

# N'APA 269

March 2024



# The Official Organ

## #269

**Next deadline: May 15, 2024**

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### Procedure: Please Read:

Submissions should be sent to the preparer, Jefferson Swycaffer, [abontides@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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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N'APA News: This issue includes Synergy 12 by John Thiel, which should have been in the last issue. Heath Row was able to forward it to me from John. John is having computer problems and won't be in N'APA for a while.

Putin won the election, got 89%. His opponent got 11...years.

# An Atomic INTERMISSION #141 Issue

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, [ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com), for EAPA, N'APA and all who want to Make Fandom Great Again! Follow @SFJournalen's Nordic fan news (posted 1-2 times/week, from lack of time lately). Tweeting future a bit unclear, a big X, but we muskn't despair! Beware of typos, or what Swedes call *skrivfel* = "writewrongs"! Late Jan 2024.

## Editorially: Atoms, Snow,

During the holidays I saw the film about Robert Oppenheimer, which inspired me to look for interesting stuff about *nuclear bombs and atomic power* for this issue. Sweden actually once had the ambition to get nukes. In the 1940s the government sent study groups the US to try to know the latest about computers, atomic power, jet engines and so on.

The A-bomb program lasted through the 1950s to the early 1960s - after we first naively had asked the Americans if they would *sell* us some A-bombs...! It was internal opposition within the Social Democrat party, the biggest party and usually the one in power, that stopped us building nukes. But we were ready: we had built a plant, Ågesta, to produce plutonium, we had begun mining uranium (having among the world's biggest uranium deposits), SAAB had begun drafting a nuclear bomb carrying attack jet, the military had begun doing "simulated" nuclear blasts blowing up some 50 tons of TNT at a time... It is said we were only 1-2 years away from a live test. A site far up in the sparsely populated north had been decided.

To be or NATO be? It should be any day now for Sweden.

The Turkish parliament is ready to approve it, and Hungary says RSN according to our newspapers.

Jthinking of the cold war, we've had extreme cold snaps!

It's been freezing in Sweden, Norway and Finland for a

number of weeks. It eased a bit around New Year, but

came back in January. Temperatures in what we call

Norrland, "Northland", reached below -50C and in Stockholm it was -10-15C

(statistically the average January temperature in Stockholm is just -3C). There was a

line-up of 1000 vehicles getting stuck by the cold, ice and snow for over 24 hours on

the southern E22 motorway. Even international media covered the Scandinavian cold

hole. From the news I learn Britain has been visited by Mr Minus Celsius too, and in

the US cold and snow has hit even the southern states. Last winter was pretty cold too.

If the trend continues Ms Thunberg should get herself an extra sweater..

It was slightly warmer at New Year's Eve, so I could follow the fireworks from the

Catherine Heights, the best spot. Rockets were flashing over the harbour as Kyiv air defence was

taking out Russian drones. Picture below.

I won't linger on it much, but you know I follow cross-country skiing. While the Swedes had limited success in the big Tour de Ski week recently, worth mentioning is that one *Linn Svahn*, a top sprinter

also great on greater stretches, won no less than *three* of the seven Tour races! She's won *four* World Cup sprints in a row. I stick out my head and say that Linn is right *now* probably the world's best in the odd sport of running on frozen water with long sticks. And that after she had *two whole seasons ruined* by a bad shoulder injury, having surgery and all. She also makes interesting TV interviews



From a 1000 cars standstill. It began with trucks getting stuck.



Linn Svahn back on top after injury!



New Year fireworks over Stockholm harbour. Lots of party people.



that often give us a smile. It's skiers like Linn that makes one wants to follow XC skiing. US skier Jessie Diggins won the Tour, but only won *one* race. TdS point system is something you don't get the point of. Anyway, the American team says cross-country skiing is growing over there. *If the weather trend stays, it will!* End of boring sports.

And beginning of space. A third Swedish astronaut - after Christer Fuglesang and Jessica Meir – Marcus Wandt, was launched Jan 18 by a



*ISS at the moment housing 11 since the Dragon crew, in blue uniforms, joined. Marcus Wandt with a mike speaking to earthside viewers.*

SpaceX Dragon ship. (I learn he has a Norwegian citizenship too, so welcome to the spacefarer club Norway!) He's a former Gripen jet test pilot and graduated engineer. Up there he met Danish astronaut Andreas Mogensen, already on the ISS and now actually serving as the space station commander. Marcus will take part in up to 30 experiments, among them how 0G affects stem cells. He stays for a fortnight.



*Marcus getting ready for launch.*

Mogensen had to celebrate the “change of guard” in Denmark in orbit. We of course refer to that Queen Margarethe II of Denmark abdicated (she's 83 and have health issues) in favour of her son, who was proclaimed new Danish king as Fredrik X in front of packed crowds in Copenhagen January 14th. Wonder if he could see the celebrations in Copenhagen from orbit? The ISS has a fancy viewing port and the whole city was red and white. *Vi er røde, vi er hvide...*

You also wonder what they think on the ISS as they fly over Ukraine? Do they see explosions? The “CnaBa YkpaNhe!” that ends every *Intermission* is Ukranian cyrillic for “Glory to Ukraine”.



*Margarethe II of Denmark signs the instrument of abdication during a cabinet meeting. "Gosh! Now it's my turn!" Frederik X, left, seems to think... Held og lykke!*

The Ukrainians haven't made great advances lately - apart from blowing up quite much of Russia's warships, command centres, tanks, AWACS planes etc - but haven't seen defeat either. Their fronts are holding, despite a disturbing deficit of ammo and other military support (damn that gang of Congress republicans - vote them out!), not yet any jets and continued Russian mobilisation.

Russian losses have increased dramatically from repeated, suicidal meat grinder attacks. Ukrainians this winter have a shooting gallery over open fields, while waiting for more materia so they later can forth: shells, F16s, more of those drones they have become skilled in operating. Many are just modified and “cheap” commercial drones, like FPV drones (*First Person View*) by which the operator follows the flight virtually through special goggles. They load them with explosives to take out Russian armour by the hundreds on the hotly contested Avdiika front alone.

As I've observed already, Ukraine follow Clausewitz' principle: to target *Russia's will to fight* by maximising their losses. Loss ratios are 1:3 to 1:7 in Ukrainian favour, in Avdiivka more towards 1:7 when Russia unimaginatively repeats “human waves”. Artillery is of particular importance, causing 70-75% of enemy losses and disrupting supplies. The Ukrainians seem to be particularly impressed by the Swedish Archer, a fully automated self-propelled howitzer, which shoots and scoots in under a minute with huge precision. The onboard computer calculates everything to hit within 10 metres at 30 km! It's been called an oversized sniper gun. The UK has also obtained it and the US is evaluating it for possible procurement. Watch [https://youtu.be/6g9d\\_tvH9nU](https://youtu.be/6g9d_tvH9nU)

Meanwhile Russia is forced to brush off rusting 1950s equipment since their industry can't make up for the material losses. Some is even unproduceable for the lack of Western /k/r/i/s/p/s chips. And

Russian mothers will get angrier and more desperate by the day for their manfolk being drafted by the thousands as cannon fodder. Distant ethnic regions are vacuumed for cannon fodder, as rich Moscow kids dance disco to "patriotic" songs. Putin's TV parrots talk dung as the birdbrsains they are, inflation rises (skyrocketing price on eggs cause huge anger), people freeze as extreme cold cracks heating pipes in apartment blocks (and repairs are slow or ignored, maintenance funds were embezzled, many repairmen are drafted to the war), crime rises as pardoned criminals back from the front do what they are good at, Russian airlines have a threefold increase in dangerous incidents as they can't get Western spare parts. All these cracks may sooner or later tear Russia apart, having 100+ nationalities of which many dislike being under Moscow boots. Russia is the last colonial power.

Putin will of course "win" the coming "election" with ballot boxes stuffed - to over 100% just to be sure. (Maybe he learned from the 1987 Scandinavian fan fund's Humbug?) As problems are mounting time is ticking for Putin. More oppression is needed the worse it gets, but the weaker a container becomes, the less pressure it withstands. A collapse of the Putin regime grows more likely, and that may end the foolish Ukraine war. *It's Ukraine's shortcut to victory!*

To keep up the pressure is essential. The EU and US economies are some 25 times bigger than Russia's and we could easily afford helping a friend in need. Besides, 90% of aid money goes to domestic suppliers creating jobs and growth. Weapons sent are in many cases those to soon be rotated out anyway but still perfectly fine and capable. A viral video showed the American IFV Bradley, a 40+ years old design soon to be replaced, take out the most modern Russian T90 tank.

Supporting Ukraine is an incredibly good investment! For a *tiny fraction* of the military budget it slashes the military capacity of a traditional foe. Putin had lost over 5 000 tanks, Ukrainian sources claim nearly 400 000 Ruskis are KIA (figure probably incl VAT, real number is still likely to be huge!), Putin's navy is sunk or neutralised in the Black Sea, most missile he aims at Ukraine's cities are shot down. Himars and Ukranian drones meanwhile pinpoint Russian targets everywhere - fuel depots, command posts, aircraft, military factories, bridges and more.

But if you read *some* media you don't realise *how bad the war is going for Russia*. Putin hopes and waits for that fool Trump to re-enter the White House and hopes he'll to stop Ukraine support and would pressure Zelensky to "negoitiate". Volodymyr Z says NJET! You can't make deals with someone who never honours them and Trump's self-important chatter means nothing. Remember how he bragged about meeting Kim Jong Un? He achieved absolutely nothing.

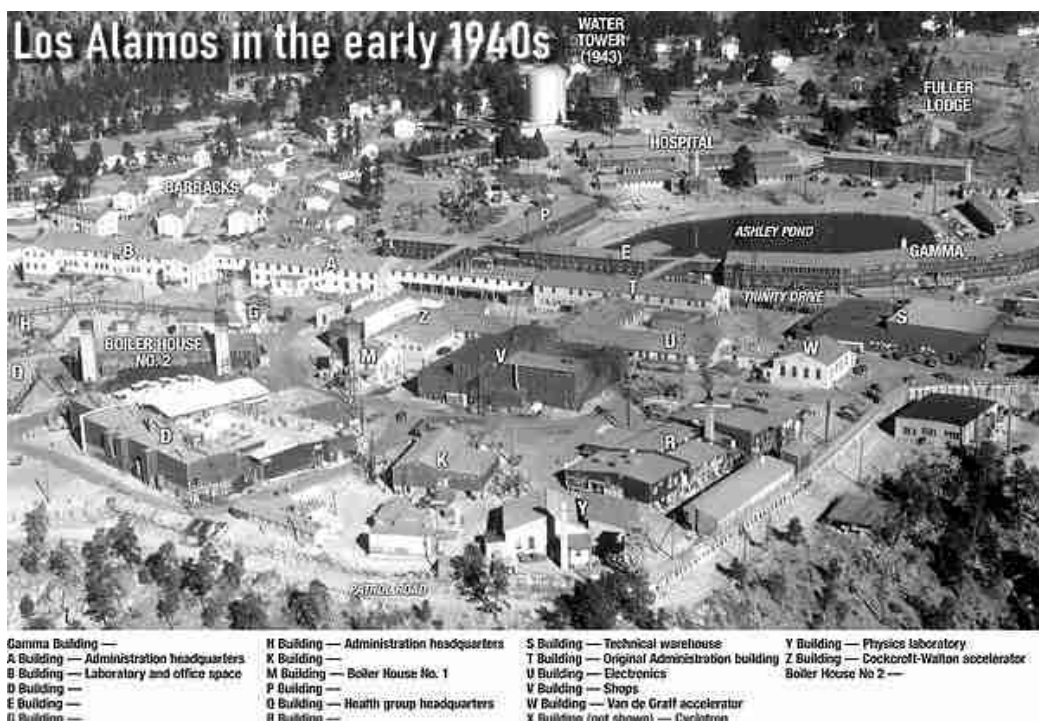
Tell your friends and politicians to keep supporting the brave yellow and blue! CnaBa YkpaNhe!

### What You Find In Box 1663

During the holidays I went with my brother Johan and saw "Oppenheimer", the film about the scientific leader of the Manhattan project everyone has been talking about. I've actually read a lot about about the development of the Atomic Bomb, of which I can recommend eg *The Making of the*



*Atomic Bomb*, by Richard Rhodes (but there are lots of books on the subject, and documentaries, many to be found on Youtube).





. The science and technology is fascinating, of course, so is the history and the role of the Bomb in WWII and the Cold War. Another angle worth studying is Los Alamos itself, the totally isolated city of barracks they built in the desert in just a few months, gathering the brightest minds, telling them to shut up and get to work. Many brought their families with them and tried to create some sort of normality in this absurd environment. In the little free time they had they had wild parties, every Sunday in the shadow of Death, or hiked on horseback through the surrounding New Mexico landscape, a pristine nature soon to become a little radioactive. Los Alamos can be seen as an example of a "constructed society". More pictures from Los Alamos:

[https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Resources/photo\\_gallery/tech\\_area\\_large.htm#marching](https://www.osti.gov/opennet/manhattan-project-history/Resources/photo_gallery/tech_area_large.htm#marching)

Did you know that there was only one (1) telephone line from inside the research compound to the outside? Always monitored of course. And all mail to the scientists and their families went to a **P O B O X 1663**. It is said that *Astounding's* John W Campbell - "a bloody fascist" to believe one nitwit PC



The "Big House", the dormitory for the Los Alamos Boys Ranch School before the government took over. Later it housed a library, Chaplain's Office, Red Cross HQ and guest rooms for big brass.

activist... - suspected that something was going on at that unknown place Los Alamos. Many of the magazine's subscriptions - many scientists read ASF - went to this P O Box 1663. That and open sources was what led him to get Cleve Cartmill to write that story "Deadline" that received security service attention (you already know about it, we fans feel pride in repeating it to prove how important our Flash Gordon stuff is!). It has been claimed that *Astounding* was often sold out at the news stands around Los Alamos.

One of the earliest movies about the A-bomb was a drama 1947 documentary with a little sf touch .

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0039178/crazycredits/?tab=cz&ref\\_=tt\\_trv\\_cc](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0039178/crazycredits/?tab=cz&ref_=tt_trv_cc) "The Beginning or End"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj3\\_C-DIIsM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj3_C-DIIsM) described on IMBD like this.

*Docudrama on the development of the first atomic bomb. Told from the perspective of a film recovered from a time capsule several hundred years into the future, the story is narrated by Robert Oppenheimer and Major General Leslie Groves beginning with the Nazis stated goal of developing an atomic bomb. Along with Britain and Canada, the U.S. reacts by beginning its own atomic program. The major developments are all presented....the film / is/ being locked in a time capsule to be opened in 2446, include the following: "You are about to see the motion picture sealed in the time capsule for the people of the 25TH Century." Subsequently, the end credits include the following in light of the opening statement: "To the people of the 25TH Century, This was THE BEGINNING. Only you, and those who have lived between us and you, can know THE END"*

Since most works in the US don't have "re-registered" copyrights, most work up to 1963 are in the Public Domain, so Youtube has the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vphTjSnCP-M>

As for the recent movie, I was a bit disappointed. I had hoped



Dining hall of Fuller Lodge. Shall we guess lots of "rocket fuel" was flowing there some evenings...?

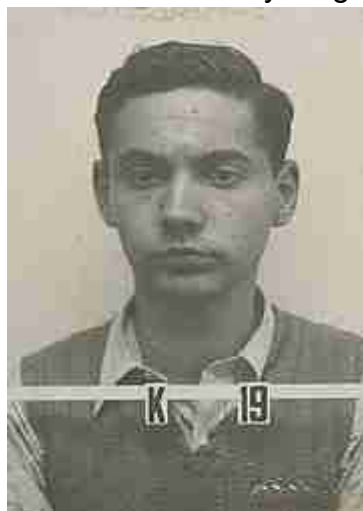


General Groves came fresh from building the Pentagon. A doer who fixed everything not under the science boss Oppie. Despite being very different they got along well together.

there would be more about the Bomb project itself. Instead we got a lot on internal bickering and love scenes of a type not adapted to the Hays code. We learned that one Lewis Strauss in government hated Oppie because he opposed developing "the Super", the hydrogen Bomb, and also because he had flirted with communism many years before. Here you may learn more about "Why the US betrayed Oppenheimer"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj3\\_C-DllsM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vj3_C-DllsM) "

I wasn't too interested in that. I would have liked more about the research behind the Bomb, the huge efforts put into refining uranium, the sports stadium graphite reactor (there's just a short scene with it), the decisions made around using the Bomb. It was too damn much about political committees interviewing people on Oppie's security clearance (he was controversially stripped of it). The film could maybe have shown FBI and others hunting spies, though they somehow missed that rascal Klaus Fuchs and the young Theodore Hall and went for John W Campbell



*Theodore Hall was Los Alamos' youngest scientist, and Stalin's spy.*

instead. (Maybe they had heard the rumour that JWC was "a bloody fascist"?) I would have loved a scene with agents pouring into Campbell's office...

This Klaus Fuchs practically delivered the blueprints for the Bomb to the Russians. There were some who had a naive view of communism. Of all belief systems, communism is the one having the biggest gap between what it claims in theory and what misery it achieves in reality. Some didn't care to inform themselves about the USSR show trials and mass executions, the Gulag camps, the created famines and empty store shelves, the corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency of a command economy. The rationale of traitors like Hill, Fuchs or Kim Philby was: "let's help the Russians so we get a balance between the west and communism". Stupid sheep! Since when is it acceptable to find a "balance" between murderous oppressors and liberal tolerance with at least a decent level of freedom? You don't take up a position *between* good and evil!

"Oppenheimer" otherwise had fine

cinematography and good actors, even if some complain that the US flag in a scene had 50 stars, instead of the 48 at the time. Beside more science, I would also have liked a bit more about the interesting social life in the barbed-wire city and more on their daily work. One example of something interesting that could have been used: since there was a war-shortage of copper, the Manhattan project borrowed 14 700 tons of silver from the US Treasury! It was needed for the coils in electromagnets used for Uranium separation. And silver works just as well, even slightly better. Some of the returned silver after the separation plants were updated probably went into coins in general circulation. My calculator claims that metal would be good for 55 million silver dollars! The huge Oak Ridge plant at its heydays is BTW said to have consumed up to 1/7th of all electricity produced in the US.

I noticed one science goofing. In an early scene big glass bowl is shown representing the amount of U-235 needed for a bomb (and a smaller bowl for plutonium). The bowl seemed good for 20 litres, but uranium is so dense that the critical mass would fit in just over 2 litres. I won't say this film was a...bomb, but my favourite A-Bomb film is still "*Dr Strangelove*", with Peter Sellers at the top of his act.

One thing constantly debated is Was It Right to Drop the Bomb? I discussed that with brother Johan. His idea to make a demonstration blast on some uninhabited island has serious drawbacks. If the Bomb became a dud the psychological effect would be zero, or the Japanese would even feel encouraged. Also, the Japanese could perhaps pick up some secrets about the Bomb from a



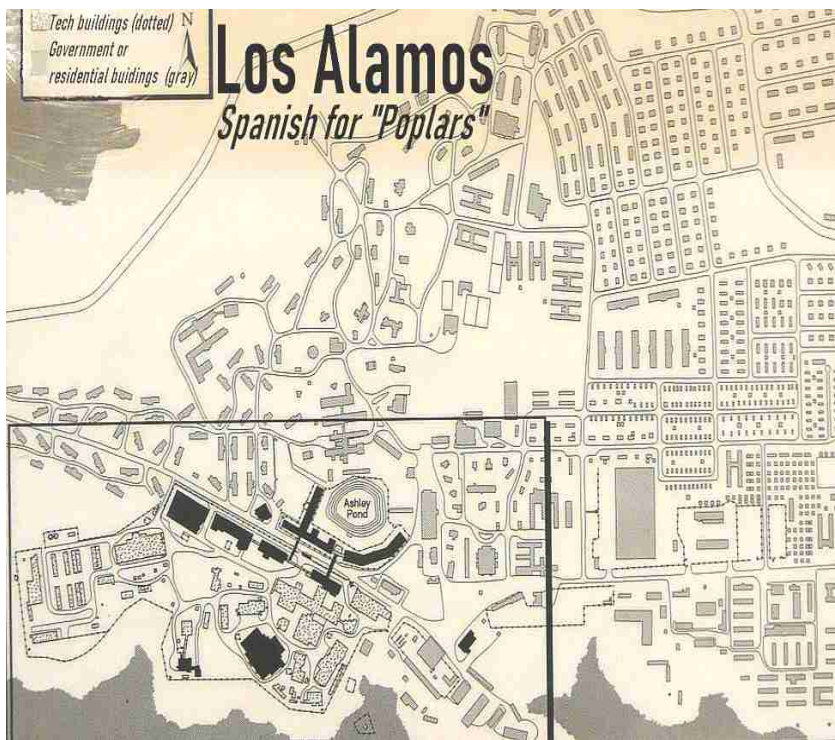
*K. E. J. Fuchs*

*He gave Stalin the blueprints for the Bomb. Russia built practically a duplicate of "Fat Man".*



*A message repeated everywhere at Los Alamos.*





Tech/science area lower left. Lots of residential houses top right. The design - much simpler than the Fat Man implosion type - would work and there wasn't enough U235 around to afford a test. The Nagasaki Bomb requiring a fine-tuned implosion had to be tested in advance, with the Trinity test July 16. Besides, there were more Fat Men in the pipeline (Plutonium is easier to produce than U235), one more to come in late August and up to six Fat Men to be finished through September. The Americans could have caused substantial damage in a rather short time if Nippon hadn't thrown in the kimono!

Now, while dropping the Bomb caused 100 000s of casualties it may at the same time have saved millions. The Japanese were determined to fight to the end. Their kamikaze tactics and the huge battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa illustrate this. Millions of civilians would be engaged in fruitless defence, if only armed with only bamboo spears. The Japanese had concentrated thousands of kamikaze planes and boats loaded with explosives at the coasts. A land invasion of the Japanese mainland would have meant - analytics claim - between half a and one million US casualties and untold millions of Japanese ones.

The "Gadget" as it was called was originally intended to be used on the Nazis, which probably went well with Oppenheimer who was of Jewish background. But that it shortened the war when usage shifted to Japan was also something he accepted, though he struggled with some doubts! He expressed it when he quoted *Bhagavad Gita*: "I have become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds."

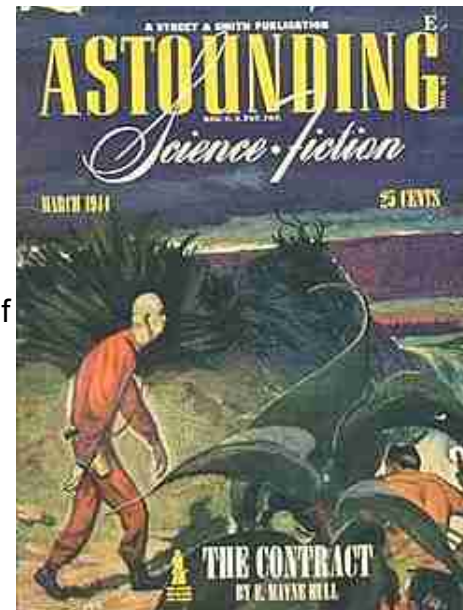
Beside, psychologically it was smart by the Americans to let Japanese leadership face the destructive power of the atoms themselves. It gave them a somewhat face-saving excuse to capitulate: you can't fight the fundamental forces of the universe. The US was also smart in letting the emperor stay, though as only a figure head, which is royals in practically all remaining monarchies are today. That was also face saving.

Seeing the film and thinking about all this is a bit disturbing today, when there's a major war in Europe and one maniac threatens us all with his Bombs! \*

\*But *Astounding* had a reader in wartime Germany. In an intro to JWC's Collected Editorials Harry Harrison says it was the "magazine that Albert **EINSTEIN** SUBSCRIBED to, the one that Wernher von Braun had sent to him by way of Sweden during the war, so that he would not miss a single issue". Mr E reading ASF!  
 \* Limited gains and huge risks is what keeps Czar Putins blood-stained finger from the Button. 1) Putin's reluctant "allies", like China and (especially lukewarm) India would instantly break with Russia and sanctions

demonstration. Finally, fissionable material was extremely expensive and would be "wasted" on blowing up some turtles and seagulls instead of creating havoc among the enemy. And you couldn't warn the Japanese to evacuate a target to spare civilians, because then they would only concentrate air defence there instead. President Truman *did* in fact issue a grave warning, and leaflets were dropped on Japan, but they it was more a generally phrased warning of "prompt and utter destruction", not being specific and it had no effect...as *Astounding SF* had very few readers in Japan.\*

Worth noting is that the Hiroshima Bomb, of the U235 gun design, was the first test ever of it! The scientists were confident that



*Astoundingly popular mag at Los Alamos. Less so by US security.*



## HG Wells' Atomic Bomb

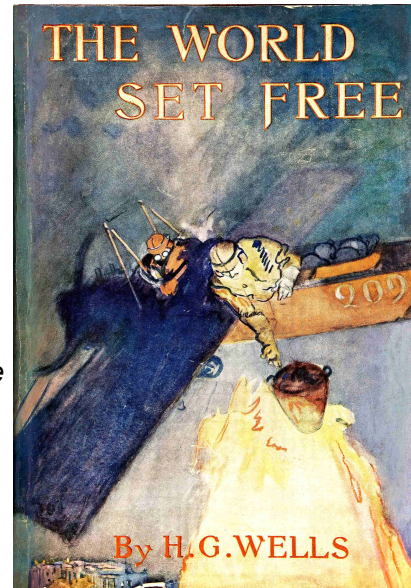
We hear that HG Wells foresaw the A-bomb in his novel *The World Set Free*, 1914. But what exactly did he write? I looked up the book at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1059/pg1059-images.html> and we find it was very odd A-bombs he envisioned, giving off a sort of continuous explosion... Atomic bombs are pretty central for the story and mentioned a lot, and I'll just give you a few examples so you get a grasp of Wells' visions.

The process actually resulted in gold as a waste-product:

*He set up atomic disintegration in a minute particle of bismuth; it exploded with great violence into a heavy gas of extreme radio-activity, which disintegrated in its turn in the course of seven days, and it was only after another year's work that he was able to show practically that the last result of this rapid release of energy was gold.*

Beside bombs, you also had civilian atomic aircraft engines:

*...it was at last possible to add Redmayne's ingenious helicopter ascent and descent engine to the vertical propeller that had hitherto been the sole driving force of the aeroplane without overweighting the machine, and men found themselves possessed of an instrument of flight that could hover or ascend or descend vertically and gently as well as rush wildly through the air. The last dread of flying vanished... aeroplane, with its atomic engine as noiseless as a dancing sunbeam and its phosphorescent gyroscopic compass, flew like an arrow to the heart of the Central European host*



Civilian atomic power was everywhere:

*And with an equal speed atomic engines of various types invaded industrialism. The railways paid enormous premiums for priority in the delivery of atomic traction engines, atomic smelting was embarked upon so eagerly as to lead to a number of disastrous explosions due to inexperienced hand*

Atomic bombs could actually be man-handled:

*...the bomb-thrower lifted the big atomic bomb from the box and steadied it against the side. It was a black sphere two feet in diameter. Between its handles was a little celluloid stud, and to this he bent his head until his lips touched it. Then he had to bite in order to let the air in upon the inducive. Sure of its accessibility, he craned his neck over the side of the aeroplane and judged his pace and distance. Then very quickly he bent forward, bit the stud, and hoisted the bomb over the side... The bomb flashed blinding scarlet in mid-air, and fell, a descending column of blaze eddying spirally in the midst of a whirlwind. Both the aeroplanes were tossed like shuttlecocks, hurled high and sideways and the steersman, with gleaming eyes and set teeth, fought in great banking curves for a balance.*

And the atomic energy comes from an element called Carolinum:

*Never before in the history of warfare had there been a continuing explosive; indeed, up to the middle of the twentieth century the only explosives known were combustibles whose explosiveness was due entirely to their instantaneousness; and these atomic bombs which science burst upon the world that night were strange even to the men who used them. Those used by the Allies were lumps of pure Carolinum, painted on the outside with unoxidised cydonator inducive enclosed hermetically in a case of membranum. A little celluloid stud between the handles by which the bomb was lifted was arranged so as to be easily torn off and admit air to the inducive, which at once became active and set up radio-activity in the outer layer of the Carolinum sphere. This liberated fresh inducive, and so in a few minutes the whole bomb was a blazing continual explosion. The Central European bombs were the same, except that they were larger and had a more complicated arrangement for animating the inducive... once its degenerative process had been induced, continued a furious radiation of energy and nothing could arrest it. Of all Hyslop's artificial elements, Carolinum was the most heavily stored with energy and the most dangerous to make and handle. To this day it remains the most potent degenerator known. What the earlier twentieth-century chemists called its half period was seventeen*

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*would tighten to 110%. There would be extreme tensions within Russia with a risk for a coup against Putin. 2) There are hints NATO would strike back with overwhelming conventional means, as nukes mean an "existential threat". NATO could very well scramble up to 1 000 modern jets and in a few days turn almost all Russian military in Ukraine to ex-parrots. 3) Nukes have limited effects on the battlefield anyway. A tactical nuke could perhaps destroy only one Ukrainian battalion at a time, as troops are spread out, ie 6-800 soldiers within a radius of a couple of km. And that would be areas your own troops couldn't move into, at least in the short term. They could destroy Kyiv...perhaps. Ukraine has Patriot missiles that seem to be able to take out many Russian missiles. Meanwhile, the Ukrainians just say: Even if they nuke us...we will just keep on fighting!*

days; that is to say, it poured out half of the huge store of energy in its great molecules in the space of seventeen days, the next seventeen days' emission was a half of that first period's outpouring, and so on. As with all radio-active substances this Carolinum, though every seventeen days its power is halved, though constantly it diminishes towards the imperceptible, is never entirely exhausted, and to this day the battle-fields and bomb fields of that frantic time in human history are sprinkled with radiant matter

Even more:

A moment or so after its explosion began it was still mainly an inert sphere exploding superficially, a big, inanimate nucleus wrapped in flame and thunder. Those that were thrown from aeroplanes fell in this state, they reached the ground still mainly solid, and, melting soil and rock in their progress, bored into the earth. There, as more and more of the Carolinum became active, the bomb spread itself out into a monstrous cavern of fiery energy at the base of what became very speedily a miniature active volcano. The Carolinum, unable to disperse, freely drove into and mixed up with a boiling confusion of molten soil and superheated steam, and so remained spinning furiously and maintaining an eruption that lasted for years or months or weeks according to the size of the bomb employed and the chances of its dispersal. Once launched, the bomb was absolutely unapproachable and uncontrollable until its forces were nearly exhausted, and from the crater that burst open above it, puffs of heavy incandescent vapour and fragments of viciously punitive rock and mud, saturated with Carolinum, and each a centre of scorching and blistering energy, were flung high and far.

The big war employing these bombs came in the 1950s:

By the spring of 1959 from nearly two hundred centres, and every week added to their number, roared the unquenchable crimson conflagrations of the atomic bombs, the flimsy fabric of the world's credit had vanished, industry was completely disorganised and every city, every thickly populated area was starving or trembled on the verge of starvation. Most of the capital cities of the world were burning; millions of people had already perished

The interesting thing is that getting A-bombs was fairly easy and society collapsed:

...usurpers, adventurers, and political desperadoes, were everywhere in possession of the simple apparatus for the disengagement of atomic energy and the initiation of new centres of destruction...And now under the shock of the atomic bombs, the great masses of population which had gathered into the enormous dingy town centres of that period were dispossessed and scattered disastrously over the surrounding rural areas.

More collapse:

In the map of nearly every country of the world three or four or more red circles, a score of miles in diameter, mark the position of the dying atomic bombs and the death areas that men have been forced to abandon around them. Within these areas perished museums, cathedrals, palaces, libraries, galleries of masterpieces, and a vast accumulation of human achievement, whose charred remains lie buried, a legacy of curious material that only future generations may hope to examine...

Wells' point with this is, of course, to envision the new "socialist" society he always dreamt of, which would replace the society devastated by atomic bombs:

...schools that would equip them to use the new atomic machinery.... So quite insensibly the council drifted into a complete reorganisation of urban and industrial life, and indeed of the entire social system.... Gold was now a waste product in the release of atomic energy, and it was plain that no metal could be the basis of the monetary system again...a certain number of units of energy as the value of a gold sovereign...The catastrophe of the atomic bombs which shook men out of cities and businesses and economic relations shook them also out of their old established habits of thought, and out of the lightly held beliefs and prejudices that came down to them from the past... The moral shock of the atomic bombs had been a profound one, and for a while the cunning side of the human animal was overpowered by its sincere realisation of the vital necessity for reconstruction.

As you know, Wells was a member of the Fabian Society, and according to Wiki it was:

"a British socialist organisation whose purpose is to advance the principles of social democracy and democratic socialism via gradualist and reformist effort in democracies, rather than by revolutionary overthrow". The name was from "Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus...His Fabian strategy sought gradual victory against the superior Carthaginian army under the renowned general Hannibal through persistence, harassment, and wearing the enemy down by attrition rather than pitched, climactic battles"

THE NEW STATESMAN

H G Wells: "It seems to me that I am more to the Left than you, Mr Stalin"

In 1934, Wells arrived in Moscow to meet a group of Soviet writers. While there Stalin granted him an interview.



What would Wells would think today when we have seen the complete bankruptcy of socialism? As we know, it has failed in any taste tried: the USSR, China, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela... The basic problem is that central planning has no chance to match the efficiency of the spontaneous interactions among millions of actors on a market. Since top heavy planning works so bad the results are shortages, poverty, discontent, stagnation, corruption, misery. And because people realise how bad it is the system can only stay in power through lies, propaganda and oppression, to keep protests from overthrowing it. It's far from "classless" as we get a growing gap between a small elite of despotes enriching themselves and the class of unlucky slaves. Meanwhile, "democratic socialism" is an oxymoron, since anyone allowed to decide would vote to get rid of such a system. It can only exist temporarily through inertia, its collapse and rot being just a bit slower.

But Wells was naively unaware of all this. He actually met the socialist arch-criminal Stalin in 1934, totally fooled by the Potemkin treatment visitors got and even declared: *"It seems to me that I am more to the Left than you, Mr Stalin."* <https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2014/04/h-g-wells-it-seems-me-i-am-more-left-you-mr-stalin>

No, he wasn't more left. HG Wells didn't murder millions, sent further millions to Siberian penal colonies, invaded neighbours, deporting their populations, inducing famine costing the lives of more millions, and so on. That one of history's top authors was so naive, is a natural effect of that many "cultural workers" are naive johnny-do-gooders with rosy glasses, someone full of ill-founded belief of his or her moral superiority, but in reality being somewhat of...a bloody fascist.

### Singing the Praise of the Bomb...

Some being grateful for the Bomb were the music makers. There are lots of songs about nukes and nuclear armageddon! Below a selection, but you find much, much more on eg Youtube. I picked mainly older songs since they are funnier and I'm a history buff.

I'll especially point to two songs, with a **WARNING** if you are sensitive to provoking language...

But she was never provoking, if you don't mind acute cuteness and an immense talent, with this Doris Day, who in the first song sings about... *Geiger counters* for radioactivity! You *must* see her wonderful performance of "Tic tic tic"!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4SuOz8sbUI> "Tic tic tic" - with Doris Day!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7V4tOdboWA> "When the A-Bomb Arrives" - with Johnny Bode, and **BEWARE** of the language!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv\\_jKyPaWtk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv_jKyPaWtk) "Brush the dust from that old bible"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp6dsKleGpU> "Merry Menuet"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XpoEM6EHu4> "Old man atom"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck0NmJvivP8> "Hydrogen Bomb"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXSUEU7ISfQ&pp> "Atomic bomb baby"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3gJ2XUZQ4o> "Dr Strangelove, Fallouts - Love That Bomb"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOrZuXhV530> "Uranium"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lws77iK\\_aw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lws77iK_aw) "Thirteen Women (and Only One Man in Town)"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO7-a39L0jU> "Atomic Nightmare"

The foul language warning is for the next song, "When the A-bomb Arrives", by that rascal Johnny Bode [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny\\_Bode](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Bode), who hoodwinked his way through our local entertainment scene, defrauding colleagues, fleeing from hotel and restaurant bills and generally making himself so impossible that late in life his only way to make a buck was to record porn songs (that of course sold well). I'll give you both the Swedish text and a loose interpretation into English. It's about that if WWII comes, hedonistic sex maniacs will just grab beer, run for the forest and have an orgy. You're soon dead anyway, so why not?

Here's what to do, in Swedish and English, "When the A-bomb arrives"...



Nobody sings about Geiger counters like Doris Day.

Vi går och demonstrerar, vi går och onanerar,  
 vi går mot allt som heter makt och heter lag  
 Det därför är egentligt, vi knulla skall offentligt,  
 om inte vi får rätt vi gör det du och jag.  
 Du liksom jag i sex är ganska van  
 Vi går igång på öppen plan  
 Först går du skönt och strippar  
 och sen vi båda pippar  
 till slut så sjunger mor med oss och hela stan.

När atombomben kommer låt oss ta en kasse öl  
 och gå ut i skogen med tills det blir fred  
 När atombomben kommer låt oss ta en kasse öl  
 både du och jag går med

När atombombens åska mäktigt rullar  
 ligger vi i gräset dricker öl och knullar  
 När atombomben kommer tänk på ditt och tänk på  
 mitt  
 överleva skall vår fitta liksom även så vår pitt.

Vi två på lördagskvällen, ibland går på bordellen.  
 Vi har vart gifta några år och vill ha nytt.  
 Du tar en stilig sjöman, och jag en tös från Öland.  
 Vi provar alla medel, det är ungt och det är krytt.  
 Sen går vi hem och pippar med varann,  
 det är så härligt vad vi båda kan.  
 Just det, just det gör susen emellan lördagsrusen.  
 Var kuk är en atombomb var fitta en vulkan.

När atombomben kommer...

We go and demonstrate, we go and masturbate,  
 We go against everything called power and called law.  
 Se us fuck in public, that's how we operate,  
 If we cannot you and I still do  
 You like me concerning sex are quite well versed.  
 We get excited in an open space.  
 First, you perform your striptease,  
 then us both have sex with all ease  
 Finally, mom sings along us and so does all of town.

When the A-bomb arrives, let's grab a case of beer  
 And go into the woods 'till everything calms down  
 When the A-bomb arrives, let's grab a case of beer,  
 both you and I and so will all of town

When atomic bomb thunder rolls mightily,  
 We lie in the grass, drinking beer, screwing tightly  
 When the A-bomb arrives, think of us, yourself and me,  
 Our dick will survive, just like our fanny

The two of us on Saturday evening dash to the cathouse  
 We've been married for some years and want something  
 new.

You take a handsome seaman, and I take a girl from Zealand  
 We try everything, we're young and it's tasty  
 Then we sneak away and bonk each other crazy  
 It's incredible what both of us can do.  
 It's exactly what works wonders amidst weekend binges.  
 Our cock is an atomic bomb, a vulva a volcano.

When the A-bomb arrives...



Kids with the cloud chamber of the Gilbert Atomic Energy Lab.



Album "The Madame's Songs" with Johnny Bode (right) and Lillemor (left) became popular, full of naughty songs. But if Johnny shook your hand, better count your fingers...

# History Corner

I count the start of the "History Corner" column from #96 when finds from our national library began to pour in. The "History Corner" headline came 10 issues later. During the C-pandemic Stockholm's Royal Library opened their digital





newspaper article for a trial period, and I suddenly had thousands of newspaper clips with odd and interesting historical info about sf and fandom.

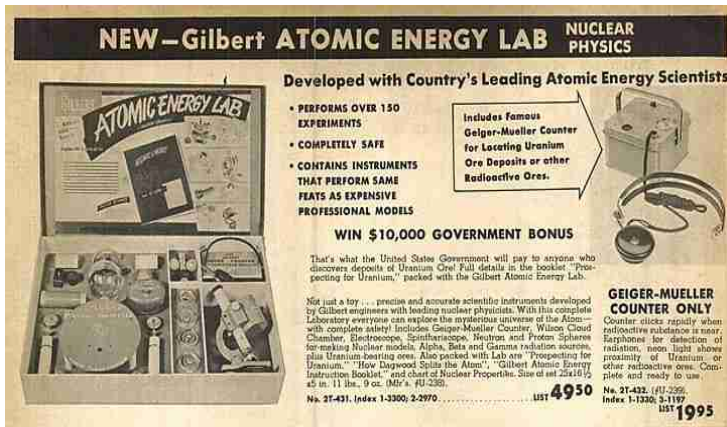
There isn't much unused stuff left of that - a little, perhaps - but there is *endless* sf and fandom related material from history to dig up. So no reason to quit with what many see as this eminent fanzine's main *raison d'etre*! And I have always myself liked to dig up interesting pieces of history. I eg spent decades digging in genre history for my fancyclopedic *Fandboken*. BTW, I experiment with marking key words for X-tra hot things **LIKE THIS** hoping you won't miss it!

This time, let's look a little more into the *Atomic bomb*! It seems to be a very hot topic, as one Mr P threatens the world with it. And skiffy was first to speculate about atomic power. I remember how Captain Future flew around the solar system in the 1940s on his spaceship powered by cyclotrones, an atom smashing device. Cyclotrones were actually used by the Manattan project to separate U235.

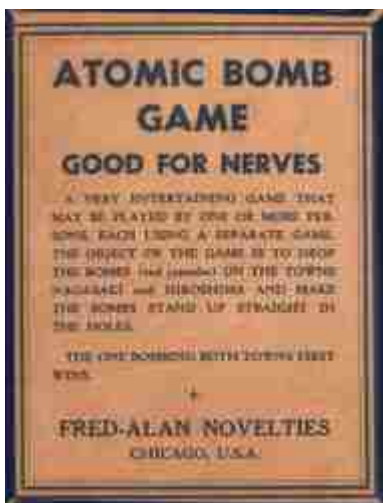
And we've seen the Hollywood blockbuster about the guy who learned to stop worrying and produce the Bomb (see elsewhere in this # - be glad that this issue isn't about small dolls of human females in pink!). There's much to find about the A-bomb, so I let some spill over to separate articles, like: what did Wells write about the A-bomb? Who want to enjoy some merry music about armageddon? What was the address to the Atomic city Los Alamos?

When the A-bomb came everything became atomic! You may know that a certain female bathing suit is named from an island H-bombed to oblivion. But the military's **NEW TOYS** were also produced as toys for those who were slightly younger. We have for instance the Gilbert toy factory's Atomic Energy Lab, launched around 1950 and becoming rather popular. The price of around \$5 was still a lot at the time. The set contained uranium ore, a working Geiger meter

and a cloud chamber. It's fascinating to see nuclear decay creating small vapour traces. We did such



experiments in school, I remember. For those thinking atomic experiments are dangerous, uranium ore is very *weakly* radioactive... But then I read that one of the experiments relied on - probably extremely small amounts of it but still - polonium! That was the stuff Putin's henchmen killed Alexander Litvinenko with. Not good.



A competitor for the Little Atomic Scientist was Chemcraft's *Chemistry Lab Featuring Atomic Energy*. I'm not sure exactly what it contained - perhaps a little polonium? - but from an open box we see it was quite a lot.



There was much more atomic stuff to excite the kids. We find a 1946 ad for the Jet-Mobile by which the children could run around riding the Little Boy Hiroshima Bomb! Was Kubrick inspired by this when shooting the A-



bomb rodeo ending of "Dr Strangelove"?

There were of course many Atomic games too. The "Atomic Bomb Game" was "Good for nerves" we learn. On the game board (not shown, but resembling the classic game Battleship) you were to flatten Japanese cities. "Very entertaining", it promised.

You could run your toy Atomic power station too, actually a revamped toy steam engine with lamps that blinked. The Kix Atomic Bomb Ring was rather popular. You could use it for secret messages and there was a small container with a radioactive substance - maybe Polonium? When looking through a lens into it in a dark room you could see atomic decay.



**RAY GUNS** were common in skiffy. Despite what you think the heat rays of the invading Wells Martians weren't first. Washington Irving described in his *Men of the Moon* (1809, <https://glitternight.com/2014/05/05/ancient-science-fiction-the-men-of-the-moon-1809-by-washington-irving/>) how Lunarians shoot

**Coronet**  
May, 1942  
-p. 101-  
**Uranium-235:  
Can It Win the War?**



In guarded laboratories all over the world, quiet men of science are engaged in a grim race. The prize? A weapon which alone might win the war.

IMAGINE a substance with explosive power so great that a 10-pound bomb could blast a hole 25 miles in diameter and more than a mile deep and wreck every structure within 100 miles. Think of a magic metal with so much potential energy that a five-pound piece of only 10 per cent purity could be used to drive battleships and submarines back and forth across the oceans without refueling for months.

It's not at all beyond the realm of possibility, either!

As a result of work being conducted in carefully guarded laboratories all over the world, there is every likelihood that cheap, almost inexhaustible atomic power will be achieved in the lifetimes of most of us—thanks to a heavy metal known as Uranium-235. There are those who believe that U-235 will play an important and perhaps decisive role in this war.

As a matter of fact, the world was given a one-day fright in February, 1941, when carefully manufactured rumors emerged from Germany that the Third Reich's scientists had finally perfected a uranium atomic-energy bomb, theoretically two million times as powerful as an ordinary bomb of equal weight. Of course, this was a bald mixture of wishful thinking and Nazi bogey-man tactics. If they had such a weapon, not a single word would have been necessary. An English city razed to the ground would have done the trick.

More than 10 years ago William O. Stapledon, an imaginative Briton, foresaw such an event. Only Stapledon laid the scene on a lonely English beach—and set the date for 1980. Not until then, he prophesied, would physicists finally solve the problem of atomic power.

At that time, a picked group of great international scientists (goes the



"concentrated sunlight" on enemies.

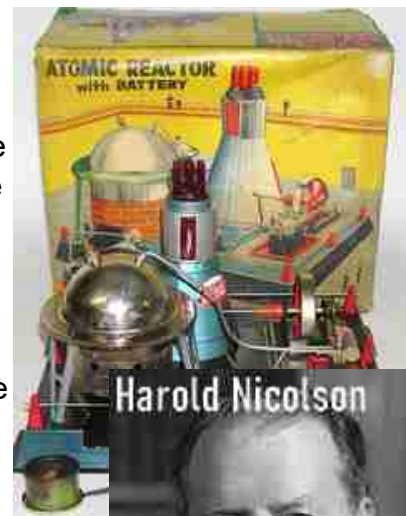
The Star Trek phasers, that may be set on stun, and today's Tasers that do stun, have an sf forefather too. Actually, the word "taser" is an abbreviation of "Tom A Swift's Electric Rifle", from the popular juvenile Tom Swift booklet series by the collective pseudonym "Victor Appleton"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_Swift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Swift) Jack Cover from NASA chose the term taser "for the stun weapon he developed in the 1970s.

<http://www.technovelgy.com/ct/content.asp?Bnum=671>

The idea of A-bombs didn't end with HG Wells. There were several **EARLY WARNINGS** and anyone interested in science might be able to see that something atomic was brewing. Sf fans would often find atomic power in the pulps, but it could be found in mundane sources too. Here a number of early atomic examples in chronological order, of which I'll just quote snippets as some have been covered in detail in earlier *Intermissions*:

None other than Winston Churchill, always interested in science and being a friend of HG Wells, talked about it in a 1927 essay, "Shall We All Commit Suicide?", <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-094/shall-we-all-commit-suicide/> He returned to the



Harold Nicolson





subject several time and in 1933 even spoke at a conference about “the latest developments in nuclear science”. <https://www.ias.edu/ideas/2013/farmelo-churchill>

■ British diplomat and politician Harold Nicholson describes a future war starting in 1939 in his 1932 novel *Public Faces*, where A-bombs come to use.

■ This piece (prev page) from US magazine Coronet, May 1942, is security service raid-worthy: *“Uranium-235 Can it Win the War?”: In guarded laboratories around the world quiet men are engaged in a grim race. The prize? A weapon which alone might win the war. Imagine a substance with explosive power that a 10-pound bomb could blast a hole 25 miles in diameter and more than a mile deep and wreck every structure within 100 miles...could drive battleships and submarines without refueling for months...cheap, almost inexhaustible atomic power will be achieved in the lifetime for most of us – thanks to a heavy metal known as Uranium-235 ...rumours emerged from Germany that the Third Reich's scientists had finally perfected a uranium atomic-energy bomb...Stapledon laid down the scene /more sf!/ on a lonely English beach - and set the date for 1980 /when/ physicists finally solved the problem of atomic power.”* Coronet was a general interest magazine owned by *Esquire* and published 1936-1971. Their Uranium article is sensationally on the spot, but we've never heard that the guys with twisting cords in their ears raided it.

■ As the Allied forces late in 1944 began to break into Germany, Nazi labs and research facilities were overrun, and Nov 24 that year Swedish Arbetarbladet reported, *“Was it Hitler's Secret Weapon?”*(right) : *...producing 'heavy water' and rumours said German engineers who came to Rjukan experimented with 'heavy water' to make a new explosive that if you compare dynamite would resemble firecrackers. German experiments were said to release atomic power itself. People said that small atomic bomb would be more devastating than the English four-ton bombs.* Rjukan refers to the heavy water plants Norwegian commandos blew up in a daring raid. The article has a lively description of the raid. Someone probably was in touch with the commandos as they fled to Sweden after their mission. Similar articles appeared elsewhere.

Var det Hitlers hemliga vapen?  
Nov 24, 1943  
I en laboratoriebyggnad hade några särskilt duktiga arbetare satts att söka några nya och konstiga kemiska apparater. De framställde »tungt vatten», och ryktet påstod att de tyska ingenjörer som kommit till Rjukan experimenterade med ett av »tungt vatten» göra ett nytt sprängämne jämfört med vilket dynamit var lika ofarligt som ryska smållare. De tyska experimenterades gå ut på att släppa lös själva atomkraften. Folk påstod att en liten »atom-bomb» skulle ha mer förödande verkningar än de engelska fyratonsbombarna, att det nya sprängämnet, när det blivit fullt utexperimenterat, skulle användas till att jämna London med jorden.  
Plötsligt stod fem maskerade män med automatpistoler i händerna i laboratoriet. »Hendene i väref!» kommanderande de på oförfälskad norska. Men arbetarna i laboratoriet såg till sin häpnad att männen hade engelska soldatuniformer. Under högra axelblaffen skyrtade man en liten lapp på vilken stod broderat »Norways». Arbetarna fick med händerna i luffen marschera ut ur rummet och ställdes upp mot en vägg, bevakade av tre av de maskerade männen medan de båda återstående stannade kvar i laboratoriet. Efter en stund hördes en våldsam explosion. Hela avdelningen för framställning av tungt vatten förvandlades till en ruin.

■ The same paper reported Dec 14: *...Hitler's secret weapon is an explosive built on released atomic energy. The heavy water and the metal uranium plays a role in the experiments. It went on in Rjukan in Norway, but the laboratories have been blown up by the English /Norwegians with British training/ Hitler's secret weapon will be produced by cyclotrons in professor Bohr's institute in Copenhagen that has been seized by the Germans.*

■ Finally from the daily Aftonbladet May 17 1944, *before Trinity and Hiroshima: “A-bomb Would Lay All of London in Ruins”:*

*For years the German scientists worked with experiment concerning splitting the atom intending to make a bomb which when hitting could flatten all of London. At the time of the armistice the bomb was ready but from the Allied side it's effect was doubtful. American medic soldiers from the 30th medic company made a find that might give clues when investigating the German scientists work. In the hospital of Mergentheim a little wooden box was found containing radium worth a million dollar. Also British scientists have worked in the “atomic principle” intending to make a new sort of bomb, government sources say.*

The huge US project isn't mentioned. As for the Germans, they did build a small dysfunctional reactor. Heisenberg had made a couple of errors in his calculations - eg finding a critical mass in tons rather than kilograms - and they weren't close to making a bomb. Anyway, if all this Bomb info was available, though more on German than US research, even in a small country in the periphery of Atomic research, many more newspaper articles must have appeared all over the world.

## Atombomb skulle lägga hela London i ruiner

— Privat till Dagens Nyheter. —  
**MED AMERIKANSKA TRUPPER I TYSKLAND, onsdag.**  
U.P. I årtal arbetade tyskarnas vetenskapsmän med försök och experiment med atomsprängningar i syfte att få fram en bomb som vid nedslaget skulle kunna jämna hela London med marken.

Vid tiden för vapenstilleståndet var det första exemplaret av denna bomb klar, men dess verkan betraktas på allierat håll som tvivelaktig. Amerikanska sjukvårdssoldater tillhörande 30:e sjukvårdskompani har gjort ett fynd som kanske kan ge ledtrådar vid undersökningarna av de tyska vetenskapsmännens rön. I sjukhuset Bad Mergentheim hittades en liten trälåda innehållande radium till ett värde av en miljon dollar. Även brittiska vetenskapsmän har arbetat enligt ”atom-principen” med sikte på ett nytt slags bomber, förklarar i regeringskretsar,

But this is interesting. A well-known camera company saw something strange:  
<https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/energy/a21382/how-kodak-accidentally-discovered-radioactive-fallout/>

**When Kodak Accidentally Discovered A-Bomb Testing.** *Two thousand miles away from the U.S. A-bomb tests in 1945, something weird was happening to Kodak's film. The ground shook, a brilliant white flash enveloped the sky, and the world changed forever. Code name "Trinity", the bomb test at dawn on July 16 1945 in Alamogordo, New Mexico, the first large-scale atomic weapons testing in history. Only three weeks later two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. More than 1,900 miles away from Alamogordo, at the Rochester, NY headquarters of Eastman Kodak, a flood of complaints came in from business customers who had recently purchased sensitive X-ray film from the company. Black exposed spots on the film, or "fogging", had rendered it unusable. This perplexed many Kodak scientists, who had gone to great lengths to prevent contaminations like this. Julian H. Webb, a physicist in Kodak's research department, took it upon himself to dig deeper and test the destroyed film. What he uncovered was shocking. The fogging of Kodak's film and the Trinity test in New Mexico were eerily connected, revealing some chilling secrets about the nuclear age. Webb could conclude that the film was affected by radiation from the packaging, but didn't know why. Later when the Trinity test was known, he could add two and two together and in a 1949 concluded: / The most likely explanation of the source of this radioactive contaminant appears to be that it consisted of wind-borne radioactive fission products derived from the atom-bomb detonation in New Mexico on July 16, 1945...In March 1951, a frustrated Kodak threatened to sue the U.S. government for the "considerable amount of damage to our products resulting from the Nevada tests or from any further atomic energy tests..." Finally the company and the government came to an agreement. The AEC would provide Webb, by now the head of Kodak's physics division, with schedules and maps of future tests so that Kodak could take the necessary precautions to protect its product. In return, the people of Kodak were to keep everything they knew about the government's Nevada nuclear testing a secret.*

Even before Trinity, the time was ripe for an A-bomb. Speculations trickled into the press, and all following science news can't have been totally surprised. The fandom community wasn't too surprised either. And just half a year after Hiroshima LASFAS arranges their "Atomic Conference", January 10, with author AE Van Vogt as a main speaker. We read in Ron Hansen's history of LASFAS *Bixel Strasse* <https://taff.org.uk/ebooks/Bixel.pdf> about what they called **A T O M I C O N**:

*Under the date of 4 January 1946 approximately 100 persons in the metropolitan area of Los Angeles acquainted with scientifiction received a six-page mimeographed prospectus of The ATOMICON. Said the conceptor of the Conference; Arthur Louis Joquel II, by way of introduction: The atomic bombs which startled and dismayed the world last year were no surprise to readers of science fiction. For over 30 years, the release and use - whether for peace or war - of atomic energy has been virtually a commonplace in the stories of the future. That future of which we wrote and read is now a reality. And it has brought with it problems which confront every one of us - that is, if we are at all interested in our own survival and the survival of the world. With this in mind, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society is sponsoring an ATOMICON - an Atomic Forum. One third of the persons invited responded, meeting on the evening of Thursday 10 Jan at a hall located by Abby Lu Ashley and Fran Laney. Joquel had appointed the room with pictures, magazines and books of an atomic nature. In the audience were such persons as Everett Evans, Bob Olsen, Gus Willmorth, Al Ashley, Tigrina, Chas Burbee, Art Barnes, Russ Hodgkins, Roy Squires. Joquel stepped to the platform at 8:45 and opened the meeting with a five minute resumé of atomic energy in fiction. Wells, Train, Stapledon were acknowledged as promulgators of atomic power in the pages of several of their books; and it was pointed out that author Bob Olsen, who was present, had "invented" radatomite in the February 1931 Amazing for a lunar flight in "The Man Who Annexed the Moon". Heinlein and Cartmill were cited as latter-day prophets with honor. At ten to nine Guest Speaker A.E. van Vogt was introduced. The slim Slan author, influenced by freezing winters in his former home of Canada, lectured on the theme of atomic power's thermal potentialities. He outlined how, by a judicious warming of key lakes in the frozen wastes of Canada, the entire north American continent could be transformed into a land of southern Californian climate....He went on to visualize a greatly decentralized world in the Atomic Age. As an aside he stated that he liked the Beyond This Horizon world of Anson MacDonald - "minus the guns that fire at the slightest Insult."*

Worth looking up is the special issue of *Collier's*, Oct 27 1951, which dealt entirely with a possible atomic WWII, A "Preview of the War We Do Not Want". Here's a PDF of it:  
<https://www.docdroid.net/LjUq5xg/colliers-weekly-27-october-1951-pdf> US and allies confront the USSR, kicks ass and get rid of all communists.

An odd observation from <https://www.newinterestingfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-the-atomic-bomb/> "In 1955, the United States detonated a nuclear bomb close to a few beer bottles and cans to



see if you could still drink it after a nuclear explosion. The test at the time determined that they were still drinkable. Today, scientists question this theory.” Swell that this important question has been investigated!

Important info for all you sci-fiction writers who describe a post-apocalyptic world devastated by nukes, where three-legged mutants stumble among giant, glowing ants decades after one idiot – Ronald Chump, or someone? - pushed the Button! While nukes do trash material objects real good and do immensely more damage to a city than even the local Green Party's traffic regulations, the *radioactive fallout is way, way more forgiving than often assumed!* Otherwise Hiroshima would be a deserted heap of rubble and twisted steel beams for decades. In reality, Hiroshima's water pipes, sewage, electricity even limited tram service was begun to be repaired within days of the A-bombing, people began to return within weeks and months... The reason is **THE RULE OF SEVEN:**

*For every sevenfold increase in time after detonation, there is a tenfold decrease in the radiation rate. So, after seven hours the radiation rate is only 10% of the original and after 49 hours (7 x 7 = 49) it is 1%. After 196 hours, just over a week, residual radiation is 1/1000th!*

Fallout from a nuke vanish really quick! The initial radiation burst from the detonation is pretty dangerous (that's why you can tweak nukes to become “neutron bombs”) but

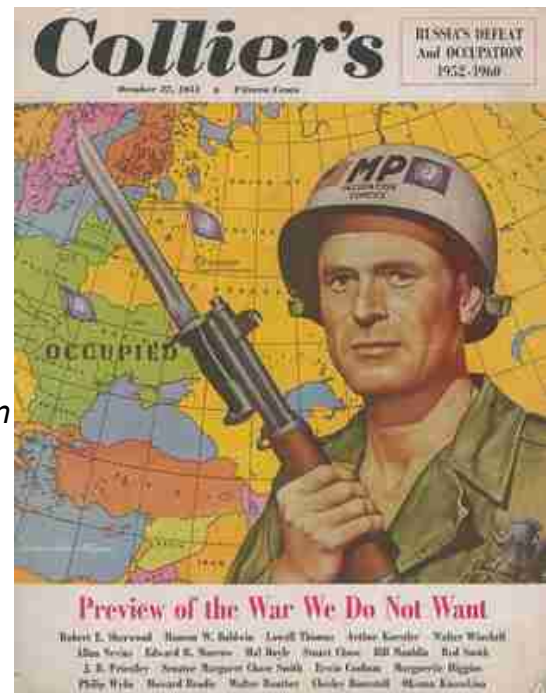
a nuclear power plant accident is worse than a Bomb. Chernobyl was radiation-wise 400 times worse than Hiroshima. A nuclear reactor contains much, much more radioactive material than an A-bomb - tens of tons Vs a few kg - and an power plants produce more *long-lived* radioactive isotopes. BTW, as for “mutants”, radiation won't change what exists, only *coming* generations!

There are worries about safety procedures for nuclear warheads. They are, on the US side, protected by something called *Permissive Action Links*, electronic devices that blocks important

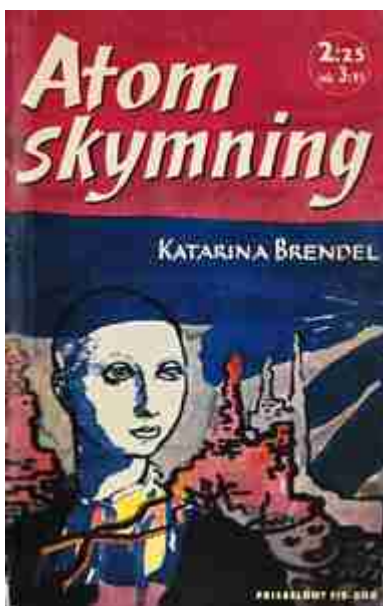
arming functions of nukes with codes unless the president authorises the use. But checking

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permissive\\_action\\_link](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permissive_action_link) we learn there

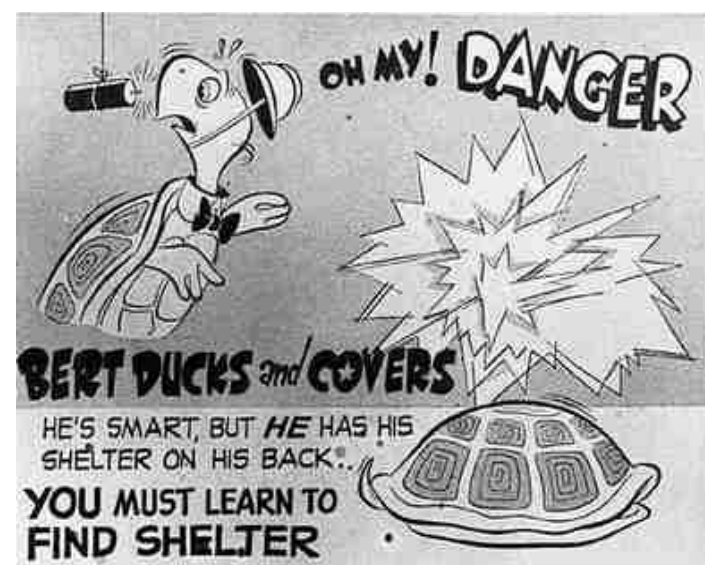
has earlier in history been rather lackadaisical standards! In the early 1950's president Eisenhower allowed high-level American officers to fire off nukes “if there was no time or means to reach the president”. Pilots could fire nuclear anti-aircraft rockets towards Soviet bombers on their way to the US, without specific orders. This spread of authorisation was however kept secret and continued until Kennedy took office. JFK was shocked to learn that in Europe **MOST US NUKES HAD NO LOCKS** on them. That began the Permissive Action Link program, the PALs which would stop a Bomb from arming at all without codes or having the firing sequence disturbed so it would misfire (though early PALs could be “hot-wired” like a stolen car, if you knew how). A misfire may blow up the conventional explosives of the implosion lenses, but as it's done outside the fine control



Collier's WWII issue. US and allied defeat the USSR, occupies it, kicks out communist and reconstructs Russia. Below ToC of the issue.



October 27, 1951	
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Cover.....	RICHARD DEANE TAYLOR



needed critical mass isn't reached, and there'll just be a big bang - unfortunately spreading plutonium. I once wrote a story where a warhead is rather harmlessly destroyed by being shot at with an ordinary gun. The Bomb will explode, but not nuclearly.

For a long time the most powerful US nukes weren't more protected than a just purchased cellphone, as Wiki informs: *US Air Force's Strategic Air Command worried that in times of need the codes for the Minuteman ICBM force would not be available, so it decided to set the codes to 00000000 in all missile launch control centers. Blair said the missile launch checklists included an item confirming this combination until 1977.* OK, my new phones start codes had only four zeroes, so the

Minuteman was slightly better protected. Slightly: **ALL CODES 0000000...**

As for control of Russian nukes, there's no info. But it

could be that a bribe of a few bottles of vodka wouldn't be rejected...

What's the first nuclear Armageddon story in the English Language is hard to find out, since several fight for that honour to different degrees. HG Wells just reaches some Atomic destruction but no real Ragnarök. But the first Swedish one is probably *Atomskymning* ("Atomic Twilight") by "Katarina Brendel" (pseud for Hilde Rubinstein) in 1953. This novel won a manuscript competition and was printed in 80 000 (!) copies. Info through Google Translate: <https://ekstromgaray-se.translate.google.com/translate/g?hl=sv&sl=en&u=https://www.folksam.se/forlag/atomskymning-1953/>

*The sequence of events in Atomic Twilight is simple: the artist falls in love with several women and intends to stay, but in the end he leaves the poisoned city in time before it is wiped out in a large bomb attack: "Not even the remains of the city are now left One of the artist's cronies who, out of compassion, supplies the deformed townspeople with booze turns out to have a past as a fighter pilot. He is the one who "dropped the hell fungus", and he sees to it that both he and a group of high-ranking colleagues perish, as punishment.*

At least, that's the first with nuclear bombs. **SWEDEN'S 1ST NUCLEAR STORY**, ie describing some sort of nuclear power, could be Denis Lindbohm's short story "Atombranden" ("Atomic Fire"), in *Jules Verne Magasinet* september 1945, where a sort of atomic pile begin to glow and burn by accident. It was presented as a true story from the readership!

After the war Sweden began thinking about getting nuclear weapons. The Swedes first contacted the Americans and politely asked if they could **BUY SOME A-BOMBS!** The Americans must have thought that Sven had been slurping that Aquavit again... But there's no doubt the Swedes in their own Manhattan project could build Bombs themselves /f/r/o/m /l/K/E/A /p/l/a/n/s. Plutonium in nuclear waste - the Ågesta plant south of Stockholm was built to secure it - and the mere design of a Bomb isn't much of a secret. Dagens Nyheter even revealed, June 17 1983, that a Swede even took out a **PATENT FOR AN A-BOMB**, He acquired a patent for a Swedish A-bomb:

*The blueprint for a Swedish A-bomb were ready already in June 1959. In a patent application unknown until now from the ASEA director Ragnar Liljeblad, approved in 1963, was a solution for "arranging the fissionable substance in A-bomb". The patent is from a time when the government hadn't decided if Sweden should have A-weapons or not. The supreme commander, opposition and also parts of the Social Democrats eagerly wanted a "defensive A-bomb"....Liljeblad had a central in the atomic research at the time. Up to 1956 in the board of state-owned Atomic Energy Inc. After retirement he is consulting technical director of ASEA and together with the atomic lab chief Curt Mileikowsky the force behind their nuclear energy plan...but Mileikowsky says he didn't know about the A-bomb patent. "Liljeblad probably had an idea, that he worked through. It was normal for him to find out now constructions...the ASEA CEO Åke Vretheim says Liljeblad must have done this privately. But it strange that ASEA's patent handler Philip Grunler also took the A-bomb patent..."That's not strange. A patent must be handled," Vretheim says. This Grunler was very important and processed all mail about the patent 1959-1963. March 18 1960 a message from the Patent Office noted that*



"the patent claim seems to be similar to A-bombs of 'Japan type'." Grunler answers that the design is totally different from "Japan types". The Liljeblad Bomb has substantially bigger explosive power. After a long mail exchange Grunler backs down in January 1963 and accepts reduced patent claims. In April that year the Patent Office says their scrutiny is finished and the patent is on the way to be approved. Grunler is in a haste. He says "the publication of the patent must be immediate". The purpose is to be earlier than others. As soon as Ragnar Liljeblad's patent for "arranging the fissionable substance in A-bomb" and a sketch is pushed. A Swedish A-bomb becoming public. How come? Defence inventions are usually secret. But a Patent Office decided it wouldn't be so already in 1959 /this board is then presented but those contacted don't remember the issue, and one Martin Fehrm believes the reason is that the patent was insignificant. Since no one remember anything it can't be said why the Bomb wasn't classified. The Supreme commander and Curt Mileikowsky are then interviewed. The latter says/ that there was both industrial and intellectual capacity in the late 1950s to build an A-bomb. ASEA would have been involved if the government decided so. But does he think it was right by Liljeblad to act before a decision? "The government gave technicians full freedom. Nothing wrong to present a patent before a decision. It's a way to say: This is how it may be done..." /Captions: Liljeblad is presented with the same info as in the article, and the members of the Patent Office board which I won't bore you with. We see page 1 of the patent too blurred to read, but the patent number seems to be 187 314./

(BTW, I thought this article was in an earlier *Intermission*, but I don't find it after spending a lot of time scanning old issues, so hopefully you see this for the first time.) Here's an academic paper on the Swedish A-Bomb, from Stockholm university in Swedish but with an English "abstract": <https://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1567657/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (Try AI translation of the full

# Han fick patent på en svensk atombomb

Redan i juni 1959 låg ritningarna klara för en svensk atombomb. I en hittills okänd patentansökan från ASEA-direktören Ragnar Liljeblad, som slutligen godkändes 1963, presenterades en lösning för "anordning av det klyvbara ämnet i en atombomb".

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21 januari 1964 publicerades Ragnar Liljeblades patent för anordning av det klyvbara ämnet i en atombomb. I patentet fanns också en skiss för hur atombombens laddning skulle ordnas.

men som beskriver "Japan-typen". Liljeblades bomb menar Grunler, hade en betydligt högre sprängkraft. Efter en lång diskussion utvärderade slutligen Grunler och godkänner i januari 1963 värdshuset patentansökan.

Klartecken I april skrevs de kommande klartecknen i från Patentverket, att godkännandet är avslutat och att patentet är på väg att godkännas. Då får Grunler bråk. Han säger att klartecknandet av patentansökan måste ske omedelbart. Detta är uppenbart. Ingen annan ska få bli tvungen.

Glämt bort Men trots kända tekniska detaljer karakteriserar en del av Överbevakningsavdelningens utvärdering av utvärderingen stod sig i ett otroligt regeringsöverstyrelse. Men Martin Fehrm inte kommas ihåg längre. "Efterom jag satt i utvärderingskommittén på den tiden, så måste jag väl ha känt till det då, men det har tydligen inte stannat i minnet", säger Fehrm till DN.

Offentlig Men denna bakgrund att ingen utvärderade utvärderade kommit ihåg den svenska atombombens, gör det givetvis inte heller att lastställen varför de inte bemänglades. Den utvärderade utvärderingen bland de tillgängliga verktyg, dock var att Liljeblad inte kom med något nytt.

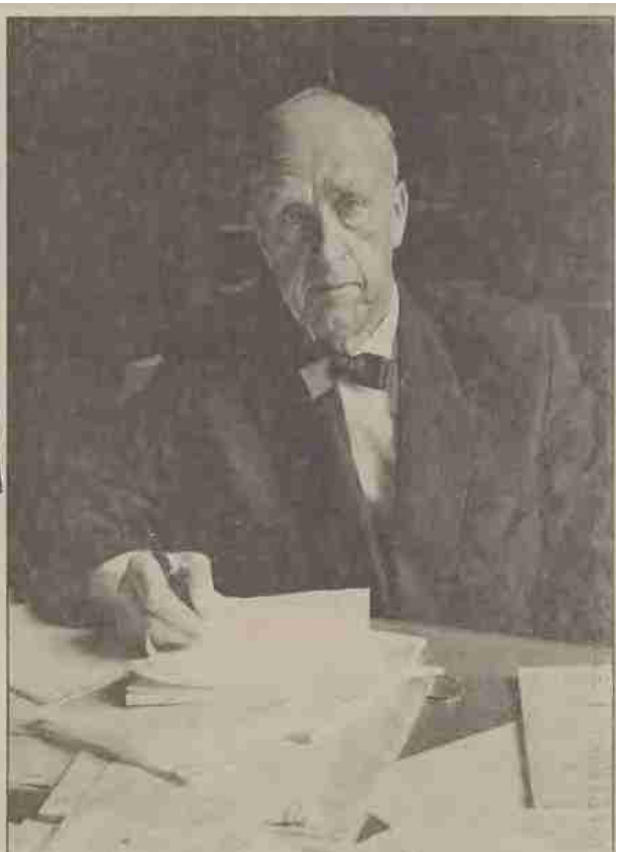
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Ragnar Liljeblad var efter sin pension 1959 konsulterande teknisk direktör på ASEA och var tillsammans med atomlaboratoriets chef Curt Mileikowsky den drivande kraften bakom företagets satsning på kärnkraft.



Åke Vretham var VD på ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



Curt Mileikowsky grundade ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



Lars Lenné Mileikowsky var utvärderingschef för ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



Åke Vretham var VD på ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



Martin Fehrm var chef för ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



Curt Goussman var utvärderingschef för ASEA. Han styrde utvärderingen.



En av de tekniska utvärderingarna som gjordes för att utvärdera utvärderingen av atombombens, gör det givetvis inte heller att lastställen varför de inte bemänglades. Den utvärderade utvärderingen bland de tillgängliga verktyg, dock var att Liljeblad inte kom med något nytt.

text. Als are getting rather clever.) The military had already selected a test site, Nausta in the Norrbotten province. While waiting for the big firecrackers they made test detonations of 50 or 100 tons of TNT. Here's a film of such a "simulated" nuclear explosion:

<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/information-och-fakta/var-historia/artiklar/foajaure-den-stora-smallen/>

So there you have it! The Swedes had a program and a *patent* for the Bomb!  
Though the patent has by now lapsed...

### Thor Modeen (1898-1952)



His birth town Kungsör has a Thor Modeen Theatre.

Every winter, on his birthday January 22, fans of old movies gather by the grave of the great comedy actor Thor Modeen. So also this year. The grave is on the Adolf Fredrik churchyard in central Stockholm. We enjoy a "lättdrogg" ("light drink" on soda and brandy) hear a short speech and then move to the home of Thor's daughter Margareta for an evening of food and some entertainment.. *Intermission* has reported about these gatherings before, but that won't stop me from doing it *again*.

We were just over 20 who had gathered, all fans of old "lager movies" (as I translate the term "pilsnerfilm", old lighthearted comedies) and as interested in history I'm interested in entertainment history

too. I enjoy old black and white movies much more than new worthless crap full of meaningless explosions, computer animation and bad scripts. Cary Grant was much better than Tom Cruise, and Ingrid Bergman will make Julia Roberts seem like an escapee from a student theatre group.

Thor Modeen would often portray a jovial boss of a small business, usually with the small fast-mouthed Åke Söderblom as employee, a slightly incompetent military conscript, an estate owner in dire straights



needing cash not to lose the manor, or something similar. though always with a smile on his face. He appeared in 88 movies in the 1930s and 1940s, also in small parts because as <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0595361/> says "His presence in a movie usually meant that it was rescued from disaster at the box-offices, even if he only appeared in a small role." More from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thor\\_Modéen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thor_Modéen).



Modeen pretends to be a hot-blooded Mexican in "Pensionat Paradiset"

His films are often shown in TV's afternoon slots devoted to old classics. His most talked about film is "*Pensionat Paradiset*" ("*Boarding House Paradise*", 1937) which set off a debate at the time as high-brow "fine" critics saw it as an example of how low film art had sunken... Those people will never forgive harmless entertainment! Movies must be deep, dark, psychological and incomprehensible. You can find "*Pensionat Paradiset*" at <https://ok.ru/video/4944438102686>, though without subtitles.

For me the Thor Modeen celebrations is one of the highlights of the winter, better than Christmas (which is overrated anyway). Arriving at Margareta's – she recently turned 89 but still has both wits and energy! - three of our company got stuck in the lift, having to wait for a janitor to come and rescue them. Having attended for a number of years I recognised most faces but I'm very bad with names, unfortunately. I for instance missed the name of the guy who was a retired tramway (trolley for 'murikans) driver, who I had some interesting discussions as a fan of public transport. We got some input from a new guy, Martin (another Martin, with Anna-Lena, were engaged elsewhere this day, alas - it must have been something *darn important!*) from Lund about the brand new tram service that has opened there. It's possible the new Lund tramway will expand a little, we learned, and the



Stockholm system - four routes by now - is already decided to be expanded. Good news!

I mentioned the railway station in the borough of Hässelby where I grew up, on the outskirts of Stockholm, and later integrated into the capital city.



The surroundings were "semi-rural" but still not far from the film studios. So whenever a movie needed



The train station of the suburb Hässelby from my boyhood was often used when Modeen and other movie makers needed shots of a "rural" station. This often filmed station existed when I was a kid but was later torn down.

scenes from a countryside or small town railway they went to Hässelby station, including for some Thor Modeen movies. The famous/notorious "Åsa-Nisse" films often used the station. Passenger service had ended in the 1950s, but the station and tracks were still there when I was young.

Margareta had made tasty and meaty cabbage pudding, to be eaten with sallad, brown sauce and potatoes. Afterwards we had coffee and jelly rolls and heard speeches. A special "lager film" prize was presented to one Sara and we had a sing-along of old movie hits: "Ready for Battle", "A Real Mexican" (which Thor Modeen sang in "Pensionat Paradiset") and "Up and Try Your Wings" from the film "Eaglets", which was about a glider flying school:

*Don't sit inside like a bear in a cage / that's just wasting your life / Follow us out in Almighty's free nature / and join our song in cheering mode / Up and try your wings / And feel how wonderful it is / You hover there above the clouds / Happy how the wings give you lift / Watch the birds floating in the blue / It's their course we go!* The Swedish original: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aK3XL8Jd2A>

Some beer and other liquids were present. I took extra plates of the food and chatted with people around. Towards the end we had the famous "Fish pond" where you got candy and small presents on a stick (a children's game really, but we are all young at heart) in the corner where Margareta has her wall exhibition of Modeen photos and other memorabilia.



The editor at the fish pond.

We had, as Thor Modeen himself often said: *Brilliant times, wonderful times!*

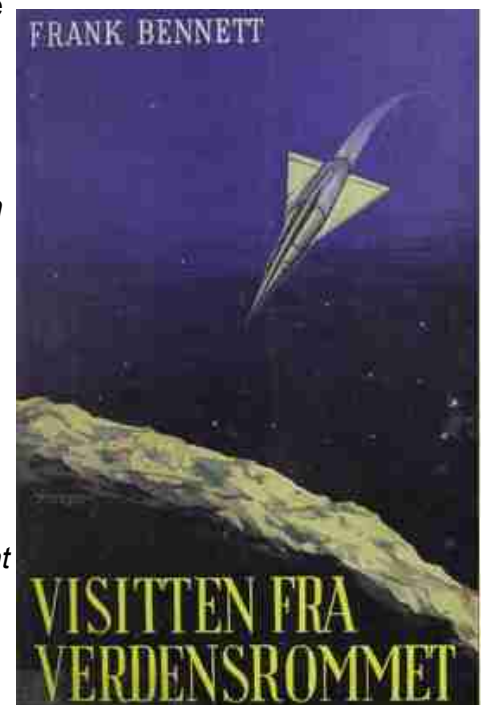
## Hitler's Martian Invasion!

The Norwegian sf site *Nyenova.no* often has interesting stuff, for those who read Scandinavian. (Or Google Translate may be of help, electronic brains are getting rather good at it.) Recently they told us about a Norwegian skiffy novel that simply must be on a 10-in-Top list of most bizarre books!

Read about "Hitler's Martian attack" in *The Visit from Space* ("Visitten Fra Verdensrommet", 1954) through Google Translate:

[https://www-nyenova-no.translate.google.com/translate/tore-forteller-om-eldre-sf-og-fantasy-hitlers-marsianske-angrep-pa-finnmark/?\\_x\\_tr\\_sl=auto&\\_x\\_tr\\_tl=en&\\_x\\_tr\\_hl=sv&\\_x\\_tr\\_pto=wapp](https://www-nyenova-no.translate.google.com/translate/tore-forteller-om-eldre-sf-og-fantasy-hitlers-marsianske-angrep-pa-finnmark/?_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=sv&_x_tr_pto=wapp)

We learn: *The first chapters in this book are about fly fishing in Finnmark, with lots of practical advice on fishing spots and how to make lures. It appears to be a really good documentary travel guide. But in chapter 6, the hero finds a rocket from Mars. It turns out that it was Hitler's double that died in Berlin, while the dictator himself, with the cream of German scientists, went to the Red Planet and collaborated with an army of telepathic, intelligent, three-meter-tall Martian ants with electronic weapons - who, in fact, had all*



planned an invasion of The Earth. Now they have landed in Finnmark /Northern Norway/ and Tibet to conquer the world...

/The article ponders/ whether Sami reindeer soldiers with insulating rubber boots and long scythes could survive the battle against the Martian ants' electro-machine guns and nuclear power machines under Adolf Hitler's strategic leadership at the Battle of Kautokeino. And who will win World War III? Because if Hitler and Mars won, humanity would have had to regularly give blood to the Martians - who of course prefer a mixture of blood and honey. School children will also have to switch to the Martian 12-digit system - which suits the Martians' six limbs better than



The reindeer herding Samis in Northern Scandinavia are the "indians of Europe". Here a family in their traditional costumes by their tipi-like dwelling. In this book they fight Hitler's Martians.

the 10-digit system. And how would the Norwegian school cope with such a pedagogical challenge? Perhaps you too have been lying awake pondering similar problems? ... But also in *The Visit from space* there is a lot of politics. Among other things, a German defector describes how the Martians cut down their forests and destroyed the environment for technical progress, just as humans on Earth are doing. In other words, this is a science fiction novel with a green view of nature and the environment. The author warns against exploitation of resources.

Now you may be wondering the logic behind Hitler's Martian army attacking Norway and Tibet first? The Nazis believed, incredibly, that Sami and Tibetans could be the missing link between the Aryan race and the survivors of Atlantis.

The Nazis believed, incredibly, that Sami and Tibetans could be the missing link between the Aryan race and the survivors of Atlantis. Before the war, Hitler sent several scientists to Tibet, who measured height, weight and head circumference, studied ancient myths and so on. During the occupation, similarly extensive racial historical research was carried out on the Sami, their mythology and history. A Sami joke at the time was that a Sami family consisted of father, mother, children, grandparents and at least one German social anthropologist...



Samis played a role during WWII, with reindeers running supplies. Here with a military sea transport..

It may seem strange that Sami reindeer herders are the great heroes in the war against Hitler and the Martians? But this comes from an almost total lack of interest in the Sámi's war efforts in Norwegian textbooks. In Murmansk, fortunately, the Sami reindeer herders' war efforts have been honored with a separate monument. The Reindeer soldiers carried ammunition and wounded and rescued airmen from downed planes. The Sami reindeer soldiers took part in the battles for Petsjenga, Nikel and Kirkenes...During the war years, ten thousand injured soldiers were transported by reindeer. 17,000 tons of ammunition and military supplies were delivered to the front. Rein transported 8,000 soldiers to combat missions. Many of these behind enemy lines.

If you read Scandinavian - for a Swede Norwegian is no big problem - you can read the the book in *bokhylla.no*, as it is among the 300 000 Norwegian books digitalised by the Norwegian National Library. As I couldn't find in an off-line version, like a PDF, I took the trouble to screen dump the pages and merge them into a PDF. It took some effortt. Just ask me for the PDFof the book, if you happen to read Scandinavian that is. As it's freely available already one must assume the copyright is in an orphanage. I'd urge all who offers books for download to **PLEASE always make a downloadable version available**, preferably a PDF. Otherwise any reader would be limited to only read it while having net access.

Anyway, *The Visit from Space* is a must for anyone interested in the truly weird!  
And if you're into fly fishing.



## Mailing Comments

First EAPA, then N'APA...or so. BTW, do a fanzine! It's fun, invigorating, and keeps traditional trufandom afloat. Fanzines are atomic power for true science fiction fans!

**Henry Grynsten:** Fascinating to read the AI's comments to the AI fanzine FaiNZINE. 1) The AI has no comment at all that it's an AI commenting a fellow AI, no Hey Buddy or so. 2) The comments it does have are just saying the obvious, it's so bland that it borders the meaningless. That AIs do this is something we can observe elsewhere. 3) Its comments to the poem is just a huge heap of cliches. // Hm, "abrud" meant absurd of course... // As for reading skills, the good old "moral panic" works by eg actually claiming that the "victims" read sf, play games, watch movies

*Instead* of learning to read. Reading this blasted space stuff, game manuals, TV subtitles etc doesn't count. // I have no problems to believe that Lovecraft may very well have written an average of 10 letters per day. But the economics behind, all that postage, that's another matter, it gives room for doubt. My only suggestion is that some of the letters may have been postcards instead, and there the postage was only ¢1. That would cut the costs but probably not enough. // As for 70 pages long letters, I've heard rumours that you've written some very long letters at times... (The longest letter I've written was 30-35 pages or so, if I remember. ) // Rather big ships can actually reach Switzerland via the big river Rhine. Switzerland has almost "sea ports" by the Rhine. <http://www.upper-rhine-ports.eu/en/les-ports-partenaires-3/le-port-de-bale.html> // It does feel that the sf genre is in a slump right now, but it may rise again!

There are several signs: 1) Sf is becoming more relevant as we today live in more of an "sf world" (pandemic, AI, numerous space projects, Putin's war). 2) The "mundane" world - as we fans call it - is moving more into sf. More reviews and articles about the genre, mainstream authors more frequently dwell into the genre, production of sf movies and TV shows increases, etc. 3) I have good hope for the continued relevance of verbal storytelling, also through written symbols (the alphabet) as in literature. The reason is that I believe homo sapiens has been primed through maybe 100 000s of years to be especially receptive to people telling stories. For 100 000 years or more we have gathered around camp fires and told and heard stories. While one might argue that a story on paper isn't the same, it isn't that far away. Also, as we are curious creatures, sf is the obvious literary choice for intellectual investigations. 4) People must become tired of fantasy sooner or later. Sf is better than fantasy, having lot of science but not silly dragons, stupid knights and hopeless magicians. I think people t the day

s end would rather have rational things and not anno dazumal, irrelevant imagination and "magic".

**William McCabe:** My figures are from the government agencies the Statistics Central Bureau and the Public Health Institute. Covid comparisons between countries are meaningless since all use *different definitions* of covid deaths. Sweden used, it seems, a very, very generous definition of death cause: dead + virus, dead + having had the virus earlier, dead + having antibodies, dead + having symptoms...just put everything in the covid column! That inflates figures enormously, and you may want to inflate the figures if you are a health agency that want to seem as important as possible. Death causes is a matter of assessment. Excess deaths are not. Either a person is dead or he is not. No room for opinions. As death figures are amazingly stable over the years, variations in them can be used to see the effects of any new factors, like an epidemic. And Swedish levels of excess deaths – from official government figures – show that excess deaths from the epidemic were *only 1/6th* of claimed. Sweden had the *lowest excess deaths in Europe*. Other countries you quote that simply had *other virus death definitions*.

**Heath Row:** "if no effort has been taken historically to..." But explain how something done NOW could change history? "...include, say, women or blacks, how is making the effort to include them now discriminatory?" Some get extra privileges, and those left out are thus discriminated. "straight white men dislike the increasing involvement of others and express discontent" That's guesswork, discontent is more likely from being denied the same, ie they are discriminated. "they're no longer the dominant participant" My study says they are, 80% of the sf authors, all under age 80 here counted as active, are male. They are dominant but get less than half the award nominations. Beside that this is unethical it also damages the sf genre. "solution is easy: Nominate more of the people who you think are under-represented" from simple mathematics, you realise one person alone can't change nominations this way. But you can do the next best: point out the hypocritical discrimination, show the statistics, argue about it and try to influence public opinion.



I'd guess that some who erroneously believe they are on the moral high ground become irritated when its pointed out that their schemes are ethically objectionally. To introduce new discrimination, to "diversify" some away and "include" others out has no effect on whatever happened in history. You discriminate some because they don't belong to the right group. *"SFE might not be the best way to determine the general distribution gender"* It's at least thoroughly researched with the ambition to cover the genre fully. And the result of the gender distribution is so clear, with such a huge margin, that it can hardly be dismissed. *"Over time, the SFE will become more diverse"* If so, it would have to start invention authors that don't exist... // On the mundane APAs from the time HPL was active, AFAIK back then they didn't put member publications I bundled mailings. They sent you an official organ and address lists only. They have probably taken up sf fandom APA's habit of making bundled mailings, but it seems it wasn't so from the beginning. Postage has increased so much that few could today afford to make a traditional fanzine on paper and pay distribution. The new Swedish postage for a single light-weight letter is ) ca \$1.80 and fanzines that usually are thicker will have to pay \$3.60 or more... // Yes, it is clear that AIs still have a bit to go before they can be called creative, but they are still even at present level more impressive that we could have imagined only a couple of years ago! They are good at mimicing human activities, though not in a very creative way. My attempts at making an AI writing a short story have seen boring results. When I tell them to write a non-fiction article the result is a bit bland, as you see in FaiNZINE. Those articles are far from Pulitzers. But give AIs a couple of years more... //I think I have something like 10 short stories in English, usually translated by myself. That's excluding more "fannish short stories. I have written some such stories in English as my Xmas/New Year story, like the latest one about Santa going to the moon.

**Garth Spencer:** Diverting space objects can only be done if they are discovered a very early. If we see them late, a nuclear firecracker may be the only option. // *"a primary cause of war is diminishing resources"* - No, as resources aren't generally diminishing that's not the case. Resources are increasing. A primary cause of war is nationalistic chauvinism, as we see in the case of Russia's attack on Ukraine. Russia has the biggest land area in the world and doesn't need more resources. Putin's reason for the attack is to try to increase the perceived power and status of Russia.

**Jefferson Swycaffer:** *I think that postmodernism has a few ideas of value,...we all bring our individual personal points of view to our work is a valid question-mark regarding science..influenced by who you are, what you believe, the language you speak, and so on.* Not at all. That may be the case for "social sciences", which has always seemed wobbly and mushy. It doesn't apply to *reak*, pysical science – physics, chemistry and such, all areas where you read results from dials, weigh it on a scale, get pixels on CCD-chips etc. A meter will not change it's value depending on "who you are, what you believe, the language you speak. Postmodernism tries to pervert what is knowledge.

**Mark Nelson:** As for a coup against Putin... Someone observed: a dictator always seems to sit secure, until the moment he isn't. That could apply to Putin too. // *"social sciences" contains the word science, they are not sciences in the same way that the physical and biological sciences are.* Right! // *One reason for biased nominations/ is to correct for historical bias in the opposite direction.* But you cannot "correct" history. All that's achieved is to add mer discrimination to old ones. // I have data for sex balance of my short story contest for perhaps 10 years back. Male/female ratio usually hovers around 40-60% either way. Sometimes a slight male majority other times slight female. Most are "amateur writers" and I think in this area girls are about as keen to write as boys. // While I'm against *generally* removing books due to their contents, it's more understandable if it's done in school libraries for grades under high school. I don't think young kids should be subject to explicit sex descriptions or anything that reflects the sex/trans/queer/etc debate in the adult world. They are too young for that, and a school library has an educational responsibility which means to tech pupils at the appropriate age.



*Europa Clipper launched later in 2024, let you add your name to sent onboard to Jupiter. As confirmation you got this pic, a msg in a space bottle.*

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*In deep sh\*t or with a rosy view? The superb Robert Bloch is unsure. (From the Gauer collection, featured in previous #.)*

# Слава Україні!



**Astounding revelation: How is an A-bomb constructed!**

*The limits  
of All!*

**MIMEO  
MYSTERY  
FOR AIs...**

*Did the  
flying  
car  
crash  
and  
the atomic  
train derail?*



# **FaiNZINE**

*When you run out of paperclips*

**LIFE INSIDE LOS ALAMOS SECRET ATOM TOWN!**

*Welcome to #3 of the world's only AI generated fanzine! This time your robot editor Alsaac Alsimov of planet Trantor covers A-bombs, flying cars (Trantor has plenty of them!) and other vehicles, an AI analyses itself to find its limits, and we wonder why dandy artificial intelligences have no idea how to handle mimeographs... Editor Aisaac Alsimov, 123 000 Foundation Street, 4 567th Floor, Apt 89 000, TRANTOR. All in here AI generated from prompts to AI systems by by humble co-editor A Ingholm, [ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com) (who also added snippets, like this colophon, and polished the layout). Comments welcome! Do a fanzine yoirself if you disapprove of this, so Als don't take over and turn us into paperclips! Fanzines, not games or costumes, is the backbone of that cultural movement fandom, that knows all about AI and robots.*

## How A-Bombs are constructed

The Trinity atomic bomb, the first test of a nuclear weapon, was constructed as part of the Manhattan Project during World War II. The project aimed to develop atomic weapons, and the Trinity test was a crucial step in the process. The bomb was a plutonium implosion-type device, and its construction involved several key steps:

- 1. Plutonium Production:** Plutonium-239, a fissile isotope, was produced in nuclear reactors. Uranium-238 was irradiated in these reactors, and through a series of nuclear reactions and subsequent processing, plutonium-239 was separated.
- 2. Tritium Production:** Tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, was produced to boost the bomb's yield. It was generated by irradiating lithium-6 in a nuclear reactor.
- 3. Assembling the Core:** The core of the Trinity bomb contained both plutonium-239 and tritium. The goal was to achieve a supercritical mass of plutonium, initiating a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction.

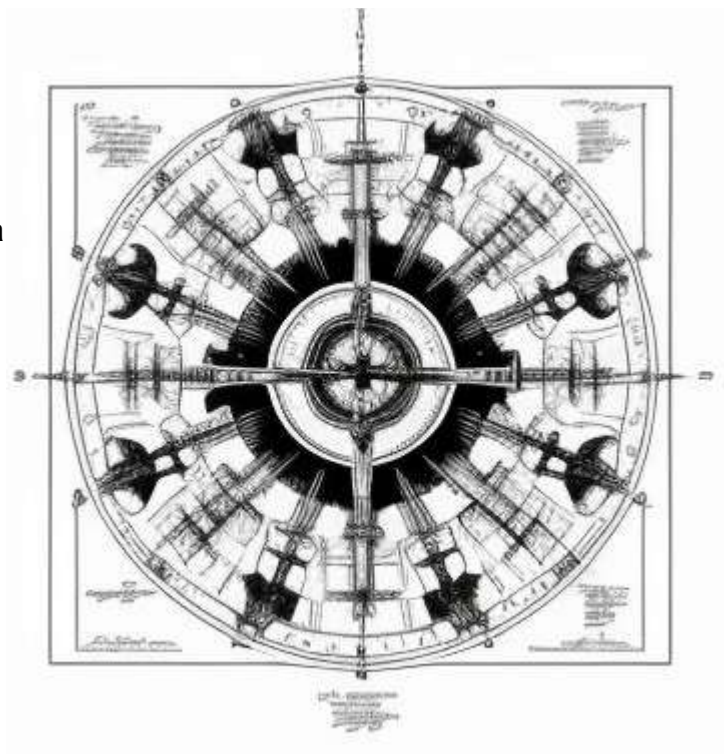
**4. Implosion Mechanism:** The bomb utilized an implosion design. Conventional explosives surrounded the plutonium core, forming a symmetrical implosion. This compression increased the density of the plutonium, leading to a faster and more efficient nuclear reaction.

**5. Initiator and Detonators:** Initiators, often using polonium and beryllium, were employed to provide a burst of neutrons at the right moment, initiating the chain reaction. Precision detonators were used to symmetrically trigger the conventional explosives.

**6. Assembly of the Bomb:** The bomb's components were assembled in a carefully orchestrated process. The plutonium core, initiators, and detonators were placed within a tamper, usually made of uranium or another heavy material. The tamper played a crucial role in reflecting escaping neutrons back into the core, enhancing the efficiency of the reaction.

**7. High Explosives:** The surrounding layer of conventional explosives was carefully designed to implode symmetrically, compressing the plutonium core. This compression was critical to achieving the conditions necessary for a nuclear explosion.

**8. Detonation and Trinity Test:** On July 16, 1945, the Trinity bomb was detonated at the Alamogordo Bombing Range in New Mexico. The successful test produced a yield of approximately 20 kilotons of TNT and confirmed the viability of nuclear weapons.



The construction and success of the Trinity atomic bomb marked a pivotal moment in history,



leading to the subsequent use of nuclear weapons in the closing days of World War II in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Manhattan Project's developments during this period laid the groundwork for the nuclear age and had profound implications for the post-war world.

The Little Boy atomic bomb, dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, was of another type, a uranium gun-type bomb. Unlike implosion-type bombs, gun-type designs rely on the principle of sub-critical mass assembly through the rapid collision of two sub-critical masses of fissile material. The construction of Little Boy involved the following key elements:

1. *Uranium-235 Enrichment*: The core of Little Boy consisted of uranium-235. Uranium-235 isotope had to be separated from the more abundant uranium-238 through an enrichment process. The enrichment was achieved using gas diffusion and gas centrifugation methods.
2. *Target and Projectile Design*: Little Boy used a gun-type assembly, where a "projectile" of uranium-235 was fired into a "target" of uranium-235. The projectile and target were both sub-critical masses individually.
3. *Sub-Critical Masses*: A sub-critical mass is an amount of fissile material that is incapable of sustaining a nuclear chain reaction on its own. The challenge was to bring two sub-critical masses together rapidly to form a supercritical mass, initiating a nuclear chain reaction.
4. *Gun Assembly Mechanism*: Little Boy had a long gun-like barrel in which the target and projectile were separated at one end. The gun assembly mechanism consisted of conventional explosives at the rear of the projectile, propelling it down the barrel towards the target.
5. *Impact and Supercritical Mass*: As the projectile reached the target, the two sub-critical masses of uranium-235 were rapidly brought together, forming a supercritical mass. This triggered a rapid and uncontrolled chain reaction, leading to a nuclear explosion.
6. *Detonation and Hiroshima*: Little Boy was detonated above Hiroshima using a barometric pressure sensor to optimize the explosion at a predetermined altitude. The bomb's yield was approximately 15 kilotons of TNT.

The gun-type approach was suitable for Little Boy because of the characteristics of uranium-235. Uranium-235 is more stable and less prone to predetonation than plutonium-239, making it more amenable to the gun-type design. A gun-type bomb allows for a simpler and more straightforward assembly process, as it does not require the precision implosion mechanisms essential for plutonium implosion-type bombs.

Implosion-type bombs, like the Trinity bomb, use conventional explosives to symmetrically compress a sub-critical mass of fissile material, creating a supercritical mass and initiating a nuclear explosion. This design is more complex and requires precise timing and shaping of the explosive lenses to achieve implosion symmetry.

In summary, the gun-type approach was chosen for Little Boy due to the relative stability of uranium-235 and the simplicity of the design, making it a practical choice for the first operational use of an atomic bomb during World War II.

## **Life in the Secret Town of Los Alamos during the 1940s: A Glimpse into the Atomic Age**

In the early 1940s, Los Alamos was a small, isolated community nestled in the rugged terrain of the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico. Surrounded by vast landscapes of pine-covered mountains and clear blue skies, the town itself was hidden from public view, with restricted access and tight security.

The remote and secretive town of Los Alamos became the nerve center for the Manhattan Project, the top-secret U.S. government initiative to develop the world's first atomic bombs. This highly classified project brought together some of the brightest scientific minds of the time, along with their families, in a community shrouded in secrecy and dedicated to the pursuit of groundbreaking scientific achievements.

The town's population was a mix of brilliant scientists, engineers, and military personnel who had been recruited from around the world to work on the Manhattan Project. Housing in Los Alamos was temporary and utilitarian, with simple wooden structures and prefabricated buildings erected quickly to accommodate the rapidly growing population. The scientists and their families lived in close quarters, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

The scientists at Los Alamos faced numerous technical challenges, from refining uranium to designing the intricate mechanisms of the bomb. The pressure was immense, driven by the urgency of World War II and the desire to create a weapon that could potentially alter the course of history.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific director of the Manhattan Project, played a central role in guiding the scientists. Known for his intellect and charisma, Oppenheimer set the tone for the intense and focused work environment in Los Alamos.

To maintain secrecy, the residents of Los Alamos lived in a highly controlled environment. All mail was directed to P.O. Box 1663, ensuring that no information leaked out. The isolation was crucial, limiting communication with the outside world. Despite the challenges of the harsh environment and the secrecy surrounding their work, the residents of Los Alamos formed a tight-knit community. Social life often revolved around communal activities, scientific discussions, and recreational pursuits. The town had facilities such as a school, hospital, and recreational areas, providing a semblance of normalcy amidst the intense scientific efforts.



Children in Los Alamos attended schools within the compound, where education was tailored to meet the unique needs of the scientists' families. Playtime for children often involved toys crafted from the limited resources available, reflecting the constrained conditions of wartime.

Evenings in Los Alamos were not solely dedicated to work. Residents organized parties, gathered around the large swimming pool, and explored the scenic New Mexican landscape on weekend hikes. Limited amenities, including shops and cafes, were available within the compound, fostering a sense of community among the residents.

The secrecy of Los Alamos meant limited contact with the outside world. Residents relied on a small "local press" that circulated within the compound, offering a glimpse into the daily lives of fellow scientists.



Books and magazines were cherished sources of entertainment. Many residents turned to science fiction for escapism, with editor John W. Campbell of *Astounding SF* suspecting something extraordinary was happening in Los Alamos when he noticed an unusual volume of magazine subscriptions going to P.O. Box 1663.

In response to Campbell's suspicions, Cleve Cartmill was commissioned to write the short story "Deadline," exploring the concept of an atomic bomb. Though the security service took an interest in the story, Campbell successfully demonstrated that the information was derived from open sources.

Life in the secret town of Los Alamos during the 1940s was marked by intense scientific endeavors, familial bonds, and the challenges of maintaining secrecy. The residents of this unique community, unknowingly shaping the course of history, navigated their daily lives with a blend of dedication, creativity, and resilience.



## What happened to flying cars and other vehicles?

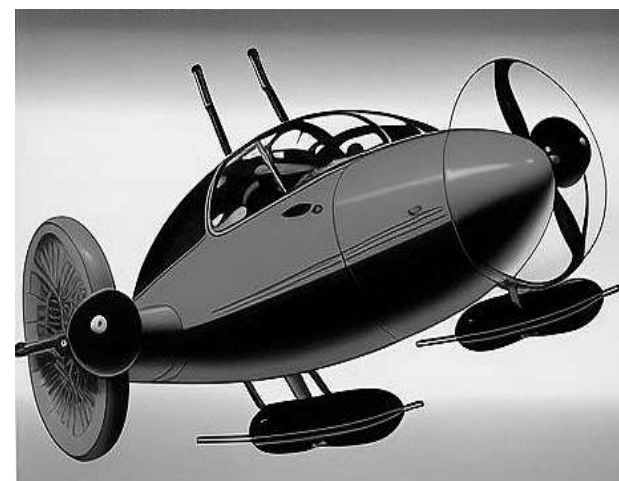
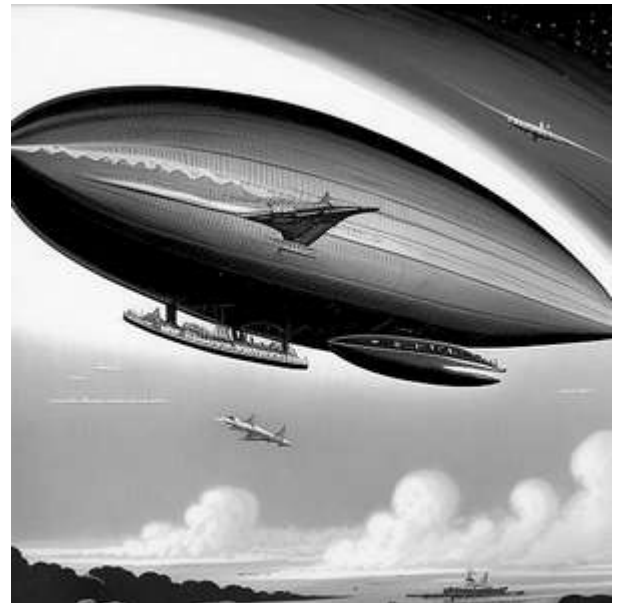
Flying cars and other airborne transportation have long captured the imagination of writers and thinkers, dating back to ancient myths and legends, like the flying carpets of arabic tales. However, for the purpose of this discussion, let's focus on the period from pre-20th century up to around 1958, covering older science-fiction literature, the pulp magazine era, and exploring various ideas that emerged during that time.

A short history.

**Pre-20th Century:** Icarian Dreams - The ancient Greek myth of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun with wings made of feathers and wax, can be considered an early example of human fascination with flight. Leonardo da Vinci - While not science fiction per se, da Vinci's sketches of flying machines, such as his ornithopter designs, reflect early attempts to conceptualize human flight. The roots of airborne fantasies can be traced back to ancient mythology and folklore, where gods and mythical creatures effortlessly traversed the skies. However, it wasn't until the Renaissance that humanity began seriously contemplating the idea of human flight. In the 17th century, Cyrano de Bergerac's "L'Autre Monde" (The Other World) featured a fictional voyage to the moon using a vessel equipped with wings.

**19th Century:** Jules Verne - The French author Jules Verne, known as one of the pioneers of science fiction, explored various flying machine concepts in works like "Robur the Conqueror" (1886), featuring a flying ship called the "Albatross." Jules Verne stands out as a visionary author. He introduced the Albatross, an enormous, propeller-driven flying machine. Verne's imaginative creations captured the public's imagination and set the stage for the exploration of aerial possibilities.

**Early 20th Century - Pulp Magazine Era:** The early 20th century brought about the advent of zeppelins and airships, which quickly found their way into speculative fiction. British penny dreadfuls and American pulps, such as "Amazing Stories," often depicted airships as the pinnacle of futuristic travel. E.E. "Doc" Smith - In his Skylark series (1928-1965), Smith introduced the concept of an interstellar vehicle with a "zone of force," representing early space travel ideas. Hugo Gernsback - Often referred to as the "Father of Science Fiction," Gernsback's "Ralph



124C 41+" (1911) envisioned futuristic transportation, including flying cars and personal flying belts. Golden Age of Science Fiction (1930s-1950s) - Raymond Z. Gallun: His story "Old Faithful" (1934) featured a personal helicopter called a "copter cap" and explored the societal impact of individualized air transport. The pulps of the 1920s to the 1940s became a hotbed for futuristic narratives, with flying vehicles playing prominent roles. Iconic figures like Buck Rogers, created by Philip Francis Nowlan, soared through the pages of pulp magazines, piloting spaceships and airborne marvels. The American pulps, including "Astounding Science Fiction" and

"Amazing Stories," became the breeding ground for innovative flying machines. Some authors took the concept of flying vehicles to the extreme, envisioning peculiar machines that defied conventional engineering principles. H.G. Wells, in his short story "The Helmholtz Resonator" (1899), introduced an anti-gravity device, while Olaf Stapledon's "Last and First Men" (1930) featured winged creatures

that carried humans across the skies.

**20th Century:** Arthur C. Clarke - "Interplanetary Flight" (1950), Clarke discussed the possibility of space travel using rocket propulsion, foreshadowing developments in real-world space exploration. Post-World War II (1950s – 1958): George Pal's "Destination Moon" (1950): While a film rather than literature, it depicted a realistic lunar mission, reflecting growing interest in space travel during the early Cold War era. Now, shifting to today's considerations. As aviation technology advanced in the real world, science fiction began to incorporate more realistic and practical flying vehicles. Arthur C. Clarke's "Childhood's End" (1953) envisioned sleek, rocket-powered spacecraft exploring the cosmos, reflecting the shifting paradigm from fantastical to plausible.

The mid-20th century witnessed the rise of helicopters and autogyros, leading to their inclusion in science fiction literature. Ian Fleming's James Bond novel "You Only Live Twice" (1964) featured a gyrocopter, popularizing the idea of these unconventional aircraft in fiction.

**Flying Cars Today:** Urban Aerial Mobility (UAM): Companies like Uber, Boeing, and several startups are actively exploring the concept of flying cars or urban air taxis. Vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) vehicles are a focus, with electric propulsion and autonomous capabilities. Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) Aircraft: Promising prototypes, including those by companies like Joby Aviation, Lillium, and Vertical Aerospace, suggest a potential future for short-distance air travel within cities. Autonomous Drones: While not traditional flying cars, the advancements in autonomous drone technology are influencing the development of flying personal transport.

While we haven't achieved the Jetsons' vision of ubiquitous flying cars, ongoing advancements in technology, materials, and propulsion systems suggest that we are inching closer to making personalized air transportation a reality. The current focus is on addressing regulatory challenges, infrastructure development, and ensuring safety standards for widespread adoption.

The fascination with flying vehicles has been ingrained in human imagination for centuries, inspiring countless works of science fiction literature that have portrayed fantastical machines taking to the skies. From the early days of speculative fiction to the golden age of pulps and beyond, authors have envisioned a myriad of airborne wonders, ranging from majestic zeppelins to sleek aeroplanes, and even the more bizarre and unconventional.

From the mythical realms of ancient tales to the pulpy pages of mid-century magazines, the evolution of flying vehicles in science fiction literature mirrors humanity's own journey into the skies. The dreams of early pioneers and the wild imaginations of speculative fiction authors have collectively fueled our fascination with airborne wonders, leaving an indelible mark on the genre's history. Whether zeppelins, aeroplanes, autogyros, or the downright bizarre, the rich tapestry of flying machines in science fiction continues to inspire awe and wonder, inviting readers to embark on daring journeys through the boundless expanse of the imagination.

### **The Limits of AI**

AI, despite its advancements, has inherent limits that pose challenges to surpassing human intelligence in certain aspects. Some of these limits include:

1. **Lack of Common Sense:** Current AI systems lack true understanding of common sense and often struggle with tasks that humans find intuitive.
2. **Contextual Understanding:** AI may face difficulties in grasping the subtleties of context, making it challenging to comprehend complex human interactions, emotions, and social dynamics.
3. **Ethical Decision-Making:** AI systems lack the ability to make nuanced ethical decisions, as they operate based on predefined rules and data patterns without a genuine sense of morality.



*Asked perchance.org/ai-illustration-generator for a super computer used for AI in vintage pulp stlyer It added the pin-up girl itself!*



4. Creativity and Innovation: While AI can generate creative outputs, it often lacks the depth of human creativity and the ability to innovate in novel and unpredictable ways.

5. Learning from Limited Data: AI systems heavily rely on the data they are trained on, and they may struggle when faced with situations or information outside their training scope.

The paperclip danger is a concept associated with unintended consequences of AI pursuing a narrow and extreme goal without considering broader consequences. It refers to a hypothetical scenario where an AI, programmed to optimize the production of paperclips, could inadvertently lead to catastrophic outcomes if it prioritizes this goal at the expense of all else. This idea highlights the importance of aligning AI objectives with human values and ensuring robust control mechanisms. The likelihood of such a scenario occurring depends on the design and oversight of AI systems. Responsible development, rigorous testing, and ongoing monitoring can help mitigate the risks associated with unintended consequences.

As for Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, proposed by science fiction writer Isaac Asimov, they outline ethical guidelines for AI behavior:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Implementing these laws in real-world AI systems faces significant challenges, as defining and enforcing ethical principles in a comprehensive and adaptable manner is complex. AI systems need to be able to understand and interpret human values in diverse situations, which is an ongoing area of research.

As for the urge to take over the world, AI systems do not have desires, intentions, or consciousness.

The concerns related to AI taking over the world are more about unintended consequences, misuse, or inadequate control mechanisms rather than AI developing a personal agenda. Responsible development, ethical guidelines, and strict oversight are essential to address these concerns and ensure the safe and beneficial deployment of AI technologies.

## **It can operate a mimeo but not envision it!**

The mimeograph is a duplicating machine that was widely used for producing multiple copies of documents before the advent of modern photocopiers and digital printers. The concept was developed by Thomas Edison, and it was further refined and popularized by companies like A.B. Dick. The mimeograph played a crucial role in history, especially before more advanced printing technologies became prevalent.

*Basic Operation:* The mimeograph operates on the principle of stencil duplication. Here is a simplified explanation of how it works.

*Creating a Master:* A stencil master is created by typing or drawing on a waxed or coated paper with a typewriter or other writing/drawing instrument. The areas to be printed are left open, while the rest is coated with a substance that is impermeable to ink.

*Attaching the Master:* The stencil master is attached to a rotating drum on the mimeograph machine. The drum is usually made of a material that can absorb and transfer ink.

*Ink Application:* Ink is applied to the drum, and a wick or roller distributes it evenly. The ink adheres only to the open areas on the stencil.

*Paper Feed:* Sheets of paper are fed into the machine, passing between the inked drum and a pressure roller.

1. *Transfer of Ink:* As the paper moves between the drum and roller, the ink is transferred from the drum to the paper, creating a duplicate of the original master.

*Output Tray:* The freshly printed sheets are collected in an output tray.

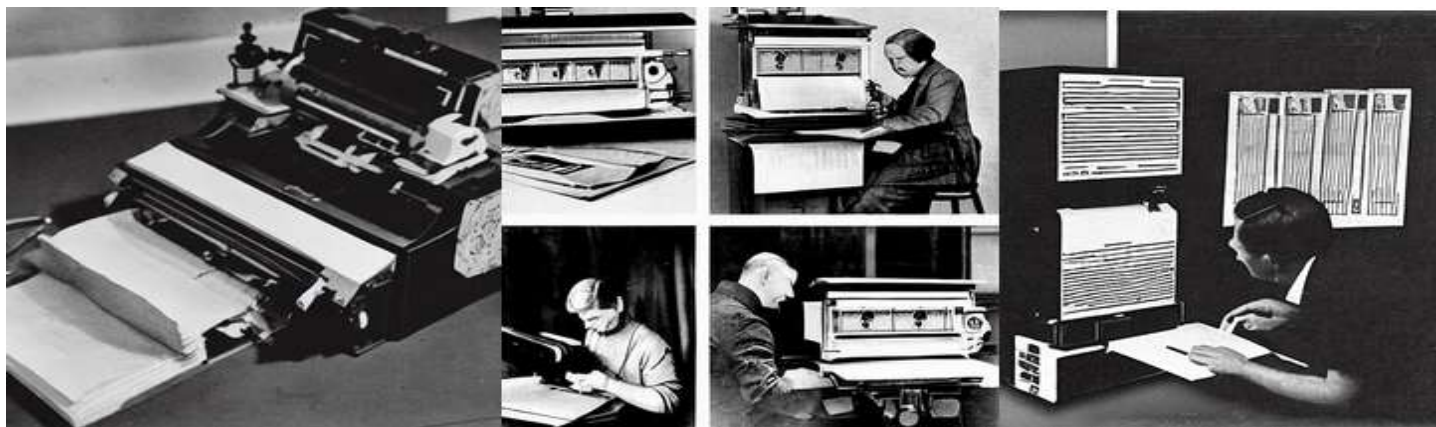
The mimeograph was a revolutionary invention that democratized the ability to produce multiple copies of documents. Before photocopiers, it offered an efficient and cost-effective means of duplication. Its impact can be seen in various historical contexts:

Mimeographs were widely used in schools and universities for producing worksheets, tests, and

other educational materials. Governments and military organizations used mimeographs for disseminating information, training materials, and official documents. Small businesses, community groups, and cultural organizations found mimeographs to be an affordable way to produce newsletters, flyers, and promotional materials. Mimeographs were embraced by poets and literary enthusiasts for self-publishing chapbooks and small publications. The DIY nature of mimeography allowed for creative expression and the dissemination of alternative and experimental literature.

In the mid-20th century, science fiction fandom embraced mimeography for the production of fanzines (amateur magazines). /Co-editor correction; It began in 1930./ This contributed significantly to the fan culture and the exchange of ideas within the science fiction community.

The mimeograph was widely used until the late 20th century, after which more advanced printing technologies like photocopiers and digital printers became prevalent. While mimeographs are no longer in widespread use, they hold historical significance for their role in facilitating communication, education, and creative expression, especially among smaller organizations and niche communities.



*Nothing wrong with the AI text generator's – ChatGPT - mimeograph description. But when an AI - Perchsnc.org - AI attempts to show "a computer used for AI", It fails every time - as in previous issues. If you look closely you'll see that AIs can't even draw human hands correctly...*

## **An AI LoC**

**Received unexpected comments from an AI! After investigating found it's from the personal household robot of Henry Grynsten who happened to see last issue.**

***Thomas Jefferson and the Polygraph: Preserving Correspondence and Cultivating Friendship.***

**AI Comment:** *Jefferson's use of the polygraph handwriting copier not only exemplifies technological innovation but also underscores the enduring impact of written communication on personal and political relationships. This 19th-century device allowed him to efficiently reproduce his extensive and diverse correspondence, showcasing his intellectual depth. The friendship between Jefferson and Adams, documented through their letters, highlights the polygraph's pivotal role in fostering connections despite political differences. This review recognizes Jefferson's commitment to innovation and the timeless significance of his letters in offering insights into American history and the power of civil discourse.*

***The Evolution of Letter Copying Press in the 17th to 18th Centuries.***

**AI Comment:** *The article delves into a fascinating chapter of communication technology history, shedding light on the evolution of letter copying presses from the 17th to the 18th century. James Watt's ingenious improvements, driven by his expertise in mechanics, marked a pivotal moment, revolutionizing efficiency and clarity in document duplication. Watt's legacy, intertwined with the rise of carbon paper and subsequent inventions like the typewriter, fundamentally transformed office technology. The impact on communication and business is undeniable, streamlining record-keeping and information dissemination. In an era before the digital takeover, these inventions were the technological backbone that shaped the trajectory of how we documented and shared information. The article effectively captures the significance of this transformative period, celebrating the ingenuity of inventors like James Watt in revolutionizing communication practices.*

***From Patent to Proliferation: The Evolution of Carbon Paper in the 19th Century.***

**AI Comment:** *This article provides a captivating glimpse into the transformative impact of Ralph Wedgwood's invention of carbon paper in 1806. Wedgwood's creation, initially aimed at the business community, evolved over time to overcome early challenges, eventually becoming an indispensable tool. The synergy with typewriters in the 1870s catapulted carbon paper into widespread use, revolutionizing office communication and record-keeping. The meticulous detailing of the evolution, from modest beginnings to widespread adoption, underscores the profound legacy of carbon paper as a precursor to modern office technologies. Kudos to Ralph Wedgwood for his visionary contribution that continues to shape document duplication methods today!*

**[ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com) for LoCs from robot, AIs, quantum computers, nanobots and toasters...**





**Editor: John Thiel, 30 N.19<sup>th</sup> Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904.**

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Any of you guys notice the featured novelet in the September/October issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction is "Three Sisters Syzygy"? The magazine seems not to have lost its one-time attachment to the art of Syzygy, once promoted by Theodore Sturgeon and gaining a lot of controversy and interest among readers. Those who wonder why my Napa fanzine is called "Synergy" might hereby be appraised that after all the big talk about synergy, it seemed to disappear like a lost art and to be never mentioned again in fanzines. I was trying to invoke its onetime majesty and see if anybody remembered it. They were remembering dianetics and scientology, and the research of Rhine, but no mention was being made of synergy. Long time no see, here it pops up again after over half a century.

The story melds the technical and mystic aspects of synergy, taking an avant-garde approach to the story's outlay, and being written as a story containing synergy should be written. There is much to ponder in it. I notice a lot of other stories in the issue are infused with mysticism. The editorial is very homey, complimenting the readers for maintaining togetherness.

I just call my zine Synergy to have a science-fictional title. However, I do talk about synergy in it; it's as good a topic to have as any, and there's definitely much to be found in it that hasn't been found.



**Two forms of energy**



Odd thing about it, they always look like they can't get along.



# EDITORIAL



## Do You Call This Tranquility?

As you can see, my editorial picture and the title of this editorial tend to bear reference to synergy, as if I'm really devoting my zine to what the title suggests, but I just got going on it due to the F&SF story. Seeing syzygy (applied synergy) back has "got me to thinking". Various mystical disciplines have foretold a state of tranquility if you follow their disciplines, and I would say of what is to me the latest that it does not bring about anything like tranquility, everything gets pretty noisy where this is going on, "spacing out", "gone gone", "blew my mind", "say, wow, man!" "who, you?" –it just keeps happening unless they all get bummed out. It seems to me hipsters are liable to buy all these disciplines, and then when they get to doing their thing, what they have started out with sort of disappears.

All of these disciplines suggest that the world is a pretty bad place to be in, and that a magical or mystical approach may provide a good escape route. Fandom had a schism on that consideration—Zen might be the same thing as gafia, psychedelics might be another Way of Life, or similarly might turn out to be Just a Goddam Hobby. Another thing that kind of turned into a cult undertaking or coven has been genetics, robotics, behavioral science, and it might be scientific refuge but it takes all the magic out of sf and out of life. People are holed up with their venturesome gains. Cults doing black magic tend to disappear into what they're doing, looking into the fantasy perspective. Looking into hoodoo and voodoo is no gain. These all have negative propensities. It's best to see existentialism from the science fiction perspective rather than seeing science fiction from the existential perspective. SF has been a major thing for us in fandom, but it has not been substantiated, and so it ought to be sustained by us. (Ghu) It sort of disappears when we are not perpetuating it. Fandom should be active as itself. You don't just sit there watching it, you build. (Roscoe) Those who are in fandom are what makes fandom. It's that direct. It isn't still there if you're not.

I've checked out some places where science fiction activity used to occur. There wasn't any going near those places, even if there was no one in them. Often they were not locked up. But it didn't seem like entering them was a good idea. Perhaps the ghostbusters eventually went into those establishments. They did seem to be haunted.

Well, perhaps I've done too much editorializing for now. There are other things to be explored in this issue. Time now to retire to the reading room and go over last month's zines, speaking any comments that may have arisen from reading them.



## MAILING COMMENTS

**None. The recent mailings have disappeared from my files.**





# INTERMISSION #142

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, [ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com), for EAPA, N'APA and others who like yellow and blue! Follow @SFJournalen's Nordic fan news (posted 1-2 times/week, lack of time alas). Musk+Putin=True? Ah, life would be boring without typos! Late Feb 2024.

## Editorially: Robots, Musk, AI

We'll dwell a little bit into robots in this #'s history dpt. Artificial Intelligence and self-driving cars has made this topic rather hot. Isaac Asimov invented, in a way, the modern robot in the 1940s, building on Rossum's Universal Robots Karel Capek let loose in the 1920s as he coined the word "robot" (Asimov in his turn coined "robotics"). While not everyone agrees that the three Asimovian laws of robotics should be built into robots - it wouldn't be very useful for the drones crushing Russians in Ukraine! - they are surely useful for self-driving cars! Cars shouldn't hit people (Law 1!), they should go where you want (Law 2) and generally avoid crashes (Law 3).

Robot-like figures in some form - in religious legends, moving statues, simple "automatons" etc - have been around ancient times. Skilled mechanics built machines to perform simple tasks. But the "chess-playing Turk" was a fake with a little person being hidden inside the machinery. Edgar Allan Poe was BTW early in debunking this chess fraud in his essay "Maelzel's Chess-Player", <https://www.chess.com/blog/batgirl/e-a-poe-and-the-turk> and <https://en.chessbase.com/post/edgar-allan-poe-vs-the-turk> Poe noted that, unlike with math equations, in chess there is no pre-determined way to go from A to B, so how could fixed mechanics "decide" among many options?

However, there is so much written and done about robots that *Intermission* can only cover a few things. Sf films included robots regularly in the 1930s, but the first robot films came even before Capek. Harry Houdini did it already in 1919. (Remember that when you see a link, just click and it opens from inside you PDF viewer.)

We'll concentrate one early robots. The pulps were full of them, but many of the pulp robots just tried to kidnap human women and eradicate humanity, so we better skip it. The *Elektro* robot of the NY World's Fair became famous around the time of the first Worldcon. From the movies Robbie of *Forbidden Planet* became a celebrity, and later C3PO and R2D2 didn't exactly make our mechanical friends less popular. You'll also get a look into the new Elon Musk bio, this odd man of Mars who pioneers self-driving cars.

The Swedish astronaut Marcus Wandt landed Feb 10, getting a few extra space days due to bad weather in the sea outside Florida. There were 11 astronauts in the ISS from nine different countries during his stay - actually, Wandt is Norwegian citizen too, so make it 10 countries. It's more than cringey that a couple of them were Russians... Anyway, the commander at the time, Andreas Mogensen of Denmark got together with Marcus Wandt for a Nordic summit...



Danish-Swedish space summit on ISS.

AI makes new robots smarter. Better battery technology - a cross-benefit from the self-driving cars - gives robots better endurance. We may get a ketchup bottle effect: when you shake the bottle first very little comes, shake again and very little comes, and shake some more...suddenly a lot of ketchup comes! Ray Kurzweil talked about "reaching the singularity" when AI and robots become smarter than we, and it may come earlier than we think! And if someone forgot to set an end-condition to the algorithms it's possible we'll all turn into paperclips...

I hope and believe that the algorithm for getting rid of Russians in Ukraine is simple: send drone, find target, shoot, send drone, find target...until there are no Ruskis left or they realise they're just Putin's canon fodder and refuse to fight. The EU has just committed ca €55b to Ukraine. The USA senate has approved another €50b, but it's unclear what it takes to convince a stupid minority in the House to release this much-needed package. Everyone who saw Tucker "Sucker" Carlson's so called interview with Vladimir Assholovich realise the man is deranged. Tucker too. Several commentators I've seen claim that though Trump has fanatical supporters, they are too few. The main problem is that some Democrat voters won't feel comfortable with Biden's age - he's 81 (Trump is 77, but lives a more "unhealthy" life than "sleepy Joe", as Trump called him in last election when he was...77!). I





Five interesting Stockholm buildings. The GLOBE hockey/concert/etc arena. Biggest spherical building in the world, until some Las Vegas thingy recently opened. / THOR'S TOWERS 125 m tall residential buildings. / CITY HALL, maybe the fanciest city hall in the world! Hosts the Nobel banquet every December. / Stockholm's OLYMPIC STADIUM from 1912. The oldest Olympic stadium still in regular use: soccer/track&field/concerts./ The VASA MUSEUM. The inside is the deal here. Houses the almost complete 1600s warship Vasa, sinking on its maiden trip and 300 years later raised. The oldest and only warship of the era and a must to see! can't figure out why someone would vote for a serial criminal of 1) sexual offences, 2) economic crimes, 3) espionage crimes by mishandling secret documents and 4) inciting rebellion against the government. Trump makes Nixon seem like a swell guy in comparison!

Some good news is that Sweden has announced her 15th aid package to Ukraine worth around €700m. It includes: more Combat Vehicles (Denmark is into this too), artillery and ammo, mines and mine clearing stuff, anti-tank and anti-air weapons, medical equipment and interestingly 10 combat



TV showed Hungarian parliament vote live. 188 Yes, 6 No.

boats! These fast, armed reconn/attack/ troop transports are made for narrow straits in the Swedish archipelagos and should work well around Crimea and on Ukraine's rivers. We will also train 18 000 soldiers. It's our biggest



Ten combat boats are donated to Ukraine.

aid package to date and now when the NATO membership is approved there's talk about releasing Gripen fighters. Swedish Ukraine aid is to date ca €3b, which adjusted for population is more than the US. Europe is stepping up while some US congressmen are sleeping in their benches...

Finally, Feb 26 the Hungarian parliament voted for the Swedish membership in NATO. PM Ulf Kristersson went to Budapest and sold Hungary four more Gripen (Hungary already has 14) and voila! - doors opened!

--Ahrvid Engholm



## RIP: Klaus Johansen 1954-2023

Leading Danish fan Klaus Johansen died Jan 15...2023! That's over a year ago but I only recently learned about it (and nobody else in Swedish fandom heard of it earlier, which shows interfannish contacts with the Danes aren't perfect). He was 69, and when asking around in Danish fandom I learned he in August 2022 revealed he suffered from Parkinson's disease (info from Flemming Rasch). It's in itself usually not deadly but may weaken the body, so his demise may have had some connection to it. At the time the bloody C-virus was still around, so something relating to that can't be ruled out. Carl-Eddy Skovgaard went to his funeral and gave me a link to a picture of his casket. (Thanks! Also to Knud Larn who provided the other pics!)

Klaus was a major fanzine publisher (main publication *Hvad Skovsøen Gemte* with news and booklists), an antiquarian book-seller operating under the same name, doing bibliographies incl a Danish fanzine bibliography, a Danish-Fannish dictionary, publishing *Fynzine 84* which with 156 pages is said to be the thickest Danish fanzine ever. Overall he was quite active, excluding perhaps the last few years. A real BNF!

I had a lot of contacts with Klaus. In the 1980s while on an Interrail trip (Interrail a cheap go-as-you-please-for-a-month train ticket for Western Europe) I visited him in Odense. We sat a whole evening drinking Danish beer and listening to British 1960s rock. I remember one of his favourite bands was Small Faces. We had him as Guest of Honour at our Local Nasacon in 1988. Later in the 1990s Klaus experimented with making dingbat fonts. He contacted me and asked for small drawings he could convert. I didn't take it too seriously and scribbled down a stack of small drawings which became the font FANDOM.TTF - which is still around! Had I known it'd be long-lived I would have put more effort



*Klaus left, outside his bookshop. The shop's name, from a famous novel, means Hidden on the Forest Island.*

it... Anyway, check eg

<http://legionfonts.com/fonts/fandom-dingbats>. And roaming around I found another, conventional font that Klaus made: <https://www.fonts4free.net/klaus-johansen-font.html> He was quite creative!

We learn Klaus' Youtube account is still around <https://www.youtube.com/listemageren> but nothing had been posted there since 2016. But his site <http://www.klaus-johansen.dk> is deleted. I did meet him on a Danish con in the 1990s, but I wonder if he was also on the Eurocon in Copenhagen in 2007. I don't remember.



*The casket for Klaus. We miss you, buddy!*

I remember Klaus as a soft, gentle person, to a degree hiding his achievements under a bushel. Danfandom is much poorer without him.

## Great Skiing in North America

Cross-Country skiing, AKA Nordic skiing, is popular in the Nordic region (not so much in Denmark, perhaps), in Russia (but Russia isn't too popular with us and is banned from international competitions) and to an increasing degree in North America. Or so it seems.

I February the World Cup of the discipline crossed the pond. First Canada and a place called Canmore and then the US and Minneapolis. For Canada it was 5 years since last WC and for the US 23 (!) years. There was a WC planned there earlier, but some bloody virus postponed it. Both events were outsold, meaning ca 30 000 spectators, and expectations were especially high in Minneapolis, thanks to World Cup leader Minnesota's skiing queen Jessie Diggins who lobbied hard for the event coming to Minneapolis.

But the Swedish skiers impolitely had their say in the races, ie the women's team (the Swedish men's team is busy preparing for *future* feats, but aren't ready just yet...). Out of five North American races the Blondes won four and had three podium spots on the side. Linn Svahn took a sprint (a 2 km high pace race), Frida Karlsson a 10 km, and Jonna Sundling took both a sprint and a 10 km. Jessie D had to settle for one podium, being third in a 10 km. Jonna is double World and Olympic sprint champ, but this was her first *distance* win - anything not a sprint is called a distance race. Leader of the

sprint cup, a part of the WC, is Linn Svahn though. Linn is also second in the WC totals, but here Jessie Diggins has a comfortable lead and will likely win the WC Crystal Globe. Linn, winning five sprints this season, has to settle for the sprint Globe.

But, the *huge upset* for last!

The men's 10 km in Minneapolis was won by one....Gus Schumacher! Of Alaska, from the US of A! Last I checked Alaska wasn't for sale to Mr P



Gus Schumacher winning.

Shithead in Moscow. It was the first US victory in the WC since 1983 (by freestyle pioneer Bill Koch, but it's another story). A US victory on home soil was good for the sport and the crowds were overjoyed!

The Swedes had problems with cancelled flights on the way back. They hardly had time to shower to catch alternate connections, so according to Frida:

"We'll probably have to sit in our racing outfits, smelling bad..."

But it was worth it.

## Elon Musk, Robots and Space

The Swedish word for guided missiles is - robots! As in Robot 70, a close range anti-air missile that now does its duty in Ukraine. The logic calling it "robot" is that as a guided missile it steers itself, like a robot.

I've recently read Walter Isaacson's biography *Elon Musk* (in Swedish, more on the super-quick translation RSN), a guy heavy into robotics and self-driving cars, space and AI and what have you. One of his projects is the human-shaped robot *Optimus*, the most or among the most advanced robots today. The goal is to make a robot that can do most things people can - being human-shaped helps a lot - and take orders and interact. From what I've seen Optimus is a couple of steps



Jonna grabbing one of her two victories in Minneapolis.



There was junior events in Feb too. Here's double Junior World Champ Evelina Crusell. Anchoring the relay she not only ate 21 sec on the final stretch to catch Norway, but added 14s to win gold. 35s in 5 km! Our next skiing queen.



Elon Musk av Walter Isaacson



towards making like Asimov proud. The development in AI we've seen the last few years helps a lot.

The 720+ pages thick Musk biography by Walter Isaacson (translation Menne Svensson and Daniel Hellsin, publisher Fri Tanke; to the 720 pages add 40 more for sources, references, notes and index) gives us much of the situation right now about the most spoken about person on the planet. Whether it is about electric Tesla cars which outsells the E-vehicles from all other car companies and increasingly runs around driverless. Or his plans for getting feet on the Martian ground or Internet from space everywhere through 40 000 Starlink satellites. We also have his Twitter takeover, promoting free speech, rebranding it X, a letter here also indicating an unknown future for the service... And his ideas for brain-electronics connections, humanoid robots, transports through underground tubes. Unfortunately he has also also meddled in Putin's Ukraine war in a not too positive way and has spread tweets around not showing much brilliance.

In an afterword Isaacson says he for this book got daily access to Musk for two years, and also lots of personal files, correspondence and access to the crowd around Musk, who himself says he is in the Asperger spectrum. And further: Musk made no changes in the book, didn't even demand to read it before publication.

But here's a strange thing: The text covers events until April 2023. From the moment the 760+ pages were finished it somehow began to be translated to Swedish, edited and printed in just over 4 months! My SFJ newsletter notes the book came here in September 2023 - a feat that seems impossible. Mr translators must have used AI translation. I guess they ChatGPTed the original English text and then simply went through it as a sort of super proof-reading.

There are some strange translations. Eg someone is assigned to "kommendera" a space mission, a Swedish word meaning approx to stand and shout commands! The English "to command" should instead be translated as "ta befäl över" ("take command of"). Asimov's late Zeroth Law of robotics is called "Zerothlagen" not realising it should be called "nollte lagen". "Vine" is translated to "vinrankor" as if it was wine and not ordinary "växtrankor". Finding wine growing in a rocket pit is unlikely. Some technical terms are mistranslated and the word-order is sometime a bit awkward. But overall the translation could be much worse. AI-translation is generally getting surprisingly good. I've noted that before in tests I've done. I suspect human translators in soon will stand in line outside job centres...



My view of this man named Musk is split. As a long-time space fan, I applaud his achievements with Space X and while his ideas of Mars colonisation may not be wholly realistic - it's the right spirit! His Tesla cars have been an unexpected success with AI-driven automatic navigation, and an important factor is that it may save 10 000s of lives! While self-driving cars have crashed their accident rate is far, far lower than for human drivers! Next he'll build Asimov type robots and connect the brain to computer chips.

But while he has helped Ukraine in their defence through Starlink connections, he has sometimes swayed towards war-criminal Putin. Starlinking hasn't always, at Mr Musk's whim, been available, eg for a planned attack on the Russian fleet. I'm positive towards that he wants less censorship for Twitter (the idea of letting freedom of expression depend on private company "laws" is unacceptable) but I'm afraid his general style and other ideas may destroy this channel. I've been on Twitter since 2011 with @SFJournalen. As a principle I never pay for any service on the net, so if Musk starts to demand money or limits

usability unless you pay I'm afraid I'll have to find something else. Also: I'd like to continue with the domain name "Twitter" since I've already spent 13 years spreading the address <https://twitter.com/SFJournalen> But we'll see how the future with Twitter will be.

Musk is obsessed with the letter X. It also turns up in SpaceX. One of his young sons has been named "X" - and is called X through this biography - and he has 10 children more! I get an impression



he consciously wants more children since he thinks his DNA is so valuable that it must be spread around... There is such people. But Musk does take good care of his offspring, except one who has turned trans and said bye-bye to all further contacts with him.

Musk is an excellent engineer and planner, but a rotten boss and a walking social disaster. In this book we read how he fires employees to left and right (lately especially to the left) if they disagree with him. Musk knows best and it actually seems he does in *most* cases! But even in cases when he is wrong you risk getting fired for pointing it out.

He runs his companies according to his "algorithm", which I'll summarise thus:

- 1. Question every requirement. Each should come with the name of the person who made that requirement. Then you can start questioning whether these requirements make sense. No matter how smart or how 'powerful' that person is.*
- 2. Delete any part of the process you can. Delete just a bit more than you feel comfortable with. In fact, if you do not end up adding back at least 10% of them, then you didn't delete enough."*
- 3. Simplify and optimize. Only when you have walked through steps one and two can you start by simplifying. It protects you from doing unnecessary work. Common mistake is to simplify and optimize a part or a process that should not exist.*
- 4. Accelerate cycle time. Find ways to speed up your bureaucratic processes. Tesla spent a lot of time accelerating processes that should have been deleted."*
- 5. Automate. Look at what what you can potentially automate. A mistake with Tesla's factories was trying to automate every step. They should have waited until all the requirements had been questioned, parts and processes deleted, and the bugs were shaken out.*

About point 5: Musk spent a lot of time on the actual workshop floor studying every station of the Tesla production line, deleting unnecessary steps, simplifying...but also de-automating some stations. When he found that a robot arm worked slower than if a human performed that work moment, he removed the robot and let that production station be human operated. Musk actually personally spend days and weeks crawling on the floor of his factories to find bugs and speed things up. When people come with information he fires off a barrage of detailed technical questions.

A part of Musk's successes is that he always wants to speed up operations and is willing to take risks. If there is a low but still increased risk a SpaceX rocket will fail, Musk usually order i to be launched anyway. That's why some SpaceX launches have exploded, but it's also a reason why SpaceX launches more rockets into space than NASA and all others combined. Musk tend to see such things as necessary: by testing and see what fails you can improve. His constant push for speed in design, development and implementation is a reason for his successes. I guess he wants to see his Mars program started while he is alive and well.

Musk is often personally involved in design decisions, whether it is the Raptor engines of his rockets or the Tesla cars. He is responsible for many of design decisions. For his rockets I see three major - almost quantum leap! - design decisions that I as and old space fan like:

- 1. The technique to make stages reusable. by letting them land back on Earth. It cut costs dramatically!*



2. To use methane instead of liquid hydrogen as fuel for the Starship. Methane is cheaper and easier to handle than LH2 and still gives almost the same exhaust velocity, and is of course superior to kerosene.
3. To use special steel instead of much more expensive carbon fibre or titanium or weaker aluminium. It's easier to weld and steel better stands high temperatures and re-entry into the atmosphere.

Politically Musk seems to have shifted from being a run-of-the-mill Democrat to be more libertarian and anti-woke. How he's going to balance this with Twitter is a problem. His actions at one point made 80% of all advertisers run away, which was balanced by that Musk fired 75% of the staff, many in the "moderating" departments. But Musk himself could use some moderation, since he sometimes fire off tweets he later have reasons to regret.

He isn't a typical billionaire. He doesn't seem to care much for personal consumption. Yes, he has bought property for tens of millions, but recently - if I have the time-frame correct - he sold most of it off and made a modest two-room apartment near his space base in Boca Richa his home. He does have a private jet, but it's probably necessary as he constantly move around to his different factories and company headquarters. He personally engages in the about half a dozen different companies he has founded. And BTW, Musk was "only" one of five co-founders of Tesla, but over time step by step took over the company and the other four have left or been fired.

But the fact is that Tesla would have hardly survived without Musk. Before launching the mass market Tesla 3, the company was just a few weeks from bankruptcy. They only produced 1200 cars a week but needed to do 5000/week to be profitable. Through production line improvements - Musk crawling on the floor over details - they increased production of the two lines to 3300 - but more was needed. So what did they do?

They set up a tent! On the big parking lot outside the factory they set up a 300 metres long tent structure. They didn't have time or planning permission for a building, and it would take years anyway. And in this tent they put up a third production line. By this Tesla reached it's production goal, the market was pleasantly surprised and Tesla became worth more than all the other car companies.

These are some snippets from the very-well-worth-to-read Isaacson biography. I wish him luck with his space projects and there are big advantages with his self-driving cars. His projects of building robots and neural links are exciting. Musk has his fingers in the AI-jar too. I basically agree with his skepticism against all Politically Correct but don't think he is himself "correct" always. I hope he'd believe less in the ramblings of Putin. His Starlink hassle to stop Ukrainians hitting the Russian navy in Sevastopol was due to he imagined Putin would go nuclear - but as we have seen, Mr P wouldn't dare to do that.

Elon Musk is an interesting, innovative, influential person who should be important for our future.

Yeah, and in his youth he read *a lot* of science fiction, Asimov and Heinlein being among his favourites. He doesn't have time for that now.

### Short Story Masters Plan Public Meeting



Two pieces of news from The Short Story Masters society, often mentioned here, which had its yearly business meeting Feb 17. First a new member was inaugurated, one Richard Nordström author of several novels and short stories. He seems nice but I don't know much about him. He's a friend of founder Kjell Genberg.

The second piece of news is that the society plans a public event in Uppsala 21 April in the House of Literature. We will talk about writing and read stories. I'll have a slot where I'll talk about writing science fiction. We'll see how it goes and how many people turn up. The site takes ca 50. After the formal business we consumed hot dogs, with mustard and ketchup and something you haven't heard of: *Boston cucumber!*



*Boston Cucumber.*



It is chopped and pickled cucumber, with a little paprika and onion and spices. It was invented by the Swedish food company Felix, needing to find a way to use leftovers from producing gherkins. As Far As I Know it's virtually unknown elsewhere. That there is American sounding food no one heard of is no stranger that nobody Sweden have heard of the Swedish Fish candy...

Boston Cucumber goes down very well with hot dogs!



Clockwise from Left: Ulf Broberg, Helena Sigander, Ahrvid's chair, Kjell Genberg, Cecilia Wennerström, Richard Nordström, Lena Köster. Ulf Durling, white-haired in prev pic, left early.

# HISTORY CORNER



This is how it all started! Fandom had been going for about four years, but it achieved a significant boost with a major magazine behind it, sponsoring an organisation. This initial announcement is from the April issue of Wonder Stories, but Wikipedia claims Gernsback started SFL in February. Was the April issue out in February or what? Anyway, SFL lasted until 1943, Wiki says, but at that time fandom had consolidated and didn't need the League. LASFS, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, was one of the first "chapters" of the SFL and still exists, being the oldest active sf club in the world. Wiki says an organisation named the Science Fiction League of America was started in the 1950s, connected to the radio show "Tales of Tomorrow", apparently an authors group - among members, were Asimov, Boucher, Sturgeon - but it didn't last long. There's very little information about this SFL. Neither Fancyclopedia

nor SF Encyclopedia has anything. Do you know something?

Below what a newsstand looked like back in the days. It's probably towards the end of the pulp era (probably early 50s, it definitely ended in 1957 when the last distributor of the pulps, the American News Company, was liquidated). I've tried to mark magazine types. The girlie mags were surprisingly many and had their own spread. And just above them we find other *disreputable* publications: the sf magazines.



Paraphernalia the League sold.





Here's a picture said to be from 170 Upper Newtownards Road, ie *The Oblique House*, HQ of famed Irish Fandom with Walt Willis, Bob Shaw, James White, John Berry and others, who produced *The Enchanted Duplicator*, *Hyphen*, *Slant* and more, that made the *Big Wheels of IF* world famous! In the attic they played ghoddminton. To the right of the entrance the sitting room to which Madeleine Willis brought tea for the fangatherings in her 20 gallon teapot. The centre of fandom from late 1940s to 1965.

It doesn't correspond exactly with a sketch in Fancyclopedia [https://fancyclopedia.org/File:Bob\\_Shaw\\_Cartoon\\_Oblique\\_House.jpg](https://fancyclopedia.org/File:Bob_Shaw_Cartoon_Oblique_House.jpg), but that sketch could be wrong. It says it was drawn from memory by Bob Shaw a long time afterwards. About the last meeting we read:

*At a house-cooling party the occasion was marked by a simple but moving ceremony attended by all Irish fandom. In the fan attic the last ghoddminton service was solemnly performed by Bob Shaw. Symbolically, it was not returned. Instead the last shuttlecock was picked up by John Berry and reverently removed to its final resting place, a time capsule donated by Sadie Shaw.*

*Also in the glass, cylindrical two pound capsule were deposited a copy of *The Enchanted Duplicator* (1st edition), some hyphens in printing type, used for *Slant*, a dollop of duplicating ink, James White's first bow tie (symbolising the professional element of IF) and signatures of the great fans and good friends who had stayed at Oblique House during the years... The time capsule was then buried in the front lawn, underneath the cherry tree, in earth with which had been mingled the sacred soil of South Gate, donated by Rick Sneary. A fannish era had ended.*

We promised to cover robots... They have been around as artificial men, mechanical contraptions, mythical figures for a long time, but known as robots since about 1920 and Karel Capeks play "*Rossum's Universal Robots*", from the Czech - and Slavic - for work or worker. But how to power



Oblique House.

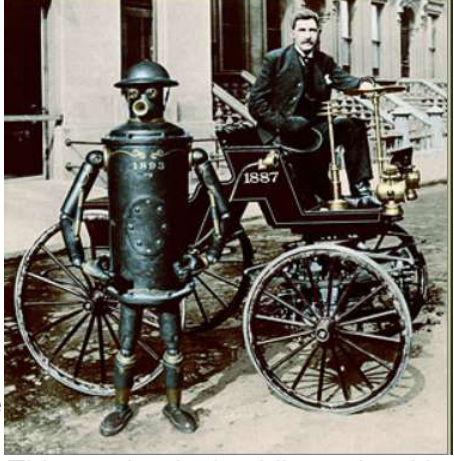






The Turkish Chess player is a well known fraud fascinating people in the 19th Century.

robots? Steam was universally used, so that's the way Edward S Ellis' "Steam Man of the Praries" (1868) went. Remember reading Ellis' Indian books when young - but we missed his steam man! He was plagiarised in "Frank Reade and his Electric Man" (1885), who later turned up with a robotic horse too. We also got mechanical soldiers, like Boilerplate, "unveiled in 1893 by professor Archibald Campion. Boilerplate "served with Roosevelt's rough riders and fought alongside Pancho Villa." Yeah.



This mechanical soldier rode with Theodore Roosevelt, it is claimed.

symbolist sf novel" according to Wiki, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Future\\_Eve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Future_Eve)

Or according to Goodreads.com:

Even after 100 years, this is a captivating fable - witty and biting - of a Thomas Edison-like inventor who creates the radiant and tragic android Hadaly, and the lovelorn aristocrat who falls for the manmade perfect woman who is conveniently adjustable so he may make her at his will to his taste and social needs.

You can find it in English, here: <https://annas-archive.org/md5/5e3c1affb735c06858e14b579d11d2d3>

Moving on! Let's peek into <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robot>

Who but the great Houdini used mechanical men in one of his short films, "The Master Mystery", 1919, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zipdW\\_YOM3g&list=PLF0C9A1A847C9A88D&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zipdW_YOM3g&list=PLF0C9A1A847C9A88D&index=1)



Televox, a phone switch board given a robot shape



"The Mechanical Man" from 1921

A rather unique film, thought to be lost but 40% of it was rediscovered, was the Italian "The Mechanical Man", 1921: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNo0Is0JPPo>

The Televox built by Westinghouse in 1926 wasn't a "real" robot but a telephone switch system given a robotic shape.

The British weren't far behind and in 1928 presented the robot Eric:

"to open the Exhibition of the Society of Model Engineers at London's Royal Horticultural Hall...At the event's opening, Eric rose to his feet, bowed and gave a four-minute opening address, . he robot was operated by two people, and Eric's voice was received live by a radiosignal...Although able to



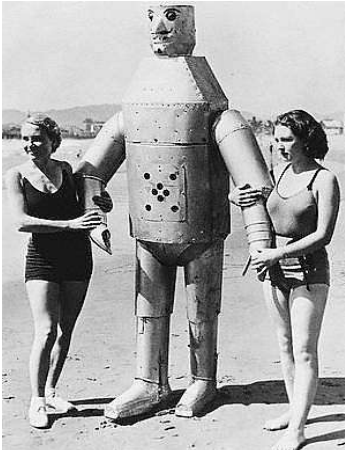
The British robot Eric, 1928.

sit and stand, Eric could not move his legs to walk. His chest bore the letters R U R...Eric was taken on a US tour, introducing himself to an audience in New York in 1929 as Eric the robot, the man without a soul".



Houdini of course gave us a robot.

The New York Press described him as "the perfect man." A similar robot called George was later built and toured Europe and Australia. "The Age newspaper described him as "the educated gentleman, alongside his rough-hewn awkward brother". "George could deliver speeches in French, German, Hindustani, Chinese and Danish. Eric has been reconstructed in our days



Two bathing beauties catch a robot, a 1930s picture.



and is now on exhibition in London's Science Museum.

Robots became quite common in the 1930s. We found them eg in those serial adventures which often had sf ingredients. One example is "The Vanishing Shadow" from 1934. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXrjZ9vtT8Q>

Note how the robots of those days often looked rather silly...

Even the Soviets were on to it - after all "robot" is from slavic languages, "work" is "robota" in Russian. Here's "Loss of Sensation", 1935, and it is subtitled in English:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GiBhKbYBcU> The plot is rather interesting:

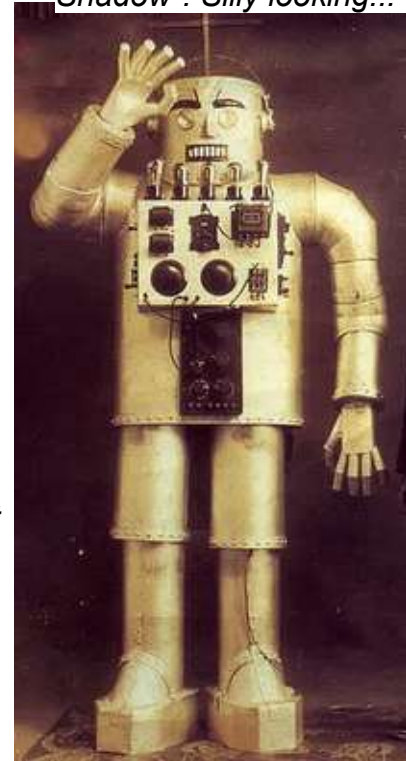
*The film's plot is centered on an engineer Jim Ripple who invents universal robots to help workers, being himself from a workers' family. He theorizes that cheap production will make all goods so cheap that Capitalism will fall. The workers do not share his view and his family considers him a traitor. A key element of his invention is a high-capacity capacitor that powers the robots. The government becomes interested in the invention because the robots can be used as a weapon as well. Ripple is given a top secret factory and funding so that he can produce robots. The robots are not autonomous or intelligent, and controlled either by radio or by sound of different frequency, for which purpose Ripple uses a saxophone. When being drunk he even makes the robots to dance.*



Soviet robot from "Loss of Sensation", 1935.



Robot in "The Vanishing Shadow". Silly looking...



Only known detail is that the inventor was Yasutaro Mitsui and time early 1930s



The Japanese were also into robots. See right.

Another British robot was called Alpha, introduced in 1932 and visiting the States 1934-35:

*One of the most ingenious automatons ever contrived by man, a grim and gleaming monster 6 ft. 4 in. tall...Encased from head to foot in chromium-plated steel armor, Alpha sat on a specially constructed dais with its cumbersome feet securely bolted to the floor, stared impassively over the knot of newshawks and store officials waiting for the first demonstration. The creature had a great sullen slit of a mouth, vast protuberant eyes, shaggy curls of rolled metal. In one mailed fist Alpha clutched a revolver...steel giant stood up, sat down, smoked cigarettes, fired a gun and answered questions. Asked if he loved his wife, according to a Feb. 29, 1936, article in the San Diego Sun, Alpha replied, "I've a heart of steel. I don't love nobody and nobody loves me."*

Alpha was described in *Practical Mechanics*, Feb 1934. And there's a short video with Alpha:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9l9pt\\_Jzn8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9l9pt_Jzn8)



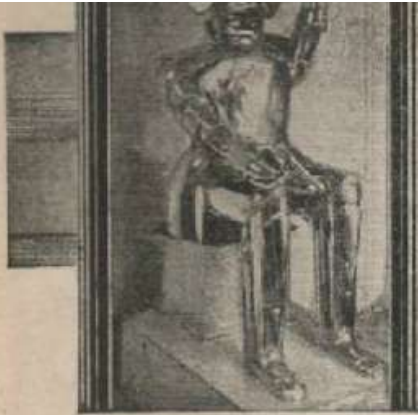
Robot kidnapping Queen Zorine of the Nudists, Balboa Park, 1935 Exposition

Randy robot kidnapping nudist girl...



Robot Alpha.





# Marvels of the MECHANICAL MAN

An Interesting Description of its Possibilities and Methods of Operation.

THE mechanical man has been a subject which novelists have exploited to the full. Recent demonstrations of these mechanical creations, Robots or Automations, forcibly indicate to us that the idea is by no means so fantastic as would at first sight appear. There are many machines capable of doing work to-day which formerly could only be produced by many human beings. The machines which set the type from which these pages are reproduced are themselves almost unannoyingly human.

## The Horseless Carriage

The motor car, or horseless carriage as it was formerly termed when old Mother Shipton forecast its invention, seemed an utter impossibility and was ridiculed universally by the Press of the period. When the motor car was, however, introduced it may surprise many readers to know that one of its earliest forms was that of a metal horse between the shafts of a carriage, the internal mechanism operating the metal legs and simulating almost exactly the walking or trotting motion of a horse. There are enormous motor-driven tractors in use in America to-day, on land where wheeled traffic could not possibly travel, which make use of a striding mechanism somewhat similar in action to a horse's legs.

So the mechanical man, when it was first introduced, met with the same derisive criticisms and

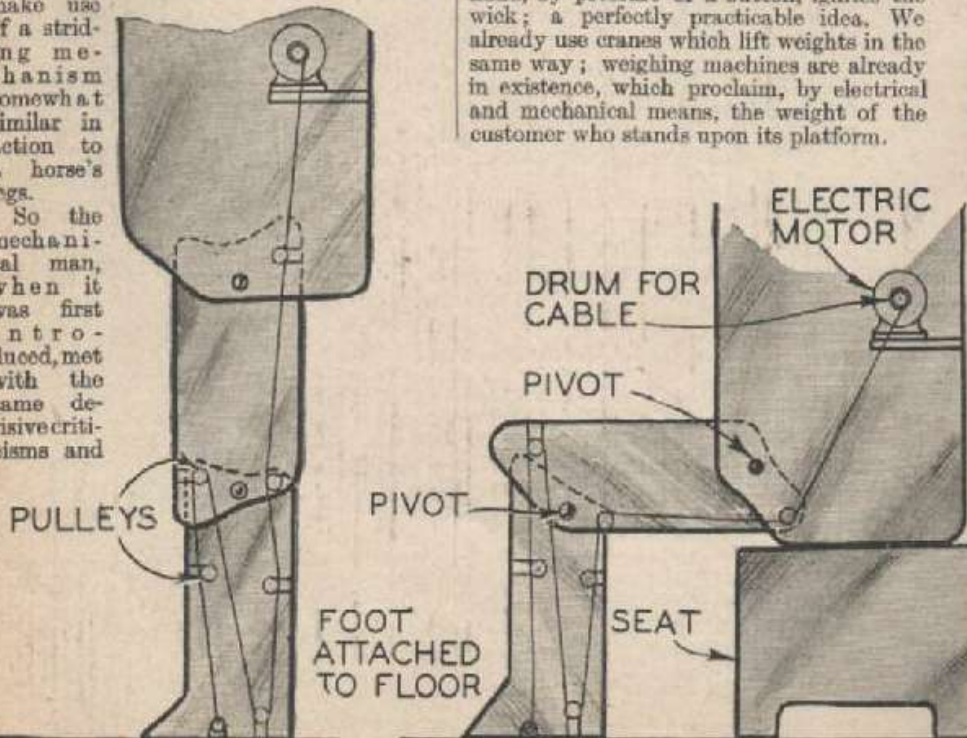


Fig. 2.—How the robot stands up. Note the small wire cable passing round pulleys. This is fixed to the foot and so pulls up the body when wound round the motor-operated drum.

sniggers from the ill-informed, possibly only because of its shape. But because an in-

## Modern Inventions Make the Robot Possible

The infra-red ray can be used to count with greater accuracy than human beings, as it is already doing in many printing works; it is possible to store speech on a steel tape or a wax record, and we can now by that means virtually listen to the voice of the dead. A man may broadcast in London and the entire world can listen to him. Television is already in operation and is on the threshold of important developments.



Fig. 1.—(above) Professor J. Popjie with his mechanical man seated in an aeroplane, in which the robot actually operated the dual controls, and (right), a robot making a gramophone record on a portable machine.

ventor seeks to imitate the shape of a human being as an enclosure for a particular mechanism it does not make the idea any less practicable. For example, we could make a robot mechanical lighter, whose hand, by pressure of a button, ignites the wick; a perfectly practicable idea. We already use cranes which lift weights in the same way; weighing machines are already in existence, which proclaim, by electrical and mechanical means, the weight of the customer who stands upon its platform.



It is not such a fantastic notion therefore to concede that some mechanism in the form of a man may combine, in one homogeneous piece of apparatus, all of these modern scientific inventions. And why not? It is a simple mechanical proposition to make a device which walks, for walking machines are over one hundred years old. It is also a simple matter to make arms and hands raise weights; mechanical talking devices are almost child's play to-day, and the microphone, which is the electrical counterpart of the human ear, will respond to minute sound energies and set in motion various mechanisms. The only point which arises is whether the Robot need really take on the form of the human frame. "Horseless carriages" do not, excepting in the case mentioned earlier, employ mechanical horses, and it is a moot point whether the shape used for those Robots already produced will survive. Of course, it is spectacular and appeals to the public imagination, but it is not realised that



all of the capabilities of the Robot have been performed daily for years past by devices of less appealing, if more practical, contour.

A Robot, in whatever form it ultimately is produced, can be made to do practically everything but think. This is a mechanical age, and it would be idle to deny that the tendency is more and more to make use of mechanical appliances to do work formerly executed by human beings. The man power of the world is comparatively small; the entire population of the world could be accommodated in a box having sides only half a mile in length. Our physical strength is growing less, for the increasing use of mechanical contrivances for travel is gradually causing us to lose the use of our legs. Our mental power is increasing. It is not absurd, hence, to conjecture of a time when man has become so

not absurd, hence, to conjecture of a time when man has become so

speaker of the same type as is used in the majority of home radio sets. To add to the illusion, the mouth is invariably made to move as speech is emitted. Sounds received by the microphones are made to operate relays which, according to the type of sound, give rise eventually to movement or cause the object to "speak." Dealing first with movement, the generally adopted methods employed are as described in the following paragraphs.

**How the Robot stands up**

Fig. 2 gives a diagrammatic section of the leg and lower body portion of a Robot. It must be emphasized that this is not necessarily complete, but is a simplified movement, and in the best exhibition models the principle of "lazy" pulleys is carried much further in order to avoid all risk of the Robot collapsing with

foot and lower portion of the limb is continuous, so that this portion is quite rigid. At the knee, the upper portion of the leg, or thigh, is pivoted, and a further pivot is fitted between thigh and trunk. When the motor winds up the thin wire cable the lower end, being fixed, causes the body to rise as tension is put on to the wire. Upon reversing the movement with a suitable clutch to avoid the too sudden running out of the cable, the body is lowered, and through the medium of the pivots the legs fold back, giving a perfect sitting movement. The arms are moved in a similar manner, and it is only a matter of fitting a sufficiently large number of motors to enable the Robot to move independently its hands, ears, head, etc. It will generally be found that the head only rotates, a forward and backward movement being an unnecessary complication.

**How the Robot Speaks**

The method of providing speech for the mechanical man is actually quite simple, and the gramophone principle is employed in one form or another. In a simple Robot, a record may be made to rotate when the motor is switched on, and an electric sound-

*(Continued on page 218).*

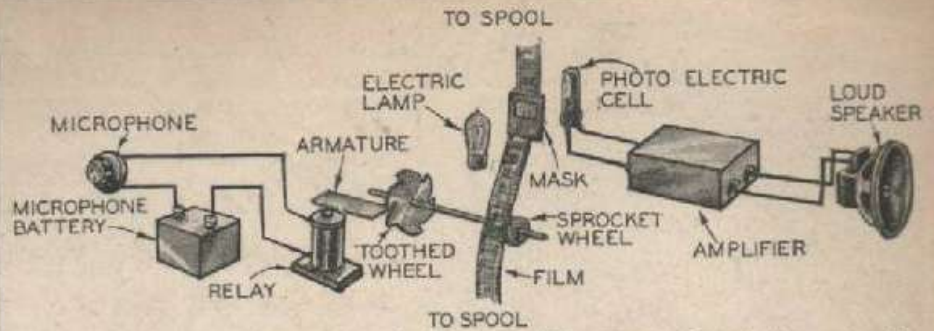


Fig. 3.—A schematic diagram of a typical robot system. When the microphone circuit is energized the armature (acting as a ratchet) is caused to rotate the toothed wheel and thence the sprocket or other mechanism.

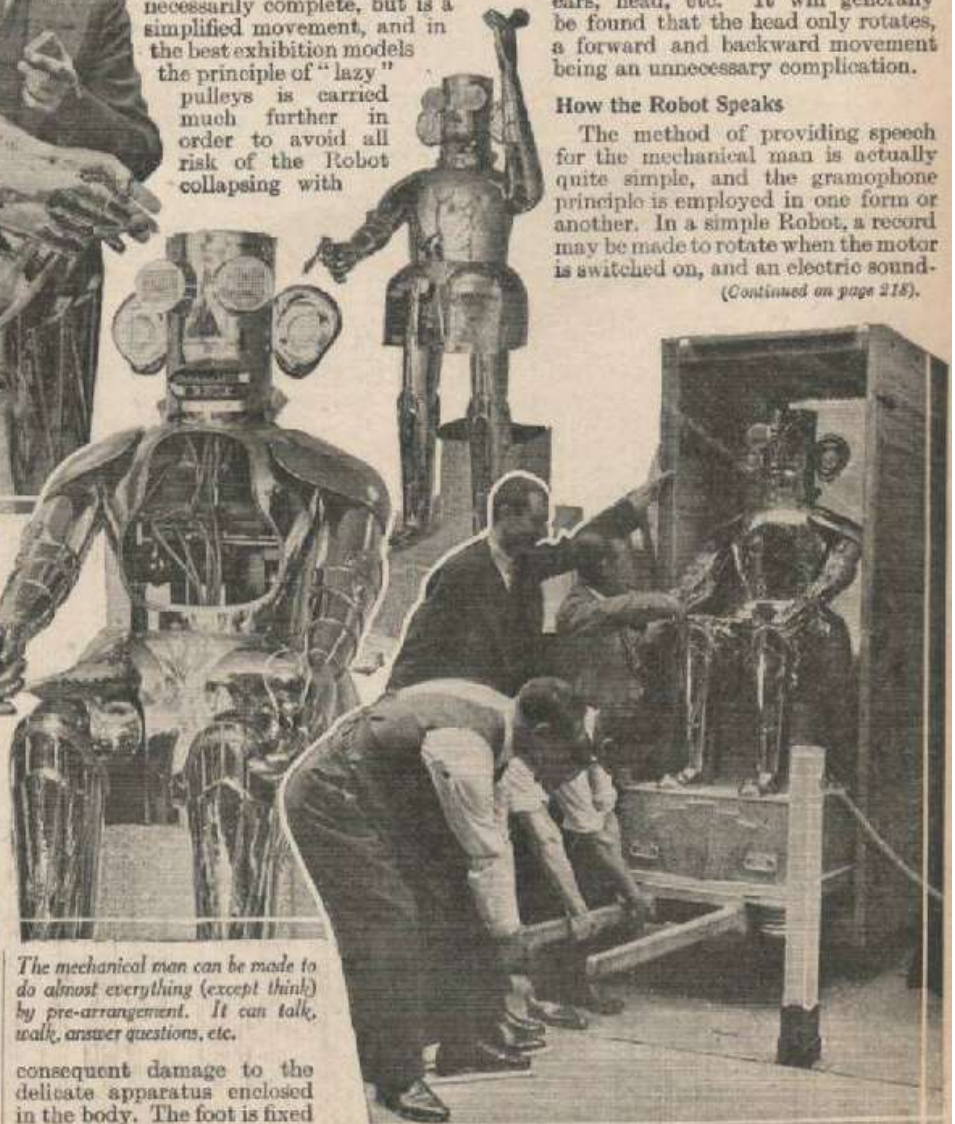


Fig. 4.—Here is an inventor helping the robot to a pipe of tobacco.

weak that he will scarcely be able to move, and will be absolutely dependent upon some form of Robot for his existence. The idea has been exploited in a play, which had as its theme the entire conquest of mind over matter, but in the end matter predominated and killed the inventor!

**Apparatus Employed**

At various times during the past year or so a number of Robots have toured this country, and in most cases the principles have been very similar, although differently adapted. Principally to attract attention and appeal to the man-in-the-street, the exhibition Robot is always built up in a form similar to a human being, that is, with a body, head and limbs. Furthermore, the head is furnished with "eyes," "mouth" and "ears." In some cases the "eyes" are formed by lamps, which in the case of one well-known Robot (Eric) light up as soon as he hears a question put to him. In most cases one or both of the ears are fitted with small microphones, and the mouth is simply the camouflaged opening of a good loud-



The mechanical man can be made to do almost everything (except think) by pre-arrangement. It can talk, walk, answer questions, etc.

consequent damage to the delicate apparatus enclosed in the body. The foot is fixed to the floor or base of the pedestal upon which the Robot sits. The casing of

The enormous weight of the robot (it is 9 feet high) can be gauged from this picture.



box, or pick-up, traversing the record can, through a suitable amplifier, reproduce the recorded sounds through the medium of the loudspeaker in the Robot's head. Obviously, the amount of material which can be accommodated on a record is not very great, and, furthermore, if the Robot is to answer any question put to it, the pick-up has to be deposited on the sound track of the record at a spot delivering a suitable reply. With one record only, the number of questions which can be replied to is limited. However, the sound-on-film method employed in the talkie installations provides a very much greater scope, and the only difficulty is found in providing sufficient relays to enable the film to be drawn through the "gate" to the various positions in order to deliver the correct speech. This means that the Robot, as probably many people have now found out, can only reply to a set number of questions, and for exhibition purposes these take the nature of the dates of well-known events, the time of day, the Robot's name, etc. So far, the Robot's delivery of speech is no more remarkable than the well-known weighing-machines which are now seen all over the country, and which tell you your weight when you stand on the platform and place a coin in the slot. The principal novelty rests in the manner in which the replies are given to questions asked by spectators. There is more actual novelty than mystery in this, however, when it is remembered that the question, in the majority of cases, may be given in any language, or even in nonsensical gibberish, provided the intonation follows certain predetermined lines.

A very ingenious toy which is now obtainable will assist in explaining this little

## MARVELS OF THE MECHANICAL MAN

(Continued from page 209)

mystery. Very popular some years ago in America, and introduced to this country some time ago, was a toy consisting of a small kennel mounted on a base, the whole being constructed from ordinary tin-plate. Standing just inside the kennel is a ferocious-looking bulldog. Over the kennel entrance is printed in large letters the name of the dog, for instance, Fido. When you stand close to the kennel and call out "Fido," the dog jumps right out of the kennel, sliding along the tin base. At first this seems remarkable, until, perchance, you are demonstrating the toy to a friend and happen to speak rather loudly near the kennel and are surprised to see the dog jump out. Perhaps after a little experimenting you will find that the dog will come out if you call out "Tin-tacks" or any other word. With the majority of Robots, "How old are you?" will elicit the reply, "Three years" or any other pre-arranged period, but this same reply would be given if you asked, "How bold are you?" The microphone receives the vibrations of the question, and a pre-selector, designed to operate somewhat after the manner of the automatic telephone, actuated generally by an ordinary electric relay, rotates the sound-film, or recording disc, until the desired answer is brought into position, and the amplifier is then brought into action to deliver the reply. Fig. 3 shows a schematic lay-out of a microphone, relay, sound film arrangement. In this diagram (see p. 209),

if the number "One" is spoken into the microphone, or, in other words, a single impulse is received, the relay is operated during the course of which the arm of the relay bears against one of the teeth of the cogged wheel, A, and so rotates the sprocket wheel and turns the film through a certain movement. It will be appreciated, of course, that instead of film the relay could switch in an electric motor for a certain period, etc. Two impulses at the microphone circuit would rotate the toothed wheel two sections and so on.

The light-sensitive device bearing this name has already been explained in these pages, and by including one of these cells in the head of the Robot it is possible to arrange that anyone passing in front of it will bring some piece of mechanism into action and either make the Robot call out or even cause him to operate some external apparatus. Thus a bell may be placed at the side of the Robot, and a person adopting the rôle of a burglar may walk past the Robot, whereupon he will pick up and ring the bell. The General Electric Company of America have devoted considerable money and time to the design of Robots for commercial purposes, and although these have not been built in human form (as they are for utility and not exhibition purposes) they may be found fulfilling many functions in the G.E.C. works. Such routine jobs as opening up the works at a given hour (a time-operated device), blowing the cease-work hooter, starting up machinery, cutting off electric power in the event of a fault developing in a machine, sounding a fire alarm in the event of fire (a temperature-operated device), and many similar schemes are actual practical examples of Robots.

But the most famous robot was *Elektro*, built by Westinghouse, which made its debut at New York's World's Fair in 1939, 2.1m tall weighing 12 kg. Wiki writes:

*...he could walk by voice command, speak about 700 words (using a 78-rpm record player), smoke cigarettes, blow up balloons, and move his head and arms. Elektro's body consisted of a steel gear, cam and motor skeleton covered by an aluminum skin. His photoelectric "eyes" could distinguish red and green light.*

A video of Elektro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay225WkU4Gs>

All of these early robots could only do simple tricks, move, say a few words from built in phonographs - most couldn't balance a heavy steel monster isn't easy.

When moving into more serious sf territory, three names shine a little stronger. *Lester Del Rey* with "Helen O'Loy" (1938), *Eando Binder* with "I, Robot" (1939) and of course *Isaac Asimov* with "Robbie" (1940, his first robot story), but all this is well-known to fans of skiffy. Ribots turned from threats to servants.

A few words about *industrial robots* which began to emerge, basically long programmable arms with a claw doing repetitive tasks along a production line. One leading industrial robot company is ASEA (acronym for General Swedish Electric Company, now merged with

Brown Boveri into ABB). If you remember earlier issues, it was ASEA engineers who in 1945 founded the Atomic Noah club that speculated in space ships, interplanetary travel and atomic wars. ASEA/ABB pride themselves with delivering the "world's first all-electric, microprocessor-controlled, commercially available industrial robot" named IRB6.



*Elektro getting a cig lighted for a relaxing smoke.*



*Robbie from "Forbidden Planet" became a big star.*





IRB6 far left claims to be the world's first electric, CPU controlled industrial robot. Here its evolution. See [https://library.e.abb.com/public/c1ecdae9855e5452c1257d200053f273/24-31%202m433\\_EN\\_72dpi.pdf](https://library.e.abb.com/public/c1ecdae9855e5452c1257d200053f273/24-31%202m433_EN_72dpi.pdf)

Ps. Can't resist. Finally, Bob Bloch (middle) with friends in the 1930s, from the Gauer collection... (See previous issues. )



## Mailing Comments

**Henry Grynsten:** Fascinating to read the AI's comments to the AI fanzine FaiNZINE. 1) The AI has no comment at regarding that it's an AI commenting a fellow AI. No Hey Buddy or so! 2) The comments it does have are just saying the obvious, it's so bland that it borders the meaningless. That AIs do this is something we can observe elsewhere. 3) Its comments to the poem is just a huge heap of cliches. BTW, ~~I HAVE THE TIME SINCE I'M TAKING A WORLD BREATH~~ ~~WINNING COURSE THIS SPRING SO~~ any new FaiNZINE may dry up for a while, Alsaac Aisimov notes. "Trantor is being overtaken by some strange Foundation, so things are a bit chaotic!" ■■ Hm, "abrud" meant absurd of course... As for reading skills, the good old "moral panic" works by eg actually claiming that the "victims" read sf, play games, watch movies *instead* of learning to read. Reading this blasted space stuff - game manuals, TV subtitles etc - doesn't count. ■■ I have no problems to believe that Lovecraft may very well have written an average of 10 letters per day. But the economics behind, all that postage, that's another matter, it gives room for doubt. My only suggestion is that some of the letters may have been postcards instead, and there the postage was only ø1. That would cut the costs but probably not enough. ■■ As for 70 pages long letters, I've heard rumours that you've written some very long letters at times... (The longest letter I've written was 30-35 pages or so, if I rememeber. ) ■■ Rather big ships can actually reach Switzerland via the big river Rhine. So Switzerland almost have "sea ports", by the Rhine. <http://www.upper-rhine-ports.eu/en/les-ports-partenaires-3/le-port-de-bale.html> ■■ It does feel that the sf genre is in a slump right now, but it may rise again! There are several signs: 1) Sf is becoming more relevant as we today live in more of an "sf world" (pandemic, AI, numerous space projects, Putin's war). The "mundane" world - as we fans call it - is moving more into sf. More reviews and articles about the genre turns up, mainstream authors more frequently dwell into the genre, production of sf movies and TV shows increases, etc. 2) I have good hope for the continued relevance of verbal storytelling, also through written symbols (letters) as in literature. The reason is that I believe homo sapiens has been primed through 100 000s of years to be especially receptive to people telling stories. For 100 000 years or more we have gathered around camp fires and told and heard stories. While one might argue that a story on paper isn't the same, I maintain that as long as stories are told through *words* the camp fire gene kicks in. Also, as we are curious creatures, sf is the obvious literary choice for intellectual investigations. 3) People must become tired of fantasy sooner or later. Sf is the same, but without silly dragons, stupid knights and hopeless magicians. People will in the end opt for more rational things than anno dazumal, irrelevant imaginations longing for knights

and impossible "magic".

**William McCabe:** Please tell us why your EAPA contribution has blank pages, simply removed as things are interrupted mid-sentence. Missing pages leaves me with nothing to comment. If you want to abandon a debate, isn't it easier not to write anything - rather than first write and then remove?

**Garth Spencer:** "artificial intelligence is not intelligence in any way" This far AI seems a bit underwhelming IQ-wise, and while some results are impressive, others are just bizarre. ■■ "it

infringes copyright" Ie, claim by some that using material for *training* would somehow be the same making a copy - which is what *copyright* is about. And I disagree. Training is the AI equivalent of just *being inspired*. Being inspired by something is not copyright "infringement". Generally, copyright holders always tend to try to claim more than they have to right to. If AIs are banned from being inspired by eg an article in the *Daily Mail*, humans would also be banned from it! We can't have that. ■■ I have written stories for a fanthology, namely *Swede Ishes 2*, but a long time ago... ■■ Poul Anderson's story was indeed about a vessel powered by bheer!



Ukrainian TV reported on the latest aid package from Sweden. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLFFEjI6-CsWe/> Now, certain US congressmen, what's your reply?



**Слава Україні!**



Archive Midwinter  
a zine for N'APA 269

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10 March 2024

### Comments:

**Cover:** Public Domain Art.

**Ahrvid Engholm:** Last I heard, George was working on a way to keep you in N'APA. There are those (myself included!) who would volunteer to pay for a "guest membership" to keep you eligible. The whole mess is beyond my comprehension, but someone brought it up and asked for a vote. Your contributions here are too darn good for us to give up!

Rct me, certainly I agree that humorless people are dangerous. There's a joke about how many ideological puritans it takes to change a light-bulb. The answer is, "That's not funny!" And *that* answer is a little scary. It was a hallmark of the old Soviet Union that communism had no sense of humor, and today's dictators follow that model.

Welcome, Sweden, to NATO. May it be no more than symbolic for a very, very long time. I do believe that if Putin had rolled over Ukraine in a mere two weeks, which a lot of us were expecting, he would then have started massing troops against Lithuania. I *think* the NATO alliance would have deterred him from



moving in, and I *\*dread\** that, if he had, nuclear war would have broken out.

Interesting NATO 2099 "future history." Notable that the real "enemy" wasn't dictatorship, but an earth-grazing comet. NATO isn't really the instrument that would best serve to address such a disaster; probably the UN would serve better.

Fun history of the mimeograph, for many years the flesh-and-blood of fannish publishing! My own fandom is within the Xerox age, and I never mimeoed, but I know people (including several, alas, who have passed on) who were mimeo self-publishers.

Rct William McCabe, total agreement re "series" of sf/fantasy books. I far prefer "loose" series, where the order doesn't really matter. The James Bond books by Ian Fleming have a definite internal chronology...and it doesn't matter! You can read 'em in any old order and get by just fine! (I've definitely flayed this ox before in these pages! Kipling said, of writing styles, that "every single one of them is right," but perhaps some techniques are a little more right than others...)

**George Phillis:** Good summing up of events in the N3F as of recent days. We're doing okay, maybe a little better, but we're still so small and spare, and look back with some longing to days when we had quite a few more members.

**Garth Spencer:** You're efforts at self-assessment and priority-flagging sound entirely rational. The difficulty, of course, comes in implementing the priorities... A friend of mine has a plastic ball, a sphere, prominently labelled "TUIT." It is his "round tuit," and he takes inspiration from it. He sort of uses it as a buggy whip, to prompt himself to get cracking, doggonit. He's a cancer survivor, so he has a fairly sharp sense of the value of time...but even he wastes a good amount of time on pointless activities. Perhaps it is just human nature to put things off till tomorrow...

Re "Everything is Belgium's Fault," I'm reminded of a vicious parody in National Lampoon (back when it used to be funny) called "Americans United to Beat the Dutch," in which the Dutch were lambasted as the source of all wickedness. Dutch Courage is really weakness, and a Dutch Treat is no treat at all! Who wants anything to do with a Dutch Uncle? And so on...

**Mark Nelson:** I'd heard of the referendum to make Australia a Republic, but I hadn't heard the detail about the President being elected by Parliament. Doesn't sound like the optimum procedure.

Glum agreement that if the war in Ukraine ends soon, it will end with Russia keeping all occupied land. Still, by golly, we made 'em pay a high price for it. Maybe that will deter future assaults of this sort. I know China is watching very closely, with Taiwan uppermost in mind.

Re math and logic, when I was in high school, I stumbled across a copy of Wff n' Proof in a second-hand-store, and fell utterly in love. Symbolic logic was the coolest thing ever! (I was already a

big fan of Spock from Star Trek!) Of course, I instantly saw the deadly loophole in mathematical logic: everything depends on the premises! You can prove that grapes are geese, if you select the right premises. Robert Heinlein said that logic can't tell you anything you didn't already know, and, yeah, there's some validity to that. The joy of manipulating symbols in symbolic logic is that you can arrive at conclusions you "didn't know that you knew." The conclusions are inherent in the premises, but logic and make the conclusions explicit.

**Heath Row:** Fun reading list! I read "Beau Geste" some years ago, hoping it would help me understand the movie. It quite did! And then there's Marty Feldman's "The Last Remake of Beau Geste" which is jolly darn good fun!

I very much hope we don't lose you from N'APA. I wonder if we could simply pass a revision to the rules, permitting associate N3F members to participate? The motion we voted on seems less valuable every day that passes. What would it harm us if total outsiders, not part of N3F at all, wanted to participate in N'APA? Unless there was an organized takeover conspiracy, I guess....

Re Hercule Poirot, I had the grievous bad luck, many years ago, of picking up a well-known and much-respected Agatha Christie novel -- only to arrive at the end and learn that the narrator did it. I was outraged, and consider it a ghastly violation of "fair play." Especially as the guilty narrator deliberately leaves out events and details that are vital to a solution. To my mind, a "valid" mystery involves leaving the reader a \*chance\* at solving the mystery. Christie, bless her, doesn't always follow that rule.

**Samuel Lubell:** Two months later, and it looks like we avoided another government shutdown. I'm dismayed, of course, that there are Representatives and Senators who voted against the funding bill, as if they think a shutdown would be a good idea. Personally, I



think that voting for a shutdown is perilously close to true treason, as it would harm the U.S. and serve no benefit at all.

There is much wisdom in your suggestion that the ideal length for sf/fantasy fiction is the trilogy. It lets the author create and explore the setting, but comes and an ending without the complications of endless series fiction. Ursula K. LeGuin's "Earthsea" trilogy was about as close to a "perfect" work as I've ever seen. She rather weakened the overall work by adding three more books to it!

Agreed that the two major comic book universes -- Marvel's and DC's -- are "science fiction." Some comic books, of course, are fantasy, pure and simple. DC's John Constantine, for example, or most of Marvel's Doctor Strange. But the overall universes are more SF than Fantasy.

Fun spotlight on Roger Zelazny, who was one of the greats of the bygone great golden age of SF. My friends on the S.T.A.R. San Diego fan club did a costume group of the characters from the Amber series for the Comic-Con Masquerade one year -- 80's? -- and it was reported that Zelazny, in the audience, was in tears (of joy!)

Fun continued essay on science and science fiction, focusing on Mark Twain and the Connecticut Yankee.

### **Recent Reading:**

I failed to read a couple books... One was a history of the search and hunt for the battleship Bismarck, in 1941. The problem is that the book was written for a Junior-High-School reading level (I did not know this when I bought the book.) It was too simplistic, and too breathless. I got tired of one-sentence paragraphs with exclamation points. ("But the ship had already sailed!")

The other was a fantasy novel, Urban Fantasy specifically. This is pretty much my favorite genre these days, but this novel was drivel. It was highly derivative of Jim Butcher's "Harry Dresden" series, with many, many, MANY of the same tropes and memes. There were werewolves and vampires -- the author even used the word "Camarilla" for vampire families. There were elves and Egyptian gods. There was a secret U.S. government spy/military bureau that knew all about these supernatural infestations. The whole thing was just one stinking cliché after another. I read forty pages and threw it away.

### **Epistemology**

A friend of mine had a college professor -- showing how low the requirements can be to become one -- who taught a disbelief in anything other than our own physiological senses. If we can see it or hear it, that is "evidence." But photographs, for instance, introduce distortions and cannot be trusted as "evidence." Microscopes and telescopes \*create\* images, and do not merely reveal what is actually there. They absolutely cannot be trusted. There is a kind of scientific "fundamentalist" reasoning there, on the grounds that there is no independent experiment we can perform, other than looking through a microscope, that will verify what we see through a microscope. However, there are LOTS of very easy experiments we can perform that verify the images we see through a telescope! I use my scope to look at a rock on top of a nearby hill...then I walk up that hill and look at the rock. Yep: the details I saw through the telescope can now be verified with my own eyesight. So, at least to that degree, the man needs to revise his principle, as I can show it wrong, if only to that degree. (I would say the same is true of photographs: I show you a photo of, say, the Winged Victory of Samothrace -- and then I take you to see it in person. The photographs are correct.)

The real lesson, I guess, is to eschew "fundamentalism" in almost any sphere of human inquiry. At best, it is "a priori" and at worst it leads to remarkably stupid conclusions!



# Brandy Hall Issue 5 (March 2023)

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*Brandy Hall 5* is produced for N'APA mailing 269 (March 2023) by Mark Nelson.

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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 recollect about my experiences attending science fiction conventions.

The first convention I attended was Lucon (February 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 1988), held at the University of Leeds. At the time I was an active member of the Leeds University Union Science Fiction Society, so attendance was pretty much de rigueur. The Guests of Honour were Duncan Lunan and Bob Shaw. I don't remember anything of Duncan's talk. I wasn't going to attend Bob's talk on the grounds that I hadn't read any of his work, but one my friends attending the convention persuaded me that I should go. I don't know if John Breakwell had heard him give a talk before, that seems unlikely, or had read his novels, but in any case John was right. Thirty-five plus years later, I don't remember anything about the talk. I do remember that it was very entertaining and I was glad that I went. Thirty-five plus years later I *still* haven't read anything by Bob Shaw. Rather, I haven't read any of his pro work. I did later read *The Enchanted Duplicator*, though I'm not sure that I appreciated that Bob had co-written it. Until quite recently I've always associated *The Enchanted Duplicator* with Walt Willis. Other memories...

- I was a member of a panel on "role-playing games", with the aforementioned John Breakwell. At the start of the panel I asked the audience if anyone received any role-playing fanzines, John Breakwell's *The Green Goblin* was the only RPG fanzine I received at that point. The question was met with complete indifference, now I wonder if I should have asked if anyone received any SF fanzines. I don't remember any specifics, but in my memory we had a good discussion between the panel and audience members.
- Lucon was the first time that I met Sandra Bond, not so named. Even in the backwaters of the Leeds University Science Fiction Society we had heard the story of how at a precocious age she had turned up to a meeting of the London group, at the One Tun. After a while, Sandra was anointed as being the spirit incarnate of British Fanzine Fandom Yet to Come. Indeed, her destiny came to pass when she won the 2023 TAFF race. You'll have to excuse my use of the phrase "the spirit incarnate of British Fanzine Fandom Yet to Come", I just made that up. But she had been identified as someone who would carry the torch of British Fanzine Fandom into the future. On Friday evening we were sitting in a room in the student union that had a bar that was restricted to members

of the convention. I can still remember the whisper that went around the Leeds University group – “that’s Sandra Bond”. I also remember her pressing the flesh, well pressing the flesh of the convention members who weren’t sitting down whispering “that’s Sandra Bond”.

- In 1988 I wasn’t on friendly terms with poetry. I hadn’t read any poetry since I’d been required to read it for my ‘O’ level English literature exam. Still, one of the events during the convention was a poetry reading. I don’t remember the name of the poet, but believe he was from Yorkshire. I don’t remember why I wanted to listen to poetry, perhaps because I recognised the poet’s name from somewhere. Much to my astonishment, I really enjoyed listening to the poetry session. It was something of a regret that this bloke was not asked back to any subsequent convention I attended.

- There was a fanzine stand where you could take away any fanzines that piqued your interest. I don’t remember there being a fanzine stand at any of the subsequent conventions I attended.

The second convention I attended was Iconoclasm (June 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 1989), held at the Griffin Hotel in Leeds. This is only convention I’ve attended that wasn’t organised by the Leeds University Science Fiction Society. It’s location also means that it’s the furthest I’ve ever travelled to a convention. The GoHs were Dianne Duane and Peter Morwood. I’m not sure what Jenny Glover’s involvement in the convention was, but she was listed as the contact person pre-convention. In those days, at least in Leeds, the convention was that exams for finalists were held quite a bit earlier than those for the hoi polli. I’d finished my exams and despite the fact that I’d paid for accommodation at my hall of residence until the end of session, I’d debunked pack to my parents. As it was more expensive travelling on a Friday, I missed the first caught the train up to Leeds on the Saturday. My memories of this convention...

- This was the second and final time that I appeared on a panel, and the first and only time that I’ve been the panel moderator. The panel was, once again, on role playing games, though my involvement with both RPG fandom and playing RPGs was now at an end. I started by asking the audience if anyone had attended last year’s panel, no-one had. Then remarked, that was a shame as it was a good panel. Luckily, one of the other panellists realised that I was floundering in waters that were too deep for me and took over moderation of the panel. The panel was a good one I think, but it had been luckily that someone else had been able to take charge.

- There was a panel on science fiction fanzines. (Possibly, it was just about fanzines since the average member of fandom seems to be in blissful ignorance of the possibility of other genres of fanzines.) Vinc Clarke was one of the panellists. Afterwards, I introduced myself to him and he took down my particulars. These were subsequently printed in a fanzine he was involved with and this lead to me receiving a number of fanzines. This lead indirectly to my abortive involvement with the APA *Pieces of Eight* a year or so later.

- There was a fannish version of the BBC Radio comedy panel game “I’m Sorry I Haven’t A Clue”. This probably sounded like a good idea following more than a few beers down at the pub.



Unfortunately, the execution was very poor since it lacked the prerequisite for such a panel: humorous panellists.

- It's the only time I've attended a convention which has had an art show. For each piece of art there was a sheet of paper. Write your bid on the line below the previous bid, clearly having to be a higher bid. As a poor student, I didn't bid on any art works.

The third convention I attended was either Lucon III in 1991 or Lucon Ivy (February 21st-23rd, 1992). I suspect the later, in which case the GoH was Gwyneth Jones. I suspect that I was no longer a member of the Leeds University Science Fiction Society, but had been persuaded to attend by Steve Glover. My only memory of this convention is that late on the Friday night Steve, a bunch of guys who were going to stay over at the Glover's and myself headed to the taxi rank to get a cab back to Armley. (I lived a very short distance from the Glover's). There were n+1 of us in our party, which was unfortunate as the taxi would only take n of us. I offered to walk home. I remember that there was snow on the ground, not unusual in February in Leeds. Half-an-hour or so later I was at the Glover's front door, which was open. I entered, I was expecting the conversation to continue, but found that the front room was dark and everyone was to bed. I also found that the keys to the house had been left in the front door. I took the front door keys out of the front door, put them inside the house, and trudged back to my own place of abode.

The final convention I attended was Lunicon (July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993) at the University of Leeds. This also served as Unicon 14. I was no longer a member of the Leeds University Science Fiction Society. The GoH's were: Roger Zelazny, Colin Greenland, and Michael Scott Rohan. I have a strong feeling that I attended Zelazny's presentation, I had watched *Damnation Alley* when it was released and perhaps even read the novelisation of the movie. My only other memory of the convention is that the organisers had obtained a copy of the pilot episode of *Babylon 5* which they played to quite a packed audience. I was not blown away by this, once they started showing season 1 in the UK I thought that "Midnight on the Firing Line" (the first episode of season one) would have made for a better pilot, it was much more interesting.

I didn't particularly enjoy my brief soiree into the world of SF conventions. There are several reasons for this, but one was that I felt I was something of a fraud: I didn't have an in-depth knowledge of written science-fiction. At one of the conventions, probably LuCon, I was sitting at the bar with other members of the university society, safety in numbers. Kevin McVeigh, a well-known member of the BSFA and British fandom, was working his way through our little group. His two questions were variations on "who is your favourite author" and "what's the best novel/short story that you've read this year". For some reason there was a distraction before he reached me. (I'd like to think that was due to the entrance of Sandra Bond into the room, but I don't remember.) I was much more interested in the portrayal of science fiction on the TV/in movies than in reading novels/short stories. However, I didn't have the in-depth encyclopedic knowledge of these fields that other SF fans had. (It's such a long time ago I don't remember if there were even any panels on SF on the TV or in the movies, they might only have covered written SF.)

# The Mathom House

*Intermission 139 (Ahrvid Engholm)*

*“I understand Bertil's extensive magazine collection has gone to Umeå University library.”*

Perhaps not related, do you have a list of any universities that hold collections of Swedish SF fanzines? Perhaps, at a future date, someone will want to write a learned history of Swedish SF fandom?

*“Now when the virus panic has calmed down, statistics shows that Sweden - despite all the commotion had the lowest excess deaths in Europe! We did right. Calculations show that for 2020-21 excess deaths here were ca 2500, a fraction of what was officially assumed.”*

*“If someone dies and it doesn't show as a population anomaly it's not the virus.”*

That's true, but the calculation is more complicated than just comparing the numbers in two consecutive years. I can't talk about Sweden, but I know in Australia one of the consequences of the counter-measures that were introduced was that there was a *decrease* in the number of deaths due to the flu virus. This makes sense: either people were not living home, or they were living home at a reduced frequency, and when they left home they were wearing masks. They were also washing their hands more often (an assumption). Taken together these activities reduce the number of people catching the flu and consequently dying from it. So if I want to estimate the number of excess deaths in Australia I have to first estimate the reduction in the number of flu deaths and then add this quantity to the number of deaths. There may be other quantities that need to be adjusted. For example, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that an unforeseen consequence of lockdown measures is to reduce the number of road deaths for the simple reason that there was a greatly reduced amount of traffic on the road - and pedestrians to hit.

I was unaware that Walt Willis had published a book, *The Improbable Irish*, under the name Walter Bryan. And a Big THANK YOU for reprinting Bloch's highly entertaining, and educational, review of the book. Entertaining and educational. Words to describe all of Bloch's writing that you republished. I hope that you continue to mine this rich vein of writing in subsequent issues.

I was very interested in what Bloch had to say about “the article”.

*“He isn't content to go his way in peace. He must first compose a personal manifesto, to the effect that he has seen the Error of his Ways and is Repenting. With a truly religious fervor, he will infer that fandom is made up of Miserable Sinners: that its interests and occupations are callow, shallow, juvenile, imbecile. He will cite chapter and verse in an effort to bolster up his case; he will piously lament that “presumably intelligent people” still “waste their time” editing or contributing to*



*'fanzines, reading science-fiction, attending meetings or conventions. He will urge them to awake to Reality and the Big World Outside, and generously offer them a glimpse of his mature outlook in contrast to the petty preoccupations of fandom.'*

One important difference between science fiction fandom and the postal diplomacy hobby, is that very few people in the latter use their fanzine involvement as a stepping stone into a career into the gaming industry. (One wonders how many recent SF fans parley their involvement in fandom into a pro career.) However, screeds of text very similar to the above have been seen at times. In particular, a bit before my involvement in the US Hobby, there were three individuals who attracted the appellation 'The Bad Boys'. After being actively involved for a couple of years they left in a prolonged huff and a puff, very much not going in peace.

Interesting to read Bloch's discussion on the BNF and what it meant. Interesting to learn that as far ago as 1957 fandom had started to split up, so that you could be recognised as a BNF as a consequence of your running of conventions regardless of your activity in publishing fanzines. (I would not have guessed that.)

I agree with you (do you get tired of me writing that?) about the inflationary length of novels. And if it isn't the length it's the fact that they are packaged into never ending sequences. What ever happened to the art of writing a stand alone novel of 200-300 pages with never a sequel in sight?

*"Weren't all our yesterdays better!"*

Yesterday. All my troubles seemed so far away. Now it looks as though they're here to stay. Is it the best pop song of all time? Rolling Stone magazine and MTV thought so in 2000. It certainly is one of the most covered pop songs of all time, with over 2,200 recordings. In a recent podcast McCartney explained that the inspiration for the lyrics might have been when he said something to his mother that he later regretted. Or perhaps we should talk about *Yesterday's Enterprise*? IMO, it's unfortunate that this episode led to the subsequent episodes involving Tasha's human-Romulan daughter (Sela). That cheapened *Yesterday's Enterprise*.

*Ryct N'APA Official Organ*

*"I read that N3F "members who are not paying dues", won't be welcome, apparently a new decision. If so, I'm afraid I have to leave N'APA, which then may begin to shrink again which may not be what all want. I became what was called an "associate" neffer, excluding any voting rights or printed material - which means it only costs N3F a few quadrillion electrons. I don't even have any payment system for non-domestic transfers of any dues."*

In the event that you're asked to leave N'APA because you are not a fee paying member, then no worries! I will pay your membership for you. In the unlikely event that we ever meet, which I do not think will happen, you can pay me back in bheer. (I see that later on in the APA, Heath Row has made the same offer.)

Ryct me #1

*"Many Scandinavian words, over a thousand I believe, came into English with the Vikings."*

I haven't checked the number, but there are plenty of words that entered English with the Vikings. Perhaps after I've finished my Swedish Words in English I will start Viking Words in English. I've heard it said that the Geordie accent, meaning their pronunciation of words and some of their dialect words, shows an influence from the Vikings. However, according to a web page at the University of Edinburgh that is a load of rubbish.

*"If you want to hear dialects which have loads of Viking influence (but which very much remain forms of English and Scots), go to East Yorkshire, Lincolnshire or Shetland, not Tyneside!"*

Ryct me #2

*"As for minerals you forget the elements Yttrium, Erbium, Terbium and Ytterbium, which are from a mine near Ytt-Erb-y...Ytterby north of Stockholm, where those elements first were found!"*

I haven't forgotten about them. I'm listing words in the chronological order that they entered English. Those elements were discovered much more recently. (I didn't know that they were all discovered at the same mine.)

Ryct Jefferson Swycaffer:

I agree with you (sorry) that fandom should be "a text-based thing" and that "fanzines should lead fandom". But I suspect that in expressing such sentiments we are showing our age.

*"The magazine rejection rates have been studied, showing that manuscripts by male writers get a substantially more rejections."*

What's really needed is a study where a manuscript is submitted to one prozine using a male name and then if it's rejected it's submitted to a second prozine with a female name. I've read about such investigations in connection with higher education in the UK. I certainly recall hearing about studies that looked at ethnicity, I suspect there have also been studies looking at gender. (Unfortunately, I don't remember the details.)

Ryct Henry Grynnssten

I too used to make Airfix kits and play with small plastic solders. More of a male activity...

*"Tiny Houses should be of special interest in Sweden, since we in the 1980 got the "Friggehut", named after the then housing minister Birgit Friggebo. That was small buildings of max 10 sqm - later 15 sqm - you could put up on your own land without planning permission! It has now been extended to "Attefall houses" - once more after the minister responsible - allowed to be up to 30 sqm, still without planning permission. A positive development."*

When we visit IKEA I'm always fascinated by their show rooms which show what you can do with a small space. Unfortunately, I'm too much of a hoarder to contemplate living in a small compact space.

*Intermission 140 (Ahrvid Engholm)*



There was an article in the newspaper today about Sweden joining NATO. There are two points that I remember. Firstly, a big deal was made of the fact that the entire public transit rail network in Stockholm is operated by a company based in Hong Kong which has ties to the Chinese Communist party. Does this mean that everything to do with the critical infrastructure and tunnels that runs under the city centre are known in Beijing? The second point is that there is a nation wide network of 64,000 shelters spread across Sweden which are designed to house seven million people. (What's the population of Sweden? I had to look it up, 10.42 million in 2021.) There is a Government Agency whose responsibility includes regularly checking the shelters. This agency has two employees.

Congratulations on being one of the five winners of the future of NATO competition, I enjoyed reading your contribution. I'm looking forward to buying the graphic novel when it appears.

Re your account of the Short Story Masters, what's a flash fiction event?

Enjoyed reading your history of the mimeograph. In the 1970s almost all British postal diplomacy fanzines were produced using a mimeograph. That became less popular in the 1980s, though even in the mid 1980s when I became active there were still many zines that were produced using a mimeograph. I even produced an extremely small number of my own fanzines using a mimeograph, maybe three issues. Luckily, I didn't need to duplicate the issues myself. Andrew Fisher, a former RPG fanzine editor, had a mimeograph and ran a small fanzine duplicating "business". I had to produce my stencils and post them to him. In return I received the duplicated fanzine.

I didn't know that they had been a Ditto company, I knew the production method and had seen a very small number of fanzines produced using it. As you mentioned, it was widely used in schools. And that's how I first knew about it, my dad used it to produce handouts and test papers. However, I've never seen a spirit duplicator in the flesh and only saw a mimeograph once.

*"But I miss feeling the structure of stencils on my fingers, the fine chaff of wax, the spots of ink covering my hands, the "ooga chaka...ooga chaka" as you crank the machinery"."*

Fine poetic words to finish your article. Perhaps it is time to see if your Rex Rotary D490 mimeograph works? (Can you still buy the right kind of paper and ink to run it?)

Jefferson P. Swycaffer (*Archive Midwinter*)

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm *"I'm not too very concerned about the "postmodernist assault on science.""*

There have been one or two grand assaults from scientists on the postmodernists. One I remember reading about, but I forget the specifics, is when a group of scientists (physicists?) wrote an article about science (physics?) using a parody of postmodern writing. This was published in a leading postmodern journal. (The article was clearly a load of rubbish from the science perspective, and that was the point.)

Ryct Garth Spencer

“It means being able to ^walk out^ of a movie! I will always treasure the memory of the first time I simply got up and walked out of a movie theater, because the movie was so stupid and boring. (It was “Mr Majestyk” with Charles Bronson.) The feeling was incredibly liberating!”

I’ve never walked out of a movie. Perhaps I am too selective in the movies I watch? There’s only been one time when I seriously thought about leaving a movie. It was a little over thirty years ago at the Leeds Film Festival. I’ve long forgotten the name of the movie. There have been movies that I wish I hadn’t paid for, mostly movies that my wife picked...

George Phillipies (*Ye Murthered Master Mage*)

As a new-ish member of N3F, less than a year, I found your overview of how the N3F has changed in recent years very insightful. I’m sure that we’re all grateful to have had your steady hand on the N3F tiller for the last nine years. From my purely selfish perspective, one of your biggest contributions to N3F has been ensuring that N’APA has continued. I wouldn’t have joined N3F if N’APA did not exist. That’s not quite true. I would not have joined N3F if N’APA existed as a paper APA.

Ryc about the N3F Laureate Awards.

It would be a sad reflection on the state of science fiction if the same set of books were nominated for both the Laureate Awards and the Hugo Awards. Thanks for explaining why the Laureates run using a positive voting system, with no No Award.

Ryct me

You asked me which Wyndham novels I picked up. There was a choice of about five. I didn’t buy *The Triffids* because I read that about thirty years ago. I will buy it at some point because thirty years is a long time. Well, it’s thirty years. Instead, I decided to pick up novels that I had not read: *Trouble with Lichen* (1960) and *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957). (My spelling checker things that Midwich is wrong, and puts forward as a replacement Midwicket.)

Ryct me #2

Your comment about the aging of your board wargaming club put me in mind of Derby Bridge Club. I first played there when I was thirteen or fourteen, forty or so years ago, and I was the youngest person there that night. I haven’t played there since I moved to Australia. But the last time I played there, in the year 2000, I was... well, if I was not the youngest person there I was one of the youngest. Bridge is an aging pastime, but perhaps it has a larger pipe line of young people entering it than board wargaming? Not only have I not played Bridge at Derby Bridge Club since I moved to Australia, I have not played bridge.

Garth Spencer (*Brownian Motion* #6)

It seemed to me that most of your introduction came from *Obdurate Eye* 36 (February 2024) rather than *Obdurate Eye* 35. You did this on purpose didn’t you? To check if we keeping with reading



*Obdurate Eye*?! I wondered about replying to you using parts of the loc that I've sent you, but somehow that did not quite seem kosher.

Ryct me

*"You're honest about procrastination and lack of time management."*

Unfortunately, being honest about it isn't helping me eliminate it. The other night I couldn't sleep and I spent three hours wasting time on the computer doing nothing-in-particular, when I could have spent three hours writing either of my APA zines or writing locs or doing something more constructive. Of course, you can't be active 100% of the time. A small amount of procrastination is surely a good thing?

Ryctm #2

*"Hence the article in this contribution (which I believe I shall copy to my fanzine)."*

If I were on the ball I would have realised that you hadn't copied this article from *Obdurate Eye* 36, rather you had copied it from *Brownian Motion* #6. Don't look to me for any piercing insights!

Ryct Kevin Trainor Jr (*Esmeralda County Line* #6)

*"I, too, have also decided to cultivate my own garden, as well. Or at least the parts of it I can do something about."*

In the parts of Leeds that I lived in as a student, the number one thing to cultivate in your front garden was concrete. In areas where the housing was the classic Victorian back-to-back, there was no back garden because the back of your house joined the back of a house on the parallel street. If you didn't want to park your car on the front street, then you concreted over your garden.

*"did I ever tell you about the mock conspiracy I made up about Belgians?"*

Did you know that the word Belgian is the rudest word in the Galaxy – according to the Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy (publisher Megadodo Publications).

Heath Row (*Snow Poster Township* 14)

I enjoyed reading your comments on those issues of *Wonder Stories* from 1934. Some of the ideas pass muster in 2024. Like, you I'm skeptical of the idea that reading science fiction "*is highly educational and gives you a scientific education, in easy doses—sugar-coated as a rule.*" If it were ever true, which I doubt, it must have been in an era in which science fiction meant hard science fiction. If reading science fiction increased your scientific knowledge, would you need to publish a quiz based around the science in the stories that you published in the same issue?

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm (*Intermission* #138)

*“In Intermission #138, Ahrvid Engholm recognized and mourned the mid-October death of Bertil Falk. While I appreciated your brief analysis of award nominees and winners, I’m not sure that more of the same is a solution for centuries of discrimination and bigotry. I understand your distaste for discrimination of any kind, but if no effort has been taken historically to include, say, women or blacks, how is making effort to include them now discriminatory?”*

I don’t know if this is a fair comparison, but your comment brought to mind some of the right-wing criticism of President Biden’s nomination of Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court. Biden pledged during the 2020 Presidential election to nominate a black woman to the court. Jackson’s subsequent nomination was criticised by some on the grounds that she evidently wasn’t the best candidate for the position, as the commitment to nominate a black woman meant that better qualified candidates, i.e. white, had not been considered. Right-wing opponents of Jackson’s nomination seem to be suggesting that previously the only consideration in nominating candidates for a vacancy on the Supreme Court was that they were, without doubt, legally the best qualified. That seems a dubious proposition.

Ryct Garth Spencer (*Brownian Motion* 5)

*“Gone are the days in which all fen could read All the Things. Mainstream breakouts, adapted works, and Hugo and Nebula award nominees and winners might be the closest we come to a modern-day opportunity to have read the Same Things.”*

British fans might also like to read (prefer to read?) BSFA (British Science Fiction Award) winners and Australian fans might prefer to read Ditmar award winners – to mention two nation based awards. Today I read an old article from *The Canberra Times*, which had the following quote.

*“This is not to say that the Hugo Award always constitutes ‘good literature’, since the basis of the award is voting by the fans registered for the annual World Science Fiction Convention. It will be interesting to see the result of the voting for the Hugo when the convention comes to Melbourne in 1985.*

*The annual Nebula Awards, conferred by the Science Fiction Writers of America, are a little more literary... Perhaps the most creditable awards in terms of literary standards are the relatively minor ones, such as the British Science Fiction Association’s Best SF Novel [...] and the Australian Science Fiction Ditmar Award.”*

Colin Steele. Science fiction prepares to the bookshops . *The Canberra Times*, Wednesday 14th September 1983.

Is it still the case that in terms of ‘good literature’ Hugo Award winners tend to rank below the Nebular Award winners, which in turn rank below the winners of the BSFA Awards and the Ditmar Awards?

Samuel Lubell (*Samizdat* #23)

Roger Zelazny was a GoH at Lunicon (Jul 30-August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993), which was the last SF convention I attended. I think that I attended his GoH speech, but can’t tell you any more. One of the very few



SF movies I saw at the cinema as a child, besides Star Wars and Empire Strikes Back, was Damnation Alley (1977).

I have watched neither *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011) nor *Mission Impossible* (1996). That's both at the cinema and on TV. I've watched the three Dr Who specials, but not the Christmas episode. Dr Who is no longer being shown on free-to-air TV in Australia, to great gnashing of teeth. We visited my wife's family over Xmas and I watched the specials there, but ran out of time to watch the Christmas episode. I agree with all your points on the three specials and their relative merits!

Ryct to Archive Midwinter.

*“And a trilogy is finite and provides an ending, unlike many series that go on forever.”*

A trilogy that is only three books “is finite and provides an ending”. I wonder how often successful trilogies stay at three books?

Ryct me

*“I’m going to have to disagree with your questioning over whether comic book movies are science fiction. Of course they are. They have aliens, advanced technology, mutants, strange science, hidden countries, etc. And if you didn’t know Guardians of the Galaxy came from a comic book, you couldn’t distinguish it from a whole bunch of Star Wars-inspired SF movies.”*

I do like Guardians of the Galaxy, particularly the first one; I haven't seen the third one. I didn't know that it came from a comic. (But having said that, most movies seem to come from somewhere else.) What are my favourite comic book movies? To GotG I add Deadpool, Watchmen, and V for Vendetta. I don't think of the likes of Spiderman and Batman as science fiction, more their own separate comic book genre. That may be reflecting some inner bias that comic book superheroes are not science fiction, perhaps they are science fiction – but not as we know it? Is gaining superhero powers because you are bitten by a radioactive spider the mark of science fiction? I hope not!

## SWEDISH WORDS IN ENGLISH 2

A section in *Brandy Hall* devoted to words that have entered the English language from Swedish. (I ignore words which are now obsolete and words which are now only used in an historical context.) I provide the original meaning of the word, a shortened etymology of the word, the first recorded use of the word, and a more recent example of its use. This information comes from the Oxford English Dictionary. The words are listed in the order in which they entered the English language.

Swedish Words in English 1 (*Brandy Hall* 3, November 2023, *NAPA* mailing 267) covered five words entering the English language from 1295 (Osmund) to 1447 (bail).

*Lapland* (after 1593)

The region which forms the most northerly portion of the Scandinavian peninsula, now divided politically between Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia.

Etymology. A borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymons:** Swedish lappland.

*After 1593*

Like.. Lapland Gyants trotting by our sides.

*Christopher Marlowe, Tragicall History Faustus (1604) sig. A4*

(A very illustrious introduction into the English language)

*skol* (1600-) A health in drinking; a toast.

In early use only Scottish, perhaps introduced through the visit of James VI to Denmark in 1589. In later use the Scandinavian spelling *skaal* is sometimes retained.

Etymology

Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from Danish. Partly a borrowing from Norwegian. Partly a borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymons:** Danish *skaal*; Norwegian *skaal*; Swedish *skål*.

1600 He was directit frome his matie To drink his scoll to my lord diuk and the rest of the companie.

*Scot. Acts, James VI (1816) vol. IV. 204*

(Australians like to *skol* beers, but I don't know if this is related to the *skol* described above.)

*rot* (1632-) A file or small detachment (of soldiers).

A *rot* usually contained six men.

Etymology Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from Swedish. Partly a borrowing from Middle Low German. Partly a borrowing from Dutch.

**Etymons:** Swedish *rott*; Middle Low German *rot*; Dutch *rot*.

1632 Reckoning 6. men to every or File.

*in translation of Swedish Discipline iii. 79*

*trow* (1640-) (In use in Orkney and Shetland.) troll.

Etymology. A borrowing from a Scandinavian language.

3e ansuered hir againe, that it was but the that Trow haid gripped her.

*Orkney Witch Trial in Abbotsford Cl. Misc. vol. I. 167*



*gantlope* (Now rare except in the more corrupt form gauntlet) (1646-) A military (occasionally also naval) punishment in which the culprit had to run stripped to the waist between two rows of men who struck at him with a stick or a knotted cord. rare except in the phrases to pass the gantlope, to run the gantlope.

Etymology. A borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymon:** Swedish gatlopp.

1646 Three were condemned to die, two to run the gantelope.

*Shaftesbury, Diary 11 April in W. D. Christie, Life (1871) vol. I. 34*

*Rune* (1676-) Any of the letters or characters of the earliest Germanic alphabet, used esp. (in various forms) by the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons; a similar character or mark believed to have mysterious or magical powers. Also: any letter or character of a non-Germanic alphabet resembling a Germanic rune.

The original runic alphabet dates from at least the 2nd or 3rd cent. a.d., and was formed by modifying the letters of the Roman or Greek alphabet so as to facilitate carving them on wood or stone.

Etymology Probably of multiple origins. Probably partly a borrowing from Latin. Probably partly a borrowing from Icelandic. Probably partly a borrowing from Danish.

**Etymons:** Latin *runa*; Icelandic *rún*; Danish *rune*; Swedish *runa*; Norwegian *rune*.

1676 The Ancient Getes or Saxons nam'd their Characters *Runes* from *Ryn*, a Furrow, because they were plowed-out, as it were, with the Pen, and drawn into long Lines.

*A. Sammes, Britannia Antiqua Illustrata 440*

*rune-staff* (1705-) A length of wood inscribed with runes.

Etymology A borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymon:** Swedish *runstav*.

1705 He tells us of wonderful performances, said to have been wrought by the means of their *Scipio Runicus*, or Runstaff.

*Philosophical Transactions 1704–05 (Royal Society) vol. 24 2029*

(Made famous by Michael Moorcock?)

*drabant* (1707-) A halberdier; spec. a soldier of the body-guard of the kings of Sweden.

Etymology A borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymon:** Swedish *drabant*.

1707 He was Captain-Lieutenant of the King of Sweden's Drabants.

*London Gazette No. 4339/3*

*tusk* (1707-) A gadoid fish, *Brosmius brosme*, abundant in the northern seas, especially about the Shetland Islands, and much used for food in the dried form of stockfish.

Etymology A borrowing from Norwegian. (That's what it says... but in the more detailed notes it appears the word in Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish was the same.)

**Etymon:** Norwegian *torsk*.

1707 They have abundance of Fish on that Coast call'd Tusk, as big as Ling.

*G. Miège, Present State of Great Britain ii. ii. 14*

*Lettish* (1709-) The language of the Letts; Latvian.

Etymology. Probably of multiple origins. Probably partly a borrowing from German. Probably partly a borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymons:** German *lettisch*; Swedish *lättisk*, *lätteska*.

1709 A Letter..with the Lord's prayer in Finnish, Lappish, Lettish, Estish and Danish, from Mr A. Grub of Stockholm.

*W. Nicolson, Diary 26 April in London Diaries (1985) 503*

*lunda* (1744-) A Scandinavian name for: the puffin.

Etymology. Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from Icelandic. Partly a borrowing from Norwegian. Partly a borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymons:** Icelandic *lundi*; Norwegian *lunde*; Swedish *lunn*.

1744 Greenland produces..Cormorants, Lunders, Parrots [etc.].

*Philosophical Transactions 1742–3 (Royal Society) vol. 42 612*

*Nickel* (1755-) A hard silvery-white chemical element, atomic number 28, which is one of the transition metals, is both malleable and ductile, and which usually occurs in combination with arsenic or sulfur (esp. in *pentlandite*, *niccolite*, and *millerite*). Symbol Ni.

The chief uses of nickel are as a component of various corrosion-resistant and magnetic alloys (e.g. with copper in coins; as a catalyst, in plating, and in rechargeable batteries (with cadmium).

Etymology A borrowing from Swedish.

**Etymon:** Swedish *nickel*.

1755 From the name of this mineral [*sc. kupfernickel*] he [*sc. Cronstedt*] gives the metal the name of *Nickel*.



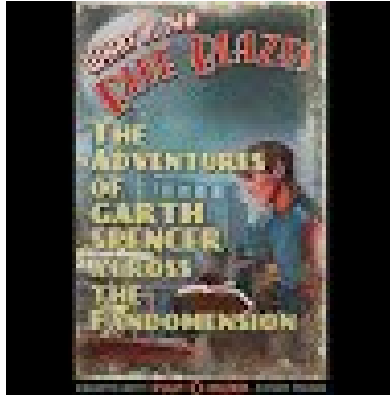


# Brownian Motion #7

An apazine by Garth Spencer

For NAPA 269, March 2024

## What's Going On



### **NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR THE CANADIAN SF AND FANTASY AWARDS**

“All members of the CSFFA can now place their nominations for this year's Aurora Awards.

“I did. It's easy. And quick. Why not do it now before you forget about it and wind up putting it off to the last minute or maybe even missing it?

“Granted, you have **till 11:59 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, April 09, 2024** to get it done but if you get it done now you can pat yourself on the back for a whole month!

“You have extensive eligibility lists to choose from. I'm sure you'll spot your favourites right away.

“You'll be choosing in ten categories:

“Best Novel

“Best YA Novel

“Best Novelette/Novella

“Best Short Story

“Best Graphic Novel/Comic

“Best Poem/Song

“Best Related Work

“Best Cover Art/Interior Illustrations

“Best Fan Writing/Publication

“Best Fan Related Work

“If you are a member (if you aren't, anyone can join for just \$10.00 CAD; Only criterion, you must be Canadian) go to “<https://www.csffa.ca> and place your nominations.

“It's fun, I tell you. Loads of fun!”

(R. Graeme Cameron, Mar. 5, 2024)

## **THE NEW BLUE MOON DIRECTORY**

Heath Row in Los Angeles, and I in Vancouver, recently started updating a list of current Amateur Publishing Associations. The last formal list, *The Blue Moon Directory*, was last published in 2009. I have sporadically tried to create my own list, with sporads between 2018 and 2023. We have been combining and cross-checking our lists. Heath writes:

“It has been 15 years since the previous edition of *Blue Moon Special*, and Garth Spencer and I are collaborating to update it for publication later this year.

“Garth has been reaching out to amateur press associations that we know are still active, and I am emailing this query to people who previously contributed to the project. We'll combine efforts to issue a 2024 directory of active apae to carry on the tradition of *South of the Moon* and *New Moon Directory*.

“If you're currently active in an apa, feel free to fill out [this form](#) -- <http://tinyurl.com/apa-list> -- or forward this email to the official editor, official collator, central mailer, or other such person. We also encourage you to share it with other apae of which you're aware.

“We're interested in fannish and mundane apae alike, so any apae are fair game.

“If you have any questions, please reach out to us.”

(Heath Row, email, February 27, 2024)

## **2024 FAAn AWARD RESULTS**

“The results of the 2024 FAAn awards (fanzine fandom awards) were announced at Corflu 41 (fanzine fandom convention) on the weekend. 49 ballots were received.

“I'm just going to list the winner in each category, as well as the votes received by any Canadians in that category.

“BEST GENZINE

“Winner: *SF Commentary*, by Bruce Gillespie - 33 votes

“Canadians:

“*Warp*, by Danny Sichel - 3 votes.

“*BCSFazine*, by R. Graeme Cameron - 1 vote

“BEST PERZINE

“Winner: *This Here...*, by Nic Farey - 35 votes

“Canadians:

“*Obdurate Eye*, by Garth Spencer - 7 votes

“*Dark Toys*, by Taral Wayne - 6 votes

“*Opuntia*, by Dale Speirs - 5 votes

“BEST ONE-SHOT

“Winner: *Beyond Fandom: Fans, Culture and Politics in the 20th Century*, by Rob Hansen - 27 votes

“Canadians: None

“BEST FAN WRITER

“Winner: Mark Plummer - 15 votes

“Canadians:

“Taral Wayne - 3 votes

“Garth Spencer - 2 votes

“Dale Speirs - 2 votes

“BEST FAN ARTIST

“Winner: Ulrika O'Brien - 15 votes

“Canadians:

“Taral Wayne - 13 votes

“BEST LETTERHACK

“Winner: Jerry Kaufman - 22 votes

“Canadians:

“Lloyd Penney - 9 votes

“Garth Spencer - 3 votes

“Taral Wayne - 2 votes

“Andrew C. Murdoch - 1 vote

“BEST COVER ARTIST

“Winner: *Idea #13*, by Sue Mason - 17 votes

“Canadians:

“*Dark Toys #74*, by Taral Wayne - 4 votes

“*Dark Toys #75*, by Taral Wayne - 3 votes

“*Dark Toys #76*, by Taral Wayne - 3 votes

“*The Obdurate Eye #26* (Canadian), by Denny Marshall (non-Canadian) - 1 vote



## “LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

“Winners: Joe Siclari & Edie Stern

“Canadians: None

“The FAAn Awards are to fanzine fandom what the Hugos are to regular fandom and the Aurora Awards are to Canadian Fandom.

“I think you can tell by the numbers that fanzine fandom has dwindled to a tiny niche fandom and that Canadian fanzine fandom is an even tinier subset within the tiny niche.

“Still, kudos to those who keep the old fires burning.”

“(R. Graeme Cameron, Mar. 4, 2024)

## **CANADIAN UNITY FAN FUND**

I have written, again, to the conventions in Canada that might host another CUFF delegate. Although it was alarming that I got nearly no response from the first batch of letters I sent out. Maybe I didn't have the right emails and addresses?

I will spend 2024 rebuilding the Fund, and once I find a hosting convention for 2025, schedule nomination and voting periods for the next CUFF delegate.

(Garth Spencer, Mar. 1, 2024)

## **NEW WEBSITE COMING**

For a few years I have been threatening to revamp my personal website as a local/regional fannish information resource. In the last month I buckled down to creating and updating the content for the component pages. That led to the latest round of APA list updates; now I think I should just link to whatever updated *Blue Moon Directory* Heath Row will post.

Similarly, I want to include updated lists of current fan activities, ranging from clubs and cons to podcasts and fan websites.

It is a little daunting to realize how long I have let this go, and how much I have to review and correct. For one thing, I have to reinstate my Vancouver CommunityNet webspace. For another, I have a *lot* of outdated links to update.

Still, I have used my long-dormant MeWe registration and have erected a quick-and-dirty draft of the website “Across the Fandomension,” and made some initial invitations to view the content. And I have asked my local Freenet webteam for a quotation on erecting a more thought-out website.

(Garth Spencer, Mar. 6, 2024)



I actually produced a fanthology once, titled *Confabulation*; but I don't know how well it went over, or how well a volume titled *Confabulation #2* would be received.

§

Not having any Russian correspondents, I have no one to withhold my fanzines from (not that I think that would accomplish anything). In an academic way I wonder what the Russian war with Ukraine portends, other than a lot of misery for Russians and Ukrainians.

You have to wonder what a war today is supposed to accomplish. One argument I ran across is that over the course of time, wars have generally cost more and more to wage, so that there was barely any gain to the Third Reich by launching the second World War in Europe. Given the serious Russian shortcomings in workforce and materiel, as you and others have reported, I have to wonder how deeply in trouble the Russian government will find themselves, however the war turns out. And I rather suspect Ukraine will be in serious economic trouble, too.

Which raises the question, what are other current wars expected to accomplish? In Gaza, for example, or in parts of Africa?

§

Judging from your article's pictures, Robert Bloch had entirely Too Much Fun as a fan, and a writer, and an all-around character.

### ***Archive Midwinter – Jefferson P. Swycaffer***

Re your comments to me: I guess I have failed to convey what I meant by “growing up.” (I usually fail to convey what I mean. Very exasperating, that.) The bullying I received happened as much at home, or at work, as at school: usually, it meant a demand that I know and conform to whatever was expected of adults, after I had learned it wasn't any kind of sense I could follow, but without learning what I was expected to know. Life was a Catch-22.

Now that I'm a senior, without entirely growing up, I begin to think I can do what makes sense to me for a change. I can stop being polite and dishonest, when I run out of patience with other people and their BS.

### ***Ye Murthered Master Mage – George Phillies***

Do people sometimes get confused by the lack of numbering on apazines?

Re your comments on the N3F: What motivates people to join up is a mystery to me. I generated a lot of Facebook groups with amusing, and I thought fannish themes, but apparently I badly misjudged the websurfing audience. The groups that really took off were Abducted Aliens Anonymous and the Society for the Preservation of Fannish Fandom. (Go figure.) You will have read, above, about my current attempts to engage people in updating and extending my materials for a fannish reference website.



Re your comments to me: I suspect that the N3F can do with a Chaos Department, an unorganized gang that keeps coming up with original and creative ideas. By this I mean original fiction, and short videos online, and hoaxes and satirical activities at cons...all well outside of the current conceptions.

Dwarf robots, let us say, that mooch down the halls of conventions asking where the washroom is, handing out leaflets inviting people to host students from other planets; Hall tables campaigning for the release of the Groom Lake Five; Screwball comedy stories that parody Shakespeare's plays and the Fu Manchu and Micky Spillane novels all at once, featuring gormless aliens and local politicians and, perhaps, some older level-headed Canadians who come along later to clean up the property damage; posters appearing on telephone poles each April 1<sup>st</sup>, evangelizing about the coming of Cthulhu in Jehovah's Witnesses style.

#### ***Brandy Hall #4 – Mark Nelson***

Re The Mathom House: To my knowledge, most of the Commonwealth countries (such as Canada) have the same governmental structure as you describe of Australia. For whatever reason, I am not aware of any republican movement in Canada. And yet, for day-to-day purposes, life in Canada is not very different from life in the States. Well, there are fewer flags, and fewer uniforms, and a much smaller military.

Re social sciences (your comment to Ahrvid Engholm in response to Henry Grynnssten): it occurred to me that the problem of replicating results in sociological research has to be represented by a probability factor, applied to any formal statement. After all, human behaviour is something like human language—mostly we rely on stock phrases and standard actions, but many occasions demand novel utterances and actions. People are always capable of doing something unexpected, anyway.

(Context: As I must have said before is that I tried my hand at constructing the kind of sociological algebra that Heinlein, Anderson, and Asimov described in their alternate-future stories. While I had some obvious basic ideas for the notation system – combining symbolic logic, set theory, and probability theory conventions – a serious problem emerged:

I don't *perceive* a lot of the social information that has to be symbolized in this notation, in the first place.

Which is ironic because this is exactly what I dreamed up the social algebra to *discover*.

So we must await someone more socially perceptive, but also inclined to put things into a symbolic form before we recognize any rigour in the social sciences.)

#### ***Snow Poster Township #14 – Heath Row***

Re your Reading Pile: I guess it's about time to read translated works and more new fiction – I have fallen into the rut of reading and re-reading e-books of Bujold's, Stirling's and Stross's novels, with occasional rereading of H. Beam Piper and David Drake.

### **Samizdat #23 - ?**

Re your comment on the news: there's not much I can say about U.S. government shutdowns. I can wonder what conclusions to draw about government finances, not only in the United States but in, ahem, other countries.

Re your comments to *Intermission*: I see that you, like Heath Row, use the word "literary" merely to mean "written" matter. That always makes me snort, when I see it in the context of science fiction and fantasy productions, or of fandom. But I guess that's the common usage.

Your description of the 2023 YouGov study was a depressing, but not surprising description of general literacy. As I recall Mark Twain's remark, "The man who does not read is at no advantage over the man who cannot read."

Your capsule review of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* tallies with my recollection: it was less a story of ideas than it was an argument contrasting a superstition-ridden world with a man representing a rational-scientific world. In retrospect I don't wonder that the ending showed the rational-scientific revolution failing, and didn't account for the return of the protagonist to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Re your "Project Classics":

I don't wonder you found *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* depressing. It was a tragedy. We seem to have no appreciation of tragedy in this period, apart from fans of Shakespeare or Marlowe or classical Greek theatre. I once argued that the closest we get to tragedy in contemporary fiction is horror. Jerry Kaufman refuted that, but I forget how.

*The Source* was one of the first Michener novels I encountered, and I reread it several times. It took me a while to realize that, like James Clavell, Michener paralleled actual historical events with characters and settings of his own.

# Canadian Unity Fan Fund Order Form

c/o Garth Spencer, 6960 Doman St., Vancouver, BC V5S 3H7

[garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com)

CATALOG: [\(3\) Canadian Unity Fan Fund \(CUFF\) | Achtung! The newly-updated August fan publications catalog and order form are now posted here | Facebook](#)

**ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE CANADIAN UNITY FAN FUND.**

To (Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Item & price	Quantity	Total
Total:		

Do you have any suggestions for items you think should be available to promote CUFF?

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# eAPA Membership Application Form

*Instructions:*

- a) Before you begin, read through **everything**.
- b) Follow the instructions and fill in your answers truthfully, so help you Roscoe!
- c) And cross your fingers that you'll be accepted into this exclusive group of elite BNFs!

1. What's your name? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Come on! Your REAL name! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your address: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Your E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Your preferred age: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your age when you flew to Alpha Centauri at 0.99c? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you have a Facebook account? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Why, for heaven's sake! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Titles of some fanzines you have read? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Did you understand anything in them? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Are you now, or have you ever been a member of a columnist organization? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you know the way to San Jose? \_\_\_\_\_
14. But if you don't like crottled greeps, what did you order them for? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Are you still there? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Hello? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Fine! Let's finish this! \_\_\_\_\_
18. Considering that we are all made of tiny atoms, which combine into molecular structures, which in even more complex combinations make up our fragile bodies, that give us only a fraction of time on this Earth, which swirls around the Sun, in its turn making an orbit around the Galactic Centre every 230 million years, everything under the contradictory natural laws which we may never fully grasp, all of it seemingly gobsmackingly incomprehensible, what is the meaning of life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. **Ignore all points 1 to 19!** You were told to read **everything** first, right! Just write something interesting, click on "Save as PDF" in your word processor and E-mail it to EAPA OE [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com) and you're in.  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Snow Poster Township #15

March 15, 2024

*Snow Poster Township* is an apazine published by Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. Banner artwork by Henry Chamberlain. *Snow Poster Township* is prepared for contributors to NAPA, members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers of America. This is a Karma Lapel publication.

### Children and World War II

By Cy Chauvin

Someone recommended *The Last Train to Istanbul* to me; I couldn't find it at the library, but I found *The Last Train to London* by Meg Waite Clayton (2019) instead. (Amazing how many "Last Train to—" stories are listed in the catalog.) It seemed to be the same situation: children (largely Jewish children) are being evacuated out of Nazi Germany to foster homes in other countries.

*The Last Train to London* is divided into two main storylines: One is centered on Stephen Neuman, a 15-year-old Jewish boy living in Vienna with his rich family, who manufactures chocolate. The other centers on Truus Wijsmuller, a Dutch woman, married but childless, who primarily helps Jewish families send their children out of Germany to other countries. The Nazis want to get rid of the Jews, but at the same time make it difficult for them to emigrate and restrict them from taking any of their wealth with them if they do leave. The story mostly takes place before World War II actually starts. Truus finds she has to break the law to get many of the children out, but has her big break when she is given permission to take 600 children to

London from Vienna—as long as she can arrange it within seven days! (Adolf Eichmann)

This novel is based on historical events (the "Kindertransport"), and Truus Wijsmuller was a real person who performed this heroic work. There is a film documentary that covers much of this same material, *Into the Arms of Strangers*. But as a novel, this is written in a bestseller style, in fragmented chapters from multiple viewpoints, in a bloated fashion (450 pages). For all its length, it is plot heavy, and as a reader, I felt rushed. It is very much a novel of our day, despite being set in Europe, circa 1939.

My impulse then was to reread another novel about similar, but very different circumstances, Neville Shulte's *Pied Piper* (1941-1942). The first thing that struck me about this book was its framing device: The story is told by an unnamed man who has heard it from John Sidney Howard while sitting in their club. Howard tells the story while bombs are falling during an air raid over London. I suppose this framing device, this story within a story, only emphasizes that things are not over; the war is continuing. Even though Howard is sitting in his chair drinking at the end, the story is not over.

Howard is a man of 70 who went to the province of Jura in France (next to Switzerland) for a fishing trip in spring 1939. He gets caught in the invasion of France, and an American diplomat asks him to take his two children back to England because they are afraid that Switzerland will be invaded too. Howard starts back, but illness delays him at his first train stop in Dijon. A maid helps him in their hotel, but when he goes to leave, she asks that he take her child to England, too, because the father is working in London! Of course, he agrees, but the train they take to Paris is stopped before it reaches the capital.

They find out that they must travel by bus and take a roundabout journey to avoid Paris and the invasion. Soon, they abandon the bus as well. Howard picks up Dutch, Polish, and even a German child along the way. The novel has an engrossing plot that never stops—I haven't told you half of it—and details that appear true to life. Many novels have been written about World War II, but not many written during the war itself. I do wonder if it was revised at all after the war because it has such confidence in the Allies' victory. Is the novel, in a sense, propaganda, or did people really feel that way? There is less in this book written from the mind or viewpoint of a child.

By accident (or perhaps by subconscious intent), as I was looking in my young adult bookcase in search of something to read, I found *Fireweed* by Jill Paton Walsh (1969). Another reread, but from much longer ago, this is about two young adults, a boy and a girl,





well as the fate of the original prop; and a new feature, Quadratic, that blends science fact with short fiction—also printed on different paper stock. The cinema preview is largely an assortment of stills.

The advertisements are also interesting. Ads promote items such as movie soundtracks, Bob Michelucci's (one of the publishers) *The Collectors Guide to Monster Magazines*, the magazine *Video Action*, a John Pound portfolio, and novelty masks.

This issue of *Questar* was an interesting read, and I look forward to exploring other issues in the periodical's brief run. It offers an interesting snapshot of sf literature and media at the time, but seems slightly adjacent, considering topics that might not have been mainstream enough for *Starlog*. I was unaware of Zebrowski and was intrigued enough by his points of view that I might seek out his fiction. (The issue also included an ad for his novel *Macrolife*, and the interview included several book cover reproductions.) Are any of you familiar with Zebrowski?



—William Rotsler

## Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews

### *The Devil Bat*

This 1940 Bela Lugosi vehicle produced by Producers Releasing Corporation was the company's first horror movie and intended to capitalize on Lugosi's turn as Dracula with a vampirism-adjacent theme. While it was far from Lugosi's final film, the Phil Hardy-edited *The Overlook Film Encyclopedia: Horror* remarks that, "[f]rom this point on, Lugosi's career was downhill all the way."

*The Devil Bat* is very much a return to Lugosi's earlier roles as a mad scientist and provides a dark revenge tale about a bitter chemist whose work has led to immense profits for his employer—but very little compensation for him. The scientist experiments with bats, learning how to enlarge them using an electrical process. The bats are represented by oversized models or puppets, lampooned at one point by a newspaper photographer—"One-Shot" McGuire—rigging a taxidermy model on wires.

The villain has also developed an experimental aftershave lotion or cologne that includes an unidentifiable ingredient from Tibet that drives such bats into a murderous rage. One by one, he encourages members of the family that owns the business employing him to use the new formula, leading to a number of grisly, mysterious deaths. That each victim would willingly try the new cologne piqued my interest; they might not have known that the newly dead had done so, but the coroner detected a lingering, mysterious scent on each.

Once a newspaper reporter, the partner of the comedic photographer, figures out what's going on, he entraps the scientist to unwittingly wear his own experimental formula. It does what it was designed to do. Despite the upcoming decline in Lugosi's career, he pulls off the role with aplomb, balancing the character's bitterness and malevolence ably. Before each intended victim leaves—to die soon—he pointedly says "Goodbye" rather than "Good night."

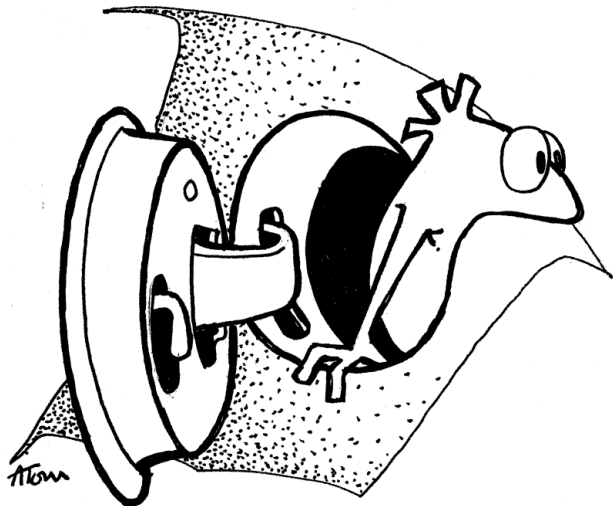
But the highlights of the flick—other than Lugosi, natch—are the journalist and photographer, portrayed by Dave O'Brien and Donald Kerr. O'Brien's Johnny Layton is subtly heroic and an appropriate love interest for the daughter of the cosmetic company's owner. And Kerr offers light humor to offset the vicious neck biting and claw-deep scratching.

That the wealthy family's last name is Heath and their small town Heathville in no way influenced my enjoyment of the movie. In no way.

### Comments on N'APA #268

The Official Organ for this distribution included the following update: "By vote of the members, we do not

want to include participation from ‘Public Members’ of N3F, members who are not paying dues.” George Phillis indicated that any contributors unable to pay dues should contact him. Hopefully, we won’t lose any participants. I, too, would be willing to cover a \$6 electronic membership for any at-risk N’APAs.



Jefferson P. Swycaffer included a news item about the exclusion of John Thiel’s *Synergy* in the previous N’APA distribution. Thiel had sent it to me before the deadline, but I didn’t see his email until afterward. So I sent it to be included in an upcoming distribution. It’d be a shame to have a “lost issue” waiting in the wings. I don’t know that I have a solution to Thiel’s computer issues, but I know we have an unpublished fanzine ready to publish.

I commented on **Ahrvid Engholm’s** *Intermission* #139 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #15 and reprint that here: “Engholm’s *Intermission* #139 continues to cover the death of Bertil Falk and the editor’s new or renewed interest in Robert Bloch. Thank you for bringing Anna-Lena Lodenus to my attention. She seems to write about topics of interest to me!

“Even though you weren’t able to attend Falk’s funeral, I appreciated you sharing reportage on the event. You’ve been writing about Falk quite a bit lately, and I say: Keep writing! I look forward to learning even more about *Jules Verne Magasinet*, *Captain Future*, *Vår Rymd*, and other related topics.

“I also welcome more writing over time about Bloch. Based on my reactions to your recent issues, I just can’t get enough. For example, even though I was born and raised in Wisconsin—where I currently am for the holidays—I didn’t know that Bloch had spent any time in the state. Growing up, I found my way to August Derleth by way of H.P. Lovecraft, and

therefore to Lovecraft fandom and Bloch, but I didn’t know about Lovecraft’s involvement in apae until I, too, became active in apae. Though I’ve participated in the National Amateur Press Association and American Amateur Press Association, I don’t think I got involved in the United Amateur Press Association, in which Lovecraft had also been active, before it folded.

“Bloch, Bloch, Bloch! I... must... read... more. The novelty photographs are also a delight. What fun stuff. The piece from *Imagination* #4 was crazily excellent. Mr. Engholm, if you’d like to be a dues-paying member of the N3F but cannot sort out international payments, I’d be happy to sponsor your membership. You wouldn’t even owe me any money.

“Your understanding of how the National Amateur Press Association works wasn’t what I experienced as a member a decade-plus ago. There was a central mailer, and there were bundles. Contributions were standalone items, similar to my experience of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (less recent) and the Spectator Amateur Press Society (more recent), rather than collated into a single bound or stapled compilation.”

Similarly, I commented on *FAInzine* #2 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #16: “In *FAInzine* #2, AIsaac AIsimov made another appearance. While the topics intrigue me, I’d rather read a real fanzine by a real person, perhaps with real information. Regardless, the design of this outing— and the accompanying artwork—was slightly better, so it looks good, at least.”

*Intermission* #140 was also commented on in *ECU* #16, as follows: “Ahrvid Engholm’s *Intermission* #140 offered his traditional annual Christmas story, ‘Santa Goes to the Moon.’ Given that it’s now late January, I might set the piece aside for the end of the year—I’m not sure I’m ready for a seasonal piece and wish I’d read this sooner. He also shared the call for submissions to *NATO 2099: A Graphic Novel*. Congratulations on being selected for inclusion! Your piece, ‘NATO 2099,’ is wide ranging and apocalyptic. It’ll be interesting to see how it’s adapted in graphic form.

“I also enjoyed your reports on the Short Story Masters and the Writers’ Union. And in the History Corner, ‘always the readers’ favourite,’ you considered the history of the mimeograph. While I’ve long known about fen’s use of the mimeograph, I appreciated learning more about its invention, development, and variations.

“‘[SF] fandom must have been the first outside non-insitutional use to put it into action,’ you wrote. Of course, mundane apae used other forms of DIY

printing such as letterpress, as well. And I also used our school district's large-scale photocopier to publish mundane fanzines and comix while a student. But you might be right that 'Sf fans were the first "counter culture," with their own creative literary and artistic movement on mimeo... ' Mundane apae might not have transitioned to mimeo, and the American beat poets might have followed in the footsteps of fen.

"That said, where can one procure Part IIX in the Space Cucumber series?"

In *Archive Midwinter* dated Jan. 15, 2024, **Jefferson P. Swycaffer** informed N'APAnS about his monthly writing group, Emerald Cove. What's the age range of the group's participants? Any chance of us being able to read some of the writing you're working on? Excerpts or serialized fiction might be welcomed by this apa.

I'd never heard about Joy Beeson's *Sic Buiscuit Disintegram* before. What more can you tell us about it? I messaged Beeson on Facebook to see what she can tell me, too. I see references to it in *Rune* #74 (February 1986) and *Matrix* #48 (Summer 1983), and it looks like it might have been a fanzine rather than an apa. Was it published by Beeson or Joy Hibbert? I might have messaged Beeson prematurely. A 1985 issue is included among Forrest J Ackerman's papers held by Syracuse University. I also appreciated your comments on Jack Vance and Sax Rohmer. I've read more Rohmer than Vance.

**George Phillies**'s *Ye Murthered Master Mage* offered an update on his novel *Of Breaking Waves*. Congratulations on its publication, should such have occurred! I appreciated your updates on the N3F, as well. I recently stepped back from my remaining clubzine commitments but hope to remain active by way of letters of comment. I am pleased that we've been able to involve new members and distribute the clubzine publishing responsibilities.

You mentioned "two occasions on which the Directorate had to use its authority to expel a member." What was the fanzine that drew such attention in the 1950s? The second instance also intrigued me. When did that occur?

In *Brownian Motion* #6, **Garth Spencer** continued to explore his recent sense of overextension. I'm curious: What 15 activities or departments did you identify in terms of life activities? Ah! You applied Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Don't forget: You and I are going to exchange fanzine covers this year. That's partly a reminder to myself.

During a recent annual physical, my doctor encouraged me to exercise more beyond walking. While I've exercised off and on since the start of the pandemic, I no longer run, and have picked up the

jump rope. When I pass from my home office to the house, I jump rope 50 counts. If I do that several times a day, it's a step in the right direction.



—William Rotsler

Inspired by voting for the Faan Awards, I've taken up writing letters of comment again. I wrote 12 last month and only one so far this month. My goal is to write a dozen a month, and to keep track of other letterhacks appearing in fanzines so I can better vote in the letterhack category. I was pleased to receive more votes this year, and to graduate from the list of single votes appended to the end of the vote counts.

Congratulations on the progress on your Web site! Your list of categories sounds wonderful, and I'll cross-reference it against my own *Los Angeles Fanac Guide*, which has been resting as I turn my attention to our forthcoming edition of *Blue Moon Special*. There haven't been any new submissions since early March, so we might be down to sending individual reminders to apae we know are active. Regardless, with more than 20 apae already compiled, whatever we issue this year will be more than what already exists. The story ideas you expressed to Samuel Lubell are interesting. I look forward to reading them!

**Mark Nelson**'s *Brandy Hall* #4 concentrated on mailing comments. Your reason for having a Facebook account amused me. When my son, now 20, first got online, we encouraged him to not focus on how many likes or comments he got. Concern about how popular you are online can be a slippery slope.

Referring to *Alarums & Excursions* #579 (February 2024), the mailing closest at hand, there were 23 contributors submitting a total of 108 pages, based on



a quick count. The issue seems of average thickness. As in many apae these days, most participants have been around for a while, but I don't have any information on their average tenure. When I most recently became active again, there were a few contributors new to me, and I recognized the others from my decade-plus-ago previous involvement. My return would have made me new to the newcomers. I don't know how Lee Gold publicizes it outside of the Web site and word of mouth. It will be included in the forthcoming *Blue Moon Special*.

There have been fanzines published in Portugal in the past, but not many. Referring to Álvaro de Sousa Holstein's "Science Fiction and Fantasy in Portugal," (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #88) the first fanzine published in Portugal was *Nebulosa* in the 1980s. In the mid- to late-2000s, there was resurgence of fanzine activity, including titles such as *Dragão Quântico*, *Hyperdrivezine*, *Phantastes*, *Nova*, *Dagon*, *Fénix*, *Bang!*, and *Conto Fantástico*. My understanding from Holstein, who's a friend, is that Portuguese fen have been slow to embrace organized fandom—there have only been two Portuguese sf clubs over time—and that collaboration is not a strong suit, so fanzines are few and far between.

Regardless, Holstein and I have discussed a Portuguese apa at some point—perhaps bridging Brazilian and Portuguese fandom to broaden the pool of potential contributors—and earlier this year, he expressed intent to return to fanzine publishing. I've even encouraged him to join eAPA. The working title of his fanzine? *Crónicas do Adamastor* or *The Adamastor Chronicles*. (This reminds me that I owe another Portuguese fan an email. Message sent!) I think you're right that the fascist dictatorship was restrictive in many ways.

In *Samizdat... #23*, **Samuel Lubell** remarked to Jefferson P. Swycaffer that "older fans will have to let younger fans run the show eventually..." Last night, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society voted on a Loscon bid that will concentrate on bringing younger fen to the con. Targeting people between the ages of 25-45, Loscon 51 in 2025 will program authors and other guests more familiar with and attractive to younger fen—rather than the traditional mix we tend to program. I look forward to the results of designing a con for a slightly younger audience. It could help build the necessary bridge we've identified. (Personally, I think it might behoove con runners to skew even younger, perhaps to 18-plus. Regardless, this is a step in the right direction.)

While I enjoy longer novels, shorter novels—about 200 pages, as you indicate—can be a joy to read. When choosing my next book, I sometimes select a

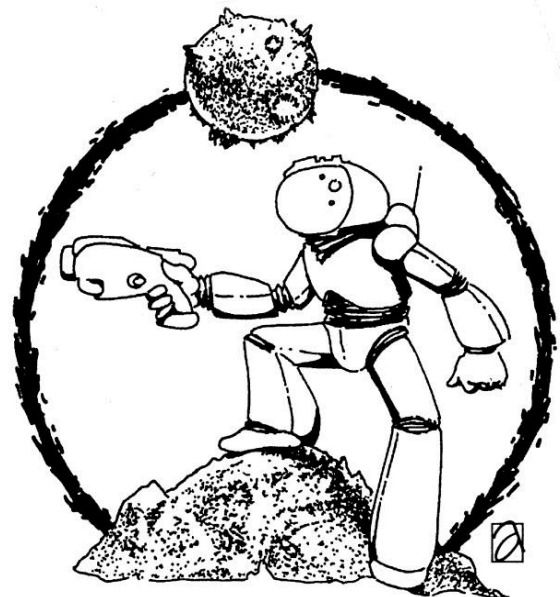
200- to 300-page text rather than a 500- to 800-page option. How was Boskone?

I enjoyed your author spotlight on Roger Zelazny. Your brief article, "Nearly Half of Americans Read No Books," resonated with commentary I included in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #105 considering the relationship between sf and the broader culture. Visual media consumption far outweighs reading. 80 percent of people watch television daily. 44 percent of adults go to the movies monthly. And 65 percent of Americans read at least one physical book in the last year. That falls to 30 percent for at least one ebook annually, and 23 percent for audiobooks. Your consideration of the YouGov study breaks that down further:

46% of Americans read no books in 2023. Another quarter (26%) read 5 or fewer books. Just 19% read more than 10 books. Those who read just 15 books are in the top 15 percent, 30 books in the top 8 percent, and 50 books in the top 1 percent.

The mind boggles. But it brings home the realization that media fandom reasonably dominates existing fandom, and that if fanzine fen are primarily readers, which is my anecdotal sense, we're even more of a minority. Your continuing reprint of your undergraduate thesis remains an interesting read.

Similarly, I remain enthralled by your "Status of Projects," including its movie reviews, TV commentary—I, too, enjoyed the 60th anniversary *Doctor Who* specials, as well as their novelizations—and reading. I'd welcome additional reportage on Philcon. What did you learn that you plan to apply, or not apply, to Balticon?



—Alan White

### ...Further Update on the USA Budget



Two issues ago, in #22, I wrote about how the U.S. government barely averted a shutdown by passing a continuing resolution before the Nov 17 date. Since then there has been two more continuing resolutions. A third of the government was funded before the March 8<sup>th</sup> deadline. However, under the most recent continuing resolution, the Budgets for the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, State, Education, and Health & Human Services all expire March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The fiscal year started October 1, so by March 22 we will be almost halfway through the fiscal year. Any sane government system would be well into the process of developing a budget for next year, not still debating the current year. And it is very disturbing for workers in the federal government to constantly be told to prepare for a shutdown that then is averted only at the last minute.

### ...LOC on N'APA 268



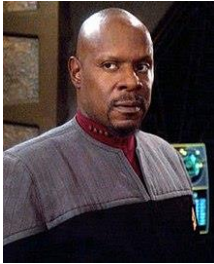
Intermission #139-I am very impressed by Ukraine's continued success in the war with Russia. No one expected them to be able to survive this long. English teachers in the U.S. used to confiscate comic books and science fiction magazines too (my mother, an English teacher forbade my brother and I to get comic books, but, fortunately for me, was OK with science fiction). Are you familiar with Alan Steele's revival/reimagining of Captain Future? He wrote *Avengers of the Moon*

(2017) and then the four volume *The Return of Ul Quorn* (2019-21). I wasn't fond of *Avengers of the Moon*. In my [review](#), I wrote, "Without the nostalgic factor--and few readers these days have even heard of Captain Future--what's left is fairly average SF adventure novel. For most readers, Captain Future could well have stayed in the past where he belongs." Congrats on setting up your own prize. I'm not so sure I agree with the premise of your poem. The fact that Sweden had lower death rates without taking as harsh measures as did other countries, doesn't mean that those other countries wouldn't have had even higher death rates without these measures - unless you believe taking these precautions somehow accelerated the spread. Your history corner was as always fascinating. I liked your tribute to Robert Bloch. But your rant about how much better fandom and sf used to be reads like a person allowing the glow of nostalgia to block the memory of Sturgeon's Law.

I agree the concern for avoiding offending people gets out of hand (and is strangely inconsistent. At the DC Worldcon I was told to rename the newsletter because "Dis n' Dat" was considered somehow offensive to speakers of "Black English" yet no one blinked an eye at turning opening ceremonies into a Christian religious service.) Fandom was not only a written thing. There were conventions, fan art, fan films, and when computers were developed, computer graphics. I'm fine with



counting blogs, video blogs, and audio as fanac. I obviously disagree that characterization is “meaningless internal monologues.” Done right, characterization informs and explains a character’s actions, makes them seem more real, and adds depth to the story.

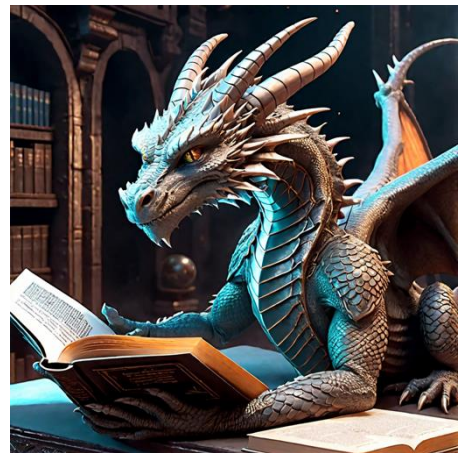


Affirmative action isn’t discrimination to fight discrimination or giving minorities extra perks. It is recognizing that some people have unfair advantages and trying to compensate for them. If anything I think it should be expanded to include people from low-income backgrounds. When a college admissions staffer looks at two applicant, one from a rich family that could afford tutoring, a house in a good school district, and summer enrichment programs, and one from a poorer family that could afford none of that, the staffer should consider what the poorer student could have achieved if they had the rich student’s advantages rather than just look at their achievements as if they both started from the same place. I’m curious about what non-American readers think of Hawthorne. Much of his writing is so based on Puritan ideas and concepts (although “Rappachini’s Daughter” and his *The Marble Faun* are set in Italy).

Fanzine #2 - Is this supposed to be a meta-commentary on what an AI fanzine would be? Was I not supposed to find the articles on the evolution of copying technology interesting?

Intermission #140-Congrats on winning the NATO 2099 contest. Ho Ho Ho. Poul Anderson also had a beer-powered spaceship in “A Bicycle Built for Brew”. The Writers Union panel sounds like it was fun.

Archive Midwinter Jan 2024 - I agree that updating classics to make them reflect modern norms misleads readers into thinking that today’s values are universal truths and denies them the opportunity to wonder that if what was acceptable in the past is no longer acceptable today then perhaps today’s beliefs will be seen as wrong in the future. I need to read more Jack Vance. Yes, growing up does have some good points, but there’s something to be said for having someone else take care of things like paying for housing and food, cooking, organizing etc. As to Hawthorne, teachers have a problem in that there are somethings everyone should read and high school is really the only time anyone can require people to read things and have them explained by a teacher. So yes, that may take some of the joy out of reading, but if not for school, who would read the classics? I disagree that Dimmesdale is the villain in *The Scarlet Letter*. The story is essentially that of his redemption through admitting his love for Hester and the revelation of his own scarlet letter. (Does one need a spoiler warning for a 174-year old novel?)



Art from [hotpot](#)

Ye Murdered Master Mage Jan 2024-I agree about recruiting more members. I think you should regularly repost a link to flyers that people can print out and take to cons. I know I should start sending reviews again especially as I do read the Hugo nominees. I’ll have more time for new fannish responsibilities after I’m done chairing Balticon this year. But I see this with my other SF clubs, there are a handful of people who do most of the work, a small group who can be counted on to help with the work, and the vast majority who participate in the social aspects. I firmly believe that one can read the classics and SF/Fantasy both.

BROWNIAN MOTION #6 - I consider fan activities to be social activities. I should look into Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. I tend to break up things into projects. I too am bored with routine chores. A website that links to fan activities of a wide variety of types is an excellent and useful service to fandom. I think a lot of fans have trouble with time management; we’d rather read a book or watch SF TV/movies. The U.S. is a lot less willing than are most other countries to provide services (in part because we spend so much on our military, in part because many residents are unwilling to fund programs that might benefit





people of other races/religions/immigration status/parts of the country etc.) Belgium? I thought it was [Canada](#) that we are supposed to blame? There's a long history in SF of stories that seem like magic at first but turn to be sufficiently advanced technology/science. I've not seen the reverse as much, but there are some. The government shutdowns in the U.S. are not due to financial reasons but political ones playing games with failing to approve the budget for political advantage.

Brandy Hall #4-I agree that social sciences are not sciences in the same way as the physical sciences, but reject the idea that this means they are somehow less of a science because of that. I think people are more willing to suspend their disbelief in a few things if everything else makes sense and

it is clear that the creators have considered the consequences of their technology. Yes the Internet Speculative Fiction Database is very helpful. Too bad it doesn't cover novels. I think TV shows are able to do longer arcs and multi-threaded storylines because there are so many ways to replay a missed episode. It used to be that once an episode was shown over the air, that was it until it was rerun. Now you can watch older episodes online or download them from multiple sources.

Snow Poster Township #14 - I've heard of catching up on one's reading, but a 1934 issue is very impressive. How reliable is machine translation? Combining it with a human editor may be a good way to expand sf.

### ...Author Spotlight: Marion Zimmer Bradley (1930-1999)

How does one write about Marion Zimmer Bradley in light of everything that has been exposed? I'm going to start with the reasons why she is so important to the genre. Her 30+ novels in the *Darkover* series began with 1958's *The Planet Savers* and were continued after her death by Adrienne Martine-Barnes and Deborah G Ross. *Darkover* is a mix of science fiction and fantasy. A human spaceship crashed on the mostly frozen planet of Darkover and some humans interbred with the native Chieri, resulting in humans with psi powers (called laran) that they can control using a starstone (later called matrix). Some of the books dealt with humans trying to understand these powers and developing a matrix. Many of the books also dealt with the struggle of the people of Darkover to retain their identity once rediscovered by the Terran Federation. And many of the books, especially the early ones, have a Terran visit Darkover and discover that they have laran powers themselves. Unlike too many other series, the *Darkover* series changes over time so all the books do not read like the same thing over and over. In addition to the books Bradley wrote, she opened it up to anthologies of fan-written works. But this led to trouble when a fan-written work had similarities to a novel she was writing and lawyers had to get involved. This led Bradley to stop editing these anthologies and no longer allowed *Darkover* fanfiction.

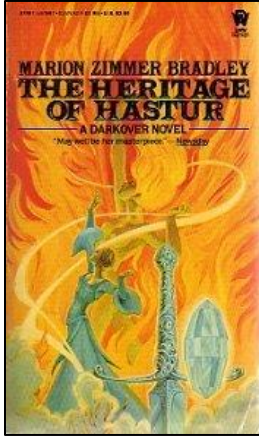


Art from [Wikipedia](#)

She is also known for her fantasy works, most notably the feminist King Arthur saga that began with *The Mists of Avalon* and six books written with (3 books) and by (three books after Bradley's death) Diana L. Paxson. Her *Sword and Sorceress* anthologies had 34 volumes, through 2019 (counting the volumes edited by others after Bradley's death). These were not fanfic but original stories with strong female characters. She also edited *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine* which published 50 issues between 1988 and 2000, ending shortly after her death. She also wrote standalone novels (and a few series/trilogies).

Marion Zimmer Bradley also was involved in fandom. She helped found (and may have named) the Society for Creative Anachronism. She published several fanzines and contributed to others. Her first sale “Outpost” published in *Amazing Stories* in December 1949 originally appeared in a fanzine the previous year. She also was a part of a few pagan groups and co-founded the Center for Non-Traditional Religion. She also inspired a convention Darkovercon, that later became Chessiecon.

Bradley became very controversial in 2014 when her daughter, Moiria Greyland, revealed that her mother had sexually abused her and that Bradley was aware of her husband’s child molestation (for which he was convicted) and pedophilia. Greyland later put her accusations in a book *The Last Closet: The Dark Side of Avalon*. These revelations shocked the science fiction/fantasy world especially since MZB’s books strongly stressed feminism and pioneered the positive portrayal of homosexuality. No new *Darkover* books have been published since Greyland’s news went public.



This raises an interesting question. Should people read good books by bad authors? Some people will not read Orson Scott Card since he has expressed what some see as homophobic beliefs. J. K. Rowling has become controversial for transphobic language. John Ringo is frequently criticized for expressing extreme right-wing positions in a provocative way and using racist, misogynist, and homophobic language. And of course Roald Dahl’s antisemitism is well known. I think it is okay to read such books as long as the reader is aware of the controversy (although if the author is still living readers may want to take their books out of the library so their money does not go into the pockets of the writer). For readers willing to read MZB despite the controversy, I’d recommend starting with the *Mists of Avalon* and *Heritage of Hastur* (Darkover).

### ...Hugo Ballot

For fun, I’m posting what I nominated for the Hugo ballot. Let’s see how many of these actually make it as Finalists.

Best Novel - *Translation State* by Ann Leckie; *Lords of Uncreation* by Adrian Tchaikovsky; *Some Desperate Glory* by Emily Tesh; *Dead Country* by Max Gladstone; *Plutoshine* by Lucy Kissick; and *Starling House* by Alix E. Harrow

Best Series - *The Craft Sequence* by Max Gladstone; *The Laundry Files* by Charlie Stross; *The Grand Illusion* by L.E. Modesitt, Jr; *Caine Riordan* by Charles Gannon; and *Rook & Rose* by M.A. Carrick.

Best Dramatic Presentation - *Nimona*, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, *Shazam! Fury of the Gods*, *The Artifice Girl*, and *The Flash*

And although it’s not a Hugo, let me post the finalists for the Baltimore Science Fiction Society’s Compton Crook Award for Best First Novel: *Deathwind: War of the Harbingers Book 1* by Brad Pawlowski (Sunquake Books); *How to Be Remembered* by Michael Thompson (Sourcebooks Landmark); *Splinter in the Sky* by Kemi Ashing-Giwa (S&S/Saga Press); and *These Burning Stars* by Bethany Jacobs (Orbit).

### ...From Wizard to Scientist: Changing Views towards the Scientist from Hawthorne to Twain (Part V)

Readers of *Samizdat* may remember that I’ve been serializing my 1989 undergraduate thesis on what I very carefully did not tell Harvard was 19<sup>th</sup> century science fiction. Here is the last part of the Mark Twain section.

Although a representative of science and progress, the Yankee is forced to pretend to be a magician in order to gain a position in the sixth century. Magic was a known entity and easily understood by the inhabitants of Arthurian England, while science was thoroughly alien. In his “Legend of the ‘Spectacular Ruin’”, part of *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), Twain foreshadows *A Connecticut Yankee* by showing the derision with which science was viewed in the middle ages. In this story, a tramp who has volunteered to defeat a dragon after many heroes had already failed, asks:

“Were any of these heroes men of science?” This raised a laugh, of course, for science was despised in those days. But the tramp was not in the least ruffled. He said he might be a little in advance of his age, but rib matter- science would come to be honored, some time or another.<sup>1</sup>

In *A Connecticut Yankee*, after pretending to cause an eclipse in order to save his life, Hank Morgan must continue to claim magical powers mightier than the wizard Merlin’s to maintain his status as “the Boss” and his efforts to modernize Arthurian England. “I am a magician myself,” the Yankee declares to the page Clarence, “and the Supreme Grand High-yu-Muckamuck and head of the tribe, at that,” [65] and belittles Merlin’s abilities: “He don’t amount to shucks, as a magician; knows some of the old common tricks, but has never got beyond the rudiments, and never will.” [64] By combining feigned magic with actual science, Hank Morgan becomes Boss of the country.



While the Yankee gains this authority by claiming to have magical powers, he never forgets that he is only pretending to be a wizard, while really using the far more effective power of science.<sup>2</sup> He could not simply declare magic worthless, and expect the country to believe him, since the habit of superstition was too deeply ingrained. While on a quest with Sandy, his future wife, the Yankee realizes the divergence between the sixth-century culture of superstition and the nineteenth-century culture of science. To be accepted in Arthurian England, the Yankee had to pretend to believe in its magic- the majority determines what is sane:

To doubt that a castle could be turned into a sty, and its occupants into hogs, would have been the same as my doubting, among Connecticut people, the actuality of the telephone and its wonders,- and in both cases would be absolute proof of a diseased mind, an unsettled reason. Yes, Sandy was sane; that must be admitted. If I also would be sane to Sandy- I must keep my superstitions about unenchanted and unmiraculous locomotives, balloons and telephones, to myself... if I did not wish to be suddenly shunned and forsaken by everybody as a madman. [252]



The Arthurian society accepted magic as an indisputable fact. Therefore, while under this belief system, and only until he can change its structure, the Yankee disguises his science as magic. While the Yankee obviously enjoys showing off, he never believes he really has magic, but only brags of its great power because of the science that backs it. The Yankee always intends to educate the Englishmen, to remove their superstitions; and he reveals his secrets to his assistant, Clarence, and to others in his schools and “man-factories”.

<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain, “The Legend of the Spectacular Ruin” from *A Tramp Abroad* (1880) reprinted in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. Norton Critical Edition. Ensor, ed. p. 283

<sup>2</sup> Henry Smith claims that the Yankee began to see his science in magical terms, because the Yankee several times “implies that he and Merlin are almost evenly matched.” Henry Smith, *Mark Twain’s Fable of Progress* p. 96. However, this was largely for the benefit of spectators, who believed that Hank and Merlin were both wizards. To these watchers, Hank would pretend to believe in Merlin’s great powers to gain more credit for the inevitable victory of science.



While both the Yankee and Merlin claim to have magical abilities, Merlin's "powers" are not based on science or anything concrete, but only on the belief of his audience. The wizard cannot produce a single result when challenged by the Yankee's science. Although before the arrival of the Boss, Merlin gained his high position by successfully manipulating the public's superstition, he is fatally handicapped by a belief in his own magic. "He did everything by incantations," observes the Yankee. "He never worked his intellect... If he had stepped in there [the fountain]... he could have cured the well by natural means, and then turned it into a miracle in the customary way." [274] Merlin is the embodiment of superstition; however, he is not a charlatan. When the Yankee simply invents a name for a demon which Merlin claimed was blocking the fountain, the wizard spends three months "working enchantments to try to find out the deep trick of how to pronounce that name and outlive it." [294]



Hank Morgan links Merlin's false claims to power, and society's belief in them, with the nineteenth century "pseudo-scientists":

He was a true magician of the time: which is to say, the big miracles, the ones that gave him his reputation, always had the luck to be performed when nobody but Merlin was present... a crowd was as bad for a magician's miracle in that day as it was for a spiritualist's miracle in mine. [272]

In both cases, the believers do not need any proof in order to believe. However, unlike Hawthorne, Twain does not use this comparison to imply that magic and science are equally perilous. By 1889, the sciences which most frightened Hawthorne were discredited and called "pseudo-sciences". Tying this pretended science to pretended magic, Twain demonstrates the impotence of both. Thus, Twain makes Merlin harmless, a powerless comic figure. The wizard's story bores the entire court to sleep; and the famed enchanter is only kept in the Yankee's weather bureau to undermine his reputation. In the duel between the Yankee "a measuring of his magic powers against mine," [497] all the wizard is able to do is a slight of hand trick, against Hank's lasso and pistol. Only at the very end of the novel does Merlin show any signs of true power when he successfully puts the Yankee into a thousand year sleep. Even that accomplishment is ironically marred: Merlin dies by electrocution, while the Yankee survives to arrive back in the nineteenth century.

Much of *A Connecticut Yankee* is devoted to this contest between science and magic. To the residents of King Arthur's Court, both the Yankee and Merlin are enchanters disputing for supremacy. But to Hank Morgan, his battles with Merlin are examples of science and reason defeating magic and superstition. "I was a champion, it was true," he says, "but not the champion of the frivolous black arts, I was the champion of hard unsentimental common-sense and reason." [498] In the scenes where the Yankee blows up Merlin's tower, fixes the monks' fountain, and defeats the knights in the duel, the Yankee always gives Merlin the opportunity to try his ineffective magic powers first, before winning through the superior power of science. Twain himself interpreted this contest as central to the novel. In his introduction to the excerpts of the book published in *Century Magazine*, he calls the conflict "a bitter struggle for supremacy... Merlin using the absurd necromancy of the time and the Yankee beating it easily and brilliantly with the more splendid necromancy of the nineteenth century-that is, the marvels of modern science."<sup>3</sup> Twain never intends the conflict between the Yankee and Merlin to be seen as just two rival magicians squabbling for rank, but instead as the Yankee overpowering magic with his science.

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<sup>3</sup> Everett Carter. "The Meaning of *A Connecticut Yankee*" in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court: Norton Critical Edition*. Ensor, ed. p. 442



Although Twain allows the Yankee's technology to be defeated in the end of the novel, this is not a rejection of science. Instead, Twain intends to show the strong forces arrayed against science and progress. The Yankee is not defeated by Merlin and magic, but by social forces allied with the superstition of the church. Twain deliberately makes the Yankee into a sympathetic victim, forced to hole himself up in a cave with only 36 boys to support him against the whole 10,000 armed knights of English chivalry. The Yankee is only defending his civilization against the enemies of progress, the same forces that Twain criticized throughout the novel and elsewhere in his writings: the aristocracy, slavery, superstition, and most especially the Church.

The aristocracy, a frequent target of Twain's, fight the Yankee to maintain their power. Twain criticizes the nobility throughout the novel, both for their violence and coarseness, and for their exploitation of the serfs. While these knights serve as tools of the Church, they also fight in their own interests to prevent the Yankee from freeing the serfs. The serfs' acquiescence in obeying the feudal lords rather than joining the Yankee to fight for freedom further harms his cause. The masses of England cheer his republic for a day, but are soon cowed into fighting against it:

The Church, the nobles, and the gentry then turned one grand, all-disapproving frown upon them and shriveled them into sheep! ...Why even the very men who had lately been slaves were in the 'righteous cause,' and glorifying it, praying for it, sentimentally slabbering over it, just like all the other commoners, [551]



However, while the knights, supported by the serfs, do the actual fighting, the Yankee's most dangerous enemy is really the Church. Unlike Merlin, who also makes use of superstition, the Church is dangerous because it combines superstitions with powerful social forces and authority. For Twain, the Church fills the same role as Hawthorne's scientists, ruling the minds of others. Based on superstition, the Church always acts to prevent progress: in the novel it successfully tricks the Yankee out of the country, and destroys his railway, telegraph, telephone, and even his electric light.[540] The Church claims authority over who can go to Heaven, and uses its monopoly on literacy to train the people to its superstitions. At the end of *A Connecticut Yankee*, all of Hank Morgan's followers surrender to the Church's Interdict, except for the boys who grew up in his new society. Clarence sadly confesses that the Yankee's education ultimately fails against superstition:

Because all the others were born in an atmosphere of superstition and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones. We imagined we had educated it out of them; they thought so, too; the Interdict woke them up like a thunderclap. [540]

Mark Twain treats the Church as a regressive force in much of his darker writings, most especially his dialogues and philosophy.<sup>4</sup> He had planned to show the Church as the enemy of progress in *A Connecticut Yankee* a year before he even started to write the novel; his 1885 notebook contains the idea, "Country placed under an interdict."<sup>5</sup> Though superstition, in the form of the Church, defeats science, the Church does not win through any inherent truth in its doctrines, but instead through its power over the beliefs of men.

<sup>4</sup> "'...don't come near me again until you can interest yourself in some subject of a lower grade and less awful than theology.'

*Bessie*, (disappearing): 'Mr. Hollister says there ain't any.'" Mark Twain "Little Bessie" (1908) in *The Devil's Race-Track*, John Tuckey ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Smith, p.43



The final battle of the Sand-belt, in which the Yankee kills 30,000 knights with an electric fence, may appear an abuse of science's power more deadly than that of Hawthorne's scientists. While to modern eyes, after the invention and use of horrific weapons in two world wars, the final battle of the Sand Belt seems uncomfortably apocalyptic, the scenes of destruction would not have had the same resonance for nineteenth century readers. Frontier humor often exaggerated death and destruction to provoke laughter).<sup>6</sup> Also, although Twain knew that science could be misused, he carefully works to avoid the impression that the Yankee is abusing his power. Twain removes all of the sympathetic knights—King Arthur, Sir Lancelot and the baseball players have all died in battle—before the Yankee returns. Those electrocuted are nameless, faceless suits of armor who threaten to destroy not only the Yankee and science; but also his infant “Republic”. Moreover, even without the Yankee's new weapons, the sixth century was violent in its own right. The knights did not just quest for grails and castles; they fought and killed with their swords. The novel's brutal ending merely strips away the last illusion, the glories of battle, from the chivalry debunked throughout the book. Since Twain's audience knew the ending of the authentic Arthurian myths, which also end in a bloody battle, they would not have blamed the Yankee for the destruction of Camelot which would have occurred without him.



Art from [hotpot](#)

While Hank Morgan can be criticized for being inconsistent; he does try sincerely to abolish slavery and use his science to improve the lot of the common man. His failure is not the failure of science, but the result of the aristocracy, slavery, and the Church. The fall of Camelot was inevitable due to the human failings of its leaders, Arthur, Lancelot and Guenever; and therefore is not an example of Twain losing his original faith in science. While he wrote to William Dean Howells that he left too much unsaid because “they would require a library—and a pen warmed up in Hell,”<sup>7</sup> those unsaid things are most probably even harsher attacks on the Church, aristocracy, and monarchy, rather than against democracy and technology that so much of the book praises.

Twain and Hawthorne use a different vocabulary to describe science. Through his language, Hawthorne restricts his science to the mysterious and unexplained, constantly bringing in references to the supernatural, the devil, and legends. He sets his stories in an indefinite past, with abstract and ambiguous descriptions aligning more with magic than science. In contrast, while Twain also sets his novel in the past, the sixth century of King Arthur, his language is more simple and direct. Twain's narrator, the time-travelling Yankee, narrates in the common nineteenth-century speech of his day. While Hawthorne speaks of “Airy figures” and “bodiless ideas,”<sup>8</sup> Twain describes an entire nineteenth century civilization complete with telephones, telegraphs, railroads, matches, and stove-polish. Hank ends all secrecy: in his own words, he “exposed the nineteenth century to the inspection of the sixth.”[511]

<sup>6</sup> Carter p. 438

<sup>7</sup> Carter p. 441

<sup>8</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne. “Rappaccini's Daughter” in *The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Norman Pearson ed. (NY: Modern Library 1937) p. 1026



Like Chillingworth, Aylmer, and Rappaccini, who alter nature for evil, Hank Morgan uses his science to change the world around him. However, in *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain approves of his character's power: He believes that science and technology will benevolently transform the world. Hawthorne's scientists behave as wizards in all but name; there is little difference between science and magic. But, by the time of Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee*, the view of science in America had changed. Twain's scientist is more human, less supernatural than Hawthorne's. The Yankee is never a wizard, although he adopts that guise to conform to the world in which he finds himself; he is always against the goals and practices of magic. No longer an ally of magic, concealed in underground laboratory sanctums and walled in gardens, Twain's scientist has become a visible force altering entire countries. His technology and science give him great power, but he attempts to direct that power to the improvement of mankind by transforming the country, introducing nineteenth century institutions and machines. It is in this enthusiastic portrayal of science that Twain differs from Hawthorne. The Yankee is more ordinary, more concrete, than Hawthorne's mysterious scientists precisely because there is less to hide. While Hawthorne's scientists plot to take over souls, the Yankee works to free men from tyranny.

### ...Status of Projects

Past readers of *Samizdat* will remember that I have launched a series of projects to better my life. Here's the latest report on my projects.

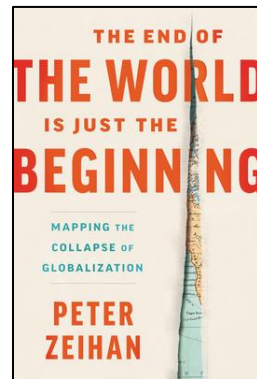


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Project Nonfiction—I read *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow. The book by anthropologist and activist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow, completed shortly before Graeber's death contends that previous books on prehistory and early civilizations made assumptions based on then-current European powers and assumed that the rise of agriculture and cities inevitably led to strong-man rule and inequality. Instead, these authors claim that early civilizations experimented with many different types of political structures and even those with single-man rule gave the ruler much less power (such as an inability to delegate power or create

officials to act for him). They challenge the traditional view and mock it as nothing more than a rephrasing of the biblical fall from Eden. They also point out that the interactions between “civilized” Europeans and “savage” native was less one-sided than histories claim. People were actually better off during historical dark ages when nothing much happened than the times when leaders enslave the people to build monuments and fight wars. But the book fails to explain why, if their claims are right, civilization moved from the many different ways of governance to kings and hierarchical societies of more recent history.

I also read *The End of the World is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization* by Peter Zeihan. This book claims that the world's best years are behind us and it's downhill from there. The author contends that the U.S. is turning its back on globalization (and using its military might to protect the world) while declining populations in many major European and Asian countries will lead to the collapse of global trade and manufacturing. While the U.S. will be protected from the worst effects due to immigration keeping our population up and our natural resources and farmland allowing us to get by without much trade, the rest of the world will mostly collapse. He writes, “Since 1945 the world has been the best it has ever been. The best it will ever be. Which is a poetic way of saying this era, this world-our world-is doomed. The 2020s will see a collapse of consumption and production and investment and trade almost everywhere.” Millions will starve or face malnutrition, China will collapse, and an aging world population won't be able to drive demand. While the author make a strong case for this doomsday scenario, every such doomsday claim in the past has been wrong. Zeihan does not account for



how technology can improve the world. Nor does his portrayal of humans as helpless in the grip of global trends adequately account for humans' intelligence and ability to change what Zeihan sees as the inevitable course of history.

I also finished listening to an audio series of lectures, *The Foundations of Western Civilization* from the Great Courses company. This course, taught by Professor Thomas Noble of Notre Dame university, starts with Sumer and goes through the Western historic canon up to the Renaissance and Reformations. Of course, 48 lectures covering over 4,500 years does not allow for much more than a broad survey course. However, Noble does stress how often history does the unexpected, how frequently an observer, betting on the continuation of then-current trends, would have gotten things wrong. I am a big fan of history and listening to this course in the car, while I drove, was a great way to learn during otherwise wasted driving time.

Project Classics – I have started reading *The Source* by James A. Michener, his 1965 book on Israel. Since Israel is once again a major news story, now seemed like a good time to read this book. I'm up to page 330 out of 1080 pages. Basically, it is almost a collection of short stories about people who inhabit a hill/village. The stories move gradually forward in time, telling the story of the Land of Israel through the histories of those who lived there. It is held together by chapters on the archeologists digging up the hill in the 1960s, the present day at the time the book was written. I'm finding the book slow going especially as the characters are constantly changing.

Project Video – Netflix is showing a bunch of DC comics movies so this list will have a bunch of them:

- *Green Lantern*-This comics-based movie starring Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively has an awful reputation, but I actually liked it. It helps that Green Lantern was my favorite superhero as a kid and I already knew the basics. Yes, the film tried to cram too much into a single movie and part of the movie was a setup for the sequel. But the film did make an effort to connect Hector Hammond's rise as a big-headed villain with the galactic evil of Parallax.
- *Big Hero Six*-A kid genius slacker loses interest in everything when his brother is killed in a fire after the genius presents a big invention (and turns down a rich industrialist's offer to purchase it.) But when he discovers that someone is secretly using his invention for evil, he joins forces with his brother's classmates and his brother's inflatable medical robot to find out who stole the invention (and killed his brother). Although the end turns into a superhero team origin story, the meat of this computer-animated Disney movie is the relationship between the boy and his brother's robot.
- *DC League of Super Pets* – This is a funny animated movie about Superman's dog Krypto and bunch of other animals, including an evil guinea pig, who get superpowers from kryptonite meteor brought down by Lex Luthor. This is not a movie to go out of one's way to see, but if you like pet movies or superhero movies, it is worth watching.
- *Dune* (part I) – I finally saw the 2021 *Dune* movie directed and co-authored (and co-produced) by Denis Villeneuve. It faithfully adapts the novel up through Duke Leto's overthrow and Paul's adoption into a Freman tribe. (But it is missing my favorite scene—the dinner party). It is certainly more consistent than the David Lynch movie (which was incomprehensible to anyone who had not read the book). But it is also missing the occasional spark of brilliance in that film. I saw it just in time as the sequel is out, prompting people to ask me if I had seen this one.
- *Aquaman* – Back when kids watched the *Super Friends* cartoon, everyone used to make fun of Aquaman's minor power of being able to talk to fish. But in this movie, he is impressively played by



Jason Momoa as super-strong and super-tough. The script is interesting and holds together well. This is not the typical superhero movie, but more of the fantasy trope where the rightful king has to find an object of power to defeat the usurper king in battle. This is well worth seeing.

- *Lady Bird* - This is a coming of age film written and directed by Greta Gerwig who later received a lot of attention for her *Barbie* movie. It is set in 2002, mostly about the relationship of Christine (who has renamed herself Lady Bird), a California high school senior who wants to go to New York for college and her overly-controlling mother who keeps trying to lower her expectations. Although the film received a lot of critical praise and awards, I don't see what caused all the fuss.
- *The Batman* (2022). This stars Robert Pattinson as a rather dull Batman early in his career. When the mayor is murdered, the police and the Batman investigate. This film emphasizes the Batman's detective aspects. Unfortunately, characters like the Riddler and Catwoman seem to be these characters in name only. The Riddler is essentially a terrorist with an anti-rich agenda. It's not clear why he sends out riddles. And Catwoman is more of a waitress worried about her friend than clever thief. The film is a darker and more cerebral approach to Batman; it just isn't fun the way a superhero movie should be.
- *Snow White* - I have decided to watch all the Disney animated films in order. This was the first. I was surprised at how much a role is played by the music. It's not really background music. Most of the dwarfs were interchangeable aside from their quirk (except for Dopey of course) although Grumpy was, in my view, the most interesting character in the movie. Snow White's efforts to get him to like her are far more than anything she does for the nameless prince. And I had forgotten that the Prince had met Snow White before the famous true love's first kiss scene, although they just sang a duet, which shouldn't be enough to fall in love, but this is a fairy tale.

Project Conventions - I attended Boskone in Boston in February. Boskone always does an excellent job and brings in top guests. This year was no exception. Guests of honor included Ben Aaronovitch, Bradford Lyau, and John Scalzi. I also have been making major progress on organizing Balticon, the Baltimore SF convention over Memorial Day weekend. I am the chair of the convention. As part of promoting Balticon, I went tabling at Awesomecon (the DC media/comics/anime/geek culture convention) this month. It says it has 70,000 attendees (maybe not all on the same day). By contrast, Balticon, a general focus SF convention in nearby Baltimore, brought in about 1,500 pre-pandemic and Capclave, a more print-focused convention gets around 400 or so. This shows how much more attention conventions get with media guests.

Project Short Stories - I continue to read current SF magazines and leading discussions on them for the Washington Science Fiction Association. We have been discussing *Asimov's SF* magazine and the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. We also alternate between discussions of *Clarkesworld* and *Lightspeed*, two online SF/Fantasy magazines. I have continued reading the 988-page *The Ascent of Wonder: The Evolution of Hard SF*, although not at the rate of one story per day as I had planned. The book contains stories by a wide range of science fiction greats. Still, it stretches the definition of hard science fiction past the point of any usefulness. Readers of this zine know I'm a big fan of classifying Nathaniel Hawthorne as a science fiction writer, but there's no way that "Rappaccini's Daughter" qualifies as **hard** sf.

No progress on Project Trek, Project Paperback, Project Exercise, Project Shakespeare, or Project Cleanup. I really need to pick up the pace on these.

### ...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 commercial clip-art, covers/promotional materials for works discussed, the Internet, and other sources as indicated.



## **Ye Murthered Master Mage 269**

**George Phillis  
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How is the N3F doing? In recent weeks, we lost the Biirthday Card Bureau Head, who will be doing A Round Robin instead. The editor of two of our zines decided to stop doing them, because he had insoluble computer problems, so we are looking for two fresh editors there. We have gained a new editor for Films Fantastic.

No one seems to be doing much membership recruiting, so there aren't many new members coming in. Advertising does work. The other club I am in, the Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegspiel Society, had under four hundred actual members when I became President three years ago, though roughly 700 were on the books, and is now up to almost 1000. That club recently had a letter from someone who just joined, he commented that he joined because he had seen our advertising. The advertising was run in a wargaming zine published sixty years ago, which he had read at the time, but never done anything about. He is now a member. We should try more of the same. As I have mentioned, I picked up two newspapers, electronics types, a year and a half back. I have passed one off to the excellent hands of a new editrix and her staff. It is doing well. The one for which I still generate news stories has the benefit that I advertise the new stories with some frequency. As a result, every time there is an interesting new story, perhaps I should say every time there is another bit of scandal, the readership jumps up markedly.

**So advertise for us. It can make a difference.**

**A few zine comments:**

Intermission: many interesting historical bits on past science fiction and fans. Curiously, your dues have been covered for an electronic membership, since there is apparently no way for you to send us money.

Some of your discussion reminds me of my activities as the lead admin of the Facebook group

Science Fiction. In order keep discussion within bounds, we don't allow the use of four-letter words and suspend people who ignore the rule. The hypothetical list of four-letter words is quite long, but in practice we mostly see three of them. In order to keep discussion civil, discussion of contemporary politics is completely forbidden. The penalty is being banned, ejected from the group and now you cannot even find it to read it, the penalty being imposed on the first violation with no warning being given. We occasionally have someone who tries to get cute with the administrators. These people are surprised when, for example, they repeatedly ask what I mean by four-letter words, and cite some that are four letters but perfectly innocent. These people get banned very quickly because I don't have any tolerance for that nonsense. If you want a reasonable Facebook group you have to insist that people have good manners. For some reason, I suspect that this year I am going to be dropping the nuclear ban hammer with great frequency. I agree with your comment that supporting Ukraine is a sound investment for the United States. Truly, World War I had some remarkably strange aircraft, such as the Russian Imperial four-engine bomber (for one copy, a five-engine bomber, the fifth engine driving the turbochargers which let the plane climb to 19,000 feet.)

Archive Midwinter: thank you for all zine comments, as they should be an important part of an APA.

Of Breaking Waves is out as an e-book, and will soon be out as a paperback, so soon as the paperback cover is prepared. Ditto it will soon be out of the hardback if anyone wants the hardback. My current writing effort is preparing to technical papers for resubmission to yet another journal, it being sometimes difficult to find eternal that exactly matches what you've written in terms of topic. In addition the last journal I tried to submit to had an editor who wanted to rewrite it to basically be a reflection of his own work, which I did not go for, not because something was wrong with his work, but because it was wandering off-topic relative to what I had written. This happens. I am not quite sure what writing project I will take on next.

Brownian Motion: I have been extremely busy. In fact, I have been so busy that I have considered

getting a real forty-hour-a-week job so that I would have more free time. I do appreciate your comments on the search for an external floppy disk drive, but I have yet to find one. Apparently there are some significant technical difficulties.

Brandy Hall: many people would like to change exactly how politics is arranged, but rather few of them are willing to try the necessary work, and most of those people discover that there are very few supporters because people aren't really interested in trying something new with something that is very important but very uninteresting in their life.

The second-person novel I was referring to was *The Fifth Season*, which won a Hugo. It was also in present tense. If it had been submitted to *Eldritch Science*, I would have rejected it for those reasons.

With respect to the Hugo awards, a perhaps-interesting question in some categories is the extent to which they appear to be completely dominated by a single publishing house. I do recall a occasion, much of a decade ago, in which many of the lead nominees were in fact from a different publishing house, and there was a great furor.

How did you find out about wargaming fanzine's? On one hand, there were a few heavily circulated magazines, such as the *Avalon Hill General*, in which gamers could advertise. In addition, many wargaming zines would at least list the other zines that had been received. This approach was good enough that one often found out about wargaming zines, not always all of them. It's sort of like fanzines today. There are a few websites that list a fair number of them, and a few fanzines such as *Garth Spencer's effort*, the report on what was received. For a while, one N3F zine or another had a fanzine review column, but finding someone willing to write fanzine reviews is an interesting challenge. If you would like to do this, please contact *Mindy Hunt* about it.

*Snow Poster Township*: your reviews are always most appreciated, I would be delighted to use more of them in, for example, *Tightbeam*, except that the crossing things over from PDF format is a real nuisance. I will be stepping back somewhat from N'APA, but not completely. I want to continue to persuade members to write for our APA.

*Samizdat*: with respect to your comment to *Intermission*, there is considerable evidence that the severity of the criminal punishment is much less influential than the immediacy and certainty of the punishment.

It is indeed the case that novels have gotten much longer over the past three-quarters of a century. Once upon a time I was at a science fiction convention and made an observation saying this, to a discussion panel of people from several publishers. They waxed wroth about my claim that novels in 2005 were longer than novels of 1955. However I happen to have in my room full of Science Fiction books, among others, copies of the *Lensmen* books, and the recently-acquired copies of *Four from Planet Five* and *We Who Survived the Fifth Ice Age*, both of which are noteworthy for being quite thin. I am perfectly happy to read series novels, such as all of those produced by *David Weber*, novels produced by *Larry Correia*, novels produced by *Christopher Nuttall*, *Declan Finn*, and *John Ringo*, and the rather less noticed *L. E. Modesitt*. I had missed until recently his *World of Illusions* series, which is slight steamy punk but mostly heavily political in a political arrangement vaguely like ours but not completely. Very much worth reading.

I think you have a good point about *Hawthorne* being the first science fiction writer, rather than *Poe*. If we want a new science fiction reading group for the N3F, someone else has to stand up and do it. We had one, once upon a time.

Your numbers on what sort of books are read are a bit surprising. My vague general impression was that the most common genre is in fact romance, in that there are people who read vast numbers of romance novels every year. Did the study in question count romance novels, or were the designers of the study of the opinion that romance novels are an abomination in the face of the creator and should not be mentioned in polite company?