definition of “first rights” is an article by Neil Clarke of *Clarke'sworld* (<https://neil-clarke.com/first-rights/>).

As usual, in most conversations in person or in print, lay people like us try to get away expressing their fuzzy, underinformed opinions. But *there is no substitute for actually doing research*, as at an actual government office's actual copyright website, whether in Canada, the U.S., the U.K. or the E.U.

There should be a commandment: **Go Look It Up.**

Intermission 146, by Ahrvid Engholm

You responded to Henry Grynsten,

Argument for that consciousness can appear in machines: If it couldn't it'd mean magic exists - and we can't believe in magic. If there exists some advanced phenomenon that we can't explain or describe it must mean magic exists. It'd mean things happen without reason and that's magic or the supernatural.

Actually, I've been thinking this one over ... for a number of reasons, the definition of “magic” appears to be *manipulating reality*, at least probability, *by means that look a hell of a lot like wishing real hard*. Adult make-believe, that is. Are you surprised that there are grown adults who believe, and claim, to practice magic in the First World? Or that there have been, all the time that we seemed to be committed to rational materialism?

Ye Murthered Master Mage #272, by George Phillies

You commented to someone (I can't figure out who) that you were curious as to how long there has been phony vote counting for Hugo Award ballots. Rather than “how long,” I would ask “when,” or “how frequently” – and for that matter, how often this happens to fan-voted awards. Before the Chengdu Worldcon, there was the “Sad Puppies” movement to game the ballot system promote one subgenre of novels at the expense of others. At the Chengdu Worldcon, there seem to have been attempts to game the ballot system to promote Chinese SF writers' works, notably by confused American committee members. At Glascon, there seem to have been confused attempts to promote minority SF writers' works at the expense of others. And so it goes.

In CSFFA meetings (CSFFA is the association that oversees Canada's Aurora Awards), we spend a good deal of time discussing how to prevent attempts at block-voting, or attempts to vote mainly for friends and relatives and just the people you know, or attempts by writers to promote their works at the expense of others.

Maybe we should remember the example of the Hogu satirical awards. Let me also remind you of the Elron Awards, which were utterly arbitrary and unilateral satirical awards bestowed for many years by a Vancouver fan, for the worst contributions to SF, fantasy, horror, and fan activity. The physical award was a bronzed lemon, mounted on a John Norman novel.

Re the third instalment of your faanfic – I have to reread the previous instalments to provide some continuity to this instalment. I quite forgot who is the young lady that

the viewpoint character is talking to, or what the viewpoint character and his next conversational partner are talking about. After this instalment, in your place I might have gone on to have the viewpoint character advise the young man to write a detailed witness statement about the attempted abduction and sexual crime that the aliens prevented – just as any upstanding British citizens might write, and submit to the police.

(Maybe I'm being naïve again but this is the kind of mediation that I might have characters undertake.)

R.A.I.L. #2, by Adrian Kresnak

Re fiction writing, particularly formula fiction: I am at the point where having an explicit, detailed plot, or genre formula, would suit me fine. But in the meantime I have purchased the “Fabula” card deck system for planning a story in detail.

§

At the risk that I have said this before:

I may just be imagining this, but it seems that hinterland communities in Canada – that is, anything north of the 55th Parallel – are badly served for transportation, communications, and all kinds of public services. I was shocked by the closure of Greyhound Canada last year. I gather it was the major, if not sole land transportation for many northern communities. I was not shocked by the deserted railway station I saw in Winnipeg in 2023, only because I had received news for some years about the withdrawal from passenger rail service.

I finally got the word that passenger rail, even in the concentration of population in southern Canada, is not economical. Our population is thinly spread except in the south (especially in the western provinces).

I still wonder if we have some practical solutions staring us in the face, such as establishing medical centres in northern latitudes, to supply more immediate services than flying patients down to Vancouver or Toronto (as we do now), from communities such as Bella Coola or Cameron Wells. Perhaps modern electric-train lines commuting between north and south could cut the cost of both freight *and* passenger transportation.

§

Re your comment to me: Thank you for appreciating “The Jade Ring.” I am glad you saw some facility in my dialogues. Not everybody got the point of the serial.

§

Re your fiction: so you also spotted the common function between superheroes and disaster/emergency responders. I wonder if anyone else has thought, as I have, about a story universe where metahumans are conscripted into a sort of Search-and-Rescue-cum-FEMA organization?

Brandy Hall Issue 8 September 2024, by Mark Nelson

Interesting that when you describe becoming a fan, you describe what you watched. For me, it was a matter of what I *read* – a number of classic authors, ranging from Poul Anderson and Isaac Asimov through Arthur C. Clarke and Edmond Hamilton, Robert Heinlein and Andre Norton, to Alan E. Nourse and John Wyndham. I also read things like Tom Swift books, but then I wasn't choosy.

The movie and TV science fiction available in my formative years was, well, shlock. Irwin Allen productions, for example. I watched *The Outer Limits* and *Twilight Zone* because they were there. Even *Star Trek* was average, but I watched it because it was there. Series like *Dr. Who* and *Blake's 7* simply weren't there. Sometimes weekend television showed American B-movies that sort of qualified as SF, or *British Sunday Theatre* showed anything from the first *1984* or *The Island of Dr. Moreau* to the Dr. Quatermass movies, but I consistently found these movies when they were half-over, so it was years before I realized what their titles were.

Re your comments to me:

Thank you! I'm pleased that "The Jade Ring" works for you as a story. Check out my comments above to Jefferson Swycaffer, relating to this story.

When it comes to fannish fandom, as one of the several phases that fandom went through, you may wish to check out the several histories of fandom, starting with the volumes by the late Harry Warner Jr. (*All Our Yesterdays* and *A Wealth of Fable*).

As to literary fiction ... I never quite *got* what the thing about toffee-nosed academic/literary fiction was. In this connection you may be amused by the career of a man named Crad Kilodney, who made something of a career getting up the nose of literary writers, at least in Toronto. What he did was to write his own stories, print up his own booklets, and sell his own books, as if he were hawking them from a cart on the street. There's a website now where you can access his books. Sometimes I think of him as a self-publishing model. Then I sober up.

Re Heath Row's mention of finding my name in back numbers of *Factsheet Five*: this was not the only attempt to review and catalog the many kinds of amateur, DIY periodicals published from the 1980s onward, but it may have been the first review zine to expose me to the zine explosion that occurred independently of fanzine fandom.

Snow Poster Township #18, by Heath Row

Re your comments to Jefferson Swycaffer – yes, I'm hearing from other sources that it is now difficult, if not impossible, for new writers to be considered by higher-paying publishers. Even well-known, long-established midlist writers – Spider Robinson, for example – now tend to be outcompeted.

Re my fanfiction – glad you enjoyed my story! Just one correction: you left the "Ruprecht" out of Ernest Wolfgang Friedrich Siegfried Gunther Klaus Inger Stroheim Ruprecht Hentzau Schelswig-Holstein Trishtrash-am-Wiesen von Ulm. Yes, I am couching what I observed of conrunning in fictional form.

Samizdat... Ish #27, Sept/Oct 2024, by Samuel Lubell

Re your comment to Jefferson Swycaffer – what other places are there to publish faanfic? Garth Hulk need know!

It is a curious experience, reading the latest instalment of your paper on how scientists appeared in literature, after having just done some freelance typing for a lady who has been writing a personal journal for publication.

On the one hand, I am aware of a growing contemporary attitude that people express as “spiritual but not religious.” On the other hand, the manuscript I have been typing for publication seems ... rather New-Age-inspired. Unclear on the distinction between one’s physical reality and emotional reality. Given to phrases such as “personal energy,” and expressing the idea that the “energy” or attitude that you “put out into the Universe” shapes the events or fortunes you experience later. Clearly this is not the scientific age as Mark Twain experienced it.

Your paper might have gone on to examine the changing depiction of science, and scientists, in literature from Twain’s lifetime to our day. One of the changes I became aware of – if I am not deluding myself – is that there was a widely-shared, confident belief in the certainty of the exact sciences up to the first World War, but a change in basic assumptions that broke that confidence, as early as the Edwardian period. I think, but am not certain, that the rise of serious dialogue about synergy, *Weltanschauung*, and synchronicity was also concurrent with emerging ideas such as Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, and about complex systems having unforeseen emergent properties. (We are now familiar with the last idea in terms of mathematical complexity and chaos theory; but the first scientist to write about general system theory was actually a cell biologist, Dr. George von Bertalanffy, who survived the second World War in Europe and later taught at the University of Alberta.)

And now, but for my apazine, I seem to have come to the end of N’APA #272.





R.A.I.L. #3

November 2024

Renovation And Innovation Letter #3

November 2024

railfanzine@gmail.com

Cover: a photo of a snapshot of the U.S. Capitol. I took it while on a trip a while ago. In the age of generative AI, I like how snapshots create physical, “raw” photographs.

*

Hello All,

Thank you to everyone for your kind words of welcome! I am happy to be here and hope to participate for a long time to come!

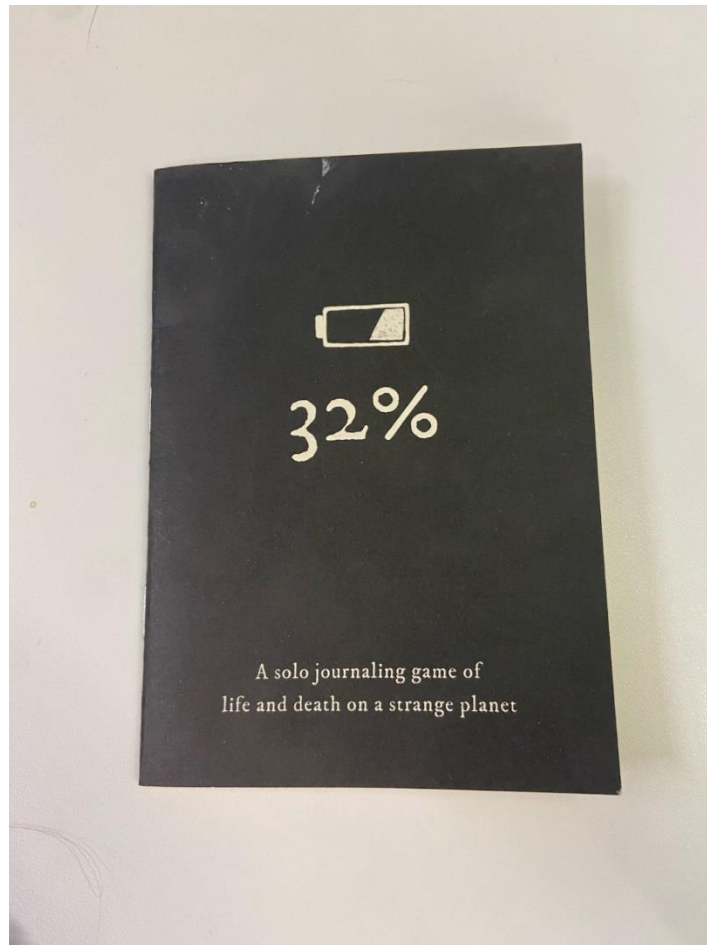
This semester has been pretty busy, so unfortunately I don't have the next chapter of the Foxhaven story finished for this month's mailing. Instead, I'm including a couple of pieces I've written for other things. Please accept them.

This semester has been busy because I'm close to graduating! **I am currently preparing to defend my thesis to get my master's degree in health & risk communication.** (!!!) This course of study has been very fun for me because it contains everything from sharing scientific research with the public to connecting individuals with resources available to them. A lot of the classes were focused on public health, but who knows – maybe I'll get a job developing those advertisements for medications on TV.

My thesis specifically is about health journalism. Journalists who didn't specialize in health reporting before the pandemic suddenly found themselves writing about health in 2020. I explored how journalists writing for community newspapers determined what health information was credible and how they decided to write about that information. I'd love to tell you my results, but I'll wait until the next time so I don't jinx myself at the defense. The study will probably not end up published in a journal or anything, but I think it's still a good contribution to my program.

See you later!

Adrian



This review was previously published on my Instagram, OleandrsStudio. I've edited it a bit.

Zine Review: "32%" by Ella Lim of Lostways Press!

This is an RPG zine, described as "a solo journaling game of life and death on a strange planet." You play as the survivor of a spaceship crash. Your life support has 32% battery left: if you aren't rescued in seven days, you won't make it. You play by drawing cards and rolling dice to explore the planet and gather materials. Roll a six twice and wait a day, and you'll be saved.

It's a somber premise, but the game doesn't have to be entirely sad. The zine has prompts and lists to encourage the player's creativity as they journal their experiences on the planet. In my first game, I found evidence of human activity on my supposedly uninhabited planet. I came across plateaus and small animals.

I wasn't rescued. But I never gave up hope.

This is one of two RPG zines I bought from this writer. If you like this idea of a solo journaling roleplay game but want a less-stressful premise, I recommend the other one, "A Lonely Road." It's about going on a solo road trip.

The DAO

I originally published the following true story in my art zine, Longform. I've edited it a bit here. My sources are the Junion YouTube video The DAO Hack: Story of Ethereum Classic and the DAO Wikipedia page.

“Decentralized autonomous organization” is such a cool term. It’s too bad it’s related to cryptocurrency. The first DAO — the one that’s called *the DAO* — had an amazing breakdown. Let me tell you about it. I promise I won’t sell you on an investment opportunity or anything.

2016. The Ethereum blockchain competes with Bitcoin to bring crypto to the world. People who’ve invested in crypto are excited for the ways that blockchain technology could be applied in the real world.

A blockchain is basically a public ledger. There’s some stuff that distinguishes a blockchain from any other public ledger, but I won’t get into it here in case it distracts from the story. There’s just a couple things you need to know:

1. Once a program is released onto the blockchain, it cannot be changed.*
2. Once a transaction is added to the blockchain, it cannot be reversed.**

I’ll explain the asterisks later.

The permanent nature of the blockchain is supposed to protect individuals from being screwed over by centralized powers. Centralized powers — actually, all other people — aren’t trustworthy. Computer code, which has no humans involved, is trustworthy. If you’re thinking “but humans write code,” well... you are right.

The first DAO was a corporation without incorporation. Built on the Ethereum blockchain, it sold governance tokens that let shareholders vote on what the DAO would do. It was a venture capital fund, sort of. Wikipedia says it had +18,000 shareholders and 0 employees.

Part of its code allowed for investors to leave the organization and take their money out. An investor or a group of investors would make a proposal announcing their intentions to leave, there would be a waiting period, and then the proposal would usually pass. The investors would form a “split” DAO, then send a request to the main DAO to send their money to their wallet. The DAO — completely automated — would do so.

But the code had a little bug in it. When an investor requested their money, the code responded in these steps:

1. Investor requests their funds.
2. Check the balance of the investor’s capital. (BALANCE = \$200)
3. Send the balance to the given address. (\$200 to Wallet ABC)
4. Update the balance in the DAO to reflect that they had no more money in the DAO. (BALANCE = \$0)

It's a logical series. A human writing a check might work in the same order.

Here's the thing:

If the fourth step is not completed, a human sending a check could still know that the investor is not entitled to ask for the same amount to be sent to them again. In other words, they'd only write one check at a time. An automated system has no such memory. Until the balance is updated, they will reference the old balance — and if someone makes a specifically coded request...

1. Investor requests their funds.
2. Check the balance of the investor's capital. (BALANCE = \$200)
3. Send the balance to the given address. (\$200 to Wallet ABC)
4. Upda—wait. Investor requests their funds.
5. Check the balance of the investor's capital. (BALANCE = \$200)
6. Send the balance to the given address. (\$200 to Wallet ABC)
7. Upda—wait. Investor requests their funds.
8. Check the balance of the investor's capital. (BALANCE = \$200)
9. Send the balance to the given address. (\$200 to Wallet ABC)
10. Upda—wait. Investor requests their funds.

And so on. The investor was only ever entitled to \$200, but because the code never reached the step where it would update the balance, it mistakenly gave the investor hundreds more than that.

The DAO coders figured out the bug and put out a new version of the code that had the updating done before any funds were sent out. But that was a new code, something for future people to use to set up new organizations. Here's the first asterisk: *If the investors of *the* DAO wanted the update, they would all have to migrate to the brand new code.

The DAO's code remained unchanged.

It didn't take long for someone to take advantage. They made a specific request and the DAO sent them money, and sent them money, and sent them money. By the time anyone else noticed, the blockchain had recorded the "hacker" was now the owner of \$60 million worth of Ether tokens (ETH).

I put "hacker" in quotation marks for a reason. This person did not break into any company laptops or social-engineer anyone into giving up a password. They used the code as it was written. Not the way the code was meant to be used, but still the same open-source code that everyone else was using. Computer code is trustworthy, right?

If a human mistakenly sent this much money in this way, they'd be fired.

The other members of the DAO looked at the remaining money in the fund. They looked at the Ethereum blockchain. Once a transaction is recorded on the blockchain, remember, it can't be reversed. There was no way to seize the stolen tokens and return them to their rightful owners.

Here's the second asterisk: **To reverse the transactions, the powers that ETH decided to abandon the blockchain and use a new one. This new one was the same as the old one up until the point where the hack started. The people with the biggest computers and the most ETH used the new chain. If you wanted your ETH cryptocurrency to still "count," you would have to join them there.

Some crypto users saw this fork as a betrayal of cryptocurrency ideals. Blockchain tech was supposed to prevent the rich and powerful from manipulating the rules as they liked, but now they were doing just that. These idealists kept using the original chain, hack and all. The original chain is now called Ethereum Classic. As of November 2024, the Ethereum Classic token sells for \$20. The forked chain's token, which kept the name Ether, sells for \$2,902.

I haven't mentioned any of the people involved in this story by name. Part of it is the pseudonymous nature of crypto. While some individuals do identify themselves with their real-life names, others – including the hacker – are still unknown. The other part is that the DAO, like many decentralized ventures, intentionally attempts to remove people from the equation. If there's a moral to this story, it's that automating the human component doesn't always make something better. If nothing else, there has to be a human who can take responsibility if something goes wrong.

Then again, it's not like humans always get held accountable, either.