

N'APA

277

July 2025



The Official Organ

#277

Next deadline: September 15, 2025

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Procedure: Please Read:

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

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

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

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

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INTERMISSION #155

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, explosive rag for EAPA, N'APA and other drones. Late with @SFJournalen's newstweets but chance them. Sad that my fingers sometimes fall out a window causing typos. It'll be better when we get rid of Trutin and Pump. Early June 2025.

Editorially

Caution: Explicit views follow. Reader discretion advised. Wokeness created Trump! Many were so disgusted by woke ideology they happily gathered around the narcissistic serial-felon 80-year old Donald "Bankruptcy" Trump. He promised men pretending to be women couldn't go to the Ladies bathroom, schools couldn't claim you are guilty of what your grandparent's did, outrageous "drag queens" shouldn't mingle with children, and US workers wouldn't have to compete with foreign immigrants, etc.

But you can be both anti-woke and anti-Trump.

I've never believed that the enemy of your enemy is your friend. Both are still your enemy, so you follow your ethical principles - don't flip-flop! Don't have a spine of jelly! There are so many reasons to dump Trump! He lies and is full of empty bragging. "America first" isolationism make us all losers - US too. If he could he'd scrap Obamacare, but health shouldn't come with a bill. Trump is a lousy businessman, unstable, has no experience in foreign politics, offends women. And more..

Wokeness isn't much better. Let's define it as a general lumping together of different leftist ideas, from the pseudoscience of "gender is just a social construction" and environmental dogmas to there are no truths, anything goes, vegetarianism and degrading civil rights to strangle the individual.

Wokeness is rooted in the 1968 hippie era. When those crazy days had passed they became myths for the children of the hippies. Their ideas survived on the universities, ideological teachers herded naive, susceptible youngsters, all lacking life experience, being isolated from society. Social "sciences" of universities turned opinions into pseudo-scientific theories for complacent dullards in ivory towers.

And media cheer it, full of shallow attention-seeking do-gooders who think they know better. According to a Gothenburg University survey more than 80% of the staff of our mightiest media group (government-backed national radio/TV) support what we call the red-green parties. It's probably similar in other countries. As traditional media is shrinking they demand new people-to-people media to be curbed as it only carries "hate

speech" - criticism or jokes are seen as "hate". (Fanatics lack humour.) There's so much "hate speech" that we'd better pad everything! Or cancel it! If we never hear different opinions, we never need to worry about anything. But how can we grow if opposing views aren't allowed to clash?

End of caution. Welcome with comments to my outbursts...

Thish's History Corner digs into sf and language. Also the superb Bloch, Eurovision, copyright concessions... Tell me what you want to read, else I'll give you whatever crosses my mind.

--Ahrvid Engholm

Eurovision: We Must Have A Serious Talk with the Government...

When the humour and music group KAJ - Swedish entry to the Eurovision Song Contest - only got 10 instead of 12 points from Finland, the home country of the Finland-Swedes, member Axel Åhman inferred "We must have a serious talk with the government...", where upon fellow members Kevin and Jacob broke out in laughter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23ompbgWwJc> KAJ always have



Stockholm in 1925: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mu6yXn4n1xQ> Xmas market, the city's icy waters and a temporary bridge, city traffic, and finally graduation of young officers from the Karlberg Military Academy - our equivalent to West Point.

some fun going on. Here's inspecting the troops before the contest: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GnXmk_vtKxw

The chance of a win for the group KAJ expressed as percentage by the site Eurovisionworld fluctuated between 35% and 40% before ESC. They were favourites but not massively so. It was 2/3 chance that someone else would conquer the glass microphone, the trophy of the Eurovision Song Contest. And that's what happened.

Austria won. Israel was second. Estonia third. (I liked their entry, a humorous piece about Italian coffee!) KAJ was fourth.

The Finland-Swedes of KAJ had changed their show a little from Melodifestivalen: 3 not 4 dancers, a slightly bigger sausage and fire, a second backdrop showing the Scandinavian mountains as it was a golden valley of the Himalayas, and they moved towards the audience in the last chorus. It didn't help, but the thing is that they had *already* won! Three unknown lads from a far-away region in the north captured all of Europe with their charm and musicality. Their entry "Bara Bada Bastu" has topped the streaming lists, and the day they arrived they were interviewed over 100 times, even by BBC TV! Their impact is proven by the massive amounts of videos they inspired (selective list follows).

I didn't like the Austrian entry, not because it won, but because it was boring, pretentious (staged in black and white - how fake noir!) and didn't sound good. Falsetto singing is like nails on a chalkboard.

It's very interesting that Israel got lots of support by the televoters, the people. A small minority have demonstrated loudly against Israel, but they aren't backed by the general population. We refuse to forget the October 7th mass murder of civilians and understand Israel's right to finish off the culprits. (Don't trust Hamas' bloated casualty reports. Great many are combatants, BTW,)

While following Eurovision I have collected some of the "secondary" Bara Bada Bastu (Just Take a Sauna) videos you find on Youtube. There are thousands - no other entry had this amount of reactions! - but here are some of the most interesting:

What KAJ's performance looked like from the side

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9BZLNICEd4>

(they said it was their best performance of the week)

BBB translated to French <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cURmRCZHLV8>

And to Polish <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HbTpdg5ynl>

BBB in Ukrainian <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msx6vnbLm7g>

The best Finnish version, by Kuunkuiskaajat 2010 eurovision

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceMT5Z-UZ6g>

In Finnish <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AE2aWXvJwnY>

Another Finnish version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBK-BjhYBJc>

In English https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iDp1DjeJo

More English <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewFOkCJLx-s>

More English version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pf8MeAGvfA>

More English <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/CVvrX9sfxgw>

More English <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewFOkCJLx-s>

And one more <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMXA7fssHcc>

In Estonian, sung by school children <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANVrbKOsobS>

Another Estonian version https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meO_cq_ik3I

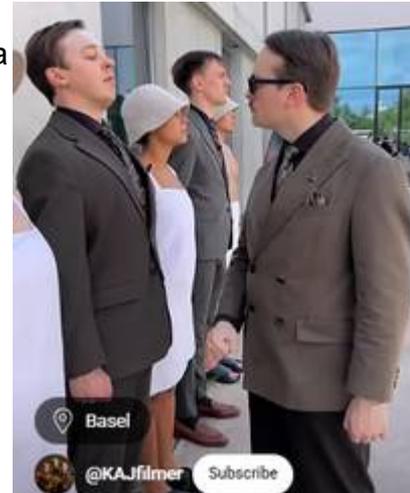
Heavy Metal version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oicnN0knd7U>

Swedish military band <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXXtCGM9vVo>

A 1930s version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZv5yFr4AXQ>



The KAJ trio: Kevin (top), Axel, Jacob



Inspecting the Troops.



A military band plays "Bara Bada Bastu", at Stockholm's Royal Palace.



KAJ through an AI filter making them look like aliens.

A Spaniard has learnt the text phonetically and now sings. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsVSv7QnFgo>

Rock version https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqpt_e5vQE0

Another rock version https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_7vbuTqhdM

Cover by a Finland-Swedish lady <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZKswmZg0oE>

On a church organ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6iS3418yiE>

Relaxed version in Swedish (ie as it's spoken in Sweden)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93DTN-U8I>

KAJ themselves pretend they dub the song to (fake)Russian

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEleG9-ETrg>

Version for a wind band <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amqZAigNFgo>

Finnish reggae version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8fCgvHGJms>

Netherlands version made by an AI <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ppG9qpJSJw>

A snippet of an English version by KAJ <https://www.svt.se/kultur/hor-kaj-sjunga-bara-bada-bastu-pa-engelska>

AI version <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/29shIGsO7Mg>

Trump sings BBB <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/QvDaX-N-YSg>

BBB In the constructed language Monelic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt8jyMDOQ3M>

In the constructed language Sheikan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aP0-oVFp64E>

Crazy frog sings <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/4OCgzgOJ5Lo>

Flash mob in Helsinki BBB-dancing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0SWBlj5sqE>

Dolls singing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iKHh3D6T0s>

Kids dancing

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/PxDIz9b9_yk

Spanish pre-school re-enacts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x700bFShuPk>

Played on drinking glasses

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/CeTD1NTaMOk>

BBB in several different music genres

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnfvSRF951o>

BBB interpreted by 2009 winner Alexander Ryback

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/HfHe5VI4ctY>

In Korean <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/yNmodoSYQj8>

In Spanish <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/OpSwi88KGCA>

Modern "dance" version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2niiJZ5111s>

BBB described as the 21st Century All-Time Hit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tgzliEi6uw>

BBB through a looking-like-aliens filter https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy4190_oDbQ

BBB as a romantic ballad <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/swOv21eCIRw>

AI showing hitting the snow post-sauna <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/tp4sm45Vnb0>

How come a group of Finns represents Sweden in the ESC, singing in Swedish? Finland was a part of Sweden (real part, having members in the parliament) for about 700 years, until the Russians attacked and we lost it in the 1808-09 war.

Swedish was at the time the administrative language of Finland and ca 18% of the people living there spoke Swedish. When the nationalist movement grew, the Swedish speakers were among the most active. Finland declared independence in the wake of Lenin's coup d'etat in Russia followed by a civil war.

In that situation it was natural to declare that also Swedish was a national language of the new-born country. Many of the leading cultural persons were Swedish speakers: Sibelius, Topelius, Runeberg, Jansson...now adding KAJ!

The number of Swedish-speakers has shrunk (today it's 5-6%, many left in 1809 and over time more emigrated to Sweden) but there are still areas, primarily along the coast, where Swedish dominates. The KAJ comes from such



BBB in Eurovision, according to AI.



Flash mob does the BBB dance in Helsinki.



Arsenal, with 4 Swedes in the squad (2 playing) beat juggernaut Barcelona in women's Champions League. Fast-legged Swedish striker Stina Blackstenius reaching stratosphere after scoring winning 1-0.

an area, Ostrobothnia, on the east side of the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic Sea. They sing in their local dialect, which compared to standard Swedish sometimes cut words and use diphthongs. But you can pick it up. My family ties on mother's side is from Westrobothnia, the opposite of the gulf. I've been there many summers and know their similar dialect.

KAJ is now on a summer tour in Sweden and Finland. Hyvä Vöyri (Vörå)!

Vetting the Worldcon and Immaterial Foundations

My minor objection to "Seattle Worldcon 2025 Building Yesterday's Future - For Everyone" is it lacks a proper con name, something starting with *Con-* or including *-vention*. That's how we usually name our sf conventions. It's hopeless to have a slogan is a name. You don't start your *Vorsprung durch Technik* to get to *I'm Loving It* on the way listening to your *Think Different* pod - pointing to Audi, McDonald's, Apple. Let's call it S-con. (Seacon's already taken by the 1979 Worldcon.)

Lately S-con has been under fire by the Usual Suspects for using AI to vet program participants. I use some AI myself for different things, being aware of the limitations, and if anything it suggests finds use I take responsibility and don't hide behind a robot. So what's the fuss about? I surfed around and found e.g. "built on appropriated texts of writers and fans", "environmentally destructive", "AI plagiarism", "racial bias" (there's more of the same, but there's no point in repeating it).

As for the last we know AI companies has worked to erase any bias or they have at least pledged that. "Racial bias" has even turned 180 degrees, as AI picture generators for instance produce black SS men. When Microsoft's AI showed Nazi tendencies it was promptly turned off. (Throwing 1st Stone Dpt: There's a lot of bias in the Worldcon awards, the Hugos since long having a giant overweight for certain groups and minorities. War is peace! Discrimination is Diversity! Exclusion is Inclusion!)

When we vet things we don't automatically follow it. We think for ourselves. Any decisions will of course finally come from a human. S-con is said to have in the order of 1000 program participants, from several thousand applicants. It's obvious that AIs can contribute to a faster processing - leaving time to work on other parts of the con, hopefully making it better.

When it comes to claims AIs would be destroying the environment (they argue it wastes energy) I asked ChatGPT: "LLM-based AIs (like ChatGPT and similar systems) use only a very small fraction of the world's total energy production - well under 1%, likely closer to 0.01% or less." I think Earth survives applications using 0.01% of the energy... But AIs may also find ways to reduce any pollution, save energy, making recycling and transports more effective - all environmentally positive.

But my *main criticism* is about their lousy idea to ban using ("appropriating") material for inspiration.



April 26 I visited the Swedenborgians again, the followers of scientist/mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). They eg played classical music that inspired him. It was a part of Stockholm's Culture Night program. There were lectures about this mysterious man who thought he had telepathic contact with aliens.

Copyright has never been for *outlawing inspiration!* Those who want to ban AIs to use work of others as training data are out on very thin ice. It's not at all a matter of "plagiarism" or "stealing" work..

What AIs do is just what the cells in our human brains do, in a more primitive way (yet) but still. AIs as we know them now aren't conscious in any meaningful way. They use artificial neural networks that mimics how our own neurons in the brain work, in a scaled down and approximate way, but the idea is the same. They are very good at processing humongous amounts of data very fast. An AI using training data to produce an output, does the same as a human brain that is inspired by this and that and that. AIs and human brains act the same in the process of inspiration. The idea that we must ban input from earlier creations to produce something new, to get inspiration, would be very detrimental to mankind's development.

"Plagiarism" isn't the notion that if B vaguely resembles A, B has stolen from A. Plagiarism requires that B is close to A. AIs are perfectly capable of sometimes creating output that puts B too close to A, just as human brains can. But usually AI output isn't a simple copy of something. And also: the output will have *inspiration from thousands of inputs* at the same time. It's impossible to "plagiarise" thousands of things things in one piece of output.

The copyright industry has in recent decades tried to stretch the copyright fence step by step. It was extremely unjustified to widen the protection time from 50 to 70 years *plus the author's lifespan* (important, since we live longer today). These extreme 70 years comes from lobbying by Disney with the help of Adolf Hitler. (The works of Nazis dying in 1945 would be free in 1995, so Germany - ashamed of those guys - lobbied hard for 70 years to delay it.) Disney has always combed through the world's folk tales, making their own films from them and then behaved as if it's originally theirs until the end of time.

We must remember that immaterial rights *are not property*. Creative, non-physical work essentially belong to all of mankind. We need the plays by Shakespeare, the math of Newton, the music by Beethoven, the calculations by Einstein - and it needs to be free so it's available to learn from and build upon. Just as the US constitution says in order to authorise Congress to pass laws in the field: "*to promote the progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited time for Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.*" (Italics mine.)

To encourage people to be creative lawmakers issue time-limited concessions, also limited in other ways: fair use rights to quote, use in scientific fields, in public debate, usually copying for private use. Etc. To let AIs train on work laying around is definitely fair use.

Immaterial things are thoughts. Nobody owns thoughts.

Picture Bloch

Intermission has earlier presented prank photographs with Robert Bloch done together with his friend Harold Grauer in Milwaukee. Here is more with the incomparable Bloch, from the gallery page <https://www.robertbloch.net/gallery2.html>



Milwaukee Fictioneers, a Wisconsin pro writers' group founded 1931. Met twice a month on Thursdays, with e.g Bloch, Fred Brown. Many wrote sf and fantasy, others mundane fiction and nonfiction. No dues, no minutes, no elected officers. They explored writing techniques and brainstormed.



Bloch and "Ego" Clarke. Below: Bloch panelist on TV show "It's a Draw", 1954.

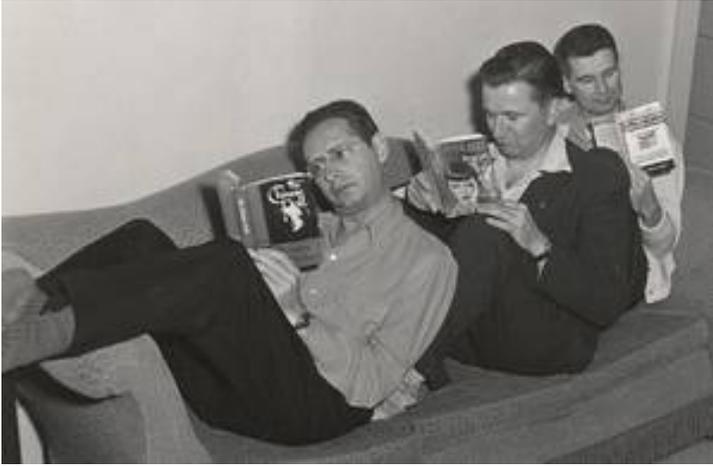




Henry Kuttner, CL Moore & R Bloch.



Office of Weird Tales: Bill Sprenger (business manager), Farnworth Wright (editor), Henry Kuttner, Bloch.



Bloch, Dean A Grennell & Bob Tucker.



Friz Lang & Bloch at the Ackermansion.

HISTORY CORNER

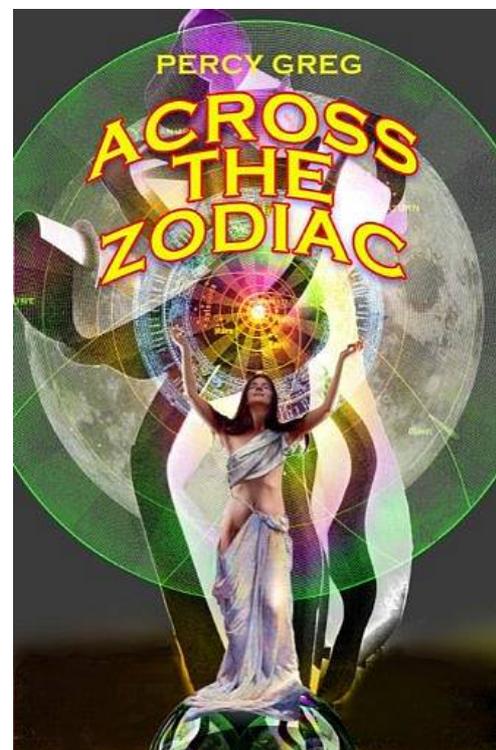
Fandom is essentially about language and words. We regular sf fans, being the true core of fandom, read our skiffy books and magazines, some of us writes fanzines, we correspond, etc. Today all this is electronic. But a fascinating fact is that many who built cyberspace and the 'Net were sf addicts! It may have to do with that technology and skiffy go hand in hand.

Letters form words that made the stories and readers' letters that built sf and fandom. Movies, games, comics and other peripheral things only came much later and is of secondary interest. This History Corner will dwell a little into language and words.

Turning to my computer I of course found a lot on the topic. I'll just present some random hopefully interesting snippets. As a writer (journalism, fiction, not to forget *fanzines*) I'm of course interested in words and language related things. Languages is a big thing in Europe, Europe has over 50 different languages! It is as every US state had its own language. Many Europeans master 2-3 languages (their native + English + often 1 more)*

There's a lot about languages in science fiction. We need our spacemen being able to communicate with aliens or decode SETI signals. In some sf works language is central for the story. We have Ursula Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest*, there's 1984 where the Ministry of Truth is busy making War being Peace, look how they speak on Barsoom (Mars) in Edgar Rice Burrough's *John Carter* books, and in Poul Anderson's *Tau Zero* Swedish is actually leading world language. (The plot is that to get rid of the nuclear threat, all such weapons are given to Sweden... And Swedish is suddenly the international language. BTW, given today's world situation, giving all nukes to us mightn't be such a bad idea!)

* I'm unsure how to count my languages... As a Swede I understand Danish and Norwegian without too much trouble. I don't really speak it, but should I emigrate there I'd probably speak decent Danish or Norwegian within a year. To this I have English and also had several years of German in school, resulting in I can read a German newspaper and understand most (but German grammar is a headache, I don't really speak it).



Some speculate that the de facto "international" language English will change a lot in a few hundred years. But I'm not sure. The more a language is used, the more need to keep it standardised so users will understand each other. More users mean slower change. Some languages resist change for other reasons Latin has been nurtured by the Catholic church, needed in masses. Icelandic has deliberately been kept change-resistant. If new words are needed they are constructed on old roots. Computer is *tölva*, meaning approx "number prophet". It is said Icelanders want to be able to read the 1000-years old Norse sagas.

One of the earliest sf books of language interest is *Across the Zodiac: The Story of a Wrecked Record* by Percy Greg, from 1880. SF Encyclopedia credits it as "originator of the sword and planet subgenre of science fiction" and "the first science fiction novel set primarily on Mars" as well as "the first documented use of the term "astronaut", here the name of a spacecraft...His space ship design also featured a small garden, an early prediction of hydroponics" SFE continues: "The book contains what was probably the first alien language in any work of fiction." You find it here:

A modern edition of *Across the Zodiac*

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10165> One wonders if ER Burroughs had read Percy Greg? He also invented a Martian language. More on his Barsoomian: <https://library.conlang.org/blog/?tag=barsoom>

Bob Clampett and ERB's son John Coleman made a short animation of John Carter on Mars around 1936. More on that: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTAlqZlqwnQ> Here's Disney's take on Barsoom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUzRaPZJJe8>

Speculating about the Martian language was natural as it's the planet closest to us and there seemed to be hope for a bearable environment. The leading 1960s Swedish fan Ingvar Svensson also invented his own Martian language, published in his "Seria Marziana", a series of pamphlets including *Gramatika, Marziana Shorana, Lista Vocabula, Inovela Marziana*. (Unfortunately I don't have access to those, so I have no more comments than that Mr Svensson was known for a dry, academic humor.)

In the stories there are several methods the sf authors use to overcome language barriers:

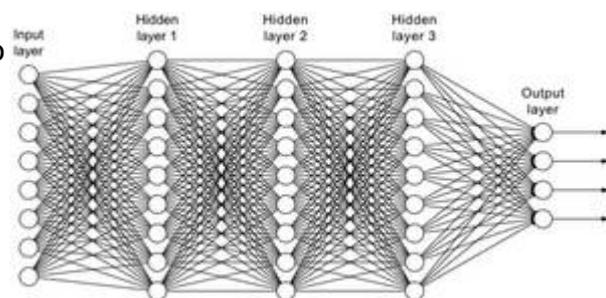
- 1) Everyone magically speaks English.
- 2) Everyone speaks a future very logical and new language, like a future Esperanto.
- 3) There are fantastic new methods for the story actors to learn new languages fast (hypnosis, brain uploading, drugs, etc).
- 4) They use telepathy.
- 5) There are translation machines, like in Star Trek. I'd also call Doug Adams' Babel Fish, that you put in your ear, a sort of (biological) translation machine.

AI has put a focus on language. AIs are after all based on Large Language Models. Those are built like neural networks emulating our own brains. A neural net takes information in an input layer, supposed to be able predict a certain result which is shown in an output layer. The input info is tweaked a little, going through neural nodes, and the result is compared to the output info. The nodes where output is closest to the desired are kept, the other nodes are tweaked further many times until required result is reached. This is how AIs train in principle, but a bit simplified. It's a language thing, but it works with pictures too. I suppose nodes will be connected to pixel matrixes. Input 10 000 pictures of cats and given enough training an AI will recognise all cats.

But ponder how much AI will influence law and crime! Take the assassination of Sweden's PM Olof



An animated feature film of John Carter on Mars was planned in the 1930s



Schematics of a neural net, the basis for AI.

Palme in 1986, an investigation Swedish police bungled badly. They first found the drunk Christer Pettersson, got a questionable conviction but an acquittal in a higher court. Then a new prosecutor just the other year found the already deceased Stig Engström whose office was nearby, slightly anti-Palme and appeared as a suspicious witness. He did it! Sure. Now they have recently found one Christer A who lived nearby, hated Palme and had a gun of the sought after type - a gun never tested! A police patrol once rang his bell, but as he wasn't home they forgot him. More on this (in Swedish, btw an AI can maybe translate it): <https://www.sverigesradio.se/artikel/6959334> This third suspect was never really investigated, despite the Palme case is one of the world's biggest consisting of 115 million pages... What if we *let an AI go through it all*?

The evolution of AI has made it clear that good translation machines - maybe even something you put in your ear! - is just around the corner. Google Translate (and similar services) are steadily becoming better, and that also goes for how machines can understand human speech. Something you put in or near your ear, like a hearing aid, could arrive any year now! Being a human translator is an occupation on the way out. (Over here machines have already begun to replace expensive human translators among publishers, which is sad for the many fans who get income from it).

There are several theories of how human language appeared. Together they sound like a kindergarten sing-along: *Bow-wow Pooh-pooh Ding-dong Yo-he-ho Ta-ta La-la*. But it's serious!

The *Bow-wow theory*, thinks that the first words were imitations of the cries of beasts and birds and other natural sounds. Think of "splash" that sounds a bit like something splashing in water.

The *Pooh-pooh theory* thinks the words came from emotional interjections and exclamations triggered by pain, pleasure, surprise, etc. Think of "Ouch" which would be something you utter in pain.

The *Ding-dong theory* states that all things have a vibrating natural resonance, echoed somehow by humans in their earliest words. (I must admit this sounds is too obscure for me.)

The *Yo-he-ho theory* claims that language emerged from collective rhythmic labor, the attempt to synchronize muscular efforts resulting in sounds such as heave alternating with sounds such as ho. Think of people working in the fields or pulling a rope.

In the *Ta-ta theory*, humans made the earliest words by tongue movements that mimicked manual gestures, rendering them audible. (I find this hard to believe.)

The *La-La Theory* suggests that language may have developed from sounds associated with love, play, and (especially) song. Well...

Some, like Noam Chomsky, believe language is built into us. Chomsky hypothesizes that language was created as the result of a single mutation in the human brain that occurred randomly. He says the mutation resulted in the capacity for complex thought, which led to language development in a small group of Homo sapiens. From there, evolution took over creating a basic universal grammar.

Anyway, language is central for us. It influences how we see the world or at least our opinions about it. Some claim the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis - named after the two linguists behind it - is pure bogus. The Hypothesis says that the way language is formed influences the way we think. I see it as rather *likely*. We can argue about how strong the influence is, but it's there. Why else George Orwell's Ministry of Truth? Why is Putin's war against Ukraine only a "Special Military Operation"? Why have forestry corporations renamed what we in Sweden call "kalhyggen" (approx "clear-cuttings") as "förnygringsytor" ("Renewal areas")! It's obvious that Sapir-Whorfian newspeak plays a role.

We especially see it in woke ideology. In Sweden people who deny there are two genders anchored in the chromosomes push for a "gender neutral" pronoun, "hen", ignoring that Swedish already has one ("den"). In English there are already scores of more or less silly suggestions for this.*



Studying an unknown language to decipher (from H Beam Piper's "Omnilingual")

*Some suggestions: tey/tem/ter, ey/em/eir, e/em/eir, hon/thon/thons, fae/faer/faers, vae/vaer/vaers, ae/aer/aers, ne/nym/nis, ne/nem/nir, xe/xem/xyr/xemself, xe/xim/xis, xie/xem/xyr, zie/zir/zirs, zhe/zhir/zhirs,

Other woke words... If someone doesn't agree and comes with critique you are a victim of "microaggression". To stop dissent emerging we must apply "trigger warnings". If someone says something on a topic without coming from that background it's evil "cultural appropriation". If you adhere to the pseudo-science that there aren't just two genders, you are "non-binary". (Interestingly enough, it implies you are a computer idiot since the digital world is firmly binary!) And so on.

I get a feeling that those denying any Sapir-Whorf effects do it to be able to continue to twist words and corrupt meanings hoping not being accused of newspeak.

Benjamin Lee Whorf actually wrote an sf novel, according to Wikipedia, titled *Ruler of the Universe*. I have failed to find it online, perhaps because it was unpublished. If anyone has access to it, let me know. Wikipedia says it "narrated the destruction of Earth by a horrific chain reaction caused by the military's research on atomic fission." (this connects to last issue about the Swedish A-bomb.)

Here's a paper that supports Sapir-Whorf from an sf perspective, "*A Language-Shaped Reality: Science Fiction Linguistics in Literature*": <https://crea.ujaen.es/server/api/core/bitstreams/3b520376-b3d8-46f2-8581-bd7e78f3dae3/content>

There are many sf novels and stories connected to linguistics. Works by AE Van Vogt, Jack Vance (*The Languages of Pao*), Sam Delany (*Babel-17*), Robert Heinlein ("*Gulf*"), Ian Watson (*The Embedding*), and so on. A favourite sf/language story of mine is H Beam Piper's "*Omnilingual*",

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19445>. We also have "*Uncommon Sense*" by Hal Clement retrospectively awarded the 1946 Retro Hugo for Best Short Story.

<https://www.prosperosisle.org/spip.php?article864#below> Here beings on an airless world communicate by picking up molecules - "smell" - at distance as molecules can travel far in a straight line in vacuum.

We need to take language into account when covering how to communicate with aliens. The idea that the whole universe speaks English is slightly farfetched, I'm afraid. Authors like JRR Tolkien was a total language nerd and put a lot of energy into constructing several languages. In Star Trek the Klingon originally were given random sounds that sounded aggressive as "language". Then someone got the idea to go through it and from those sounds construct a vocabulary and grammar.

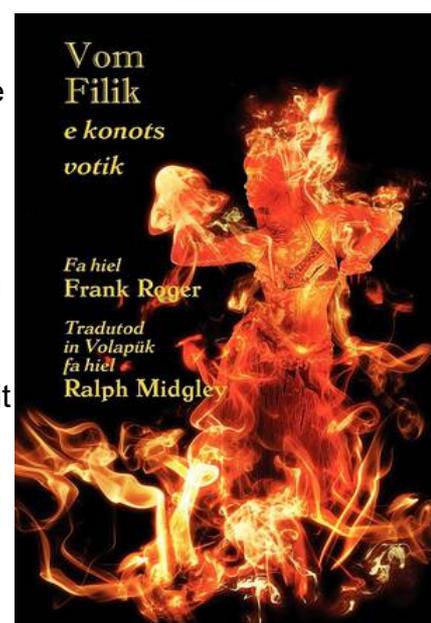
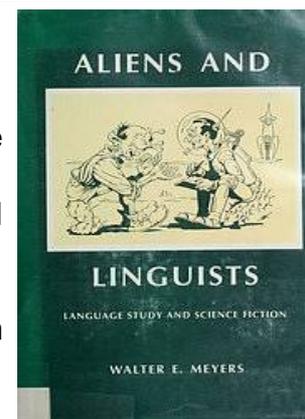
When fishing in the binary ocean to catch more about skiffy and language you catch a lot. Your trusted old *Intermission* can only throw out one fishing line at a time. But here's more dangling on it:

Walter Meyers, with *Aliens and Linguists: Language Study and Science Fiction*, has everything you can imagine on this topic, but as it's from 1980 it doesn't have the latest. <https://annas-archive.org/md5/fc98fb967112be92e551e003bfa67e6f>

Peter Stockwell's *The Poetics of Science Fiction* is more theoretical, according to a description it "ranges from a detailed investigation of new words and metaphors, to the exploration of new worlds, from pulp science fiction to the genre's literary masterpieces, its special effects and poetic expressions. There are speculations, extrapolations, thought-experiments and discussion points". <https://annas-archive.org/md5/83b0daf3c2902e4a038cc688029fadcb> Leafing through it my eyes briefly land on a discussion of literature about (and set in) the future should be written in future tense! "*The last man on Earth will sit alone in a room. There will be a knock on the door...*"

Why have nobody thought of that before? Asking the 'Net here's examples of books using future tense (though I haven't read them):

Station Eleven by Emily St John Mandel, follows a small group of survivors after a future plague
Service Model by Adrian Tchaikovsky, the dying humanity depends on artificial labour, One robot gets a nasty idea.



Volapük skiffy? "What if time were to grind slowly to a standstill?" Volapükian description: "Kis jenonöv-li if tim stoponöv pianiko jü tak lölöfik? Kis ojenon-li if drims no binons bai spets olik. Fütür obik binon-li ya po obs? Bäts yofamaplada binons-li bai lesags onas."

ze/hir/hirs, sie/sier/siers, zed/zed/zeds, zed/zed/zeir, ce/cir/cirs, co/cos/cos, ve/vis/vir, jee/jem/jeir, lee/lim/lis, kye/kyr/kyne, per/per/pers, hu/hum/hus, bun/bun/buns...and there is more of this idiocy!

This Is How You Lose the Time War by Amal El-Mohtar, two rival agents try to find the best outcome for their side on a dying world.

The Ministry of Time by Kaliane Bradley, a time travel romance, a spy thriller, and a comedy.

Children of God by Msry Doria Russell, journey to a distant planet and into the center of the human soul.

Deep Sky by Yume Kitasei, thriller about a mission into deep space that begins with a lethal explosion.

Just One Damned Thing After Another by Jodi Taylor, borderline looney historians investigate events with time travel.

That's from the Goodreads site, which has more suggestions. Haven't checked if they really use *futurum* but they are supposed to. Anyway, here's a list of "Science Fiction using Languages or Linguistics as a Plot Device"

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/22451.Science_Fiction_using_Languages_or_Linguistics_as_a_Plot_Device and the ten first are:

Stories of Your Life by Ted Chiang

Embassytown by China Miéville

1984 by George Orwell

The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell

Babel-17 by Samuel R. Delany

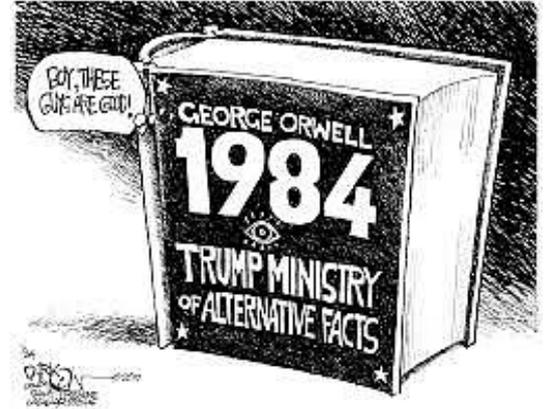
The Dispossessed by Ursula K. Le Guin

Native Tongue by Suzette Haden Elgin

Foreigner by CJ Cherryh

Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson

Lexicon by Max Barry



And an alphabetical list of linguistic based sf:

https://www.reddit.com/r/printSF/comments/1166rax/a_relatively_definitive_list_of_linguistsbased/

And *SF Studies* on constructed languages in sf: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25475175>

Esperanto used to be popular in sf fandom. Forry Ackerman was an Esp-fan and Harry Harrison spoke Esperanto like a native (and our local fan Gunnar Gällmo translated some sf work to Esperanto). Constructed, artificial languages have a long history. In the late 17th Century and on, fascinated by the new discipline "linguistics", famous scientists were busy trying to create a "universal language", like Carl Linnaeus father of taxonomy. He "translated" the beginning of the Bible into "*Spavilafk ikav Sve.*" (More on all this in *Intermission* #145).

Before Esperanto we had Volapük, created in the 1870s by one Johann Martin Schleyer.

<https://ai.glossika.com/blog/volapuk-the-would-be-language-of-the-world>

We read at <https://www.evertype.com/volapuk.html>

Volapük is a constructed language, devised in 1879 by Johann Martin Schleyer, a Roman Catholic priest who was inspired in a dream to create an international language. Schleyer adapted the vocabulary of Volapük mostly from English, supplemented by German, French, and Latin. The grammar of Volapük is regular and relatively simple-surprisingly easier, in fact, than it looks at first. Volapük was the first proposed International Auxiliary Language to enjoy widespread popularity: it is estimated that in 1889, there were some 283 clubs, 25 periodicals in or about Volapük, and 316 textbooks in 25 languages, and that somewhere between two hundred thousand and a million people had taken up study of the language. Esperanto, being similar to many European Romance languages, first appeared in 1887

What if Volapük took over international diplomacy? After all, present diplomacy has failed so much that it can't hurt to try a made-up language whose mere name sounds ridiculous... There's even an English to Volapük translator online. <https://rephrasely.com/translate/translate-english-to-volapuk> And if you aren't satisfied with Volapük, why not create your own artificial language. Insert a few words or parameters and use this language generator: <https://www.vulgarlang.com/>

And while you're at it, here's an idiom generator: <https://www.fantasynamgenerators.com/idiom-generator.php> giving you new expressions and proverbs, like "Trying to smell with your eyes", "Trying To Jump To The Moon" or "Like Learning From An Echo".

This fantastic fanzine has in earlier issues talked about Robert Heinlein's Speedtalk, where 850 words of "Basic English" are expressed as single syllables, so that one word could represent a whole sentence. The word list for Basic English

https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Basic_English_word_list It's claimed it can express any ideas, though you may sometimes have to construct compound words.

Here's 625 words claimed to be "the most valuable to learn" if you study a foreign language:

<https://www.boredpanda.com/625-words-to-know-language-learning-hack/>

The English language is an interesting creature, in the way that its origin and structure is Germanic, but after the Norman invasion in 1066 lots of French words sneaked in. One who commented upon this was Poul Anderson who in the essay "Uncleftish Beholding" described atomic theory using only words of Germanic origin, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncleftish_Beholding The essay is here <https://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/1100/docs/uncleftish-beholding.html> but it has been reprinted a lot so I won't join that club. But let me make my own attempt to use Germanic roots only, for say Isaac Asimov's genre definition: "*Science fiction can be defined as that branch of literature which deals with the reaction of human beings to changes in science and technology*"

Knowship sagas sets out as that limb of writings that handles the answer of man to shifts in knowship and toolskill.

"Science fiction" in Germanic roots becomes "Knowship sagas". I had help by ChatGPT constructing this. "Science" was difficult to Germanise, but Swedish gives a clue as we say "vetenskap" (similar to German's "wissenschaft"). "Veten-" is from "veta", to know, and the ending "-skap" has the same role as *-ship* in English. So science becomes "knowship". That "fiction" becomes sagas needs no explanation, I think. "Technology" was also difficult, but somehow it's about being nifty with machines or tools. So toolskills *seems* about right. I didn't think it was necessary to "Germanise" some smaller words.

More interesting language tidbits: https://www.projectrho.com/public_html/rocket/futurelang.php e.g. a list of languages used in skiffy:

Basic (or *Anglic*): Andre Norton's space operas

Esperanto: Harry Harrison's novels. This is a real-world attempt at a lingua franca. Harrison is always promoting Esperanto in his novels.

Federation Standard: Star Trek

Galach: Frank Herbert's Dune novels

Galactic Basic: Star Wars

Galactic Standard: Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy

Galacto: Edmond Hamilton's Starwolf Trilogy

Galanglic: The Traveller role playing game

Galactese: Frank Herbert's The Godmakers

Galbasic: Andre Norton's Cat's Eye

Galingua: Brian Aldiss' Galaxies Like Grains Of Sand

Galling (galactic lingua franca): Janet Kagan's Hellspark. Uses phonemes common to all human languages for ease of use by humans.

Imperial Universum: James Schmitz's The Witches of Karres

Intergalact: Harry Harrison's No War, Or Battle's Sound

Interlac: Babylon 5

Interlingua: David Gerrold's Space Skimmer

League Latin: Poul Anderson's Polesotechnic League novels. Official trade language, because communication makes it easier to sell things to aliens.

Lingua Terra: Robert Heinlein's Tunnel In The Sky, H Beam Piper's Space Viking

Lingua Spatia: John Brunner's Born Under Mars.

Symbospeech: Alan Dean Foster's Humanx Commonwealth. Originally designed for Human and insectoid Tranx but it turned out other aliens could handle it so it became de facto lingua franca.

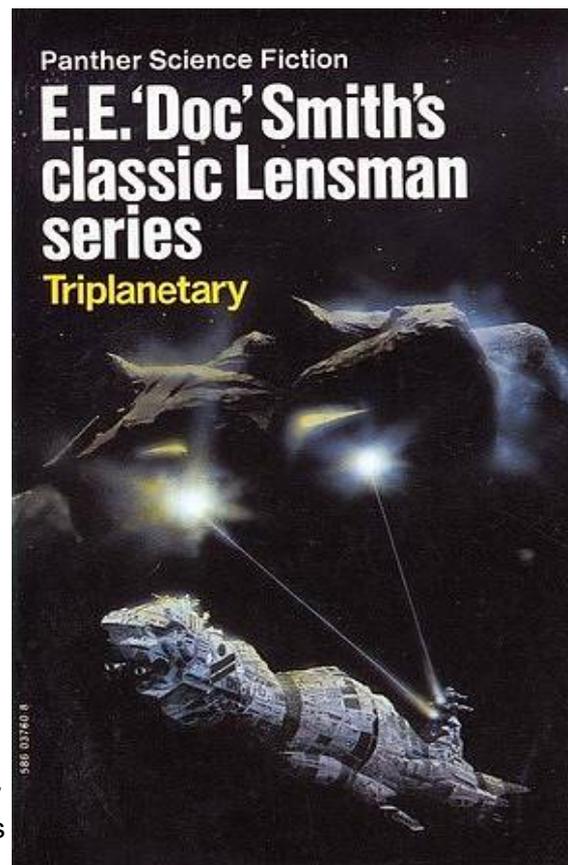
Tongue: Alastair Reynold's House of Suns

Trade: Liaden novels (used for trade)

Triplanetary: E. E. "Doc" Smith's Triplanetary

Another snippet:

When getting down to basics, remember that the word Lord comes from the Old English word hlaforð, which was derived from the Old English hlafeard. The word hlaf means "bread" or "loaf" and weard means "keeper" or "guardian", so Lord means "One who guards the loaves" or "Keeper of the food".



Even "Doc" Smith invented a language. (I have always loved the spaceships drawn by Chris Foss, like on this cover.)

Does anyone understand what the heck "general semantics" and "non-Aristotelian" is, invented by some dude named Alfred Korzybski? I don't get it, though AE Van Vogt did and wrote a whole series of incomprehensible books about it. I understand it is seen as a precursor to scientology, so I don't have much hope that "general semantics" will make sense. This classic probably makes, about how to reform English spelling step by step:

For example, in Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replased either by "k" or "s", and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only kase in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later. Year 2 might reform "w" spelling, so that "which" and "one" would take the same konsonant, wile Year 3 might well abolish "y" replasing it with "i" and lear 4 might fiks the "g/j" anomali wonse and for all.

Jenerally, then, the improvement would kontinue iear bai iear with lear 5 doing awai with useless double konsonants, and lears 6-12 or so modifaing vowlz and the rimeining voist and unvoist konsonants. Bai lear 15 or sou, it wud fainali bi posibl tu meik ius ov thi ridandant letez "c", "y" and "x" — bai now jast a memori in the maindz ov ould doderez — tu riplais "ch", "sh", and "th" rispektivli.

Fainali, xen, aafte sam 20 iers ov orxogrefkl riform, wi wud hev a lojkl, kohirnt speling in ius xrewawt xe Ingliy-spiking world.

Another snippet is that "flash mob" may also come from skiffy. A Flash mob happens when people seemingly out of nowhere suddenly appear on a public spot, do a song or dance number and then disappear. It may come from Larry Niven's 1973 novella "Flash Crowd". In in it are telephone booth-like devices that can teleport you anywhere instantly. When a small riot starts one day people immediately teleport to the scene. "Flash mob" is constructed reminiscent of "flash flood".

We haven't touched upon fanspeak yet. I find it both innovative and fun. Swedish fandom, with



Demonstration in Stockholm against Russia's colonial war. Contrary to propaganda from Putin mouthpieces, like Trump, Ruzzia is losing. Snail-pace advances to million-size casualties, while Russia is on the brink of collapse: super-interest rates, high inflation, banks insolvent, 1/3 of companies a breath from bankrupcy, oil price dropping. Recruitment plunges, most armour destroyed, ukrainian drones (4 million coming this year!) dominate, vanishing morale, Daily hundreds of ukrainian drones destroy factories and refineries, while Ruzzia in desperation targets homes, kindergartens, shopping malls, hospitals, churches. Slava Ukraini!

international contacts from the 1950s and onward, soon took over much of thre English-based

fanslang. We certainly said BNF, LoC, Gafia, trufan and so on, but on top of it we invented our local words (#145 had a long list) some of it on the spur of the moment. Some sources were the 1950s generation with Appeltofft and Lindbohm, the 1960s with the Fannish War, WDVf and Skandifandom, and I was myself involved in the 1970s when the SFSF clubhouse was the hotspot, but eg Salafandom was also a fan-linguistic contributor, finally in the 1980s Gotheburg-fandom chipped in.

But then, from the 1990s and on, fanslang production seemed to slow down or stop. The traditional fen aged and slowed down, there were fewer fanzines (linguistic fannishness grows better through the mimeo!) and there were more games, movies etc, but mediafans aren't of the right stuff.

But your *Intermission* editor would be happy to hear if you have examples of lesser known, fun and expressive fanspeak!



The Limhamn Bomb inspired by the Swedish atomic Bomb.

Mailing Comments

Soon MCs to EAPA and then N'APA, but first a reader's message, from Tore Greve in Limhamn near Malmö, who writes about a cake and the Swedish Atomic Bomb project (see last issue):

The Limhamn Bomb /Ed:a famous cake/ has a prehistory from the city of Karlskrona. She who started Limhamn's confectionery Kakboden ("The Cake Shed") had the shop in Karlskrona earlier. Sweden built its first and only Atomic Bomb in the 1960s, right during the fierce arms race. To celebrate this a contest to bake a Bomb Cake was announced among the confectioneries of Karlskrona, and she won. But Sweden signed the non-proliferation treaty and soon decommissioned her atomic bomb and forgot about it without even a test. Kakboden moved to Limhamn and her Atomic Bombs were renamed Limhamn Bombs.

They taste heavenly.

Ed: You sound like Sweden had an A-bomb... I speculate that since this originated in the important military base town of Karlskrona, maybe they had special rumours floating around about this!

Henry Grynsten: You are absolutely correct in emphasizing the important of drawing for both the development of civilisation and for everyday life. I don't find much, or anything, to disagree with about this interesting piece! And myself, I've always been one who draws. (Not as much now as when I was younger, but still.) Over to the long section where you comment my comments to your previous comments that were comments to earlier comments by me... ☆☆ *published published* That was a typo. I warn against typos in every colophon. ☆☆ You still don't explain how an identical, exact copy is "more" than a copy. 1. Your idea of a "copy" is that it's inferior. 2. I note that in this case we have two entities that are *identical*. 3. This means it is *more* than just something inferior. ☆☆ *So if we program the DNA that some of our children should become servants or prostitutes, that would be OK?* This is mixing two ethical questions, that don't necessarily have with each other to do, and throwing in emotional phrasing to short-circuit rational reasoning. Q1. Is it unethical to accept that servants exist? (And this includes "prostitution", itself a service - here thrown in to confuse us through emotional connotations. Using a word with a heavy, questionable load intends to throw the ability to reason off track.) Q2. Is it unethical to tinker with DNA? A1: It can't be unethical to accept servants! How could it? We are dependent on having and being servants and exchange services. We are *all* to one degree or another "servants". Being of service is natural behaviour for homo sapiens. A2: Tinkering with DNA is more complicated. If we were certain that such tinkering always had "good" aims, and we could agree what "good" is, the answer would be easy. But we can't. Tinkering with DNA could be both good and bad. We should think it through, make rules for it (and have systems to uphold them) and tread with care - and this way DNA-tinkering shouldn't be unethical. After all it has huge positive potentials, eg avoiding genetical disease, making medicines, improving abilities... ☆☆ *So you would just stand by and coolly watch someone pulling out someone else's nails one by one, and burning her body, because she said she liked it?* We coolly watch as people punch each other on the nose, with consent. It's the sport boxing, and there are several other sports where people hit and punch each other. If there is consent, and the consent is real and well-founded, it would be at least questionable to intervene. ☆☆ *First you said "one or a very few", then your quote says "a single female or caste". A caste isn't "very few". A "caste" a selection with a high level of similarites. So it's still very few in the sense very few variations!* ☆☆ *He was one of the most important biologists of the 20th century who received 150 awards.* I remember going through this with you before and I'd rather not be repeating myself, but briefly: I know some have a good eye for this E O Wilson. I don't. He was a fanatic who guessed and fumbled his way to his infamous "Wilson's rule of thumb" (leading to the irrelevant and mathematically impossible* claim of the "sixth mass extinction"). He was hardly out of his diapers when he began wasting all his time on flowers, insects etc. He basically *never* did anything else, taking the onesided, narrow path that breeds fanatics. Unfortunately, the mental climate today - the Zeitgeist - is such that if you hug trees and kiss frogs you can do nothing wrong and get all the awards. Re: "extinctions", we don't know how many species there is on Earth. Guesses go between 5 and 50 million. So we can't know anything about a "rate of extinction". If you don't know the starting figure, the rate of any change is unknown. In fact, without figures - as the situation is - you don't even know if there really *is* a change! Straight math. Taking about "mass extinction" today sounds faklse, not primarily because there were more extinctions in pre-modern time, like all large North American



A vampire dog from the stars, according to Lars LON Olsson.

mammals, the Dodo, all cats let lose by sailors. Species come and go all the time, but what we care about is only mammals and birds - and those are much *better* protected now than even 100 years ago. The "extinction" talk is mostly about insects of which we have maybe tens of million species, and insects are irrelevant. Earth environment is fine and getting even better as we get richer and can afford it. ☆☆ *education is inversely correlated to childbearing* To a degree. We've only had reliable contraception since the 1960s. So the period to establish such a correlation is rather short. And the heavy data is from developing countries, where we go from women having *no* education at all and 7-8 children, to most girls attending school and having maybe 2-3 children as grown ups. Correlation here is low-hanging fruits. But what will the long-time trends be? It may be too early to say. It depends on many factors, including but not limited to government policies and the general attitudes to personal freedom and families. It's entirely possible childbearing could increase in popularity (consider the tabloids headlines about "baby happiness" every time a pop star or "influencer" gets knocked up!). Education isn't an obstacle here. In fact, higher education usually gives higher income which is *more* compatible with childbearing. ☆☆ *You think that individualism is good and collectivism is bad. I still think that is an oversimplification. There is and needs to be a mix of both, either extreme is not good.* There shouldn't be an *equal* mix, a 50/50. I agree that some collectivism is necessary, but as positions and interests of the individual and collective often clash, in those cases the individual must prevail (unless there are exceptionally strong reasons against). The individual comes first. ☆☆ *Bureaucracy is there to lubricate the wheels of society...essential for civilized life.* Only to a degree. Bureaucracy has a tendency to always grow, becoming complacent, becoming its own means to an end. Have you heard of Parkinson's Law? One Northcote Parkinson wrote several books about the excessive growth of bureaucracy. One way to phrase his law is that bureaucracy "expands to fill all time available and any resources". See eg <https://sas2.elte.hu/tg/ptorv/Parkinsons-Law.pdf> ☆☆ *Sweden is more equal than the US. Which has the more social mobility? Sweden.* No, Sweden has less social mobility as you have less control of your life. That you control your lifemakes it possible for you to have mobility. Collectivism freezes mobility. (Last fall we had a long debate involving e g this. I don't feel like going through the whole thing again.) ☆☆ *Sweden is also in 8th place in number of billionaires per million people, higher than US.* No. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_billionaires The US has 3028 billionaires for 346 million in population, ca 9 billionaires per million. Sweden has 45 billionaires for 10.5 million in population, ca 4.3 billionaires per million. ☆☆ *Where did he get his technical and other resources?* From anywhere. You can acquire tools, resources and whatever and still be a hermit. ☆☆ *Alcohol causes way more damage to individuals and society than all other drugs combined* No, this is probably untrue. Narcotics fucks up body chemistry magnitudes more, causes gang violence and fills the prisons. Don't listen to teetotalers like IOGT-NTO who always argue among these lines. Narcotics do things like, even on low dose, causing hallucinations, block rational thinking, causing involuntary body movement and strong addiction after even a short use. Alcohol basically first relaxes you and then slowly numb your brain and makes you sleepy. And it takes years, even decades for addiction. But at the same time it's a social lubricant that benefits us (it probably has a positive effect on natality too!), it's an effective self-medication for anyone with a bad day and it works as a pressure valve when things go awry. We've probably had alcohol in humanity's life for 100 000 years, originally from fermented fruit or fruit juices spontaneously fermenting. I find "The earliest archaeological evidence of fermentation consists of 13,000-year-old residues of a beer with the consistency of gruel, used by the semi-nomadic Natufians for ritual feasting, at the Raqefet Cave in the Carmel Mountains near Haifa in Israel". We will *not* "evolve" away from it. And we don't want to: it's who we are, we want the relaxation, social lubricant, self-medication and pressure valve effect, and if you try to take it away you get smuggling, moonshining, speakeasys, mafia gangs. Criminality causes far, far more damage. ☆☆ *Maybe you think it's health dictatorship to prevent people from harming themselves.* Yes. The point of using stimulants (but not narcotics) is to stimulate yourself, not to harm yourself. It should be your right to stimulate yourself. You must be allowed to do yourself harm if you consider the "harm" lightweight and the positive effects you seek outweighs it. (But as said, narcotics should be left out. It has much stronger effects.) ☆☆ *Why are you against people being happier?* Have you stopped beating your wife? ☆☆ *I bet people would like not to get assaulted or robbed or raped by people high on recreational substances.* The risks are lower if we're talking legal substances. The risk of such behaviour is first of all genetical, and secondly much, much higher with narcotics.

Heath Row: (I think I have commented #29 before.) ☆☆ I see communism as a greater evil. It has the tendency to murder more (Stalin: 50 million, Mao: 60 million) and be more difficult to get rid of: USSR 70 years, China 76 years and counting, North Korea 76 years and counting). ☆☆ #30 then: many claim the followers of Sherlock Holmes was, if not in name but in functions, the first fandom (but they didn't use the word "fandom" - that honour belongs to sports fans). ☆☆ I doubt you'll find my short story collections. The first was printed in ca 400 copies, the second fewer. (It's probably not far from many sf/f printruns today. There's a myriad of small publishers and their printruns are modest as more publishers will have to share the same number of readers.) ☆☆ Interesting ideas of how to

get EAPA more members. Do you listen, Garth? (I have myself tried recruiting new members, not very successfully. People don't have the feel for fanzines anymore. "Social media" kills it...) ☆☆☆ Now SPT in NAPA: My own "streaming service" is whatever I can find on the net, incl Youtube and even pirate streamers. It's more than enough.

Garth Spencer: I remember Fran Skene. She sent me fanzines a couple of times (but I don't remember if we wrote to each other). ☆☆☆ Unfortunately (for you) I have more on the Eurovision in this... It's a big thing in Europe. Putin and Eurovision have done a lot to unite Europe! I've always been for closer European cooperation (but we should fight the bureaucracy - that's the thing you could hold against the EU). ☆☆☆ Finally, please get next EAPA out in time...

William McCabe: No, there are several grounds for impeaching Trump. Not following court orders, for instance, for accepting a Jumbo Jet as bribe... I hope the Democrats win next congress election in 1.5 years and have both majority and the guts to impeach Trump - to remove him. ☆☆☆ The Vasa is complete, but Mary Rose is half eaten by woodworms so they aren't exactly the same. ☆☆☆ Interesting thought to see HPL as the first fanzine maker. But I'd like to see the publications first! I don't think anyone have saved them. ☆☆☆ Is your health improving?

Robert Jennings: Sorry to hear about your hearing. (I haven't decided if a pun was intended...) I think that today hearing aids could benefit a lot from AI, like reconstructing what people say in an disturbed sound environment. ☆☆☆ Weather seems to have become "wilder" in the last decades, but statistically hurricanes are a bit fewer. ☆☆☆ Constantly seeing five seconds into the future is a brilliant story idea! ☆☆☆ Robert Kennedy Jr looks like he shouldnt run the Health department, he should be a subject to the Health Department and in hospital. He looks and talks like he's been on a week-long drinking binge. ☆☆☆ It's overstating it that the Antikythera mechanism is a "computer". Its a limited mechanical calculator.

Jefferson Swycaffer: I can very well imagine the Ukranians holding out. They just need to do that until Putin's Russia has exhausted their resources, then Putin is done for, just like the Czar was ousted because of the losses of WWI. I commented the 2024 Worldcon CoC earlier and will turn to the 2025 ones. Those are what I have seen. ☆☆☆ Condemning Queen Mary for burning witches won't change anything in history. ☆☆☆ Actually, Zelensky didnt raise his voice against Trump. Example: Trump almost shouts "You don't have the cards" but you find it difficult to at the same time hear Zelensky's reply: "We're not playing cards." Z would have put his country in danger if he didn't stand fast! His job is to evaluate what others say, not to say "Yes Sir!" to anything. ☆☆☆ Usually our emotions aren't irrational at all. A friend in trouble, you feel sad. You win a million, you feel glad. Perfectly rational. It might feel "irrational" to be afraid of the dark, but mostly it's rational. On average, the dark poses more risks than illuminated spaces!

Mark Nelson: Did BBC have a "Ski Sunday" show? Wow! ☆☆☆ I had my piece in Australian Journal of Fandom Research #1. I'll see if I can find something else to write about...

George Phillis: Read. Found nothing to comment. Sorry.

Garth Spencer: What's wrong with having a hibachi on a balcony. (I had to look up what a hibachi is: some sort of heater for food.) ☆☆☆ *"it falls to convention committees to tell congoers that they have to wash regularly, respect other people's personal space, refrain from touching (or even photographing) people without consent, control their speech and actions even when they've been drinking"*. No. Should it turn up any problems in any of these areas common sense is enough. Inventking written "rules" is an invitation to begin harassing people. ☆☆☆ *I don't see the evidence that Codes of Conduct are unfair to impose 'politically correct' standards.* Evidence 1) Dave Trusedale was kicked out of a Worldcon for claims he breached a CoC. He spoke out against the woke, in his own panel where he had the right to lead the discussion. Similar things have happened on other cons. Evidence 2) The CoC last year in Glasgow, banned "comments that are intended to reinforce social structures of domination" (=being anti-woke is banned). However: "The Code of Conduct team will generally not act on any complaints regarding...reverse discrimination" (=being woke is encouraged). Their CoC tries to blow civil rights, like freedom of speech, to smithereens! Tatalso goes



for attempting to outlaw "misgendering". No no one has the right to force words into your mouth! It's a part of freedom of speech. Another example of Glasgow CoC abuse. It claims "This is UK law...the following are prohibited...pornography" But UK law does *not* outlaw pornography. Not that I think porn should be a topic of an sf con, but point is the lie. ☆☆ TO all this we have the Hugos that for many years are unfairly slanted towards the woke. So called minorities are heavily over-represented among nominees and winners. ☆☆ Yes, I agree teaching foreign languages should begin earlier! ☆☆ My position is reasonably anti-woke, but also anti-Trump.

Adrian Kresnak: Sorry. I found nothing to comment.

Kevin Trainor Jr: Yes, people are dying in Ukraine, notably Russian soldiers - due to their own ruthless commanders who think human waves is a good tactic - and Ukrainian civilians as the Russians target apartment houses, city squares, schools, etc. ☆☆ Will check out Monster Hunter Nation. ☆☆ If you motivate your voting for Trump by the description you for Kamela Harris, I'm afraid I disagree. I saw several campaign rallies with Harris - they are on Youtube - and I think picking Tim Walz as running mate was a very good choice. Both spoke the language of ordinary people and Harris/Walz did have concrete sensible plans, promoting small businesses, make housing more affordable and their Ukraine policies would have been lightyears better.

Samuel Lubel: You commented me saying: "the non-white, non-middle aged, non-men, who are unfairly prioritised for the sf awards, aren't the best sf writers. Reason: science and technology is and must always be taken into account when writing the stuff, but it it's an established fact the female half of humanity care less for those subjects. Their sf will therefore (*on average*) be at an disadvantage", with "*Even if the premise was true (which I don't believe).*" Believe what you want, but you are wrong, and it is true. One example out of *numerous*: In preschools, even if staff actively tries to act gender neutral or even gender reversing, boys will practically always choose toys like cars, trains and such, and the girls go for dolls, of course. "*There are many female scientists and technologists.*" Could be, but the percentage is significantly lower. To your Andre Norton, Ursula LeGuin, CJ Cherryh, Octavia Butler, Lois McMaster Bujold, James Triptree/Alice Sheldon, Anne McCaffery, Margaret Atwood, Connie Willis, Elizabeth Moon, Catherine Asaro, CS Friedman, or NK Jemisin, I'd say that the *average* of points they score in *science fiction* is lower than the average for Verne, Wells, Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, Anderson, Dick, Vance, Clement, Ellison, Haldeman, Silverberg, Niven, Gibson. I give the same number of names you did, with works so recognisable that surnames suffice, but could easily quadruple the list! For some reason (genetics is a good guess, I don't go into details here) female writers tend not even to choose writing skiffy, but go for crime fiction. I BTW took the trouble to estimate sf author gender ratio. I picked two random letters and counted the gender of the authors with those two last name initials in SF Encyclopedia. I discounted dead authors and all above 80 (inferring they weren't active any more). Male sf authors were 80% of all. ☆☆ BTW, I disagree that Frankenstein was the first sf novel. Lucian of Samosata wrote a better choice. ☆☆ "I don't think that non-white, non-middle aged, non-men are prioritized in awards." Just check the lists, it's easy! "*For evidence, I can point to the WSFA Small Press Award.../that/ uses blind judging.*" Holy Roscoe! Your "evidence" is a minor award nobody has even heard of! I hadn't at least, and BTW blind judging isn't blind for the text itself. Female writers tend to have a different approach and select different topics (more "social style" of writing, less heavy action and technology). Since the Zeitgeist is that female writers should get unfair advantages its easy to achieve that from just the texts. ☆☆ "*I disagree about Codes of Conduct. They are needed so con organizers can point to written rules rather than face disagreements over what constitutes common sense.*" The problem is that those CoCs go far beyond what's needed for that purpose. See my CoC comments elsewhere. ☆☆ Bye!

To my Swedish readers. Fantastiknovelltävlingen 2025 drar igång så smått, se <https://www.freelists.org/post/skriva/Tvingsutlysande-prel> Men bidrag till prispotten eftersöks! Stöd kreativitet, fantastiska noveller och Sveriges äldsta novelltävling med ett litet pekuniärt bidrag! Tävlingsadmin har inte Swish, men direkt bankbetalning går ju. Sätt in ett lagom belopp på konto 330 324 578 hos Handelsbanken (clearing-nr 6153, om det krävs) tillhörigt A Engholm. Och meddela ahrvid@hotmail.com om din donation! Donatorer avtackas ståtligt i tävlingsutlysanden!

Слава Україні!

Long Live the King! Vive le Roi!

May 27 King Charles III personally read the King's Speech at the opening of the Canadian parliament (in both English and French). Canada is a monarchy with Charles as the dominion's Chief of State. This speech is usually read by the Governor General. Last the sovereign opened Canada's parliament was with Elizabeth II in 1977. This year the point was to give a certain Mr Trump a little reminder, elbows up sort of...

THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL



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THERE MAY BE SOME FOLKS OUT THERE

who are wondering about the title of this fanzine. Perhaps some are thinking, swamps? In Massachusetts? Huh; what's with that? Or maybe not. But if anyone *is* thinking about that, let me assure you that there are indeed swamps in Massachusetts, and on almost any land on any of the known continents and most large islands. Even in the distant arctic regions, during the spring and summer thaw, vast areas of permafrost become semi-frost and become grunky water holding swamps breeding mosquitoes and gnats by the billions.

I presume that there may not be swamps in the land mass of Antarctica, but who knows for sure. If you ever read any of those Marvel comics in which Ka-Zar and his pet saber-tooth tiger were involved, you know that he hails from a hidden jungle area deep in the center of the otherwise frozen solid Antarctic region, and where there are jungles, there are going to be swamps.

But anyway, yes, we do have swamps here in Massachusetts, altho the politically correct term these days is "wetlands", and they are supposed to be valuable natural resources helping to sustain the environment and preserve the balance of nature. Yeah, sure. Let me tell you, that stuff is bullshit deluxe.

I've had a huge swamp right across the street from my house for many years. Then, sometime around the turn of the new century a rich guy bought up that whole parcel of land and built a big rich-guy type house on the upper (higher) part of the land, and presumably did whatever was necessary to keep his new castle high and dry. But he did leave the bottom of his lot, the part facing me and my nearby neighbors as wetland/swamp.

What kept this from being a disaster is that he also installed a whole series of those new highly effective mosquito traps, the ones that use carbon dioxide to lure the skeeters into a cylinder where they are executed by dehydration. As a result the mosquito population has declined dramatically, a situation for which everybody facing the swamp and all those living within a half mile further out are very, very grateful.

Before the rich guy came along this place was insect heaven during the summer months, with gnats, mosquitoes, and midges everywhere, along with lots of dragon flies and newts. However no amount of dragon flies and newts or even frogs could keep up with the flood of flying pests even if they did eat up to six times their weight in flying insect pests every single day. Unfortunately those wonderful new mosquito traps do not work on Satan's favorite insect, the black fly, of which we have plenty around here, and the swamp land over there is prime breeding ground for the things.

In this part of the world we routinely pray for a sudden killing frost in late April after spring has arrived, because a sudden killing frost means that most of the black flies will get caught and die. I'm sure willing to sacrifice a few hundred budding trees and sprouting ferns if it would mean killing off 90% of the black flies in

| | |
|--------|------------|
| the | process, |
| but | alas, this |
| | Spring, |
| altho | it has |
| been | very cold, |
| we | had no |
| deep | frost or |
| | sudden |
| | snowfall, |
| so the | black |
| flies | are |

everywhere, necessitating the wearing of long pants and long sleeve sweaters or shirts even on those days when the temperature rises into the high seventies.

Black flies swarm toward any mammal exhaling carbon dioxide, which is me. The other bad thing about the monsters is that black fly bites take a long time to heal up, typically a week or more, whereas the recovery time from mosquito bites is three or four days. And God forbid you should scratch those black fly bites. Then they decide to stick around another four or five days as a reminder that you should suffer gracefully. Have I mentioned that insect repellent does not deter them very well?

All we can do is preserve and pray for a hot, not dry summer, which deters black flies. It doesn't look like we will have one of those this year, but what the hell. Meanwhile, black flies, cold, drizzling rain and perennially crawling newts are a constant reminder of the inheritance I'm living with a swamp across the street.





TRAILIN' starring Tom Mix, Fox 1921 feature film

My serious hearing loss is nudging me back into exploring the vanished world of silent movies again. These days silent movies are a niche category in the entertainment spectrum. The fans who enjoy them are very enthusiastic, but most modern movie buffs have no great interest in silent movies, or in the history of the format either. The fact that only about fourteen percent of all the American silent movies ever made have survived does not help that situation.

During the late 19teens and 19twenties one of the most popular movie stars was Tom Mix, undisputed king of silent western films. He got his start playing romantic leads in two reel shorts beginning about 1909, but gravitated to western films easily and early because he was an expert horseman and a crack shot who had actually worked on ranches and knew the cowboy life style.

The fact that he did almost all his own stunts and also wrote many of his movie scripts endeared him to studio heads. His handsome smiling features made him popular with the female audience, while his action oriented story plots made him a favorite

among western movie fans, especially younger movie goers

Trailin' is one of Tom Mix's films for the Fox studios. Based on a novelette by Max Brand, it is set in contemporary times and tells the story of a young man raised in wealth and society, who isn't particularly interested in wealth or high society. In a flashback to the days when the west was really wild, we witness a gang robbing a stagecoach and kidnapping two eastern investors. Kept captive for weeks, they finally manage to gain the advantage and kill all their captors in a violent battle. The daughter of the leader is attracted to both men, but a flip of the coin after the bloody confrontation decides who will win her.

Flash forward many years later and we see Tom Mix's character polo champ Anthony Woodbury witnessing a sudden meeting and a duel with a stranger who kills his father. A mysterious locked room with an old pistol and a photograph of a western homestead lead him on a trail of discovery and vengeance.

The plot becomes standard western fare as he reaches his destination, the exact location never being stated. The westerners he meets along the way take him for a tenderfoot, but Anthony is able to take care of himself and proves to be a two fisted fighter as well as a champion horseman.

He meets a beautiful young girl who runs a restaurant, currently being courted by a crude, very jealous cowboy. Naturally Anthony shows up the lout, which makes him Anthony's instant enemy.

The owner of a huge ranch that the audience immediately recognizes as the man who shot Anthony's father wants him taken alive for unknown reasons. A gang of outlaws becomes involved. Lots of action, hard riding, fast shooting and a hectic chase soon develop as Anthony and his new lady love try to escape being killed for a possible murder he was framed for.

Needless to say, after many unexpected events all turns out well in the end.

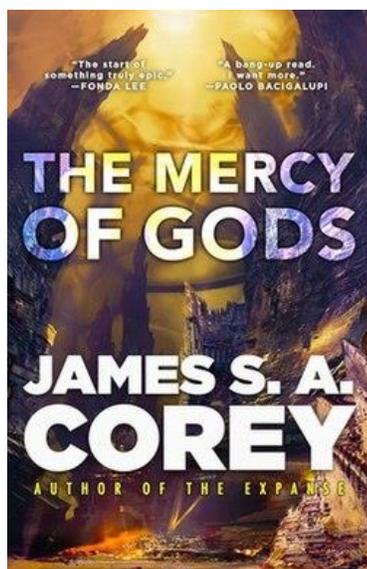
This was an enjoyable western yarn with a couple of twists along the way including a revelation at the end of the story that was overplayed, in my opinion. So far as I can tell, this film may have been the very first instance in which the villains, attacking the good guys in a cabin at the bottom of a hill, load dry hay into a wagon, set it afire, and roll the wagon down to crash into the cabin and set it afire in order to flush the heroes out. That particularly scenario became a frequently used sequence in a lot of western movies and a fair amount of movie serials in the days of talking pictures.

This was not a great Tom Mix flick, but I enjoyed the movie. The copy of the film I have is an Alpha Video DVD. The print is not terrific, but it is clear enuf, unlike the version that is posted on YouTube, which looks like a 16th generation dupe so blurry you can barely make out any of the figures let alone read the dialog cards. Alpha Video movies are regularly on sale for about five or six bucks a pop. Worth the time.



BOOKS...

I realize that I'm hopelessly out of touch with the modern world of entertainment and instant gratification, but I still read books. I actually prefer books to movies, and I hardly watch any television at all. Call me old fashioned, but that's the way I am. And being that way, here are a few short-shot reviews of a few of the books I've been reading lately. Most of these are available from your local library thru interlibrary loan---



The Mercy of Gods, James S.A. Corey

I'm late getting to the first book of this new series by the writing team of James S.A. Corey. First of what is called the Captive War Trilogy, this novel came out in mid 2024 and became a best seller within the first week after its release.

In the far future the human race has spread out across the galaxy. The planet Anjiin has humans living alongside an alien ecosystem incompatible with human life. After many centuries a biological research team has finally discovered a way to integrate the alien fauna with human compatible plant life, just in time for the planet to be invaded by the Carryx. Rather than detail the plot, let me quote directly from Wikipedia:

"Anjiin is suddenly invaded by a vastly technologically superior alien species called the Carryx and their subservient species. After killing one-eighth of the population, the Carryx abduct many of the planet's social and scientific elite, including Dafyd's group. The captives are taken aboard Carryx ships and transported to a massive world-city.

In one of its [ziggurats](#), they are assigned to a research project by their Carryx overseer, known as the librarian, who reminds them that humanity's survival depends on their usefulness to the Carryx. The

task involves making one alien organism (referred to as "berries") nutritionally compatible with another (called "not-turtles").

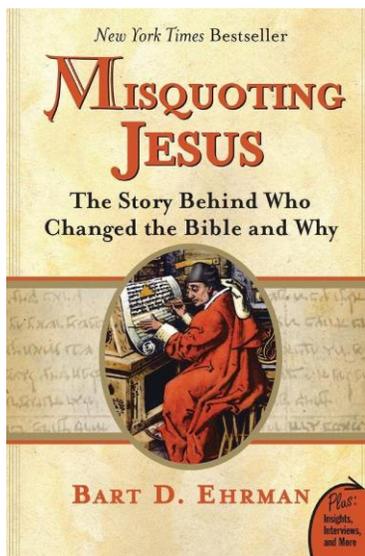
As the group struggles to adapt to captivity, they face various challenges. They must defend themselves against attacks from another captive species called Night Drinkers. Jessyn battles her [mental health issues](#) without her medication. Relationships within the group become strained, particularly between Tonner, Else, and Dafyd. Meanwhile, a resistance movement forms among the human captives, led by Urrys Ostencour, who plan to create bioweapons to use against the Carryx. Some members of Tonner's group, like Synnia, become involved."

The plot unfolds at a rapid pace, but the authors give plenty of space and wordage to fleshing out the characters involved in this adventure. Hopeless situations appear not to have any solutions, yet the human beings try against all the odds to somehow survive and find a way to deal with their captors.

One of the strong points of this story is the way the authors clearly make the Carryx an alien species. Most classic science fiction/fantasy depict alien beings with some (often many) human-like qualities so that the readers and the protagonists can adapt to the situation and come up with ways to deal with the aliens.

That is not the case here. The Carryx are not human, by any stretch of the imagination. All other creatures conquered by the Carryx are considered inferior animals and must prove themselves useful to the Carryx civilization or they will be exterminated. Individuals of conquered animal species have no personalities so far as The Carryx are concerned; they continue to live only so far as they are useful. It takes the entirety of this novel before the humans finally realize that the aliens have absolutely no compatible empathy points with the human mind set. At the end of the book readers learn that this knowledge will become useful in the upcoming volume.

Well written, with strong, interesting characters, unusual and suspenseful incidents within the over-reaching plot make this one of those books I was reluctant to put down. If you have not read this yet, you should do so immediately. One of the best novels I've read this year. Very Highly recommended.



Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible, and Why; by Bart D. Ehrman

I am not a particularly religious person, but I have a lot of curiosity about philosophy and ancient times; especially the formative period of how civilization and our beliefs got from there to here. This book is a very interesting examination of the creation of the Christian Bible and the problems that arose along the way of it becoming the core written credo of the religion.

The author notes that like Judaism from which Christianity sprang, Christianity was a written religion. The works and beliefs of the new religion needed to be written down so they could be accurately referenced when seeking new converts. Those beliefs were also studied and discussed by worshippers in their church meetings to affirm their beliefs.

As the author points out, this reliance on a written record led to some obvious difficulties. Back in those days only a very tiny percentage of the population was literate. The written texts of the religion were read to the congregations at their church meetings. Yet the early converts to the new religion wanted their credos and beliefs set down in a record. New congregations wanted written copies that could be read to their own worshippers, while church leaders wanted to reference the written material so they could explain and more fully understand Jesus and his teachings.

There were no printing presses in ancient times. The words had to be hand copied to create new manuscripts that were passed on to new congregations. That means that when copies of the books were made they were often transcribed by people with very limited knowledge of the language. The people doing that work were often laboriously copying symbols they did not fully understand, and sometimes, no matter how carefully the writings were copied, some transcription errors invariably arose.

Compounding that problem was that the almost universal written language of the day was Greek, which is a language that has a number of conflicting letter symbols, and was written continuously with no punctuation marks and no space breaks between words. In addition, altho most Greek writings start right to left, at the end

of the line, it simply turns, farm furrow style, and continues from left to right, then turns again and so on. This makes simple transcription errors even easier to commit, especially when you are dealing with people whose understanding of the writing language is likely to be limited.

Most efforts to transcribe the words were as exact and careful as possible, but accidental mistakes crept in, and sometimes there were revisions made by otherwise well meaning people. Some copyists wanted to make obtuse or difficult passages easier to understand, so a little minor editing to smooth out the words occasionally snuck in.

Then there were other problems. There were major discussions during the early days of the religion concerning who were acceptable as converts, the precise divinity or non-divinity of the Messiah, whether mere belief led to eternal salvation or belief linked to good works and behavior was necessary, or was righteousness the most important element, or how the Holy Ghost was passed and its importance to the core beliefs and on and on. Some local sects added their own views to the religion, and some of these discussions were extreme.

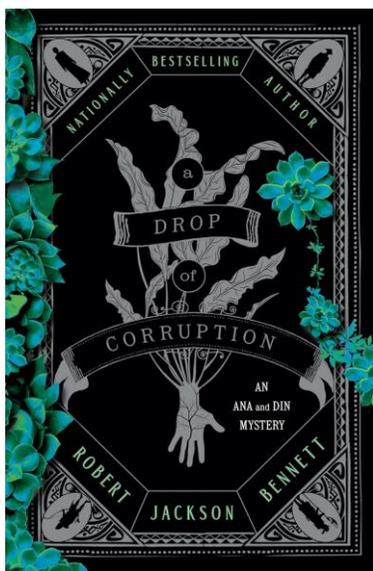
It became tempting when transcribing the words of the gospel to make a few minor changes, or even a few major ones here and there to support the belief of the group that was making the copy.

The author cites a number of passages that were clearly additional forgeries added to the Bible including the popular story of Jesus confronted with the case of the woman caught in the very act of adultery. Or the seeming conflict between the letters of Paul, where he earlier praises the work of female leaders in the Church, yet later admonishes women to be silent and to only act as supporters of the male priests and male leaders. This conflict was possible because that latter letter reversing his earlier stance was a forgery, added by someone who didn't believe women should be leaders and teachers in the religion.

Then there is the other problem when seriously flawed primary sources became the basis for medieval and modern Bible translations. The most remarkable is the fact that the popular King James version of the Bible was translated from a medieval Greek copy notorious for its errors and problems.

This book is about those problems and the efforts of scholars and archeologists to resolve the situation, to correct errors, identify edits and to trace the writings back to the earliest possible source. New Bibles have been printed with major corrections, but the author notes that this is an ongoing work as modern archeology with its diggings into the past has been able to locate even older copies of the written material along with better preserved writings.

This is a very well written, intensely interesting book that discusses the complications involved in seeking out the original writings, as well as tracing early Church history, the major schisms in early Christianity, and the efforts of many scholars to clear up the errors and understand what has happened along with their efforts to seek the original writings. Even if you are not religious, this is a book well worth reading. I recommend it very highly.



A Drop of Corruption by Robert Jackson Bennett

This book is billed as a fantasy, but the fantasy elements are thin. It is actually a science fiction novel that is also a detective story. There is no real magic, no supernatural forces, and no demi-humans or other fantastic sentient beings. All the characters are human beings, and they exist in a place far far away when an empire has united most human tribes and kingdoms because of the Empire's ability to destroy Leviathans, huge monstrous sea dwelling creatures that periodically come onto land and did enormous damage killing untold thousands of humans before the original people who formed the Empire devised ways to kill the monsters at the sea shores, and more, to make use of their dead bodies and its toxic blood to create reagents that have curative and restorative powers.

The Empire expands slowly. It does not conquer, it offers its hand in friendship and trade, but not all of the outlying regions welcome their interest, or even their trade. To quote from the publisher's hype--

In the canton of Yarrowdale, at the very edge of the Empire's reach, a Treasury officer has disappeared into thin air—vanishing from a room within a heavily guarded tower, its door and windows locked from the inside. To solve the case, the Empire calls on its most brilliant

and mercurial detective, the great Ana Dolabra. At her side, as always, is her bemused assistant Dinios Kol.

Ana soon discovers that they are investigating not a disappearance but a murder—and one of surpassing cunning, carried out by an opponent who can pass through warded doors like a ghost. Worse still, the killer may be targeting the high-security compound known as the Shroud, where the Empire harvests fallen titans for the volatile magic found in their blood. Should it fall, the Empire itself will grind to a halt, robbed of the magic that allows its wheels of power to turn.

Din has seen his superior solve impossible cases before. But as the death toll grows and their quarry predicts each of Ana's moves with uncanny foresight, he fears that she has at last met an enemy she can't defeat.

Released in April of this year, the novel immediately became a best seller, particularly among those people who read the previous volume, "The Tainted Cup". I didn't read the first volume; I got this novel on the recommendation of a friend, and I'm glad I did. This is one of those stories that is so interesting that you hate to put the book down. It's 615 pages long, but I polished it off in two days and I wish there had been more to read.

All the characters introduced are interesting, while the unfolding adventure mystery is complicated. It is definitely not a simple straight forward murder case with a small cast of suspects. There are quite a few people involved in a touchy political situation revolving around the murder, many of whom have obvious greedy interests in the problem, yet there are just as many with no economic or political interests at all, yet who are directly involved in activities that fall within the sphere of the investigation.

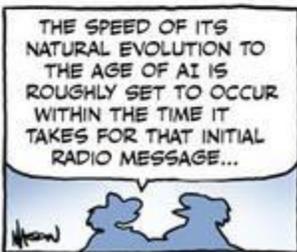
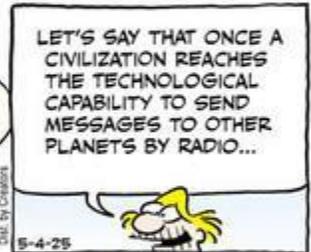
The fantasy elements involving the processing of the dead Leviathan blood and its ramifications are directly relevant to the problem, since the reagents created from the poison Leviathan blood are core to the entire adventure.

Din is a very human protagonist with personal problems and many worries. Ana, the Empire's agent and investigator is much less accessible from the reader's viewpoint, but the author makes up for that by not only revealing the oddities of her character, but demonstrating the brilliant yet logical mental jumps she must make to unravel a mystery that seems to have no solution.

Robert Jackson Bennett is a prolific author. This is his twelfth book turned out since he started writing back in 2010. His fantasy titles have been nominated for many awards, and so far he has won five. That may very well change with the publication of "A Touch of Corruption". One of the best books I've read in quite a long time, I recommend this to everyone who wants a fascinating adventure mystery set against a bizarre yet engaging fantasy world peopled with interesting, believable characters. And, I sincerely hope that Mr. Bennett will give us more stories of Ana and Din in the future.



Fred Saberhagen's Beserker stories validated...

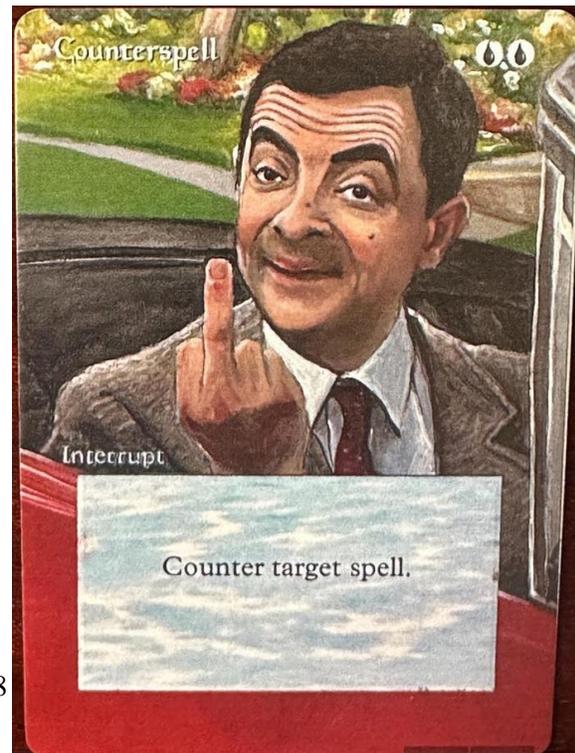


GAMING CORNER...

Word is that our illustrious club prez George Phillies has launched a new club zine devoted to the world of gaming. This will be a news/reader participation/commentary type publication somewhat similar to the recently defunct *Alarums & Excursions*. I am always happy to help out with any new club publication effort, so herewith are four brand new cards that can be used with Magic the Gathering---



8





FAQ'S ABOUT OUR

NEW PATIENT

PORTAL,HELLTHCHASE

BY EMILY SCHLEIGER

Dear Patient,

In our continual efforts to provide you with the confusing level of treatment you've come to expect, we'd like to introduce you to HellthChase, our new cumbersome and contactless check-in solution.

HellthChase invites and obligates you to engage in the unpaid data entry of your health information. Once you're set up, you can complete a variety of other activities online without having to interact with a human regarding important medical care.

What kinds of activities can I complete on HellthChase?

You can attempt such tedious tasks as:

- Ask questions or request prescription refills from doctors and staff who might read and respond within one day or never
- Regularly scan and upload your insurance card and driver's license because we're not sure we believe you that you are who you say you are
- Sign forms with a pre-selected online signature in the font of an eight-year-old child's writing
- Be gaslit into thinking you can schedule appointments online easily
- Examine some HIPAA forms you signed but never read and don't give a shit about
- Opt in by default to receive texts about balances due, with no billing or insurance detail

Are my records secure?

Yes. All personal data entered online is completely hacker-proof. Did you know that prior to web-based recordkeeping, paper records were constantly being snagged from doctors' offices by cat burglars?

Is that true?

No, but it's a narrative that HellthChase says inspires instant cooperation from technophobic patients.

Given that I can complete forms at home before my appointment, will HellthChase save me time?

Oh, god, no. HellthChase convinced us to purchase off-brand digital tablets that our receptionists will hand you at check-in. The tablets love to freeze and time out, which allows you to mindfully watch a digital hourglass (HellthChase likes to say they put the "patient" in "Patient Portal"). Once our

Wi-Fi has caught up and the screen refreshes or starts over at the beginning, you will get a chance to confirm or re-enter any information you previously completed before your appointment.

Wait, if I have to hold a tablet... didn't you say it was contactless?

Well, you don't have to touch the receptionist's hand; you just have to take the tablet. Technically, you aren't making contact with a human, which is our ultimate goal. However, holding a tablet that was held moments earlier by another ill person allows you exposure to healthy germs that will keep your immune system robust.

Will this system connect with patient portal systems my other doctors use so I can have one login?

No. As an American with healthcare, you must have unique passwords for at least twenty bespoke portals, none of which connect with one another.

Did my previous online health records migrate over?

Ha ha ha, what? No. Those were lost in a cloud fire. You can declare yourself at the beginning of a fresh start of your health, or if you were a really anxious nerd and you printed your previous records, you can try entering them on your own (but remember the character limit). Or you may give them to your provider, who will just throw them in the trash.

Two days ago, I requested a prescription refill, but I have not heard back. Should I request a refill via my pharmacy?

No. This double-dipping will create confusion and delay. Just be patient. Doctors may take twenty-four to forty-eight hours to respond, but sometimes take 1,204 hours due to regular software updates to the portal.

I received a scary test result via the portal. Can I please speak with a doctor to confirm I'm not dying?

What are you doing trying to interpret your own test results? Those are not meant for your eyes. Wait for your doctor to message you that everything is fine.

Isn't the point of the portal to access my information?

The point of the portal is that it's cool and proves we aren't afraid to stay on the cutting edge of technology, even when it's not helpful yet. There are definitely notes our doctors make and see, and you will never know about anything you don't have access to. You really shouldn't be looking at anything. Except the HIPAA forms.

I'd prefer not to be texted balances due. Can you mail me a bill instead?

No. One hundred percent of ill Americans, you included, are criminals who plan to never pay their medical balances, so for efficiency, we omit sending detailed paper bills. Instead, the portal bombards you with a series of texts with balance reminders, which is not unlike the harassment of debt collectors. Just trust that the amount we say you owe is correct. Pay immediately, or you will be texted repeated threats and insults, you lazy sack of disease-riddled bones.

Can I opt out of this bullshit?

No, you are obligated to take charge of your well-being with HellthChase. Sign in today to take an active role in getting actively frustrated by your healthcare. Your username is your social security number, and your default password is SucKeR.



Mailing Comments



INTERMISSION #153 & #154

As I have mentioned before in a previous direct LOC, plenty of people keep saying that Putin's war efforts are going horribly wrong, that he is wrecking the Russian economy, that he is on his last legs, that Russia will soon collapse, and that the Ukrainian war will soon end. It hasn't happened yet, and I very much doubt that it will happen. Putin is a sociopath who only cares about his own ideas and interests. He doesn't care if the Russian economy collapses, or if the entire country is depopulated by being fed into the Ukrainian meat grinder. All he cares about is winning, and he will go to any lengths to win.

I also believe it is a huge mistake to think that Russia is isolated in its efforts to conquer Ukraine. Putin has many staunch allies who are more than willing to sell him munitions, drones and other weapons of war. Most of the drones the Russian army is now using are made by Iran. A large portion of the long range artillery shells used by the Russian army are being supplied by North Korea. Advanced computer technology for logistic planning is being supplied by China, along with a vast array of replacement parts for worn out or damaged front line vehicles. Gold to pay for all of this is being shipped by regular planeloads from Africa, where Russia has long established economic and political alliances with many African nations and their despot leaders.

Yes, Russia is short on tanks and APCs, but India, "officially neutral", has already completed a deal to sell 2500 upgraded T-72 tanks to Putin in a trade for more Russian oil, and that will also include spare parts. Other Asian nations are also happy to step in and sell armament to Russia. Russia is also actively recruiting foreign citizens to fight in the Russian army with generous sign on bonuses and high monthly salaries that young men in many third world countries are eagerly accepting.

My point, again, is that Russia is not going to collapse, Putin is not going to be forced out of power, and now that Caligula Trump is in the White House, a major source of military equipment going to Ukraine is going to drop to a dribble, or even stop entirely. In this war of attrition Ukraine has more to lose than Russia, and Putin knows it. I hate to sound so gloomy, but we need to face reality here.

On a related subject; the most recent polls show that Trump's GOP voter base remains strongly supportive of almost all his actions. 91% regard him favorably. The only crack is on the tariffs. Many Republican voters are uneasy about the predictions of major inflation with hefty price increases on basic necessities caused by those tariffs, but their confidence in Trump's ability to master the situation is still very high. 68% say Trump's plan will win out in the end even if there is some short term pain. My point is, don't expect any kind of impeachment effort to gain traction anytime soon.

More worrying to me is the fact that Trump is clearly suffering from degenerative senile dementia. It is abundantly clear that he losing his marbles, yet the ass kissing syncopates he surrounds himself with along with the cowards in Congress do nothing about it. Our 2026 midterm elections are a loooooonnnngggg way away, and Tiny Hands Trump can do vast amounts of damage to the US economy between now and then, and he probably will.

Very interesting history of the warship Vasa. It's sorta/kinda known in the US mainly because it capsized and sunk on its maiden voyage right in its home harbor of Stockholm. It still seems incredible that King Gustavus Adolpous would have allowed so obviously an unbalanced vessel to be completed. I thot monarchs were supposed to have relatives, advisors, trusted department heads who will tell a ruler when he is making a bad decision. But apparently thus was yet another case of where the trusted advisors were afraid of losing their pampered positions by pointing out harsh reality to the guy who gave them their jobs.

We have that same situation here, where our newly elected dictator refuses to listen to the advice of every single financial expert in or out of government about the disastrous effects that imposing trade tariffs will have on a nation's economy. I fear the repercussions for our country will be far more costly than the financial disaster the sinking of the Vasa was for Sweden.

Even more amazing to me is the fact that the Vasa was actually raised from the harbor and refurbished to become a tourist attraction. That kind of technology was once the stuff of wild fancy. The cost added up over the years must have been enormous. However, one presumes that the sense of history, and the desire to establish a premiere tourist attraction weighed heavily in the financial considerations. I am curious whether the government put up the restoration money or was it donated by ordinary citizens?

Another excellent article about the development of science fiction fandom in central Europe, but I have nothing to add. Almost everything you reference is new info to me. I am amazed you are able to dig up so much information about these early developments and trace the developments from past to present.

So far as American fandom goes, I am pretty sure that Ray Palmer's "The Comet" qualifies as the world's first science fiction related fanzine. Even tho it started out being a collection or science fact info, it quickly evolved into the kind of material fanzines have been doing forever, comments on stories, authors, correspondences and info on other fans, personal nattering and more.

I enjoyed your article about the "Ben Hogan" western novels by Kjell Genberg written and published in Sweden during the 1970s. 56 books in six years is impressive, altho I suppose it was just business as usual for a prolific author whose life was devoted to writing popular fiction for as many markets as possible to support himself and his family. I am occasionally still curious as to why the American west (which was hardly as wild & wooly as everybody seems to believe) holds such fascination for European readers. I suppose the lure of a different largely untamed land is the fascination, but the world is still full of dangerous untamed regions right up to the present time. Maybe fighting it out with cattle rustlers and marauding Indian raiders has more appeal than fighting off headhunters and pythons in the Amazon jungles, but it all seems pretty much the same to me.

I remain impressed by how much fannish material you are able to turn out on such a consistently regular basis. I wish I had half as much energy as you seem to have.



ARCHIVE MIDWINTER

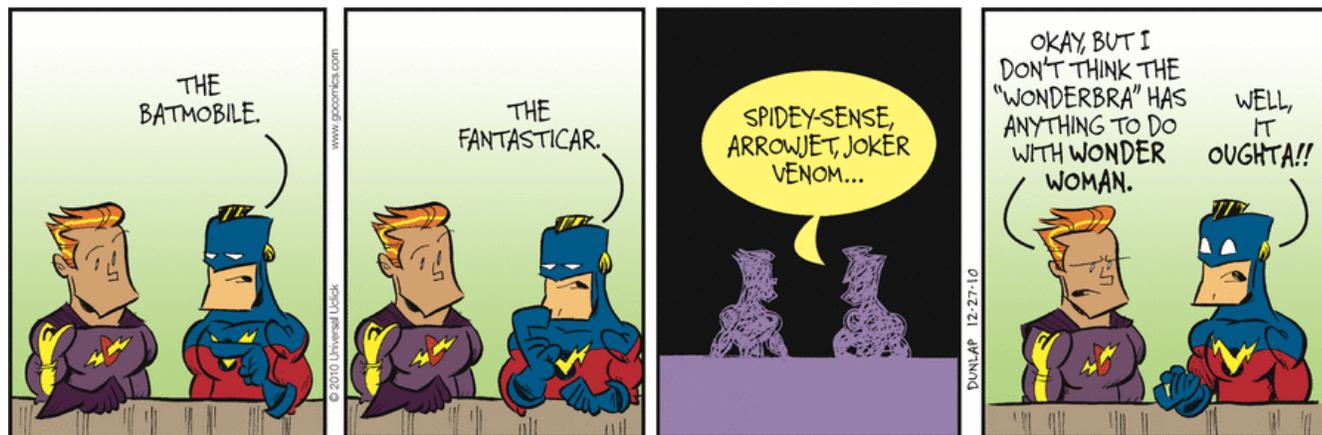
I sort of echo your comments about applying the morality of today to the

actuality of the past. Times change, and some, but certainly not all, attitudes toward life and society have changed with it. I think we can understand some of the things people did in the past without accepting that they were necessarily the morally correct things.

The prime example here is human slavery, which was a universally accepted norm in most ancient and modern societies going right up thru the nineteenth century. But, it should be noted, there were opponents to the concept from the very beginning, and some societies had a system that (theoretically) protected enslaved people more than others. In Rome, for example, slaves had access to the legal system, and could lodge complaints about overwork and mistreatment. I'm not sure how well that ever worked, but the Romans also had a system where slaves could be freed and become regular members of society.

I am only slightly sympathetic to those fans who complain that Multi-track convention programming forces them to make impossible decisions about which events to attend. It's part of what is, (I believe there is a technical term for that... Oh yeah)--Real Life, where you have to make hard decisions based on time, economic, and physical constraints. Altho I note that a lot of conventions now days are making video transcriptions of some panels and events so that members may enjoy them virtually later on. This seems to have been a development brought on by the COVID crisis. I do wonder how long those videos stick around. I would assume collecting them at the convention website costs money, and after a time, with the convention being over and done, might decide not to pay the costs for pixel storage any more. For cons that are put on annually the videos might be available longer. Anyone have any ideas about that?

I am not familiar with the Sherlock Holmes pastiches of Hugh Ashton. I will give them a try.



BRADLEY HALL 12

Interesting story about your process of becoming a role-playing and science fiction fan, leading to your publication of fanzines and other fanac. I am still impressed by how many stf fans have been molded by their exposure to Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings series. I was already a long time science fiction and fantasy fan when I came across the books. I thot they were pretty good, but they were not soul shaking to me; they were just well written fantasy stories. I tried to reread the series around the turn of the new century, after being impressed by somebody's eloquent comments about how deeply spiritual the series had been to them, but I only made it about halfway thru the first volume that time round. There is simply too much new stuff coming out for me to really consider rereading material I have already perused. And again, LOTR was not an earth forming event for me, altho I acknowledge that it was a big deal for a lot of people, and certainly for you, from your comments here.

Fascinating info about your non-reading sister and the BBC TV series that had showed someone actually reading a physical book on TV for children. I suppose there is support for the concept since very young children enjoy having their parents read stories to them at bedtime, and perhaps that was the idea of the TV show, but I would suspect that fifteen minutes of air time could have been better used by having classic stories adapted visually for children.

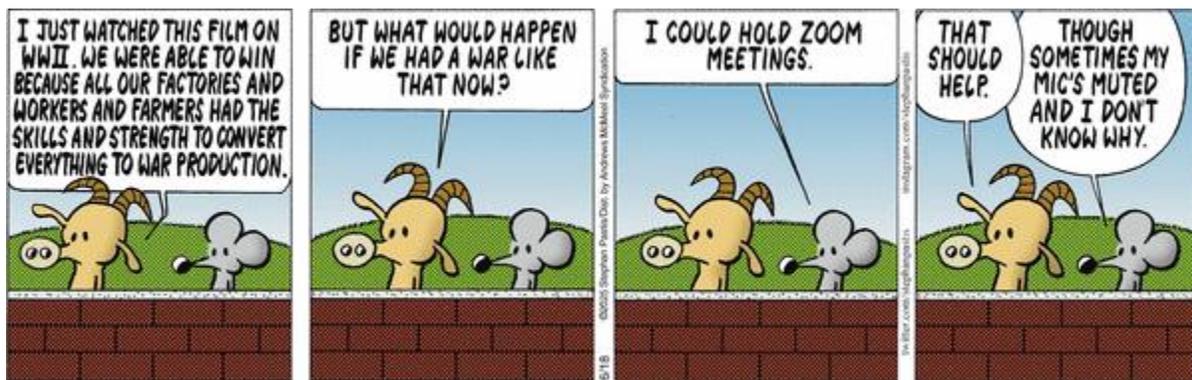
Amusing story about Japanese kids using magazine photos of an adult to fool computer scanning vending machines to buy cigarettes. In the US cigarette vending machines existed for a long, long time. It was easy for anyone of any age to buy cigarettes, and retail stores were never particular about selling packs to

children, even tho it was supposed to be illegal. All a youngster really had to do was tell the cashier that the pack was for his parent, and put the money down. I suspect that only reason cigarette machines went out of business is because as the price of the smokes went way up a lot of machines got vandalized and the merchandise stolen. I remember still seeing cigarette vending machines at hotel bars at stf conventions I attended back around the turn of the new century. Anyway, so far as I know they aren't around any more.

I take tales of older computer data being somehow lost forever because no one has the equipment to read it these days with a truck sized grain of salt. It is almost impossible to eliminate technology once it has been introduced. All kinds of electrical inventions and their components going back deep into the 1800s are still available, with new copies being made regularly. Wire recorders, tape recorders, tube radios, phonographs, magnetic DAT discs and more are easily available with new reading devices being manufactured today, abet at a hefty up-charge. If someone can't access old computer material in an outdated format they aren't looking very hard. I had a pile of computer games on both small magnetic tape packs and 5" floppy discs that I hadn't looked at in decades, including stuff in obscure and no longer existent codes. I gave them to a friend who was doing a research project and it only took him a few hours of searching before he found the equipment to read and translate everything.

My town library has completely eliminated all genre sections. All books are now either fiction or nonfiction, and then listed in alphabetical order by author last names. If you want a science fiction book, or a detective story, or a western, or anything else, you have to know the author's last name and hunt him down. I think this is a crappy system, since it discourages people from sampling new material in a genre they find interesting. How are you going to know if you like Isaac Asimov or Edgar Rice Burroughs if you have never heard of them before? Maybe the neofan has heard of Asimov and Burroughs, but has he heard of Groff Conklin and his line of superlative SF anthologies? Even the Star Trek and Star Wars novels are filed by author's last names. This is a bad system, clearly enacted to save space in a building with finite space. These days a lot of that finite space is now being devoted to DVD movies and computer related entertainment, such as games.

I have plenty of things to read, but I like to keep up with the new stf output. I generally rely on reviews and recommendations from people whose opinions I respect, and then request the new stuff thru inter-library loan. It has worked fine so far.



YE MURTERED MASTER MAGE 276

No cell phone? Gosh, how can you survive in modern society?? Most people seem to believe they cannot live thru a single day without their cell phone.

I have a cell phone that I carry around in case of emergencies, but lately I have also been using it to actually make a few phone calls, mainly because I can turn the volume on the cell phone waaaayyy up, loud enuf that I can actually hear the other person speaking, which I have a hard time doing with my regular land line. This doesn't necessarily make the words clearer, but I find it does help. As mentioned previously, I try not to do telephone calls if I can possibly avoid them. A friend also showed me how to use the GPS part of the phone. I haven't had a reason to use it yet, but it's good to know, just in case.

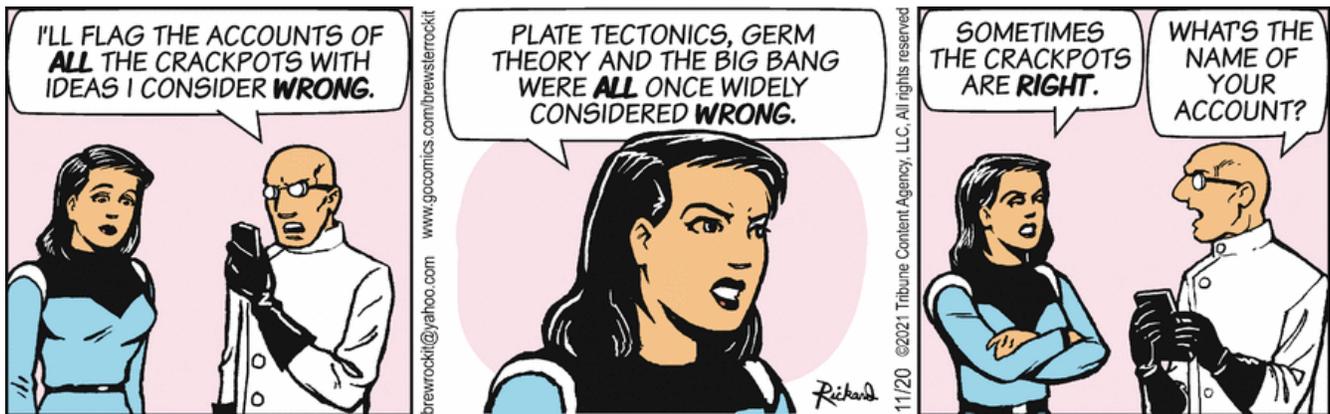
At one time I was using the cell phone internet connection from my warehouse space to log onto Atomic Ave to list comic books on their site. Unfortunately about two years ago the internet speed on the phone

declined dramatically, and the number of dropouts increased as well (it's AT&T service), so I don't do that any more. I understand that there are many other features available on the phone, but I don't have a use for any of them, so I don't bother.

I assume the reason the club zine *SF Review* is bi-monthly now is because the current editor(s) can't keep up a monthly schedule. I think a monthly schedule would be beneficial. There is so much new SF&F material appearing these days that fans really need responsible reviews telling them what is good and what is bad. I try to hype books that I think are exceptional, titles that are well above the norm and something that would be enjoyed by everyone, but I also occasionally slam a bad title, particularly a bad novel that is being heavily promoted. Keeping an eye on the *Locus Magazine* list of best fiction of the year is also a pretty good guide to quality in the field.

One doesn't "find time" for reading; an individual needs to *make* time to read. Reading as a planned activity is something I have been doing for a long time now. I devote at least two hours per night to reading, mostly brand new novel releases. I have trained myself to go to bed and to sleep at a certain time each night, and altho it took me a long time to realize it, the book I am reading and the words on those pages will still be there tomorrow, so I almost always stop reading when bedtime rolls around, no matter how interesting the story might be.

I was dropped in the middle of your fiction piece so I can't tell what is going on. Let me know when/if you issue a complete finished version.



BROWNIAN MOVEMENT #13

There were quite a few things in your Common Sense checklist that I do not know how to do. And also a fair number that I have no interest in knowing how to do either. If, for example, I'm ever in a situation where navigation is required, I would rather know how to find an expert who could handle it, not in developing a skill that I will probably never otherwise use.

Skimmed over the fiction. See my comment above made to George. If you ever get your story completed and available let me know and I'll give it a read.

As I recall from way back then, most of the gasps and aghast-ness traditional SF fandom had for the Trekkies was the similarity the movement had with the behavior normally associated with barely teen-age girls about some hot rock music or movie star, including the adoration of Spock. Then there was the fact that a lot of Trekkies didn't bother to read the literature, and insisted that all the concepts developed in Star Trek were new and completely original to the Star Trek universe. They refused to admit that traditional SF had influenced Star Trek even when long time SF fans pointed out the various stories that had been directly or indirectly adapted from old published science fiction stories. Trekkies ignored the concept that there was anything worthwhile before Trek, and they were so busy learning everything they could about Trek that they rarely had time for anything else. That kind of ignorant elitism wears thin in a hurry.

R.A.I.L. #6 You may be onto something about applying etherdiscipline to fanac. Over.



ESMERALDE COUNTY LINE #10

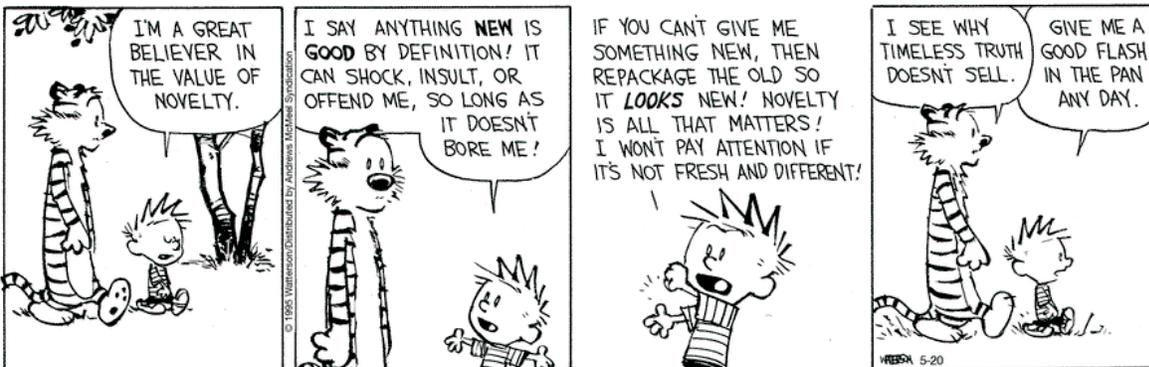
A book about the adventures of Captain Horatio Hornblower? I would much rather read the actual stories. Despite being constantly overwhelmed with new material, the C.S. Forester Hornblower novels are one of the few series of books I have actually reread. I thot they were even better the second time round. It seems to me that an annotated project, where potentially obscure or unknown references in the novels could be explained for modern readers would be more effective, like the annotated Sherlock Holmes. That might be even more effective, since the world of the Napoleonic Wars is even further back in time and much more obscure for the modern reader than is Victorian London around the turn of the twentieth century, the world of S. Holmes.

I don't think pornography should be allowed in school libraries either, but when parents are given explicit rights to censor books in school libraries what invariably happens is that certain factions will band together to insist that their particular viewpoint about religion, or politics, or history, is the only correct and just one and they will insist that any deviant viewpoints be removed. There are private schools devoted to specific religious and political doctrines that will teach their students exactly what their parents want their children to believe, but the real world demands a world wide viewpoint, not ideological brainwashing, and preparing children for life in the real world is part and parcel of what public schools do.

You mention having a lot of completed fan fiction you are trying to sell. Who are you trying to sell it to? The core of the SF&F magazine in any form seems to be rapidly fading. The internet survivors, what few of them are still around, don't seem to be paying much for any submissions, with most of them backlogged into the next decade. I note that *Amazing Stories* continues to publish on-line fiction, with a maximum paid for submissions being \$20; that fee more or less confirmed by Lloyd Penney in a recently published LOC. So where are you submitting your material to?

I echo your comment that Ahrvid should work all his articles about the history of European fandom into a book. There would probably be a respectable demand for the volume, particularly among libraries and popular culture historians.

You didn't know that DAW Books still existed? Really? They were bought by Astra Publishing in 2022 and have been pumping out six to ten books a month every month, altho most of it is fantasy these days and a lot of it is specifically in hardback format. DAW books are on most library Regular Purchase lists. Like many a modern publisher, most of their editorial staff is female, and they seem to publish mostly female authors.



SAMIZDAT... 31 Sorry to hear about losing your government job to Trump's slash and burn tactics.

There have been a few wins in court about terminating established employees, and I hope your case was one of them. The job market is getting tighter these days, as I am sure you have already discovered, with the mass downsizing of government departments only making the situation worse. I have a friend who has been out of work for more than a year and a half, even tho he is a corporate level accountant. Unfortunately he is almost 61 years old, and the invisible but lethal Ageism Prejudice has come into play.

I have only read a few books by Lois McMaster Bujold. I recall the first Miles Vorkosigan novel "Shards of Honor" which I thot was entirely too cutsey with plot sequences resolved by simplistic and occasionally near-magical events that were not necessarily supported by either the development of the characters or the ongoing plot. The couple of her other military based stories that I read were entertaining, but were the sort of thing I regarded as quick, easily digested literary fluff. I notice she has won a bunch of awards, including four Hugos so I suppose I should give her another try.

Interesting write-up on the destruction of the American Dream and the rise of the Neo-fascist wealth caste system. From your reviews I think the three authors you discuss, and their books, point out the problems and the steps that led to our current situation pretty well, but all of them fail which it comes to providing any kind of workable idea toward reversing the process.

The reality is that the ultra-wealthy with their own agendas control most of the mass media which reaches the majority of citizens every day. Fox News is famous for distorting and both under-reporting and point specifically reporting material that solidifies their super conservative viewpoint, yet Fox News is one of the most widely watched/listened to services in the nation today, and most of their viewers seem to believe everything they say.

A couple of quotes might be pertinent here---

"Those in possession of absolute power can not only prophesy and make their prophecies come true, but they can also lie and make their lies come true."

---Eric Hoffer (1898-1983)

and---

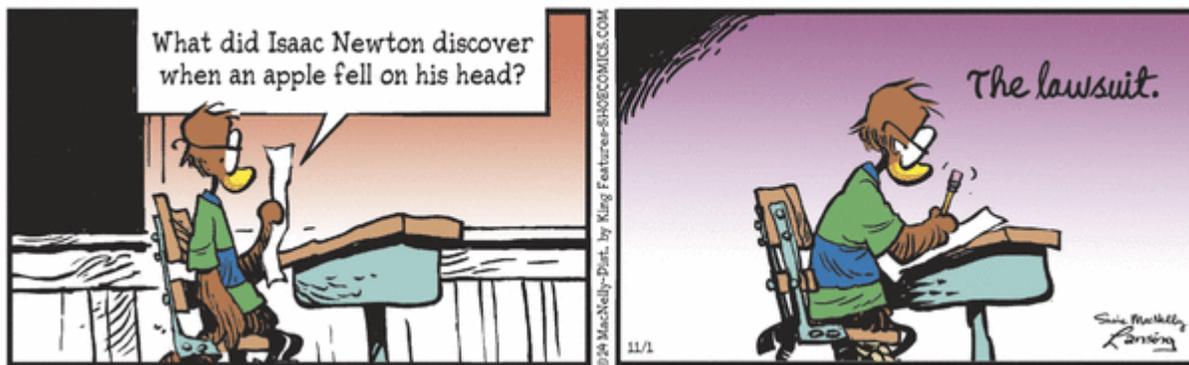
"Socialism never took root in America because the poor see themselves not as an exploited proletariat but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires."

---John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

Notice the pattern? The bulk of the American public believe that things are going to improve, and that they deserve it, and they also believe that the government is bloated, corrupt and inefficient, because that's what the plutocrats have been preaching for the past forty-five years. People are so used to these lies, that they are not even upset when Trump or his administration members tell blatantly outrageous lies about their accomplishments and the perceived evils of their opponents. We have become largely a nation of sheep, and I have serious doubts that we will be able to regain our imitative, much less our national heritage in the upcoming election, or any election in the immediate future either. Not that I'm bitter or anything.

Excellent issue, but not many more comment hooks this time round.





SNOW POSTER TOWNSHIP #21 I read your comments about streaming services, but I have no use for such things now. My hearing loss/comprehension problems make it difficult for me to understand most modern movies and TV shows, particularly the ones with loud background music running constantly. Streaming services seem to be popular now, but I find that for those times I want to watch a movie or a particular TV show or whatever, that the library's huge variety of DVDs (more available thru inter-library loan too), plus YouTube and the other free services on the internet satisfy me easily.

I vaguely remember reading FROOMB in the past. I was not impressed. I thot that the author was mostly winging it as he went along, finally arriving at the concept that the future world the protagonist was catapulted into might possibly be changed, but that realization came too late in the story for the author to really do a lot with it. But, it's been a long time, and maybe I missed some of the other points you mention.

Good luck with your move to Portugal. You have mentioned that you don't speak the language, and Portuguese is not an easy tongue to pick up, but I envy your ability to leave the US at this difficult point in our history.

News broke this weekend that Trump has joined Israel in bombing Iran. Most dictators try to initiate a war to solidify their grip on their countries and use that as an excuse to further eliminate citizen freedoms. Getting America into a shooting war amidst the never ending quagmire of middle eastern politics is going to be a costly and long lasting problem, potentially worse than Viet Nam and Afghanistan. Wasn't Trump the guy who kept shouting about how the United States should stay away from murky foreign military engagements? How quickly the worm turns.

Call me cynical, but I don't think a national Moment Of Silence to honor all the people (mostly youngsters) killed in mass shootings would mean anything. Every time one of these horrific events occurs politicians are happy to offer lip service and the ever popular "thoughts and prayers", and then nothing happens as the nation marches on to the next massacre a few days later. How many dead children will it take to change this poorly phrased Constitutional amendment and get some realistic gun control enacted? I'll bet Portugal has laws restricting private ownership of automatic and military grade firearms.

And that's it for this round. More in-depth comments next time round.

Stop killing alligators to make Gatorade! Repeal Trump's crocodile import tariff! Save America's precious reptile heritage!

THE NEWSSTAND

GUNS 'N' CULTURE

OPERA'S
BUSIEST
BABIES

IN
HOT
SEMI-AUTOMATIC
ACTION
GARRISON
KEILLOR
ON
LUTHERAN
MILITIAS
KEN BURNS'
8-HOUR BIO-
"MICKEY
SPILLANE"



'PHANTOM MENACE' - JUST DEADLY p.24

NEW 'STAR WARS': GIVE IT A MISS p.98

SMART BOMB

THE NEW 'WISE
BOMB' SAYS:
"HELL NO!
I WON'T
BLOW!"
HUMANS-
ARE THEY
NECESSARY?
WHEN IT'S
OK TO STOP
AND ASK FOR
DIRECTIONS



EXCLUSIVE TOM CLANCY NOVEL EXCERPT

Highlights for Adults

ASSISTED LIVING
PREREGISTRATION-
IS 35 TOO YOUNG?

WORK WITH A PURPOSE

MALE BALDNESS
10 EXCITING NEW
PATTERNS

101 SIMPLE YET
ELUSIVE WORDS

PROSTATE
CONNECT-THE-DOTS
FUN PAGE!



NEW 'STAR WARS' DAMN FOOLISHNESS

REFUGEE REVIEW

NEW
STAR WARS
YOU'RE NOT
MISSING ANYTHING
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE EDITION

WHAT TO DO
WHEN THE
CELEBRITIES
SHOW UP

10 GREAT
MACEDONIAN
GETAWAYS

AVOID THE CROWDS
LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY
NOW!

BONUS INSERT -
FAMILY SIZE
FOLD-OUT SHELTER



by Richard Thompson

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 275

by Jefferson P. Swycaffer
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San Diego CA 92175

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abontides@gmail.com

6 July 2025

Comments:

Cover: Public Domain space art.

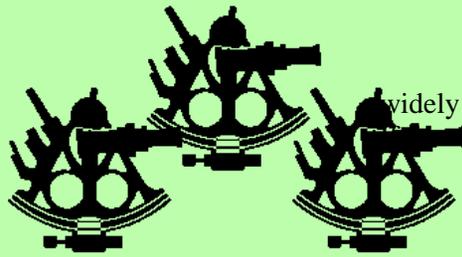
Ahrvid Engholm: Nah, Trump isn't a Russian agent. He is pretty much what he seems to be: a monstrous ego that parlayed ignorance and populism into power.

VERY fun article on the Vasa and the Vasa museum! That, and the replica Viking longship, would be high on my list, were I able to travel and visit!

Robert Jennings: Sorry to learn of your hearing problems...and that there are people who phone you even after you've asked them not to. There is an innate cussedness to our species... Your adventures with home repairs is another example of the perversity of things as they are.

Delightfully saucy "press release" re RFK Jr and our national reserves of Eye of Newt!

Interesting new analysis of the Antikythera machine, and how it might not have been the miracle that has been touted so



widely in science magazines. I've been suspicious of all that hype.



ancients were actually capable of building "computers," there would have been more than just this lone instance.

Mark Nelson: I had to read Lord of the Rings four times (I was young) before I finally "got it." I was able to perceive the various episodes, but the overarching structure eluded me!

Rct Garth Spencer, I agree that society (in the western industrialized nations) has gotten less polite and less civil. I put a lot of the blame on social media platforms, where people are not encouraged to practice self-censorship. In olden days, the child smacking a lamp-post with a stick and bellowing four-letter words was an object of ridicule and pity; today, it's a typical "X" poster.

Ahrvid Engholm: Alas for me, I do not listen to current music nor do I watch movies any longer. When time permits, I read!

Absolutely fascinating history of the Swedish Atomic Bomb! I had not known any of that, and I was completely rapt in reading it. My personal belief is that Sweden is just as well off without a nuclear weapon, because Sweden's foreign-affairs issues don't really

revolve around city-destroying strategies. Sweden is a diplomatic powerhouse, which is far more admirable!

George Phillis: I've never had the misfortune of being in a writing group with someone, as you describe, who isn't interested in constructive criticism because "When I get published, my editor will fix all that." But I have been in writing groups with writers with – ah – issues. I'm in one now with a "true believer." She refuses to change her descriptions of events to improve the drama because the way she wrote it is "the way is really happened." She's also immature in other ways.

Fun couple of pages of Shepdon Fields. And, aye, kittens, past the age where their eyes open, are remarkably self-sufficient.

Garth Spencer: Agreement re codes of conduct. Alas, re your list of basic competencies, there were rather a few that have eluded me in my brief lifetime! I'm good at a lot of the things on that list, but a good double-handful are beyond me!

Fun segment of Jade Ring. The interrogation scene was quirky. The interrogator lost control of the discussion, something that they generally don't do in the real world, because they have legbreakers to compel adherence to the rules. The Holy Inquisition would not have been flummoxed by Hrothgar's eloquence. James Bond continues to be a fun and effective character!

Re slaves with implants so that they enjoy slave-work, this was alluded to in a book entitled "What Sort of People Should There Be?" by Jonathan Glover (alas, no longer among us.) He wrote of three models of Sisyphus. Sisyphus Mark I is condemned to roll a rock uphill as his punishment. Sisyphus Mark II doesn't see it as punishment, but simply as reality. He rolls the rock uphill the way a road-grader does. It's simply what he does in life. And Sisyphus Mark III enjoys it.

Adrian Kresnak: I'd never heard of "etherdiscipline," but I guess it makes sense. At a hardware level, you need some form of "handshaking" between sender and receiver, or else you'll suffer from mutual interruption. The etherdiscipline of the Internet seems pretty well developed and properly functional. Less so public hearings of, say, County Board of Supervisor meetings. Here in San Diego, we have severe problems with people disrupting our meetings, and I'll wager the same is true all across the country. Once more, I will blame "social media" for much of the problem, as it is a milieu that rewards talking, but does not reward listening.

Kevin Trainor Jr: I'll track down and read "The Centurion." I'm fond of fictional re-tellings of the gospels. "The Gospel According to Pontius Pilate" was a clever example from some decades ago.

I have read all the Horatio Hornblower books, and Parkinson's "Life and Times" also. General agreement that Parkinson took a few liberties.

"King David's Spaceship" was quite a good book indeed. I don't believe that Pournelle was arguing that monarchy or empire are admirable forms of government, only functional ones that might exist in an SF future. Poul Anderson was a libertarian verging on anarchism, but he described a Terran Empire that rivaled ancient Rome for tyranny. One must never make the mistake of thinking that authors are arguing in favor of the situations they describe.

Samuel Lubell: Mighty sad to learn you lost your job due to DOGE slashings. I hope you find something decent as soon as may be. I'll send you an email regarding the company I work for, which might conceivably be an option for you. Sympathies, and sym-outrage also.

Interesting review of books dealing with the collapse of the great American Middle Class. Pretty much everything wrong with America today stems from that destruction.

Heath Row: Wow! Moving to Portugal! That's really cool! I hope the actual move is not too stressful, and that everything is lovely and fun when you get there!

Rect me re information, only if all history and all events are pre-determined, as in some interpretations of physics, would information be constant, impossible to create or destroy. If, on the other hand, there is an element of randomness to history and events – as quantum physics seems to suggest – then information could be created. The idea that “Moby-Dick” is somehow “encoded” in the hydrogen atoms of the Big Bang seems absurd to me, but it would follow from strict Newtonian determinism. I actually know a guy who is a strict Newtonian determinist...but he's a Jack-Fool in a lot of other ways too.

One really key rebuttal to determinism can be found in the behavior of radioactive decay in atoms. As far as anyone can tell, Uranium atoms (and others) decay at random, the randomness, however, falling within informational parameters. Any given atom may or may not decay, but, overall, in a sample of a few grams, the atoms decay according to the rules of half-lives. If radioactive decay was deterministic, that would require a mechanism – a kind of “fuse” that burns down – that contains the information of when the atom is “due” to decay. Such a mechanism would be ridiculously complex, like a little clock-timer. There is, at this time, absolutely no evidence for such a mechanism.

The Travails of a Collector!

I'm a comics fan, and have been long. The first comic book I bought on my own – as opposed to my mom buying me occasional copies of Casper the Friendly Ghost – was Marvel Comics Presents Red Sonja, number five. The beautiful woman in a chain-mail bikini was an obvious selling point. Well, I was young...

I now share living space with twenty long boxes of comics, each box containing something like 120 comics. And I'm plumb running right out of room! I've come to the grievous triage of deciding which comics to keep and which – gasp! – to throw away. Aye, grim as it is, I'm putting perfectly good comics into the trash. Breaks me little heart, it does!

I have the joy of frequenting a full-service comic book shop – they actually do “pull and hold!” That's very rare these days! I have a deal with them: they will pull for me “Issue No. 1” of anything! A lot of this is pure crud – Sturgeon's Law will never be repealed! But a lot of them are remarkably good and highly creative, and I'm in the joyful position of coming in on the ground floor.

The Murdered Master Mage

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About the N3F

First, several of you made a point about thanking me for the work I do for the N3F. Your comments were most appreciated.

We successfully launched a new APA, The Gentle Stroll. The Gentle Stroll covers rolegaming. The first two issues have been published. We will see if the Stroll stays in flight or if it executes controlled flight into ground. The stroll is paralleled by another new APA, Ever&Anon, which views itself as the successor to the recently-deceased Alarums and Excursions. Ever and Anon was immediately almost as thick as Alarum and Excursions.

I continue to work toward encouraging n3f members to become more active in their club. We are a fan organization, not a media con run by people working for pay, so that if members decline to do work for the club the club will be much poorer as a club as a result. Remember, an electronic membership is only six dollars a year.

I have been having very strange computer problems, confined to Microsoft Office. Word, Publisher, and Excel each lock up after a few minutes of use, so it is very hard to get anything done with them. I have been given advice to reboot the computer, to delete a problematic file, or to use a repair function on a piece of software...none of these have affected the problem.

For this issue I am using LibreOffice and OpenOffice, which is fine if I stay with text, but will not work for creating the next issue of Tightbeam. LibreOffice is the more recent and modern, but apparently it declines to speak to Nuance Dragon speech to text conversion which is a definite inconvenience.

I am aware of several alternatives for producing the next issue of Tightbeam, none of which are particularly pleasant for me.

Comments on #276

Cover: Hard to be certain, but it appears to be a Gemini capsule. The two passengers are indicative.

Swamp Spot Sentinel: Hi, Bob!

Sympathies on your medical issues. Baby dandelion leaves are entirely edible and used in iirc Italian cooking. My recollection is grilled meat on a bed of dandelion leaves that have been sauted in olive oil with a lot of garlic and lemon juice. You may want to blanch the leaves first---wash leaves, drop into boiling water, let them boil for a bit, and remove from the boiling water. For flowers, consider daffodils, tulips, daylilies, coneflowers, and asters. They are fairly hard to kill off.

The curious feature of the antikythera mechanism is that it seems to be one of a kind. Nothing like it is mentioned elsewhere in the ancient world. The level of corrosion is such that analysis of its machining errors would be at best challenging. On the other hand, progress is being made in the physical challenges to reading the Herculaneum scrolls.

Please do not show your Page 9 image to the Worcester city council. We have a bicycle fanatic on it, and he might be inclined to have the city pay for the gadget you display.

Archive Midwinter: Many odd things are happening in fandom. I moderate the Science Fiction Facebook page, which has around 80,000 members. References to contemporary politics are not allowed. Then we have the fellow who demanded that I ban another contributor. His material on the FB page was to my taste – I am very tolerant – but not violating our rule against discussing contemporary politics. In any event, I refused to ban the fellow, whose posts largely reported which the topics he would be covering in his magazine. The complainer was actually complaining about the things the contributor had posted elsewhere, which is not my problem. I received a profanity-laden email from the complainer, who apparently did not agree with the political opinions of the poster he wanted banned. Fortunately the complainer then went away.

Asimov and Killer Robots...I see that Wells' Murderbot gets a great deal of attention. I wonder what Asimov would have made of AI-controlled kamikaze drones in the Ukraine.

Brandy Hall: I read the Tolkien novels in hardback roughly when they first became available locally. They may well have been in print for some time. I enjoyed them enough to reread them once or twice.

Downloadables. Once upon a time, my other club went to the approach of uploading their zine onto their web page and expecting members to download it. Almost none of them did. On the other hand, the N3F Zine FrankinZine, is indeed distributed by being posted on the web site, on occasion, because it is way too big for alternative distribution methods.

The large problem with N'APA is members who attach significant numbers of images in inflexible formats.

The LEO computer is fascinating. It is sort of like 'who purchased the first home entertainment computer, a machine used only for entertainment?' That was Flying Buffalo, Incorporated, which ran their games 'in the cloud' on the corporate machine. Of course, this was in 1973, so data went into the cloud via paper mail, but they ran a series of games for many years.

Bravo for Margaret Thatcher. The absence of people with STEM backgrounds in legislatures is a very bad thing that is unlikely to go away.

I had at least one of the Feynmann Lecture volumes. I thought it was dreadful. Feynmann forgot or didn't care that he was lecturing undergraduates, indeed, freshmen. There were far too many bits and pieces of physics content that a student was unlikely to know.

Mind you, I wrote a freshman physics/mechanics book, *Physics One*. It was based on two equations, namely $F = dp/dt$ and *Physics Minus Calculus Equals Nonsense*. Selling point: The price of my physics book (\$19.99) may be less than the sales tax on your physics book.

Well, you asked for my opinion, and you got it.

Wrto schools, once upon a time Massachusetts made the outbound Speaker of the

house, a gentleman by the name of Bulger, into the President of the system. He promptly decreed (1) the top five students from each high school in Massachusetts would get automatic admission if they so requested, and (2) at least half of all admitted students would be admitted under the general rules for admission, rather than being admitted as a special case, e.g., the ten foot tall basketball player. I have no idea how it worked out.

Brownian Motion: Interesting con problems. The cherry solution readily involves the local constabulary and handcuffs. The 'how to' list is long. Good work on finding it or creating it!

Jade Ring V: Ah, yes, fan fiction, complete with evil villains, torture chambers, James Bond, a strange machine with a large number of mysterious controls, and people in need of rescue. I encountered few issues with your writing, so at the stage I do editing you are in good shape. I might suggest (paragraph 5) that opening a sentence with a conjunction generally does not work.

Burying an interrogator in answer text might not work in the real world, but it was still amusing here. A cliffhanger ending is always appropriate in this sort of work, just as you did. For what it was supposed to be, it was a fine tale, so far.

Re: Your mailing comments. With respect to the Sad Puppies controversy, I receive descriptions from various factions in the dispute, the comments being enough to prove the existence of antiparallel universes. Not only do the comments not match each other, but they do not resemble each other. The two sides agree: The other side is totally lacking in merit. The matter goes downhill from there.

I am encouraging people to do more for the N3F so that it does not fall apart in a few years. Someone else prepared to handle mailing our zines would be particularly valuable. It's a fairly mechanical activity. Our worst challenge in activating such a person is the two-factor-identification system, which makes it harder and harder to transfer control of key web pages.

R.A.I.L Second Person, Future Tense. It sounds dismaying. I am reminded of The Fifth

Season, an odd book by an author some of whose other books have had positive reviews in The N3F Review of Books Incorporating Prose Bono. The book did have a brilliant closing line. A fair part of the volume was in second person, present tense. Worse, the chapters were not in temporal order. So far as I could tell there were chapters set in a place that had been destroyed in an earlier chapter...but I could be wrong. It is hard to get more terrible than that.

I have had people compliment me for managing to finish the volume. From what I have seen, these cute literary devices are more effective at impressing the reader with their technical virtuosity, for good or bad, than at producing a book that is worth reading.

Esmeralda County Line: Sorry about the Tax issue. Meetings, the alternative to work. Those were good short reviews.

Readers may note the comments on Sad Puppies made here and in Brownian Motion, and wonder what was going on. They may also prefer to preserve their sanity by not looking further, since the disputes would leave one to believe in the existence of coexisting contradictory realities. There is an accumulation of material as a drop-down list in File 770.com, a drop-down list headed "The Compleat Litter..." There are many other such collections. A larger list of these collections would be of merit for people interested in the dispute. Readers familiar with Call of Cthulhu, the role-playing game, might consider the potential sanity point loss for people who read it.

Interesting bit on dojinshi. Recently I was approached by a fan of my writing who asked me to write some Telzey Amberdon fan fiction. I did. For copyright reasons, none of you will ever see it.

Samizdat. Sorry to read about the RIF affecting you. Thank you for the fine bio of Bujold. Wrto non-male SF Writers, The National Fantasy Fan and Tightbeam have covered a fair number of them, mostly thanks to Jon Swartz's articles.

Snow Poster Township: May your move advance with a minimum of difficulties. You give us many fine reviews of stfnal material. Some years ago, we ran in TNFF profiles of the 64

Immortal Fen. Rather we ran profiles of 60 of them, since absolutely nothing is known about the other four. Jon Swartz did the writing and data collection.

Fan-Fic

Shepdon Fields

In best fan-fictional form, I shall fail to complete the tale.

Before the kittens, there are several encounters between the children and Thornberry-Thistlewaite in which he attempts ever so subtly to corrupt them with human thinking. Between the previous and in the beginning here several things happen. Charlotte continues to take care of the kittens, special orders for them cat-milk, since kittens actually are not supposed to drink regular milk, surprises her parents by taking over doing the dishes and some other housework, since they've put up with her as a guest for all this time.

Eventually we reach the point where Thornberry-Thistlewaite is advised by the English spy agency that something is visiting the sites of the previous incursions of strange children, leaving a certain number of bodies and wreckage behind, and leaving behind no particular explanation of what they are doing. The British Army shows up in Shepdon Fields to remove quickly from the scene people who are suspected of being in danger.

This takes a while, long enough for Charlotte to make friends with the Colonel and Sergeant-Major who are supposed to be trying to run the evacuation, a step much hastened by her mental telepathy and the notion that the two men are both friendly to her, and sympathetic to the children. They are slightly too late with the evacuation. A flying saucer descends on the Shepdon Fields common and paralyzes more or less everyone.

The alien is one of the ant men. He has paralyzed most of the children as well as the lead normal human inhabitants, but a few of the children have learned enough about shielding themselves mentally that they are not paralyzed.

The ant-man decides that Charlotte is probably mentally defective, so to break her of her mental defect he orders her to kill Mrs. Baskerville, who is obviously of no further use to mankind, and the four kittens, who will never be suitable as food.

There is then a mental battle between Charlotte and the ant-man. The Sergeant-Major had attempted to get in the way between Charlotte and the ant-man but was paralyzed first. She is losing badly until she relieves the paralyzed Sergeant Major Bradshaw of his pistol and shoots the ant man. Repeatedly. That's the out of the box thinking she learned from the professor.

She strips the fatally wounded and mentally-incoherent ant-man of its memories, stuffing them into the professor, determines that there is a failsafe self-destruct on the flying saucer, several hundred megatons worth, so she takes command of one of the soldiers, has him march into the saucer, and, since the saucer responds to the controls, disarms the fail-safe.

At this point the ant-man dies, disarming its mind control devices, and people recover. She tells the Sergeant Major that she used his weapon, so she is supposed to clean it.

"I'll be cleaning my own sidearm, thank you," Sergeant Major Bradshaw said, "You having done more than enough."

His large hand englobed the girl's now-trembling hands and the Glock now held loosely between them, and ever so gently recovered the weapon and returned it to its holster.

"Easy, lass," he said as Charlotte began to slip toward the floor. He reached forward. One arm went under her shoulders, the crook in his elbow supporting her head. His other arm scooped down and lifted her up, supporting her under her knees.

Sergeant-Major Bradshaw gave his best sergeant-major glare at Thomas Weatherby.

"Be a good lad," Bradshaw said, "and open that door behind you so I can deposit the young lady on the couch. And while I'm doing that, if you would be so kind as to look and see if you can possibly find a couple of blankets."

"Yes, sir!" Thomas responded. He dashed to the double doors, opened them, and let the Sergeant Major advance. So soon as Bradshaw

was clear of the doors, he ran off in search of blankets and a pillow.

"Sergeant Major," Charlotte said weakly, "would you please call Corporal Benson here? I need to say something to him."

"That ship is disarmed?" Bradshaw asked. "He's manning its controls."

"Yes," she answered weakly. "With three of us watching the controls."

"Benson!" Bradshaw shouted. "Here! On the double!"

Not a minute later, Benson dashed into the room. "Here, Sergeant Major!"

"The lady," Bradshaw said, pointing at Charlotte, "wants to speak to you. Easy. She's a bit tuckered out."

Benson knelt so he could hear her more clearly.

"Corporal," she said weakly, "I have to apologize to you, and hope you believe me."

"Apologize to me?" a confused Benson asked.

"The saucer," Charlotte said, "you disarmed the failsafe. Except that wasn't you. I took complete control of your body. That was extremely rude of me. Except—I wasn't thinking that clearly, couldn't see another way to stop it in time, and you were right there. So you were in a dream watching, and I moved you..apologies, I only almost had us trip and fall on your face. All that weight on your back moves your center of balance."

"Aye, Lassie, walking with a hundred pounds of gear is something you learn with practice. But you saved my life," Benson said. "Our lives. No apology needed. But apology happily accepted. And now you look as though you should be closing your eyes and fall asleep."

"Yes..." Her voice drifted off.

Benson looked at Ralph. "Will she be all right," he asked. "Is there anything we can do?"

"She'll be fine," Ralph announced. "Just very tired."

Thornberry-Thistlewaite dropped into a chair, opened his carrying case, and began to write rapidly on the awaiting pad of paper. He was vaguely aware of a pair of children facing him a few feet away.

"All this information on the alien," he said, not ceasing to write as he spoke, "Charlotte lifted it from the creature's brains and dropped it into mine. That means it's in short-term memory, so when I finally fall asleep most of what she got for me will be forgotten. I have, I can speak, no, I can read and write anything in its language, and know what it means, sort of, but that will be gone tomorrow, except what I can write down in the meantime."

"Begging your pardon, sir," the boy standing in front of him said, "but that transfer should be to fixed memory, not working memory. May I check? Please?"

Thornberry-Thistlewaite remembered the boy in front of him was Ralph, and said to be particularly astute with using mentalic powers.

"Oh, go ahead," Thornberry-Thistlewaite said. "Make yourself happy, and maybe you could salvage a few scraps also."

Thornberry-Thistlewaite was vaguely aware of a few odd sounds that didn't seem to have any direction.

"Sir? Good news!" Ralph announced.

"Yes, Ralph?"

"She set it in there correctly," Ralph said, "so you'll remember it as well as you remember what a gorp, I mean group, is, whatever a group is. No danger of forgetting."

Thornberry-Thistlewaite felt a great weight lifting from his shoulders.

"That is a great relief," he said. "Thank you. I am most grateful."

"And your friends will be happy to know," Ralph said, "they're right. There's a war in the heavens."

"I am not quite certain that 'happy' is precisely the right word," Thornberry-Thistlewaite said. "Frightened out of their wits' seems more likely. But you twelve, and that machine, perhaps will protect us."

BROWNIAN MOTION #14

An apazine by Garth Spencer

For NAPA 277 | July 2025



Sound and Fury Signifying Nothing

I thought I was so smart, transferring all my documents to thumb drives in an attempt to clean my computer. All I accomplished was to wipe out a lot of saved documents – including my fanzine and eAPA records for July – and to require myself to rebuild the lot.

And now my desktop computer is possessed. Most of the time I can live with this. But earlier this week, I transferred my documents to thumb drives in an attempt to clean the computer ... and lost a lot of recent files. I started slowly reconstructing the personalzine and apazines I had lost ... and yesterday, old versions of my document folders appeared out of nowhere. I don't know whether to make ritual offerings and wave a dead chicken over the monitor, or post a message asking the possessing spirit to cover half of my online subscription expenses.

Steve Fahnstalk advises,

“It won't matter. Computer spirits do what they want no matter what which witch doctors attempt to doctor them. I have the spirit of Bill Gates (MS Certifications) since years ago, and the computer spirits ignore him/it. Just work around them, that's what I do. Besides, this is an opportunity for you to work on those anger issues you've been dealing with. 😊”

#

First as Tragedy, Then as Farce

If I had understood back in my teens what my folks wanted, I might feel obliged now to build a continent-wide network of anti-fascist resistance groups. The problem with that is that I have about as much charisma and leadership potential as a potted plant.

So, I just find information and make it available. That's all I can do. That's what I did for local fandom, and eventually tried to do for Canadian fandom, back in the 1980s.

What people *do* with any information provided to them, now, is entirely their business.

A recent Facebook post, attributed (falsely) to Liz Cheney, shows a plan for organized resistance to current excesses in the U.S. If there are enough people in the United States who already have the determination, publishing such plans may start a movement.

Unless the worldwide underground conspiracy to achieve Belgian global domination has doped American water supplies with Prozac, as in Canada. We just have to see what happens.



The Jade Ring (Finale)

Ernie and Polly awoke sprawled in their living room.

“What were we doing, to fall asleep here?” Polly wondered.

“I don’t know *what* we were doing, but it must have been a good trip,” Ernie answered. He stretched. “Wonder if we can score some more?”

Polly hit him lightly on the shoulder. “Don’t be a brat. Let’s see, what time is it ...” she glanced at the wall clock and blinked. “That can’t be right! Now I wonder what day it is?”

“The morning after the night before?” Ernie joked.

“No, I’m serious! What were we doing last? Have we missed any ...” She went into their bedroom to check the date on their bedside alarm clock, and blinked. The date was Sunday. What had they been doing all Saturday??

And then it came back to her.

“Ernie. Take your ring off!”

“Say what?!”

“Take off your jade ring! RIGHT NOW!” Polly was twisting the ring off her hand as she spoke.

“—Oh *man*—” Ernie visibly remembered the last twenty-four hours and started tugging frantically at his hand.

#

Hrothgar awoke in his bedroom, wondering what day and time it was. Then his aches and pains reminded him of the last 24 hours.

In a fit of horror, he tore his jade ring off his hand, scratching his ring finger deeply as he did. Then he went hunting for bandages in the bedroom.

The phone rang downstairs. Presently his mother’s voice called, “Hrothgar, it’s for you!”

#

Mick, Rudy, Dolly and the members of the Combination Con committee awoke in their respective homes, unable to remember the previous day. But for no reason they could explain, none of them wanted to wear jade rings anymore.

Three months later, at the next meeting of the college SF club, Sean Giorgiou stood up to announce that after Combination Con, the committee found themselves bankrupt.

“The convention found a lot of its funds had vanished from their bank account, and we can’t contact or find the treasurer,” Sean said unhappily. “It also looks

like a lot of the advance memberships we counted on just evaporated, or never actually arrived.” Sean looked hard at Rudy and Mick at one side of the meeting room, and Ernie and Hrothgar at the other. They looked blankly back at him. “So instead of hosting a four-day convention in two hotels, we held a one-day event in a Jaycee Hall.”

Hrothgar and Ernie didn’t say anything, but Mick didn’t hold his peace. “Yeah, and you got about 100 people, 40 of them on your committee,” he muttered.

“I beg your pardon?” Sean snapped.

“Nothing!”

#

“But of *course* the Combinationoids blame us,” Dafydd said later at the Lettuce Patch. Hrothgar noticed the after-meeting group at the café had dwindled to him and Ernie and Polly and just one or two others. “They can hardly blame themselves, can they? They have to tell themselves Combination Con could have succeeded, if it weren’t for those interfering Jade Ring jerks and their whispering campaign.” He drained the last of his beer glumly. Dafydd had started drinking before he quit being president of the Star Trek club.

“Fine. Just fine. We averted a calamity. And nobody *learns* anything!” He kept his voice down, but a couple of heads turned anyway at nearby tables.

Polly leaned forward. “Did you expect them to?” She sounded genuinely curious.

Hrothgar looked at her. “Well, why not? We even *told* them —”

“That’s why,” Ernie cut in. “They can’t humble themselves to admit they were wrong about how conrunning works.

“Especially not when some people strung them along, with what seemed to be financing from generous institutions, which suddenly swear they never heard of them before. And you can hardly tell them they were trotted back and forth between our timeline and another one, can you?”

“Not since the jade rings stopped working,” Hrothgar sighed. “At least it’s over now.”

“Is it?” Polly said. “I seem to remember, you said your interrogator boasted there were any number of

other scams the Empire was running on this planet, most of them unconnected with fandom.”

“So, what do we do?” Hrothgar looked around at his friends.

They all looked at each other, uncertain, and changed the subject.

#

Hrothgar dreamed again of meeting Saavik. Like most of his dreams, the setting and their figures were not well defined or illuminated, but he noticed that Saavik was in her quarters on the *Enterprise*, and in working uniform.

“Live long and prosper, Hrothgar,” Saavik said and gestured. “I deduce that you have survived and succeeded.”

“Live long and prosper, Saavik,” Hrothgar returned. “It is good to see you. May we see each other again?”

“No, Hrothgar,” she said. “It appears that our connection is dissipating, since you damaged the intruding empire’s crosstime engine.”

Hrothgar felt hope again. “So, we may actually have stemmed their threat—”

“No,” Saavik said with regret. “To the best of our ability, we detect that they repaired their engine. Clearly this was not their only crosstime facility, nor is this the first time they have had to rebuild one.”

Hrothgar felt bitterness. “So, we have an impossible task to do again.”

Saavik lifted an eyebrow. “If it was impossible to confront one of the Empire’s infiltrations, as you and your friends did – then, yes. You and your friends have now to join, or create a widespread resistance to intrusions in your reality. Commander Spock permitted me to calculate a security assessment, as far as we can, based on your information. You have to expose and resist scams and cons and frauds in general; expose attempts to suborn and corrupt your culture’s institutions, not just in your hobby group’s subculture.” The picture of her and her quarters began to fade.

“Wait, Saavik,” Hrothgar pleaded, “wait—”

“Fare well, Hrothgar,” her voice was the last thing to fade. “Live long ...”

#

Hrothgar was inexplicably shunned by everyone but Polly and Ernie, in the years following the Combination Con affair. He hardly noticed; he started a fan newszine, after Norman French ceased producing *Nouvelles du Fantastique*, with several motives. As well as gathering and distributing fan news, letting Canadian fans know there were other Canadian fans and clubs and conventions, Hrothgar intended to gather and publish common-sense conrunning information, and prevent future Combination Con fiascos.

Fandom at large barely responded. Norman French’s reaction was “those who need it won’t read it, and those who will read it already know it.”

It took Hrothgar years to concede that his purposes barely mattered to any fans. He lost a lot of faith in fandom, as a result.

And then, in the 1990s, Samsara fandom hosted a grandiose Westercon bid ...

Finis



Mailing Comments

Intermission 153, by Ahrvid Engholm

Re current politicians: I am inclined to agree with your assessment.

Is the Eurovision Song Contest a form of war carried out by other means?

My brother and his wife built a sauna into their downstairs bathroom. Back when I was house-sitting for them, I never tried it; I don’t quite know how to control the heat properly.

After some consideration, I gave up the writers' workshop I was attending, because I consistently failed to produce any new short stories, over the past several months.

Are there Czech or Slovak fans who might care to join eAPA NAPA?

I was impressed by the biographies of the Semitjovs in Sweden.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel, by Robert Jennings

Greetings, Robert! It looks like you have a respectable fannish resume, there!

I am also bothered by increasing hearing loss. Mostly I notice that more and more people speak in a low, rapid mumble; at the very least, I can't hear critical words and they talk over each other, so I can't always tell what subject they're going on about or what point they think they're making; and I'm not always certain that they're even speaking English. (Not an unreasonable speculation, since a lot of Vancouverites actually speak Punjabi or Cantonese or other languages.)

I have asked my doctor's clinic to refer me to an audiologist.

Your point about comprehension bothers me more. I know a young man in local fandom who has auditory processing disorder, which means he has to ask everyone to repeat what they tell him. Sometimes I'm afraid I'm tending in the same direction.

(And here I am, taking minutes for three different voluntary societies.)

In a way I'm not surprised that people don't register you need *written*, and not spoken messages, even when you've told them. If you're dealing with someone who simply hasn't experienced your problem, then subliminally, they have trouble believing in it.

My father may have been a clear example. For all his virtues, he simply could *not* believe in allergies – perhaps because he saw a certain number of hypochondriacs, working in a hospital. But he simply wouldn't absorb the fact that there *are* lethal allergies, far more serious than a mere distaste for some foods. This was an annoyance to my brother, who discovered he had serious allergies to my father's cigarette smoke, as well as common foods.

There are a *lot* of unfounded attitudes out there.

Onward.

Good to hear about the flowers you notice in your local environment. I haven't tried to cultivate flowers here, although Vancouver is in a great climate zone for gardening. Instead, I have been persuaded to take part in raising a garden plot, as part of an initiative for my housing society. Now the raised garden bed is engulfed by giant mutant monster plants, only some of which I can identify as lettuce. There are probably going to be cucumbers and tomatoes in my future as well.

Re your review of *The Man Who Saw Seconds*: absorbing to read your review. The book's premise is really frightening ... like the Will Smith movie, *Enemy of the State*.

"Breaking News" was a hoot. I wish I had been the first to find and reprint it!

The article about mechanical errors in the Antikythera Machine was very interesting. I have to wonder how wide a gap there was, in the Classical era, between what Hellenic innovators could conceive, and what Hellenic machinists could produce.

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer

About the most constructive thing I can do, about the gap between fandom as I enjoyed it and fandom as it is, is to build an informational website about contemporary fandom. Or fandoms, rather.

It's taking me quite a while.

Onward.

Good on you for joining a protest. Sounds very civil and orderly. I wonder how long they will be allowed.

Brandy Hall Issue 12 May 2025, by Mark Nelson

Glad to see you're another one who enjoys Tolkien's fiction. Years after I remarked to my aunt, "I wish there were more books like *The Hobbit*," after which she exposed me to LOTR, I can view the work more objectively; but I still enjoy the works for what they are.

What they are, I was slow to learn, was Tolkien creating a mythology – at first inadvertently, later intentionally. He was on record as trying to create a specifically English mythology, which he called a

subcreation. The fact that he captured many people's imaginations suggests he succeeded.

For my part I think my entry into science fiction fandom was not motivated by pure interest in the fiction. At that time, I was fairly deliberately looking for a sense of community, which I didn't find in family or university or other groups. Fandom worked, sort of ... at least for years longer than several other leisure interest groups.

Re your comments to me ... so the Australian Bureau of Statistics had a burst of level-headedness, did they? Now I wish they *had* admitted "Jedi" as a religion. It would be funny.

Re your comments to Ahrvid ... so, Thatcher was the first British PM with a science degree? Sad. I remember a time, though, when British Columbia (Canada's westernmost province, the one I live in) had a government cabinet in which *only one* member had a university degree. That seemed typical of the Social Credit Party.

Thank you for your coverage of the Great Egg Drought in Australia! An interesting look at a foreign economy.

Re your comments to *Brownian Motion* #13 ... I'd like to claim that my remarks about convention Codes of Conduct were an attempt to set up a dialogue about how hit-or-miss is the communication of social norms, and whether we can do anything about it.

I'd like to claim that, but I'm not that smart.

It really does seem, sometimes, as if there is less of a social consensus now, and as if there are proportionally more adults who resist any rules or expectations being applied to them – even common courtesies, legislated rules of the road, or legal business practice. Maybe I'm just projecting an impression I got from mass media.

Likewise, I Hold Opinions about what could and should have been part of my grade-school education, but wasn't. (I refrain from holding opinions about current grade-school education as I know doodly-squat about it. And I realize it.)

Re your comments to Sam Lubell ... I think I could respond to your query about *If I Ran the Zoo Con* ..., as I used to have a copy of the game. It dates to before the time when Codes of Conduct were conceived, and costumers' objections to photographs of their trademarked image were unknown. The kinds of situations ran from dealing with a private investigator looking for a runaway (who was potentially a convention member) and

demanding complete compliance from Registration, through a consuite staff finding themselves involuntarily acting as babysitters for a baby who started running a fever, to someone's pet snake that went missing, and turns up in the Artshow with three auction bids and an award for Best of Show.

There was a time when I hoped to collate a nearly foolproof Standard Conrunning Handbook, from many curious, divers and sometimes forgotten materials. This ran aground upon two reefs: (1) nobody was interested – it appears all fans who become conrunners want to do Their Own Thing, Their Own Way, and (2) there are no solutions to all problems – conventions are inherently chaotic, no convention committee performs well on all fronts, and there are always situations you cannot foresee or succeed in overcoming.

Intermission 154, by Ahrvid Engholm

I responded to all of your comment hooks above, didn't I?

Ye Murthered Master Mage #276, by George Phillies

The virtual disappearance of fandom as I knew it – what I am pleased to call "fannish" fandom – might be just a local phenomenon. After all, I am in Canada, and Canada's population centres form the northernmost tier of urban settlement in North America, so some of the changes in popular culture might well be more severe, here than in the States.

But there are other signs of ... not so much retreat, as unfortunate change. When Corflu (the fanzine fans' convention) was held in Vancouver a few years ago, I was struck by how many of the congoers were well over 50 years old. Including me. I had recently tried once again to build a calendar of upcoming conventions, and could not find a listing that year for either Potlatch or Foolscap, which were also fanzine fans' conventions as much as anything.

So be it. The focus has shifted from writings on paper to animation or live action on screen; to gaming; to costuming; to favourite TV or movie series.

Fandom as I knew it was a long-running event. And all good things come to an end.

Thank you for your kind words about "The Jade Ring"! I didn't think I was writing that well.

R.A.I.L. #6, May 2025, by Adrian Kresnak

Re etherdiscipline: Maybe I should convince people around me to say “Over” when they’re finished speaking, and not to speak until someone else has said “Over.” I am so *sick* of people talking over each other.

Re your comment to me: I am pretty much resigned now to the fact that the great majority of fandoms – note the plural – neither understand nor interest themselves in fan funds. The fandom in which fans became well known to each other for fanwriting is simply not current fandom.

Esmeralda County Line #10, April-May 2025, by Kevin Trainor Jr

Re your comment to me: if you get a feeling of déjà vu when reading my apazine, it’s probably because I tend to repeat myself. I must avoid that. On another note, I really must learn not to repeat things I’ve said before. I don’t want to be a typical Boring Old Fart.

Re your comment to George Phillies: after going through several changes of computers, I am now using a Lenovo Ideacentre 3 desktop with Office 365; a not-very old laptop; and a recent purchase from Temu – a lightweight, recent-model tablet which came with a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse.

The problems with the Lenovo that I reported at the beginning of this zine seem to have to do with saving documents in the cloud – meaning, on some server somewhere connected only wirelessly to the device I am pounding. As a result, I am *tired* of automatically being misdirected to deceptive identically-named folders that don’t actually have the documents I’m working on, and thus losing them. It’s time to invest in an external hard drive.

As to writing ... I sympathize, I have trouble finishing stories generally. Is it possible for you to change names, dates and places, and turn fan fiction into salable stories? Or do you just run into the same problem as before?

Which reminds me: it’s time I updated some of my material for the website in progress, including specifically my SF and fantasy markets list.

Re your comments to *Brownian Motion* #13 – I haven’t gotten around to renaming the Great Lakes individually, just declaring they’re the Canadian South Seas. (I also unilaterally renamed the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Hudson Bay, and the Straits of

Georgia and Juan de Fuca, but those are other improved maps.) Can’t tell you anything about the blue features north of Lake Huron, as you call them, that mundane maps won’t tell you.

Samizdat Ish #31, May/June 2025, by Samuel Lubell

I take the view that the cuts in U.S. federal government staff are ill-considered, but that’s just a foreigner’s opinion, not based carefully on complete information.

I wish you the best of British luck in your search for employment.

Thank you for the biography of Lois McMaster Bujold – she is one of my favourite writers.

The collected information on whether a college education is worth it rang a chord, because I became a university dropout in the 1980s. Originally I meant to take just a year out to get some orientation – I went into higher education straight out of high school, without discovering that all the rules I had absorbed were reversed, and I was expected to choose my own future, not to have it dictated to me.

More fundamentally, I was suddenly expected to know what I wanted to do and be, which knowledge or desire was more or less trained out of me.

Not having a direction, of course I didn’t even know the cost-benefit of post-secondary education was a vital issue.

Onward.

The books you reviewed – *Ours Was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*, *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America: A Recent History*, and *Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope* – document what I and many others have concluded about North American recent history. I am glad that they offer recommendations for improving the general welfare.

Snow Poster Township #21 by Heath Row

I wish you a safe and trouble-free move to Portugal!

Your review of *Froomb!* Interested me as I think there was a copy kicking around in one of the libraries I frequented as a child. But I didn’t pick it up, as the title seemed to indicate some writer too much into the 1960s for me to enjoy at the time.

To answer your question to me: What I mean is, yes, that there are local fandom events, but they don't interest me. Gaming, costuming, mediafandoms, and so on are not enough to keep the mind alive. Yes, there's the venerable UBC SF Society, yes, there's the Vancouver SF/F meetup group, and yes, I'll add them to the clubs list for the website I am compiling; but I'm beginning to feel my age, and my unwillingness to try out new people.

To answer the question raised by *Brownian Motion* #13, no, my haunting sense that I've missed something important has nothing to do with the numbering gaffe in NAPA. It's a cognitive condition, or aftermath of childhood trauma, that I have lived with for some time. (I grew up trained into a sense of permanent, congenital inadequacy, and a chronic sense that I had forgotten my most essential obligation, or True Mission in Life. When it got really bad I was convinced that I was a changeling, an alien child kidnapped from vacationing Space Gypsies by a tribe of wandering Anglos, since they needed a designated Fool in their family to point and laugh at. That sort of nonsense.)

Onward.

Since conventions became unaffordable, inaccessible, and less than desirable to me anyway, I read with interest but no judgment about their various foibles. The whole issue of Codes of Conduct leaves me unmoved. Let's face it, when people go to a place where they don't live, on a vacation where they wear clothes they wouldn't be caught dead wearing at home, they tend to act as if they're subliminally released from social norms and inhibitions; SF cons are not the only occasions that demonstrate this. By comparison with some of the bizarre behaviour reported, I

suppose I was pretty tame when I let my hair down. Back in the old days, I was easily gratified if you let me meet and talk at length with old friends, have dinner with them, go to interesting panels, learn some things, get drunk (or stoned) with people who find me funny under the influence, stew comfortably in a hot tub with clothes-optional ladies, and maybe get lucky. Although I admit my natural force is now somewhat abated. You may interpret that as you please.

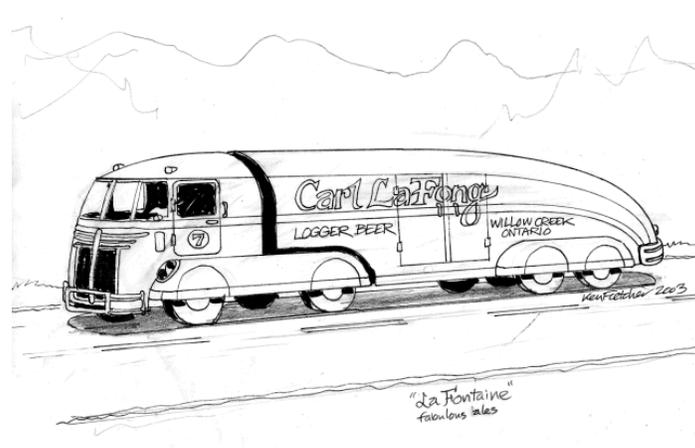
Ah for the good old days.

Re your comment to Sam Lubell about *If I Ran the Zoo Con* – one thing I was trying to say earlier in this apazine, before I so rudely sidetracked myself, was that obtaining the game from NESFA and attempting to play it sort of broke my faith in the quest to attain nearly foolproof conrunning principles. The design of the game, based on some actual conrunning incidents, seemed to imply that *any* decision could turn out to be disastrous; there were no absolutely right answers.

And then, of course, the whole conrunning "game" changed. I gained most of my impressions of conrunning in the 1980s and 1990s (and, at that, mostly within the Pacific Northwest). Since then, economics has changed; hotels are much more inflexible (and much more expensive!), at least in the Northwest; congoers are much more focused on media, comics, costuming, gaming, or other fringe interests; fans who want to meet fans, as much as authors, and have good conversations and panels and parties, far more than buying kipple, are much rarer on the ground.

Maybe I should start a so-called Smith Family Reunion or some other event instead.

And with that, I bid you all adieu.





Esmeralda County Line #11
June-July 2025
A zine for N^oAPA 277

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OR DID I?

Lastish I whined that I'd fallen short on commissions for my tax work, but it turned out that I was mistaken; while I was out East on the Not-Balticon Excursion, Block dropped ~\$60 into my bank account. So I guess I did finish the season in the black after all.

Speaking of the Not-Balticon Excursion, that went well enough. I went down to Las Vegas the day before the flight, got some lab work done at the VA, and flew out to Dulles on the 6th. Spent the rest of the week driving around Northern Virginia and central Maryland, seeing friends, blogging, eating way too much, and trying desperately not to run the gigantic Jeep Grand Cherokee Avis rented me in lieu of a Tesla ("I don't know nuthin' about them electrical cars, ma'am") into cars, curbs, people, etc. The damned thing had the feel of the deuce & a half trucks I used to drive in the Army, though it had more creature comforts and slurped up slightly less fuel.

June and July have been far less busy. There was an NSSAB meeting in June, and I'll be driving down to the NNSS on the 9th to observe the sampling wells on Pahute Mesa, which is near the northern boundary of the former test site and contains the remnants of 85 nuclear tests, including three megaton-plus packages that were part of Project Plowshare. The sampling wells are there to detect any outflow of tritium into the local water table, which will maybe affect local residents in about 1000 years after the water seeps from the NNSS into the Nellis Test & Training Range that surrounds the NNSS and finally into Nye County between Amargosa Springs and Beatty.

The week after that, of course, is Son of Silvercon III. If you happen to be in town, come on by!

BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

Over the last couple of months I have accumulated a small pile of DVDs which I expect to be watching Real Soon Now, most notably *Roughnecks - Starship Troopers Chronicles*, an anime series claiming to be based both on Heinlein's novel and Verhoeven's movie. I also picked up the original *Rollerball* starring James Caan and John Houseman. *Rollerball* and I go way back – I skipped my junior year Ring Dance to watch it in the theater and was impressed enough to see it again and pick up William Harrison's [Rollerball Murders & Other Stories](#), which was notable only for the title story that became the movie.

David J. Butler has written a brief but excellent history of our genre, [The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science Fiction & Fantasy](#). Unlike other books of its ilk, it is not big enough to stun an ox (even a small one) but nonetheless covers all the bases, all the significant authors, and the major controversies in under 200 pages including the index. Highly recommended.

Travis Corcoran, author of the excellent Aristillus books, has written an equally excellent guide to homesteading, [Escape The City](#), which I took the time to look through in search of wisdom to apply to my own project. ETC has a pair of excellent virtues: Corcoran will not express an opinion on things he hasn't tried himself, and he is autistically thorough in describing things he has tried, to the point where I think you'd be better off reading his walk-throughs on various things (e.g., slaughtering a hog) than watching a YouTube video while trying to do it. YMMV.

There is a nascent movement, not quite its own subgenre yet, that calls itself Incensepunk, which as they say blends High Church with High Tech. One example of the movement is Yuval Kordov's [Orders of Magnitude](#), which concerns a squad of Military Order knights in powered armor investigating the collapse of the lunar colony. SF in general has been rather hostile to organized religion, and Incensepunk wants to provide some that isn't. Kordov's debut novel is solid work that walks the fine line between milSF and Cthulhu Mythos-like horror without falling to one side or the other, and it's worth reading.

Also added to my Kindle: John Wright's [Catburglar of the Constellations](#) and [Outlaw of the Outer Stars](#), books 3 & 4 in his enjoyably pulpy space opera Starquest; Maxwell Drake's [Carnage of Kiraz](#), a Harnworld novel which appears to contain dwarves but no elves*; Ralts Bloodthorne's [Bright White Light](#), #19 in his Behold! Humanity! series, in which the Phasic Shades erupt to plague both the Confederation and the Atrekna; and finally Jac Weller's [Wellington in the Peninsula](#), which I have been meaning to acquire since Bernard Cornwell referred to it in his Sharpe novels.

* I will note here that I've never played Harnworld, but I skimmed the Infogalactic article so I'm not completely at sea when it comes to the setting. Looks interesting, but I already have several extensive collections of RPG material that I'll probably never do anything with, including Twilight:2000, Delta Green, and the Laundry RPG based on the Charles Stross series.

Comments on N'APA #276

Intermission #153

(editorial) AYFKM? You seriously think that a man who has had the entire U.S. intelligence community, the FBI, the media, a fair number of flag officers, and the Democratic Party up his ass since 2016 is a Russian agent? To quote Bill James, "You should have your brain checked to see if it has any moving parts." That's all I'm going to say about this ridiculous speculation.

(the *Vasa*) Cool story about the recovery and restoration of the ship.

(History corner) I think you have conflated the ditto machine with the mimeo, though at this point finding either one would require browsing antique shops and junkyards. You can't find either one (or hectographs, for that matter) on Amazon, which suggests to me that they are on the verge of becoming Lost Media, or more properly lost media technology.

(RYCTo Heath) "I don't see 'woke' as generally a good thing." I agree completely, and for the reasons you gave.

(RYCTo me) I'm old enough to remember Trekkies being sneeringly referred to as "drobes" who bought their costumes off the rack instead of hand-sewing them like *real* costumers, which completely missed the point. I also find the notion that SF fans in the 1960s cared what the corporate media thought amusing,

though this is probably affected by my growing up in the Washington DC area, where the Washington Post rarely covered anything that happened outside the boundaries of DC itself. 🍷🍷 Willy wasn't a foot fetishist himself. He was married to a foot model, is all.

Intermission #154

(editorial) What isn't utter balderdash and bunkum has been rendered obsolete by the passing of time.

(Ben Hogan) I can't help being reminded of the German author of westerns, Karl May, though it seems Mr. Genberg did his homework better.

(RYCTo Heath) Drake is indeed interesting. While he's best known for his SF (Hammer's Slammers and all that) he also has a considerable amount of fantasy and horror in print. In fact, he started as a horror author; his first sale, a Lovecraft pastiche, was to August Derleth.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel

Welcome aboard, Bob.

(natter) Sorry to hear about the hearing loss, and even sorer that people can't honor your simple request to deal with you via email. 🍷🍷 You have my sympathies with the roses. For many years I toiled in my parents' back yard to plant various Jackson & Perkins roses, which obstinately refused to grow...meanwhile, the bush of American Beauty roses in the side yard grew like weeds to cover several square yards on the fence and supply an ongoing source of friction with the neighbors. 🍷🍷 The "Peanuts" strip reminds me of one of my favorite English history books, 1066 And All That, which has mock examinations at several points with similar instructions.

(The Man Who Saw Seconds) Now that I've read your review, I'll probably take a look at it. I was actively ignoring it because for the last couple of months every other conversation in Twitter had an ad for the book, and this irritated me.

Archive Midwinter

(RYCTo Garth) "...we can, in our rough way, prepare the groundwork..." This is the way. 🍷🍷 Be fannish, but remember that FIJAGH. There are other things just as important, like baseball. 🍷🍷 There was a short-lived Marvel series about the people who had to clean up after superheroes ~~destroying the city in order to save it~~, but I don't recall if they were superheroes themselves or just ordinary joes. Still, it sounds like a fun topic for a story.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) As I commented lastish, it's damned hard to figure out what's really going on in Ukraine. I've decided to not waste time worrying about it, as what goes on in Carson City, Las Vegas, and Pahump affects me a lot more than what goes on in Ukraine. 🍷🍷 Musk was not a cabinet secretary, he was a special government employee appointed to head DOGE, which is a White House office established by Obama as the U.S. Digital Service. So he didn't require Senate confirmation, was making recommendations instead of regulations, and had to clear out his desk when his 130 days were up. Despite the howling from the Democrats, he did nothing illegal and didn't even draw a salary.

(RYCTo Heath) WRT the cassette tax, SCOTUS has traditionally been unwilling to punish the masses for the misdeeds of the few. Among my acquaintances, it was common practice to copy albums onto cassettes so you could listen to them in your car or on your Walkman since those were more portable. The issue is academic now that music has gone digital and can be stored on thumb drives or telephones; in fact, I alternate between playing music in my car from a thumb drive or over a Bluetooth connection to my phone. ~~Nobody's looking for Danegeld yet.~~

(RYCTo Sam) Erratic behavior from geniuses? Well, I never! ;) I sometimes wonder if later authors deliberately had their robots violate the Three Laws as the setup for their stories, much as Tom Kratman did with Big Boys Don't Cry, which was a deliberate inversion of Keith Laumer's Bolo Combat Unit stories.

(RYCTo me) I'm a firm believer in the notion that people should do what works best for them with their taxes. If your taxes are simple, by all means use the home software; if they're complicated and you anticipate trouble with the revenooers, come see us at the Big Green Square or hire an accountant. 🍷🍷 I really ought to drive down the Extraterrestrial Highway. It's just the other side of the NTTR/NNSS, after all. (LOL)

Brandy Hall

(Miscellaneous) I daresay most of the people residing in the Commonwealth of Virginia aren't aware that their state flag sports an exposed breast, and the same is probably true of the other state flags with seals.

People just don't pay attention to those things.

(RYCT re Official Organ) I prefer to get N'APA as an attachment to e-mail, as I am fairly obsessive about e-mail. On the other hand, if I had to download it from a web page, the chances of me failing to respond would be much higher.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) The reason we didn't impose tariffs on Russia is that they're embargoed, so there would be no point in levying tariffs on goods that could not be imported. As for the uninhabited islands, people were apparently claiming those as corporate locations and thus evading import duties. See also registering your merchant ships in Liberia and other such sketchy places. ☹️☹️ I remember moose meat being commonly available in Alaska and also in northern Minnesota. Harder to get it elsewhere, of course.

(RYCTo Jefferson) I have seen a review of Legends & Lattes at Upstream Reviews which was surprisingly positive, but it doesn't look like my brand of coffee. ☹️☹️ Regarding egg prices, a factor in the 1992 election was the press mocking President Bush (the elder) for being surprised at a supermarket scanner, this being interpreted as a sign that he was out of touch with the common people.

(RYCTo Garth) I wrote a fairly lengthy essay, "Cosplay is not Consent", on the issue of people behaving badly at conventions, some years ago when the experience of running an anime convention was still fresh in my mind. Part of the issue is that conventions have long been regarded as a sort of ~~Red Hour~~ Carnival where normal standards of behavior don't apply or are relaxed, which leads to people who are poorly socialized to start with not keeping their hands to themselves or worse. This behavior goes back to the 1960s, at least.

☹️☹️ I don't know about NASA, but my friend the AV archivist at the Air & Space Museum has run into this issue with audio and video recordings. Tapes exist but the machines to play them back no longer exist.

(RYCTo me) It is the advisory board and not the accreditation board. ☹️☹️ When I was playing EVE-Online about a decade ago, I was shocked to find that Goonfleet was an enthusiastic user of a tactic where when your character was killed in a cheap, easily replaceable attack ship, your clone woke up in a station, jumped into another cheap attack ship, and rejoined the battle.

Ye Murthered Master Mage

(N3F) Good to hear that the activities are picking up, even if the dues-paying member count has not. I will continue to shill for the club at Son of Silvercon.

Brownian Motion

(codes of conduct) Much like Col. Richard Sharpe, I believe that instructions to con members should be simple and to the point, and violators of those instructions should be severely punished. People may object that we aren't dealing with Wellington's "scum of the earth" here, and I would agree insofar as the soldiers of the South Essex Regiment were generally better behaved than most con attendees these days. I of course exclude Son of Silvercon members from this, since they are all well-behaved adults or children raised by good parents.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) You have grossly oversimplified the issues and unfairly maligned the people involved in the Sad Puppies affair. I strongly suggest you read Larry Correia's posts about it on his blog, Monster Hunter Nation. If I sound like I'm taking this personally, it's because I am; I was a fringe player in the SP/RP/Sasquan fiasco and have had to put up far too many uninformed people since who presume to lecture me on what the Sad and Rabid Puppies were all about. ☹️☹️ I'm not sure that the sundering of fandom into literary and media factions was inevitable, since we all know people (and are people) who enjoy SF in a variety of media, but nonetheless it happened. All we can do is reach out to other fans on the other side of the -ideological?- divide and hope to close up the ranks with the things we have in common. ☹️☹️ I typed up a response to Bob Jennings pointing out that the multiplicity of conventions is no indication of the "health" of fandom since most of the cons are, as you point out, specialized conventions and not general-

interest SF cons. 🍷🍷“The people have spoken.” “But the people...are retarded.” – Indian philosopher Osho

R.A.I.L.

(etherdiscipline) Having spent a good part of my life in the military or its auxiliaries, I am very familiar with the notion, which in the U.S. Army is called Communications Security, or COMSEC. But what if we lived in a world where the luminiferous aether existed? The word would take on a very different meaning!

Samizdat

(natter) I'm sorry to hear that you got RIF'd, and hope you find something satisfactory soon.

🍷🍷Lois McMaster Bujold is the SF equivalent to the band Poco for me. I keep thinking I should pick up some of her books (and I did enjoy the one I read) but somehow I never get around to it. Ditto with Adrian Tchaikovsky, though I haven't actually read anything of his. I quite fancy the musical stylings of his cousins Bram & Pyotr, though. 🍷🍷I'm curious as to whether the college studies differentiated between STEM degrees (which generally pay very well) and liberal arts/*studies degrees, which do not. My gut feeling is that STEM degree holders tend to pull up the mean average, whereas the modal figure for BA holders is a lot lower. 🍷🍷I would strongly disagree that Atwood and Jemison are excellent SF writers, but reasonable people can disagree on matters of taste. In any case, ever since the 1940s there have been women writing good SF. (C.L. Moore and Leigh Brackett, to name just two.)

(projects) It's generally accepted that the Crusaders' tendency to butcher Orthodox Christians was one of the factors leading to the decline of the Byzantine Empire. 🍷🍷An actuary friend of mine argues that Bleak House is unfairly underrated by most critics. 🍷🍷I saw *Interstellar* at the Udvar-Hazy center's IMAX theater and was blown away. I think I would like to see it on a smaller screen so I can pay closer attention to the plot, which I agree shifted from hard SF to mysticism...or maybe we're not understanding the intersection of math and mysticism. 🍷🍷Have you noticed any changes in Asimov's and Analog now that they are under new management?

(RYCTo Ahrvid) “Nearly every rule in a code of conduct came about because someone...made the rule necessary.” Sad but true.

(RYCTo George) I haven't written or read fanfic in literally decades, but authors used to cite the source material, especially if they were doing crossover fanfic.

(RYCTO Garth) Bond learning he's a fictional character reminds me of the game Fate/Grand Order, in which several Heroic Spirits (Don Quixote, Pope Johanna, Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein's monster*, and James Moriarty) are legendary literary figures. They don't always remember clearly their (fictional) exploits.

(RYCTo me) You might as well just start reading the extant ASoIaF books and when done, watch the eighth season of Game of Thrones. 🍷🍷There's supposed to be a Buc-ee's opening this year near Winchester, but that's a bit of a drive.

*Gender-swapped to appear as a teenage girl, who is “adopted” by Moriarty, Tesla, and Sir Charles Babbage, who appears as a steam-driven robot.

Snow Poster Township

(natter) I sympathize with you having to accomplish several herculean tasks before moving. I'm not looking forward to doing the same myself in the near future, even if my demented dream of reviving a ghost town doesn't work out; I am thinking that finding a one-floor house here in Tonopah where I'll have room to unpack and sort out all these damned boxes will be more practical anyway. 🍷🍷Your Rotsler cartoon reminded me of this cartoon, which complements his:



POST-NATTER

This Sunday might as well be N3F Sunday in the burrow; in addition to finishing this zine for N'APA, I'll be updating the membership roster and doing the treasurer's report for George.

I am happy to report that preparations for Son of Silvercon III are pretty much complete, with just a bit of printing work to be done. That'll have to be done in Las Vegas, since the local copy shop was run by the local paper, and they closed their Tonopah office due to a lack of ad sales. So it's either drive two hours to Bishop, CA (nope) or get things done on the frequent occasions when I'm in Las Vegas. This is also going to make fulfilling my responsibilities to Stipple-APA harder ~~but I knew the job was dangerous when I took it.~~ Anyway, the T-shirts are coming in tomorrow, the staff has been briefed, our GoH is ready to hold forth, and we will be purchasing pie and tacos along with fluids and munchies for the consuite as we get closer to the weekend.

The observation at Pahute Mesa was interesting and loud enough that we needed to wear ear protection; the well was in the far northwest corner of the Security Site, and I observed sourly to the Navarro admin person that it would have been less trouble for me to drive to the drilling site by coming in from the north through the Tonopah Test Range...assuming, of course, that I could have gotten the necessary clearances and my car could have handled the absolutely wretched roads in that end of the Site.



R.A.I.L. #7

R.A.I.L. #7

July 2025

Adrian Kresnak

railfanzine@gmail.com

Cover art: I took this photo while on a road trip in eastern Pennsylvania.

Commentary

Robert Jennings — hello! Nice to see you! I appreciate what you've shared with us.

Jefferson Swycaffer — your gaming session-turned-prose-fiction sounds fun! I've come to realize that as much as I love my search-and-rescue superheroes, I'm finding it too depressing to actually go through the kind of realistic disaster I imagined them for.

Mark Nelson — Your report about the NSW egg situation was interesting! One of my neighbors started keeping chickens, too. The egg supply here seems to have evened out, though now my local grocery has a sign announcing a shortage of organic milk.

Re: Jedi being listed as a religion: I'm interested in the intersection between intellectual property rights and spirituality. I'm thinking of *Jan Herron*, a novel marketed as being written by Mark Twain "from the Ouija Board". Twain's daughter Clara sued with two arguments. First: if the channeled messaging was fake and the medium wrote the story herself, it would be false advertising to use Twain's name. Second: if the channeled messaging was real and Twain really was writing from behind the grave, all profits had to go to the Twain estate and the publisher who had bought the legal rights to all his work.

Samuel Lubell — Beautiful pictures of the cherry trees! I'm happy you got to go see the museums in DC. / It's good to hear some perspective about the magazines changing ownership.

Heath Row – Good luck on the move! / re: pronouns – don't worry, it's all good.

Natter 1: The Age of Revelation!

There's an upcoming Marvel event focusing on Doug "Cypher" Ramsey. The teaser comic comes out 7/16, so that's my plan for this week. I'm also excited about the Imperial event, which gets its issue #2 on the same day.

Natter 2: A Report from Ann Arbor

I'm not usually a fan of natural history museums. Given the choice, I'd rather visit an art museum – and the closer to modern-day, the better. Maybe it says something about me that I'm

always drawn to the new. The only reason we ended up at *this* natural history museum is because the one I wanted to go to was blocked off by road work.

I had fun.

They had this fascinating exhibit about evolution and genetics. These are topics that interest me, but they're not the kind of thing one can really "be a fan of," you know? I'm not interested in origin debates and I'm sick of America's fascination with eugenics. I wanna see the *X-Men*.

(Granted, the X-Men aren't exactly high-science when it comes to their portrayals of evolution, either. Most comics aren't, and I agree that's the best for the genre. POINT IS: I love how genetics and environment interact in the life of an individual. I enjoy stories that explore those interactions.)

In superhero origin stories, I love when the powers manifest into something the character desperately needed – maybe not what they *literally* need in the story, but what they need for the emotion narrative, something that reflects who they are as people. X-Men stories are great for this (or maybe I just feel like that because they're my current favorite superhero team). I keep thinking about x-genes having the potential to manifest in near-infinite ways, then finally "locking in" at the start of the story.

In the bottom floor, the museum had something I'd never seen in a Natural History Museum: an exhibit devoted to the *postnatural*. The introduction describes postnatural as all those parts of the natural world that have been intentionally influenced by human activity. Think of all the dog breeds, for example. Selective breeding has made all these varieties based on things that humans think would be good for a dog. A terrier isn't artificial – and yet it's not exactly natural anymore, either. It's *postnatural*.

Then there's the more space-age kinds of influence, too. In the exhibit, there's a specimen of a "firefly petunia." Humans added a gene to give the plant bioluminescence. How cool is that?

(There's a philosophical question here about how humans should be interacting with natural selection. I don't have a good answer to that. I'm noting this here to give the question to you.)

This brings me to another of my favorite comic book origin plots: genetic engineering. It's fun when a character tries some experimental potion on *themselves*. It's a classic, all the way back from Jekyll and Hyde, and it's form of body modification that I wish more characters would choose to do.

Brandy Hall Issue 13 (July 2025)

Brandy Hall 13 is produced for *N'APA* mailing 277 (July 2025) by Mark Nelson.

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This is West Riding Press Publications ??? This is West Riding Press Publications (Australia) 37.

In my first issue I followed in the spirit, if not the flesh, of Garth Spencer (*BROWNIAN MOTION* 1, mailing 263), by discussing my involvement in non-SF fandoms. In my second issue I followed Garth more directly by discussing my interactions with SF fandom. In my third issue I discussed my involvement with APAs. In the fourth and final instalment, appearing in issue five, I reminisced about attending science fiction conventions.

In the sixth issue, inspired by Ahrvid Engholm, I reprinted two articles from the Australian newspaper *The Age*. The first was published on Saturday 19th March 1932 with the title ‘‘The Automatic Pilot. George The Robot in the Air’’. That article was a red herring. The article that Ahrvid quoted from was published on Friday 20th September 1935 with the title ‘‘Meet Mr. Robot. Not Forgetting His Master’’. In the seventh issue there was a short spin on a YouTube video with the title ‘Top 10 Best Sci-fi Movies’. In the eighth issue I wrote about how I became a fan of science fiction, focusing on SF on the TV. The culprits are threefold: Dr Who, Star Trek (The Original Series) and Blakes 7. In the ninth issue I wrote about the role that science-fiction movies played in my becoming a fan of science-fiction. I focused on movies that I viewed at the cinema, concentrating on Star Wars. In the tenth issue, again inspired by Ahrvid, I reprinted an article by Sven Eklund on ‘‘Science Fiction in Scandinavia’’. This was reprinted from *The Australian Science Fiction Review* 14 (February 1968). *Brandy Hall* 11 was the first issue to be written using pages, the previous issues having been written using LibreOffice. In *Brandy Hall* 12 I explained how I started became a Tolkien fan, courtesy of the BBC 1 children’s TV series *Jackanory*. For the first time I used US Letter size rather than A4, but that didn’t prevent the peculiar page breaks that had happened when I used A4.

It’s Tuesday 15th July and I’ve only just finished writing the first draft of my mailing comments. Unfortunately, the deadline for submission for the next mailing is the 15th July. Luckily, the 15th of July in America is not the same time as the 15th of July in Australia. I’m hoping to take advantage of this time difference and submit *Brandy Hall* in time for inclusion in the next mailing.

Why have I left it to the last moment? Partly because I thought the deadline was the 17th July. I did not read Jefferson’s email very carefully! But mostly because I’ve been pretty busy. We moved house on May 29th. The two removalists worked very hard and over eleven hours made two return journeys between our new and old houses. (It’s a 10-15 minute car trip between the two.) They moved almost everything that we had put into boxes. Unfortunately, there was a quite significant amount of ‘stuff’ that had not been packed by the time we moved. (This despite the fact that we knew that we would be moving at some point this year). We spent a big chunk of time the following week moving many, but not all, things over There were also a few bigger items that they didn’t move. There was a small amount of

room left in their truck before they left the old house for the final trip and they asked if they should pack my keyboard or our TV. The vote split evenly. My wife had the casting vote and she selected the TV. (Which I agree was the right choice for the family, even though I would have preferred my keyboard).

Then on June 6th my wife's sister and her family arrived for a five week visit. This increased the number of people in our household from three to seven. (They're leaving on 17th July, remember that date? Perhaps I mixed up the *NAPA* deadline with my sister-in-law's departure?) Then on June 28th one of my wife's cousins arrived with her family. This increased the number of people in the household to ten. The number decreased back down to seven on 11th July. During the five week period we've had a stay in Sydney (with the seven of us), a stay in Canberra (with ten of us), and a second stay in Sydney (with seven of us). There have been some day trips. Life has been quite busy and there's been no time for *NAPA*. (Though I did find time to write a few lots). Things have quietened down the last few days, but I've had to write a long overdue report on a PhD thesis - maybe the last time I'll be asked to examine one. (It's very poorly paid. The main reason to agree to be an examiner is that the person who asked now owes you a favour, such as examining one of your students. I now have no PhD students, so need to nail down future examiners.) So this issue is a mailing-comments only issue.

The Mathom House

Brownian Motion 13 (Garth Spencer)

"...the long-running Vancouver convention, VCON, was bothered by a jackass who repeatedly did things like setting up a hibachi on the balcony of his rented room."

Courtesy of this example I have learnt what a hibachi is.

I hope you don't mind if I now print part of my loc on *Obdurate Eye* 51.

I was going to tell which of your life skills I definitely do not have, but the list is too long. Instead, let's look at a subsection of your "Life Skills: A Proposed Encyclopedic List" with a vague threat to return to this topic in a future loc!

* *How to apply some science to your home, to renovations, to health, to gardening or your workspace*

I have zero gardening and renovation skills.

* *How to arrange flowers*

Not something I have ever needed to do.

* *How to bake chocolate chip cookies*

I am sure that I have the skills to make chocolate chip cookies from a recipe should I ever need to do so. Perhaps I will try and accomplish this before my next loc. (I failed to do so due to the incursion of my wife's family and relatives. Perhaps by the next mailing...)

* *How to balance your chequebook*

My bank, along with many other Australian banks, no longer provides its customers with a chequebook. If I really need a cheque I must go to the bank and request that they write one. I'm not sure what "balancing your chequebook" means. I always used to check that all cheque transactions on my bank account matched those on the stubs in my chequebook. Is there more to it than that?

* *How to barbecue*

Based upon a conversation I had with a guy who lived in Tennessee I believe that the word "barbecue" means something different to Australians than it does to Americans (in addition to my very selectivity sample set this comment is also based upon a few TV shows I've seen) and by extension perhaps to Canadians. In the UK barbecuing means something different. It means a middle-aged man creating a large amount of smoke by burning meat on one of the few days of the year where it looks like it will be a nice Summer's day. (It almost always rains on such days.)

* *How to breathe properly*

I've been successfully doing it for nearly 57 years so I assume that I must be doing something right.

* *How to brew coffee*

I probably don't know how to do this, but what does "brew" mean?

* *How to build a fire*

I'm not an outdoors person. If I survive into a future where this is a required skill then I am going to quickly perish. Who are we kidding? If there's a future in which people need to know how to build a fire to survive then I will have mostly likely have perished before that future arrives.

* *How to build and drive a go-cart*

I don't know how to do it. But Mr Grug knows how to do it. Mr Grug is a beloved character in a long running series of Australian children's picture books.

* *How to build and maintain a website*

I learnt how to write HTML code late in 1993 or perhaps in 1994 and since then I've written a small number of web pages, but perhaps that is different from building a site. (I never learnt cascading style sheets. What puts the cascade into cascading style sheets? I know not)

* *How to buy a diamond*

My wife didn't want a diamond ring, so I didn't buy one. My understanding is that, even for professionals, it's very difficult to distinguish between a lab-grown and natural diamond without the use of expensive tools. Since the former are much cheaper in the unlikely event that I need to buy one I would buy a lab-grown diamond.

* *How to care for a houseplant*

We have a demonstrated affinity for killing houseplants.

* *How to care for your skin*

This question, like some of the others, is a bit vague. What exactly does care mean? In Australia caring for your skin involves knowing that you should always wear a hat in the sun, always apply sun-screen in the sun, and always wear a shirt, in the sun. Personally, I think that should always wear a shirt. I am always shocked when man thinks it's OK to go to the local supermarket without putting a shirt on. Am I showing my age?

* *How to catch fish*

I've only ever been fishing once in my life. I was 16. I had to get up very early in the morning. We were fishing from a boat in the lake. The fish took my bait and I was none the wiser.

* *How to change a diaper*

I do know, but until I was 54 I would not have known.

* *How to change a tire*

* *How to change your oil*

As I don't drive I do not consider it to be essential for me to know how to do these.

* *How to clean a house*

* *How to clean and deodorize shoes*

Knowing how to do something does not necessarily mean that you do it as often as you should, or perhaps even at all. Neither my wife nor myself are very big on cleaning and in the nine years that we lived in our last house parts of it were only sporadically cleaned. (Some parts of it were never cleaned). One of the advantages of retiring is that I now have the time to clean our new house. (That's the way my wife sees it). It's going to be my responsibility. I may be asking you for some tips!

* *How to conduct a background investigation*

Not something I have ever needed to do. The last time I was on a university appointments committee we were told that it's against university policy for committee members to look at the applicants social media profiles. I think one reason for that is that we are not supposed to know the gender of the applicants. That does make it difficult to increase the number of women working in the STEM disciplines. I believe that we had something like 70 applications. Very surprisingly five of the six people on the committee ranked the same applicant as number one. The sixth member of the committee, the Head of School, did not rank this applicant in their top six. Was the gender of the applicant a factor in the Head of School not selecting them in their top six? I would say so.

* *How to decide what you have to do next (executive skills)*

I have decided that I am ending considering these questions when I reach the end of page eight (of *Obdurate Eye* 51).

* *How to decorate a Christmas tree*

We don't have a Christmas tree. Perhaps we will buy one when our son is a little older. As he still doesn't know anything about Christmas, there seems no point. What? There's a right way to decorate a Christmas tree? Seems a bit prescriptive.

Ryctm

“Interesting to read how you’re handling the inconvenience of losing the use of your University laptop. (For my part I’ve generally found myself using PC-compatible computers, and Microsoft platforms and software, with occasional excursions into Ubuntu.)”

I’m now 56 years and 11 months old and I’ve never bought a computer. I didn’t need my own computer when I was an undergraduate (1986—1989). Before I joined uow I always got by using whatever unix machine was available at where I worked (1989-2003). When I joined uow, I used their unix mainframe and had a PC laptop. Then when laptops running Ubuntu became available I started to use those. At some point in time use of the mainframe was heavily discouraged. One of the things that I was apprehensive about with regard to taking a voluntary redundancy was how I was going to survive computer wise.

My wife has always used Macs, so I started to use her desktop. (To be more precise, the more modern of her two desktops.) Now I am going to reveal my shocking lack of knowledge about computers. I did not know that the MacOS is based on unix. I did not realise that if you open a terminal window that you can use all your favourite unix commands. Discovering that made my day and has made my life much easier. I’ve installed sage, which is an open-source mathematics software system designed for symbolic and numerical mathematics. (I mainly use it as a calculator to keep on top of our finances). An essential piece of software for writing academic material (and my ANZAPA zine) is LaTeX. (LaTeX is a document preparation system widely used for producing high-quality, structured documents, especially in academic, scientific, and technical writing.) Fifteen years ago I would have had to struggle with figuring out how to install this on a Mac. But in 2025 that’s not a problem. I can write LaTeX documents via the web site Overleaf.

I may at some future date buy my own laptop. But equally I might manage with using my wife’s Mac laptop - do we really need a laptop each?

Ryct Adian Kresnak

“English is full of ambiguous bigender names, ranging from loanwords like Kim to my father’s name Leslie to my brother’s name Sidney to British names like Evelyn and Noel. For my part, I used to think the Australian fan Leigh Edmonds was a woman, until my misapprehension was corrected.”

The first wife of the British author Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) was Evelyn Gardner. According to wikipedia, they became known to their friends as He-Evelyn and She-Evelyn. I’ve never known any female Sidneys or Noels. That may just indicate no more than a paucity of female friendships on my part.

Intermission #153 (Ahrvid Engholm)

I very much enjoyed reading your account of the 2025 Nordic World Ski Championships which I only read about in *Intermission*.

The only time I've had a sauna have been on my three trips to Finland.

Thank you for your article about the Vasa, I really enjoyed reading it. I'm not very positive that we'll have travel to Sweden, but my wife harbours a fantasy about visiting Denmark (because of Lego). If we ever reach Copenhagen, I'll suggest that we should at least take the ferry to Gothenburg; perhaps a side trip to Stockholm will be in order.

"...and later traders to East Asia."

I hope you will discuss this in a future issue. I didn't know that Swedish traders visited East Asia.

"It may be my 151st published short story - estimated, I haven't kept count."

You need to find the time to make a list of all your short stories. I hope to see that list in a future issue of *Intermission*. How many of your short stories have been published in English?

"Having had a look, it doesn't feel like a fanzine to me."

That's an interesting comment because it raises some questions. Firstly, what does a fanzine feel like to you? Secondly, should we expect that the first fanzines to look like a fanzine? That implies that fanzines arrived fully formed. SF fanzines have evolved since the 1930s haven't they?

"Cosmic Stories, a supposedly hectographed publication by Jerry Siegel (of Superman fame) from 1929 and "it was advertised in the classified section of Science Wonder Stories". The problem is nobody have seen it (or the Wonder Stories ad!) [...] Sam Moskowitz mentions it in The Immortal Storm, 1945, placing it among the "rarest" publications - so rare SaM never saw it. It's also mentioned in Pavlat/Evans fanzine index (1955). Nobody has seen it, info is shaky. On these grounds I'll write it off."

I agree with you. If no-one has ever seen the fanzine then it can't be considered the first fanzine. If no one has been able to track down the advert then there's considerable doubt that it ever existed. I sent a draft copy of *Brandy Hall* 13 to Mark Plummer and he made the following observation.

Mark Plummer (10th June, 2025) I am now curious about that alleged fanzine Cosmic Stories as advertised in the classified section of Science Wonder Stories where nobody has seen the fanzine or the advertisement! Surely the issues of SWS are online at archive.org and if it's 1929 then that's only six issues to check... (I shall now restrain myself from going off in search of something that doubtless plenty of others have tried to find before. Actually, F3 has a pretty good article about it: [https://fancyclopedia.org/Cosmic_Stories_\(Siegel\)](https://fancyclopedia.org/Cosmic_Stories_(Siegel)))

(Back to the normal flow of material.) You, that is to say Ahrvid, might be interested in the following which appeared in *Quoz* 100 (distributed with ANZAPA mailing 344, April 2025).

“I didn’t mention earlier that I went to a mimeo conference last week. ‘The revolution will be stencilled! Mimeography and Small Press at UCL’ was an open-to-anybody conference of talks and workshops at University College London near Euston station. Rob Hansen told me about it and it was free and I hadn’t anything else in particular on that day. The University has been collecting these publications for 60 years now and has a substantial archive, mostly of poetry zines and underground publications. They’re not dissimilar to our own duplicated fanzines, if perhaps more given over to experimental design. The workshop was led by Hamish Ironside, the author of a book on British zines. In common with many people he’d originally dated the idea back to the punks in the 1970s, but he’d stumbled across Rob Hansen’s website and realised it went back another forty years. Claire’s and my earliest joint fanzines were duplicated and so I’m familiar with the principles although I’ve never typed a stencil. However, there were probably fewer than half-a-dozen people there, including me and Rob, who’d ever even seen a duplicator in action. The smell, something I’ve not encountered since the 1990s, was absolutely transporting, reminding me of Andy Hooper’s review of Claire’s and my first joint fanzine when he opened the envelope and:

“...a delicious aroma, the by-product of Maureen Speller’s fine mimeography, filled the room and imbued me with the spirit of the living Roscoe.”

In your list of fandoms kick started by SF fanzines you could also include postal diplomacy fandom as this was started by New York fan John Boardman in 1963. Many of the early players and publishers were active in SFdom, some of them very well known. (John passed away May 29th 2025. I believe he was most active in SFdom in the 1960s, including being Treasurer of the 1967 WorldCon.)

It’s a mystery as to why anyone thinks Trump has any business smarts. One article I read suggested that if’d taken the money his dad gave him in the 1970s and invested in a reasonably conservative way in the stock-market he would be worth multitudes of what he was before he became President the first time around.

“If Trumps fumbling isn’t active sabotage, it could just be that he is slipping into dementia. He is after all soon 80”

In today’s newspaper (5th June) there was an article claiming that Trump has set up an investigation into whether Biden was suffering from dementia towards the end of his Presidency. There is an implication that he will try and use this as a lever to nullify some of the presidential pardons that Biden issued.

“and Sweden undeservingly acquired the reputation of a land of wild sex.”

Speaking as an Englishman, we don’t know very much about Sweden. After ABBA, 1958, and wild sex we have exhausted the list. The third item on the list may, or may not, be related to the first item on the list.

The Swamp Pot Sentinel 1.1 (Robert Jennings)

Welcome to NAPA. Or, give your previous involvement with N3F, is it welcome back to NAPA?

Re *The Man Who Saw Seconds*.

Your review of Boldizar's novel reminded me of a movie that I haven't seen, *Next* (2007). In this the protagonist can see a few minutes into the future. Returning to *The Man Who Saw Seconds* how does seeing into the future work? Do I see the world as it is through my eyes, and the world as it might be imagined in my brain? That sounds that it would be confusing until you cottoned on to how it worked. Suppose I have a choice of selecting one of two envelopes. If I think about selecting envelope one do I see the future that arises due to my choice? If I change my mind and imagine selecting the second envelope do I now imagine a new future?

Ye Murthered Master Mage 276 (George Phillies)

"On the other hand, the count of dues-paying members is not increasing."

The N3F is a very long running organisation, founded in 1941. I'm assuming that many historical records have been lost along the way... what records does the organisation have? For example, for what years are there membership lists?

Intermission #154 (Ahrvid Engholm)

Thanks for summarising so many of the films in the Short Film Festival. I enjoyed reading these and your thoughts on the entries.

"a documentary by an immigrant lady who hits the city streets with her "How to become Swedish?" survey. What is being Swedish? Citizenship? Language? Culture? Interesting project."

Interesting questions. Part of the process of becoming an Australian citizen requires non-citizens to pass an Australian Citizenship Test. This "assesses whether applicants have a sufficient understanding of Australia's values, history, traditions, and system of government, and whether they speak English well enough to integrate into Australian society." The test contains twenty multiple-choice question and the pass mark is 75%. It's debatable as to whether passing the Citizenship test shows an understanding of "culture". I've yet to take the test. I believe that there is also an interview which tests your understanding of functional conversational English.

As a non-citizen I've often wondered how many Australian citizens would pass the test and whether Australian citizens should have to pass the test as part of the process for applying for their first Australian passport...

"[...] a young man preparing a school reunion party, for class mates who have mostly left the little town while he has remained."

I'm not going to travel from Australia to attend a school reunion party in England. But even if I lived in England I wouldn't bother attending a school reunion party. I doubt I'd attend it if I was living in the suburb of the town which contains the school. It has zero attraction for me.

"Anders Nilsson had the advantage to get all the books in file format directly from Kjell, which has made it possible to do so some deep studies of the texts. This means that Kjell had taken the time to type the books into his computer, because in the 1970s they were of course produced by trusty old typewriters."

Wow! That is quite the heroic act. I know that the books were only 128 pages, but to retype them into a computer. I wonder why he did it? Did he think it would make it easier to sell to a new publisher?

"Of course you need to test the technology first, so in 1954 our first nuclear reactor, a small research plant called R1"

I wonder how many countries developed a working nuclear reactor before Sweden? According to ChatGPT only three countries had a working nuclear reactor before Sweden: America (1942, developed for the Manhattan project), Canada (1945, for research purposes), and the United Kingdom (1947, for research). The Soviet Union's first nuclear reactor was started in June 1954, the first to supply electricity to the power grid.

"As if that wasn't enough, he threatens friends and destroys US economy. His tariff policy is incomprehensible. He invents his own back-of-envelope tariffs by a formulas economists have never seen before..."

Trump claimed that the purpose of the tariffs was, in part, to penalise countries that America has a trade deficit with. He imposed tariffs on Australia. However, the US has a trade surplus against Australia. I wonder what he would have to say if the Australian government decided to impose tariffs against America on the grounds that Australia has a trade deficit with America?

Archive Midwinter (Jefferson Swycaffer)

Ryctm

"Re formatting, so long as you send us either a Word-compatible document or a pdf, we're good."

I'm now writing *Brandy Hall* using pages. I save the final version as a word document which I send to you. (I thought we were discouraged from sending you a PDF.) Last time I formatted my issue using the US Letter paper size. I thought that would eliminate strange formatting errors, but it did not. What paper size should I use?

Ryct Heath Row

"I have pirated music, making copies to cassette tapes and giving them to friends".

When I was a teenager it was a breach of the law (in the UK) to even copy a record that you owned onto a cassette tape - even if you had no intention of giving it to a friend. I found it more convenient to record a LP onto a cassette tape and to play the cassette tape, rather than the LP; a breach of the law! For starters, you could listen to music for 45 minutes straight. Additionally, you weren't restricted to

listening to your LP in the only room in the house which had a record player. Finally, you could listen to your LP whilst you were in your parents card.

Ryct Kevin Trainor Jr

“For taxes, I go to an accountant”

One of the few “culture shocks” moving to Australia from the UK was learning that I had to submit my own tax return. Nowadays I submit my return electronically. Before that I had to fill it in my hand and post it to the Australian Tax Office (ATO). The ATO helpfully provided two large books for tax payers to consult when writing their returns, luckily only one of these applied to me. As my tax affairs were reasonably straight-forward I did not need to read every page of the guidance book. Still, there were a few times when I wondered if it would be less stressful to pay an accountant to fill in my return. (In Australia that’s a tax deductible expense on next year’s return). I always persevered and completed it myself.

The only section of the guidance book that I need to consult were the rules regarding what the ATO considers to be legitimate work-related business expenses. As an academic I had a number of these including: academic texts, professional memberships, union fees, and travel related expenses. The last of these was most often attending a conference/workshop/meeting of some kind. (Some of the expenses might be covered by my employer.) Expenses related to attending a meeting include: registration fees, travel costs, and living expenses. The living expenses include: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and miscellaneous expenses. Let’s assume that the conference was within Australia. The ATO sets what it considers to be reasonable living expenses for the eight capital cities of Australia. The rest of Australia is broken down into: High-cost country centres, Tier 2 country centres, and other country centres. The reasonable living expenses depend upon your salary. There are three bands depending upon if your annual salary is: equal to or lower than \$138,790, between \$138,791 and \$247,020, or equal to or higher than \$247,021. (All figures in AUD!)

For example. Suppose that I travelled to Adelaide for work and that my annual salary is in the lowest band. Then my reasonable amount for accomodation is \$158 a night. My reasonable food and drink amounts per day are: \$32.10 for breakfast, \$36.10 for lunch, and \$61.50 for dinner. My reasonable incidentals claim per day is \$23.00.

What the ATO says is:

“The reasonable amounts only provide the maximum amount you can claim without being required to substantiate your expenditure (refer to paragraph 33 of TR 2004/6). If you rely on the reasonable amounts and the ATO checks your tax return, you will still be required to show:

- you spent the money in performing your work duties (for example, in travelling away from home overnight on a work trip)
- how you worked out your claim (for example, you kept a diary)
- you spent the money yourself (for example, using your credit card statement or other banking records) and were not reimbursed (for example, a letter from your employer), and
- you correctly declared your allowance as income in your tax return.”

Recently the ATO issued a list of the most outlandish work related tax deductions it rejected in the last tax year.

- A mechanic claimed a number of household goods: an air fryer, microwave, two vacuum cleaners, a television, gaming console and gaming accessories as work-related. These were rejected by the ATO as they were “personal in nature”.
- A truck driver stated that he became hot and sticky during a trip and needed to have a swim. He claimed his swimwear as a business related expense.
- “Last year, we had someone that worked in a laundromat that tried to claim about \$30,000 on their overseas safari trip as a work-related expense,” he said. “Obviously, that one was a personal expense.”

Millie Muroi. (May 7th 2025). Sprung! The wildest claims people have made on their tax returns. *Sydney Morning Herald*.

R.A.I.L. #6 (Adrian Kresnak)

“The story is set around the “Race to the North,” where trains in the late 1800’s would race each other from London to Edinburgh.”

I’ve never heard of this race. One of Garth’s favourite expressions seems to be that “all knowledge is found in fanzines”. But the race makes sense. In the late 1800s there were numerous private railways. I wonder how the logistics of it worked? Surely a regular train wouldn’t be delayed to give preference to a train in the Race to the North? According to ChatGPT there were two races, in 1888 and 1895. The winner of the latter race won in a time of 6 hours and 19 minutes. The typical travel time in a train today is 4 hours and 59 minutes. The fastest journey is just over four hours whereas if you travel on the sleeper train it takes a more sedate seven hours. Returning to the Race to the North. Why was there no third race? ChatGPT tells me that

“This race ended when the government and railway managers intervened due to safety concerns, fearing accidents from reckless speed and overworked crews.”

Ryctm

“Are you allowed to tell us some of what you might research?”

Although I was offered and accepted a position as an honorary academic in April, HR have not yet processed the paper-work to confirm my appointment. This tells me that someone, either the Head of School or the Dean, is blocking my appointment. I won’t be able to get to the bottom of this until I am able to visit the university and speak to the Head of School. I didn’t do this earlier because we moved house on May 29th and I was pre-occupied with packing. I won’t be doing this until July as my wife’s sister and her family have come to visit for five weeks. (I did answer your question in response to a mailing comment by Heath, provided later!)

Esmeralda County Line (Kevin Trainor Jr)

I was interested in your comments on “The Life & Times of Horatio Hornblower”. I read these in my early teens, my parents setting me off when they bought me “Mr. Midshipman Hornblower” as a present (birthday or Christmas, I forget). I spent a few happy years tracking down all the novels (? I think). A few years ago I had a hankering to reread them and I’ve been slowly acquiring them in second-hand bookshops.

Ryctm #1

“I’m not sure whether to congratulate or commiserate with you on your early retirement”

It’s a tricky one. Left to my own devices I was planning on retiring at the age of 64 years, rather than at the age of 56.5 years. So I’m retiring 7.5 years ahead of schedule. Financially, I don’t anticipate having to find another job. My voluntary redundancy settlement was equivalent, after tax, to two years net pay. We recently moved house and selling our previous house should provide sufficient funds to survive until I’m in my early 60s, at which point I will be able to access my superannuation money. (I can access it from the age of 60, but it’s advantageous to leave it as long as possible before accessing it). So, on the plus side, it looks like I have an additional 7.5 years to enjoy retirement and I also get to spend more time with my son (who is almost three). On the negative side, I would have preferred to continue working.

We moved house on May 29th. I’ve now unpacked all my books from the library in the old house, plus almost all the books that were put into boxes when we moved in 2016. (There’s still a few books missing, I’m hoping that they didn’t go missing when we moved in 2016 and are lurking in a box that doesn’t have the word ‘books’ on the.) One of the ‘things’ that I can see from where we’ve currently set up our desktop (not the final destination as we’ve not yet moved the usual computer desk) is my paternal grandfather’s set of “The Diary of Samuel Pepys” (in 11 volumes, though one volume is the index). One of the silver linings from my early retirement is that I will finally start to read them. (I’ve had them for approximately 28 years, it’s about time that I started to read them.) My current plan is to start reading them in January 2026 and follow Pepys by reading them on a day-by-day basis. That will take me ten years to read straight through, so I might speed things up.

Ryctm #2

“I am against the removal of statues for the same reason I am against the editing of history to suit a particular political tendency.”

In principle I agree with you on both counts, but in practice I think it can be difficult to tell when history is being rewritten “to suit a particular political tendency”. That decision seems to be a function of your own political perspective. What should be said about slavery and its aftermath in the school curriculum? Your answer to that question could well depend upon your political views.

Ryctm #3

“I do, however, think pornography should not be on the shelves of school libraries.”

I agree, subject to the standard proviso of defining what constitutes pornography. One solution to that conundrum is, as you point out, to give the parents a “veto power”. I wonder if in a public school system whether parents should have a “veto power”? My opinions regarding my last point may reflect differences in how schools operate in the UK and Australia rather than in the US.

Ryctm #4

“I think the lumping together of fantasy and SF and fantasy was something Damon Knight wanted to see, much like the later New Wave insistence on the term ‘speculative fiction’...”

The term ‘speculative fiction’ seems to encompass a much wider variety of fictional writing than fantasy and science fiction. For instance, I often see ‘alternative history’ novels described as ‘speculative fiction’, but, at least in my mind, most alternative history novels are not science fiction. I don’t see a science fiction element in a novel that postulates that the Confederacy won the Civil War, extrapolates an alternative history from this point of difference and sets a story in this world.

Some time ago my YouTube feed was providing clips from *The Man in the High Castle* TV series. I haven’t watched the series, only the clips. I then started to think about the novel. I’ve only read the novel once, just under twenty-five years ago. My memory of it is a bit fuzzy and I probably should reread it. Although it has one or two very minor science fiction points, I wouldn’t class it as a science fiction novel. (If you disagree please tell me why!) I appreciate that it won the Hugo Award for “Best science fiction or fantasy story” in 1963, but to me, it’s non science fiction speculative fiction. From what I recall, the science fiction elements, such as colonisation missions to the Moon, are not central to the plot. (Since writing this I have bought *The Man in the High Castle*. At some point in the future, not necessarily anytime soon, I will reread it.)

Ryctm #5

“Your suggestion regarding a better newspaper than the Daily Mail is funny to me since among American conservatives it’s a truism that the Mail does a better job of covering events in America than most American newspapers.”

Perhaps the next time I’m in the UK I’ll have to read a copy, I think my sister receives it. It may be the choice of her husband, I’m not sure on that. When I lived in England the Mail was a tabloid, but a superior tabloid. Whilst it has always been a conservative newspaper, it employed some quality journalists. My impression is that in the intervening years it has increasingly gone down market and it’s no longer a superior tabloid. It’s not as bad as the likes of *The Sun* and *The Mirror*, but it’s been many years since it had any pretensions to being a superior tabloid. This is especially true for its web-page, at least based upon what I’ve heard about them from Australian news outlets. Of course, this doesn’t mean that it doesn’t do a “better job of covering events in America than most American newspapers”. Though that assessment may well depend upon your “particular political tendency”.

Ryctm #6

“I’m pretty sure RYCT is older than ANZAPA; it’s just one of several acronyms I associate with APA hacking such as HHOK/HHOS (HaHaOnly Kidding/Serious), S,AS (Smiling, Always Smiling) and other such expressions. The late OOK of Stipple-APA, Judie Cilcain, compiled a page-long list of them in one of the long-ago disties”

I'm sure that you are right, I only meant to say that I learnt RYCT from its usage in ANZAPA. I haven't seen any of your other acronyms in ANZAPA, though that's not to say that they were not used in the past.

Ryct Samuel Lubell

"I might even argue that Facebook has been a detriment to fandom, and the rest of social media (possibly excepting Twitter) is just as bad if not worse."

I am happy to second your proposition that "This house believes that Facebook has been a detriment to fandom". I'm also happy to second the motion that "This house believes that the rest of social media is just as bad if not worse".

Snow Poster Township 21 (Heath Row)

"we couldn't work on site to continue dispensing the belongings that weren't packed up to ship overseas."

How are you arranging for your possessions to be shipped to Portugal? Do you already have a shipping address in Portugal?

"Caitlin worked in the back room, preparing our stereo components to ship to the Midwest ahead of us."

Will you be taking your stereo system with you to Portugal? I guess you will need an adaptor to run them there. Or will you be buying a new one

"but I've also started watching movies on my mobile. I used to seriously pooh-pooh watching videos on such a small screen, SPT 21-2 but I've found that it's a good way to occupy 15-30 minutes of free or in-between time."

I don't mind watching short clips on my mobile, which I do often from YouTube. But I can't imagine watching a whole movie on it. Put me in the pooh-pooh camp.

"I quite like the idea of sf fen passing around an annotated copy of a book, contributing to the conversation between readers themselves before handing it off to another poor reader. Those marginal notes must be fun to read!"

The auction value of that book should be increasing in time due to the value provided by annotations provided by earlier readers. I think there's a word for an item that is endlessly passed around a community, though as a gift rather than auctioned...

I don't have any specific comments about your discussion of Codes of Conducts, in response to comments made by Garth. Regarding such things as "Harassment" and "Hate Speech" I believe it's essential for a Code of Conduct to include examples of behaviour that are not acceptable. But it's equally

important to include examples of behaviour that don't constitute "Harassment" or "Hate Speech". It's like in pure mathematics when a new definition of a type of object is introduced. It's important for students to see examples of such objects as well as examples of objects that don't fit the definition - you often learn more from the examples of objects that don't fit the definition.

Ryctm #1

"If selected as an Honorary Academic, what would you research?"

I wanted to write up some of the innovative problems I've used in teaching mathematical modelling. I was also hoping to continue working with one of my former students on "pattern-formation". Finally, just before retiring I became interested in a simple model that has been used by physical chemists to investigate how complicated molecules might form from simple molecules, a necessary precursor to the evolution of life. There's a certain set of mathematical tools that the physical chemists did not use that I think could extract additional information from their models. As I write, on Tuesday 15th July, HR have still not finished processing my application so I'm assuming that someone has put a block on it. So maybe my voluntary retirement will evolve into a real retirement from academia.

Ryctm #2

"I think they ((the use of acronyms in ape)) were more commonly utilized when we were using older modes of production and design, and had to conserve space on the page for as much text as possible, economically and effectively presented. I tend not to use them because PDFzines and the Internet allow for infinite real estate and page count."

I am sure that you are correct about the use of acronyms as a way to conserve space. My first iteration through ANZAPA was in the days when members had to print their contributions and send them to the OBE (original bloody editor) for inclusion in the next mailing. I started using the abbreviations then and I've retained their use in my second iteration in ANZAPA, and also in NAPA. As both of these are now electronic there is no reason to use the acronyms. I suppose that I continue to use them because they are a link to the history of fandom. (Or perhaps because I am too lazy to change my habits.) Similarly, when I send a loc to an editor I write, for example, "LoC: Fadeaway 70" in the Subject line rather than "Letter of Comment: Fadeaway 70".

Ryct George Phillies #1

"When I was serving on the directorate, I considered running for president but decided against it. I would have been honored to lose to you."

I can't imagine anyone putting their hand up to run against George. The only way that he is going to become an ex-president is if he says "I am not standing for re-election as President". Probably he should not make that announcement without first ensuring that at least one person will stand for election!

Ryct George Phillies #2

“Looking at Fancyclopedia 3’s entry for the N3F, I was drawn to the list of the federation’s charter members, the 64 “Immortal Fen.” Has anyone ever profiled all of them? That, too, would be a worthy effort.”

That would be a great project. It’s a shame that someone didn’t think about doing this in the days when their names were well-known. I imagine that a fair bit of detective work will be required to obtain information on them. It may be an impossible task. I suppose that at some point in time the N3F must have had information on all its early members, such as mailing details. I assume that such historical records have been lost.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm

“In ANZAPA, there’s been discussion recently of faneds who’ve published fanzines in more than one country. If you once mailed Fanytt or Science Fiction Journalen from Finland, you’d qualify!”

Personally, I would not consider someone who had posted a fanzine from a second country to be an individual who had published a fanzine from a second country. I’d consider that to be a “cheat”!

Ryct Jefferson P. Swycaffer #1

“According to a cursory read of materials from the National Institutes of Health and related to Maxwell’s demon, information is considered constant in physics—and cannot be destroyed.”

Maybe, but what does the word ‘information’ mean in these physics contexts? Does it have the same meaning as in the “real world”. It’s not uncommon to read article where writers make extravagant claims about the implications of Gödel’s work to the real world. These claims are mostly nonsense: the postulated implications assume that Gödel’s theorems apply to the real world.

Ryct Jefferson P. Swycaffer #2

“It could be that even if information remains constant, known information can increase.”

Let us never forget that there are three types of information: known known information, known unknown information, and unknown unknown information.

Ryct Kevin Trainor Jr

“As we prepare to sell our house and relocate (see above), my world has gotten substantially smaller.”

I’m currently writing an examiners report for a PhD thesis. I’ve had to point out to the candidate that the word ‘got’ is not acceptable in academic writing as it’s too informal. (I’ve suggested numerous revisions to improve the standard of the academic writing.) Although “gotten” would not be a suitable word for a PhD thesis, it’s perfectly fine for a N’APA zine.

Samizdat 31 (Samuel Lubell)

I'm very sorry to hear that you have been a casualty of the lunacy carried out by President Trump and Elon Musk in decimating the Federal work force. Kevin may be correct in his statement, in the same mailing, that "the Federal government, it has been hiring and spending too much for too long". (I don't consider myself qualified to comment about that). However, I don't think that the actions of Trump and Musk have been motivated by an effort to produce a more efficient Federal work force. That would require, as you write, consideration of "what positions were needed and who could be let of without interfering with the mission". Unless, of course, you think that interfering with the mission of government agencies is the de factor justification for firing so many government workers.

"Is College Still Worth It?"

That's a good question. I think that in both Australia and the UK analysis would show that the answer is a clear yes. However, the "graduate premium" is not what it once was. ChatGPT tells me that in the late 1950s, when my parents attended university, approximately 3.4% of British 18 year olds attended university. It tells me that in 2024 approximately 36.4% of British 18 year olds started university. (Those numbers are unsurprising to me, so I will use them without finding a more authoritative source. Though I am slightly surprised by the 2024 figure, I would have thought it to be higher.) As the number of graduates has increased it is unsurprising that the premium for being a graduate is not what it once was. One way in which this is seen is that jobs that were once open to non-graduates are now only open to graduates.

I've seen conservatives argue, in both Australia and the UK, against increasing the proportion of 18-year olds that enter university.

"But the report admits that some of the difference ((in salary between graduates and non-graduates)) between the type of student going to college and not due to anything the student learns there".

An interesting point, but I'd need to know what the authors mean by "anything the student learns there". Many graduate jobs require little or nothing in the way of discipline specific knowledge, they are general graduate-level jobs. But that doesn't mean that graduates aren't using soft-skills that they acquired as a consequence of their tertiary level education. Graduates typically have a wide variety of skills related to: adaptability & flexibility, communication (written work), critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, presentation skills (perhaps!), teamwork & collaboration, time management, and, in theory, work ethic. These *are* skills that graduates have learnt at university.

"The return also drops depending on majors, with Engineering, Math, and Computer majors having a return of 18% but Social Sciences 10%, Liberal Arts 8%, and Education below 6%."

In the UK some conservatives have argued that the quality of education provided by universities can be assessed by the average income of their graduates. This is nonsense. This would penalise universities that produce graduates that enter professions that are relatively poorly paid. It's a Good Thing that we have eighteen year olds who want to pursue careers in areas such as nursing and social services, even those such choices are detrimental to their long-term salary. There are many other arguments against assessing the quality of education via the salary levels of graduates. Some employers are more likely to employ graduates from certain types of universities, for example Oxbridge graduates are not discriminated against because of their alma mater!

"And of course, any purely economic analysis omits many of the intangible benefits of college resulting from greater exposure to advanced academics and culture."

Some of the benefits to society from university graduates are tangible, not least the fact that they earn a higher salary means that they pay higher taxes! There are other factors. One that springs to mind is that graduates are healthier and are less of a drain on medical resources than non-graduates. (Only applies to countries with medical services that are available to all citizens regardless of their income level, such as Australia and the UK).

“Colleges are not just job training but preparation for life in teaching students how to think, reason, assemble facts, and structure a convincing argument.”

Some types of politicians may not favour a population in which large numbers of individuals are able “to think, reason, assemble facts...”. In 1999 the British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a call to make the British tertiary education sector a mass higher education system by aiming to have 50% of adults pass through the sector by 2010. One of the reasons behind this expansion was that having a better educated nation is in itself beneficial, in addition to economic dividends from a better educated workforce. The conservatives opposed this expansion. The last Conservative Government claimed that it was better for many 18 year olds to learn a trade rather than to go to university. However, they suffered from a credibility problem since it transpired that it wasn't their own children that would benefit from learning a trade at 18; it was other people's children.

One reason why the Conservatives might have wanted to decrease the fraction of the population that is university educated is a perception that in the 21st century better educated individuals are no longer Conservatives for life.

“To solve this disparity, Leonhardt advocates for increased government investment, strengthening unions”

Union membership has steadily declined in Australia since the 1970s, though it remains strong in some sectors. In many sectors of employment work conditions and employee entitlements are specified in Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. It surely comes as no surprise for me to tell you that these are better in sectors that remain heavily unionised. Unfortunately, I don't see the pendulum will swing back in the other direction.

I'm not a fan of *Interstellar* (2014), due to its use of time-travel as an essential element of the story: the Earth is only saved because Cooper comes across a tesseract made in the far future which consists of infinite copies of his daughter's bedroom across many moments in time. This allows him to send a message into the past which ensures the survival of humanity. I call that time travel tosh!

Ryct Garth Spencer #1 (*Brownian Motion* 12)

“...I think the U.S. is a lot less religiously Christian than it used to be. At one point stores were closed on Sunday and schools opened with prayers.”

When I went to work in New Zealand in 1997 I was surprised to discover that supermarkets were not allowed to sell alcohol on a Sunday. The only establishments that could legally sell alcohol on a Sunday were on-licence premises, such as hotels or taverns, and clubs that held a special licence. The latter could only sell alcohol to members and their guests. The supermarket that I visited in Auckland roped off their alcohol section on Sundays so that no one could enter it. In 1999 the law regarding the sale of alcohol on Sunday's was liberalised. Something that I didn't learn in 1997 was that although supermar-

kets could sell *wine*, they could not sell *beer*. I probably didn't pick that up because I was not buying beer!

Ryct Garth Spencer #2

"We've backslid too much lately, but we still aren't teaching Christianity as the truth and forbidding mentions of evolution."

If in the post-Trump world MAGA continues to hold sway in the Republican Party then I will not be surprised if under the *next* Republican president there are changes in these areas...

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm (*Intermission* 151)

"I disagree about Codes of Conduct. They are needed so con organizers can point to written rules rather than face disagreements over what constitutes common sense. Nearly every rule in a Code of Conduct came about because someone's behavior, at some convention, made the rule necessary."

I agree with you. Codes of Conduct are a sad necessity. They tell delegates how they are expected to behave and, equally importantly, they should tell a convention committee how to act when someone breaks the Code. The discussion should move on from "are Codes necessary?" to "what should be included".

Ryctm (*Brandy Hall* 11)

"I agree that Harris did not adequately communicate her positions; but I am not sure doing this would have helped."

You are right. Trump is a master of political campaigning. I doubt that her positions on some issues would have resonated with the voters. Still, I think she should have communicated her positions better so that the American people knew where she stood.

Ryctm #2

*"Since you said you read a number of Margaret Atwood's novels, you must have liked them. So why not read *The Handmaid's Tale*?"*

That's a very good question and I no longer remember the answer. In 1997 I moved to New Zealand on a one-year fellowship. I noticed that the Post Office which was opposite the supermarket where I did my shopping had a number of novels by Margaret Atwood, so I started buying them. But for some reason I made a decision not to buy the one novel that I'd already heard of. Twenty-seven years later (!) I bought *The Testaments* (2019), because it was a co-winner of the Booker Prize in 2019. (Since 2016 I have had a literature project of reading all the winners of the Booker Prize.) I haven't read it yet. One reason is that I have a backlog of winners that I need to read. Another reason is that I finally need to buy *The Handmaid's Tale* before I can read *The Testaments*. What are the novels by Margaret Atwood that I've read? They are: *Alias Grace* (1997), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), and *Cat's Eyes* (1996).

Why in 1997 did I stop reading the novels of Margaret Atwood? Because I had an epiphany: if I am living in New Zealand then I should be reading novels written by New Zealanders. Incidentally, there

was an article in the paper a few days ago “15 of the best literary Substacks”. Margaret Atwood’s “*In the Writing Burrow*” was one of the 15.

It’s still Tuesday 15th July in Australia. So time to submit this issue.



Snow Poster Township #22

July 15, 2025

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Con Report: POPX Madison

Was this a convention? An event? I'm not sure. I haven't ever really understood the appeal or popularity of Funko Pops, the now almost-ubiquitous pop culture collectibles inspired by Japanese and other vinyl figures such as those sold by Giant Robot. (<https://www.giantrobot.com>) Funko launched in 1998 to produce low-tech nostalgia-inspired toys. Today, Funko maintains more than 1,000 licenses, producing a wide range of figures including chase variants, retail exclusives, Mystery Minis, and multiple lines—as well as NFTs. Last year, there were more than 15,000 different Pops available. One estimate indicates that more than 150 million figures have been produced.

POPX Madison (<https://popxusa.com>), then, was a local Funko Pop show, held in late June. I went on a Saturday while my wife was out of town to one of the smaller exhibition halls next to the Alliant Energy Center to see what all the fuss was about. Imagine a convention hucksters room in which every vendor sells only Funko Pops. That's pretty much what it was.

There was a token nod to additional activities in the form of a celebrity row featuring a handful of anime, cartoon, and video game voice actors. People on hand

included Michelle Rojas (*Tokyo Ghoul* and *Assassination Classroom*), David Vincent (*Bleach* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*), Greg Dulcie (*Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* and *One Piece*), Chuck Huber (*Soul Eater* and *Ace Attorney*), and David Sobolov, whose voice work resume is extensive, including movies and television. There were no lines, and they didn't seem that busy. I wasn't enthusiastically familiar with any of their work, however, so I didn't offer any greetings of my own.



After making my way up and down the aisles and checking out celebrity row, I stopped to talk to a friendly vendor, who'd already sold enough Pops to cover the cost of his booth and hotel room. We talked a little bit about the evolution of vinyl figures over time—from small-batch art objects meant to be owned and displayed over time to mass-produced items that people sell and trade as their tastes and favorites change—how people collect and display their Pops (I was surprised that people tend to keep them in their boxes in order to resell them in the future.), and other aspects of the hobby.

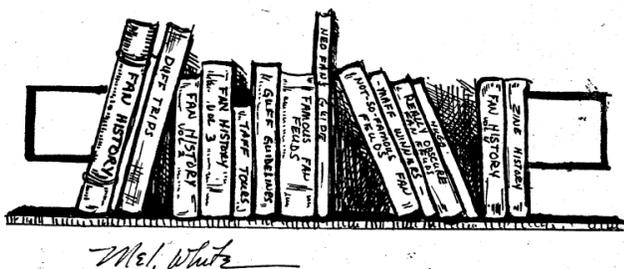


By then, I'd seen some of the different kinds of Pops that are available, such as the Ad Icons (Count Chocula!), Animation, Movies, Rocks!, and Television lines. Some of the more interesting Pops I saw included Gigantor, Mechagodzilla, Frank Zappa, and several *Doctor Who* doctors. There are Universal monster Pops. If I'd seen an Astro Boy Pop, that might have been my initial pick. Apparently, there have been several *Astro Boy*-related Pops.



In the end, I settled on two Pops, my first Pops—a hesitant, uncertain purchase. For myself, I selected the Fourth Doctor from *Doctor Who*. And for my wife, I chose Penny from *Inspector Gadget*. But I'd misremembered that she'd watched *Inspector Gadget*. "Who's that?" she asked when she returned from Michigan. While she has seen at least one episode with our son, the Nickelodeon cartoon she's actually fond of is *Danger Mouse*. A Danger Mouse Pop would have fun, and a Penfold Pop would have been even better. That would have made the perfect gift.

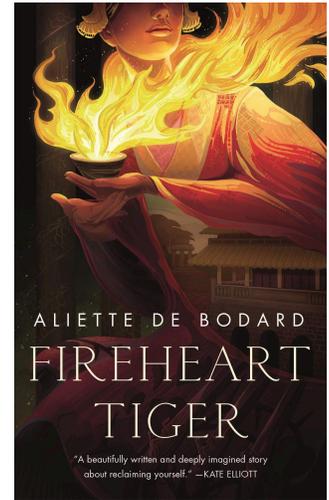
Even though we now own two Pops, each resting in their box on a nightstand in the bedroom of our furnished apartment, I still don't understand the appeal. If we were living in a more long-term situation, I'd be tempted to take them out of their boxes to display them on a bookshelf. Without their packaging, they don't take up much room and might make fun decorations. In the box, they can't breathe!



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Fireheart Tiger by Aliette de Bodard (Tor, 2021)

After reading a handful of non-genre books during a recent business trip to Chicago (*Faculae & Filigree* #44), I returned to Madison and a short stack of library books that included this sapphic romantic fantasy novella.



I expected the fantasy and novella components—the book, authored by a French woman, focuses on a precolonial world inspired by Vietnamese and Chinese court dramas—but not the

sapphic romance aspect. While that came as a gentle surprise, the novella's status as a borderline romantasy featuring women lovers was neither intrusive nor distracting. In fact, the genders of the characters, regardless of their pronouns, almost didn't matter. That's not actually true; the story works better because of the number of women in it.

De Bodard has written several series, and early in the book, I felt like I was reading the second or third book in a series. *Fireheart Tiger* is a standalone work that incorporates quite a bit of backstory and past action to establish its characters and world. Readers arrive after quite a bit has already happened, and the novella proceeds from there, bringing you up to date along the way. (That approach to storytelling worked impressively well. It might be worth considering!)

Neighboring states jockey for position in trade and military relations. A young woman returning to her mother's court isn't sure whether she caused a disastrous fire while visiting another land. Her one-time lover, a young soldier destined to be queen of her people, arrives with an envoy intending to negotiate the acquisition of arms and defensible land. There's the risk of being outed prematurely, a marriage proposal, diplomatic correspondence—and a fire elemental.

Above, I indicated that the novella is a borderline romantasy. While there is romance in the book—while there's a tasteful scene involving lovemaking by p. 26 of 99—I'm not sure this qualifies as a romantasy per se because the main point of the novella isn't the romance. Instead, it's an exploration of power dynamics between states, between family members,

and between lovers. It's also a coming-of-age tale that focuses on the development of the protagonist's skills of persuasion and proving one's self to a demanding parent.

The fire elemental character and setting is intriguing enough that I hope there's a follow-up to this book. Parts reminded me of Robin Hobb's *Ship of Magic* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #154), particularly its focus on trade, negotiation, contracts, and the ties between families. Now that I think about it, the fire elemental also reminded me of the liveships in Hobb's novels—their naivete and relative innocence.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews *Sex Kittens Go to College*

In late June on the Facebook, artist Mitch O'Connell posted "I was this many years old when I realized Vampira was in *Sex Kittens Go to College*." Though we're not the same age, I was that many years old, too! Given how little footage remains from KABC-TV's 1954 *The Vampira Show*, we're mostly left with stills featuring Vampira and *Plan 9 From Outer Space*—though rumors remain of surviving kinescopes. So a friend and I hastened to check out the campy comedy flick. After all: Vampira!

Starring Mamie Van Doren, Tuesday Weld, and

Mijanou Bardot, the movie features Maila Nurmi—credited as Vampira—in the role of Etta Toodie, an initially mousy lab assistant. Vampira's presence bookends the flick, and she doesn't get a heck of a lot of screen time even though she's credited in the opening titles.

Vampira's presence in the movie is, in fact, just a tease—similar to the rest of the movie. It struck me that this supposed sex comedy was neither erotic nor funny. Van Doren is cast as an erotic dancer-turned-professor and primarily serves as the romantic interest for a male colleague (the bad girl gone good), Bardot's performance indicates that not every member of her family—she's Brigitte Bardot's sister—can act sensually convincingly, and Weld (*The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*) delivers most promisingly, perhaps, on the title of the movie.

The object of affection for Weld's character provides much of the movie's humor. Norman Grabowski's character, Woo Woo Grabowski, is a silly, thick-headed foil to the ostensible sex kittens. He's pretty dim, and women make him swoon often. In addition to his acting career, Grabowski was also a car buff whose death earned an obituary in *Hot Rod* magazine. (<https://www.hotrod.com/news/norm-grabowski-the-entertainer>)

In addition to an increasingly bug-eyed professor—humor by way of mugging for the camera—the movie also includes a science fictional aspect. Elektro, Westinghouse's Mechanical Man from the 1939 New York World's Fair, stands in as Sam Thinko, a robot mistaken for a small-time hood by a couple of vengeful crooks newly arrived in town. In fact, it is the robot who draws the crooks' attention to the college; its horse race betting—enacted by Grabowski while sleepwalking!—is often quite successful.

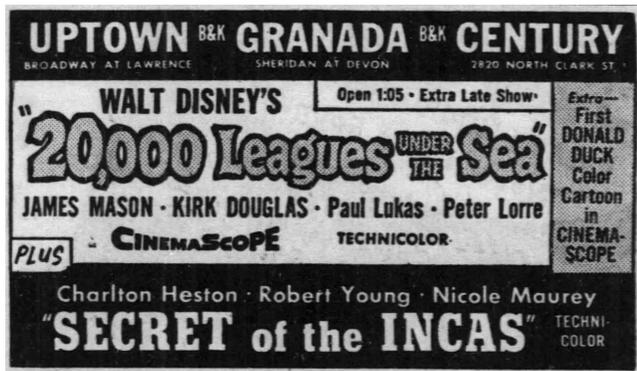
If you watch the "extended international version" of the movie on YouTube, the promise of the movie's title bears some fruit. The movie gets pretty international in the European print, which includes an often expurgated nine-minute dream sequence in which striptease dancers perform for the stoic Thinko.

Otherwise, the movie's cast is surprisingly star studded. Jackie Coogan and John Carradine perform roles, and Charles Chaplin Jr. and Harold Lloyd Jr. appear as a fire chief and policeman, respectively. Even Conway Twitty participates, cast as a musician. (Fancy that!) Van Doren performs "Sex Pots Go to College" and "Baby" in the movie, and Twitty provides "Mamie's Song."

While watching the opening titles, if you wonder why the song is called "Sex Pots Go to College," it's because the flick fell under multiple titles during production. Initially titled *Sex Pots Go to College*, it

was briefly known as *Teacher Versus Sexpot* before its final title of *Sex Kittens Go to College* (aka *The Beauty and the Robot*). “Sex Pots Go to College” scans better lyrically.

The movie would have benefited from more beauty—and more robot. Most importantly, it would have benefited from more Vampira.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

Comments on N’APA #276

I previously commented on **Ahrvid Engholm’s** *Intermission* #153 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #30 for eAPA. “In *Intermission* #153, ... Engholm contends that President Donald Trump could be a Russian asset. I think that’s a reasonable suggestion. As you said, ‘if he isn’t a Russian agent he surely acts like one.’ If it quacks like a duck... My apologies to the ducks. ... [T]he *Wall Street Journal* reported that the board of Tesla is seeking a CEO to replace Elon Musk; soon afterward, Tesla denied doing so.

“Most of the time, when I see food delivery robots like the one you spotted in Stockholm, it’s stationary, navigating pedestrians, street corners, and traffic with difficulty. Given the option, I will never order food to be delivered by robot. I’ve not been impressed by their mobility and can only imagine that their delivery times are worse than human delivery. Perhaps that comparison has been done.

“I’ll have to seek out KAJ’s ‘Bara Bada Bastu.’ The photograph was also appealing. ... I am looking forward to the release of the new album by Propagandhi in Canada, *At Peace*. That record comes out May 2, so I don’t have much longer to wait. I’ve only used a Nordic sauna once, either in Finland or Sweden. I remember drinking a lot with my hosts, enjoying the sauna, and then running outside into the snow. The memory could be apocryphal.

“Congratulations on selling a story to *Kvällsstunden*! I enjoyed the History Corner’s ongoing consideration of sf in Czechia. I would hesitate to impose any structural restrictions when

determining the first fanzine. It’s reasonable to think that early fanzines mimicked the format and content of professional magazines, though that tendency weakened over time. Fanzines, after all, are fan magazines, made by fen for fen, within the context of a fandom.

“I thought that the United Kingdom’s history of football fanzines might have led to a precursor to the sf and comic book fanzines, but no. According to a brief search of the Internet, the first ‘recognizable’ football fanzine, *Foul*, wasn’t published until 1972. Did any other sports foster fanzines?

“What about music, which predates print media? Again, no, what some consider the first ‘dedicated’ (whatever that means) music fanzine, *Mojo Navigator*, a contemporary of *Crawdaddy!*, was published in 1966. (Those could arguably be considered recorded music or rock ’n’ roll fanzines, not music fanzines.) Even fanzines focusing on precursors to pulp fiction such as the story papers seem to come even later.

“If the first public Kinetoscope demonstration took place in 1893, were there early moving picture fanzines that predated or were contemporary with commercial movie fan magazines like those we saw in the 1950s and 1960s?

“Another intriguing question might be: What was the first fandom? *Wikipedia*—not the best source, but a starting point—indicates that the earliest fandoms might have concentrated on Jane Austen, perhaps the first such fandom subculture (<https://www.wired.com/story/the-pride-and-prejudice-of-online-fan-culture/>); Sherlock Holmes (<https://www.wired.com/2009/04/pl-brown-6/>); and even... trains. Did those fandoms produce fanzines? Holmes fen produced fanfiction as early as 1897. If such fanfiction was printed non-commercially, by fen for fen, those might qualify as fanzines unless we apply other structural requirements.

“In Bob Jennings’s letter of comment, I appreciated his mention of the impact that the cancellation of the Third Class Matter postal rate had on fanzines and similar periodicals. When donating materials to university libraries and archives, I’ve long benefited from the less-expensive Media Mail rates, though those are more favorable when applied to larger packages rather than single pieces.

“Rich Zellich’s question ‘why absolutely everyone doesn’t just say “No” to everything they’re illegally ordered to do,’ is one I’ve also asked. A colleague and I were just discussing that during lunch. . . . The mistaken recognition of asserted authority contributes to the situation we’re in here. Ooh, Garth, can I have the list of old passwords? I’d like to bulk up my local collection of eAPA distributions. Meanwhile, Ahrvid,

I shall look for affordable copies of your short story collections, including *Rumtidsenligt*.” (Thank you, Garth, for sending me that list in early June.)

Robert Jennings joined the apa, offering *The Swamp Spot Sentinel* #1. I enthusiastically welcome you as a fane extraordinaire, a member of the N3F dating back to the 1950s, and a Massachusetts bookseller! I lived in Massachusetts from 1996-2004, working in Framingham and Boston and living in Somerville and Cambridge. While I was a patron of Pandemonium Books & Games Inc. (I remain friends with the proprietor’s sister though I haven’t spoken to Tyler or Spike, who also worked there, for years) in Cambridge, I was unaware of Fabulous Fiction Bookstore in Worcester. I didn’t really explore Worcester while I lived there. Now I wish I had! Your email address now makes much more sense to me.

I am sorry to read about your increasing hearing loss. I can understand your prioritization of communicating by correspondence—and hope you’re able to continue as a fane for decades to come. Even though people wanting to talk to you on the telephone might be frustrating or irritating, it could also be a sign of their esteem for you.

It was fun to see that you were able to rework a portion of your letter of comment in *The Stf Amateur* #20 as an item for your apazine. The story of your storm door and the resulting customer service mayhem was riveting. Your review of *The Man Who Saw Seconds* by Alexander Boldizar intrigued me, especially your description of it as a story about “a man with a minor power.” So much speculative writing and media focuses on people with major—or super—powers. The idea of exploring the impact of a minor power (though able to “effectively disrupt the entire structure of the social order”) is quite compelling.

“Breaking News!” made me chuckle. If someone supposedly in charge of public health can disregard germ theory in the name of miasma theory, perhaps we’ll see steps taken toward bloodletting, trepanning, and babies sleeping on their stomachs. A list of “obsolete medical theories” online offers additional options such as animal magnetism, female hysteria, shunamitism, and tooth worms. Each of those offer rich fodder for storytelling, even today.

Somehow, that you’ve been communicating telepathically with Matildia, a banded Madagascan Buttonquail, doesn’t surprise me. I look forward to her advice column! “Dear Matildia...”

In *Archive Midwinter* dated March 9, 2025, **Jefferson P. Swycaffer** offered Garth Spencer some consolation, suggesting that older fen can continue to serve as positive role models for younger fen. “The

best way to do that is to be fannish!” Hear! Hear! I found your comments on convention codes of conduct to be reasonable and sound.

Similarly, your remark that “The concession I make is that I will endeavor to understand [sins of poisonous enormity] in the context of their own time,” resonated with me. We could even apply such an approach to convention codes of conduct (not a sin, in my opinion), the surge of far-right thinking, and bad behavior taking advantage of power dynamics. Why is something happening? What was occurring that might have led to a set of behavioral guidelines being implemented? What is making people so afraid or feel threatened? We might not always be able to successfully address or respond to what we learn, but it’s an exercise worth undertaking.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1955

Your mention of Hugh Ashton’s Sherlock Holmes pastiches reminded me of the Mycroft Holmes series written by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse. Reportedly, Abdul-Jabbar chose to focus on Mycroft because there were already enough Sherlock pastiches. I’ve not yet read the copy of *Mycroft Holmes* that I procured upon learning about the series. In *SPT* #4, I mistakenly suggested Abdul-Jabbar wrote Moriarty novels, so this has come up in our pages before. Subsequent titles in the series include *Mycroft and Sherlock* and *Mycroft and Sherlock: The Empty Birdcage*, so Sherlock—and the Sherlock pastiche—was never that far away.

I’m glad you participated in a protest earlier this year, and that you found the experience lovely, cheerful, and good. In mid-July during my evening walk home from work, I passed a group at a well-trafficked intersection protesting—I believe—the current situation in Israel and Palestine. The next morning, I found a cryptic sheet of paper on the sidewalk. I do not know whether the two are connected.

B— J. G— is an act[...] and Mossad Agent.
He joined the Bloods in 2014-2015.
He joined Mossad in 2015.
Worked with Hells Angels and Italians.
CT/VA/Israel.
Theft/Human Trafficking/Murder.
3 Body Doubles.

I haven't been able to identify who those talking points might be about, and I obscured the name on the piece of paper in order to not commit libel (in a fanzine!), but I'm fascinated by the makings of a story here. (The fellow might have a three-body problem.) A 2024 *Washington Post* article (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/09/12/iran-criminal-gangs-target-dissidents>) suggests that the notes might be related to Iran's use of criminal gangs to target critics.

Mark Nelson's *Brandy Hall* #12 considered the impact that J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series had on his reading and other fannish activities. Nelson terms the series a novel, and it turns out that that is indeed the case! I've long considered *Lord of the Rings* a series comprising three novels: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. Apparently, Tolkien intended the three resulting books to be published in a single volume; a two-volume set would have also included *The Silmarillion*. However, for economic reasons, the novel was published in three volumes in 1954-1955, with *The Silmarillion* finally published after the author's death. So, what do you consider the *Lord of the Rings*: a series or a novel? I'm sure Tolkien scholars—and purists—have a strong point of view.



Chicago Tribune, March 4, 1955

Despite your not watching the broadcast reading on *Jackanory* and your sister not reading the books—or *The Hobbit*, for that matter—I'm glad your mother eventually introduced you to the *Lord of the Rings* and that Tolkien's writing resonated so strongly with you. I haven't been able to find online video of the original *Jackanory* episodes yet, but in 2020, the staff of St. Joseph's College in the United Kingdom produced its own *Jackanory* series as part of a literacy program. The first episode featured *The Hobbit*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTxHZajUqOO>)

Your identification of the event as a watershed moment is apt. I, too, followed such a path: comic books to science fiction and fantasy to roleplaying games to punk rock (hanging out with more people introduced me to more music) to zines to amateur press associations to sf fanzines to sf fandom. Now that I'm back in Wisconsin, the state in which I grew up, I wish I'd known more about fandom when I was younger. There was once a strong, active fandom in Madison, and even today there are at least two active *Doctor Who* clubs in Wisconsin—but my transportation as a youth was limited. Regardless of the path we followed as individuals, I think you have your sister to thank for your presence in N'APA today.

I enjoyed learning about the Lyons Electronic Office computer produced by J. Lyons and Co., a tea company, in the early 1950s. I also enjoyed learning that “needs must”—which I thought in response to the company developing technology to solve its business problems—is a shortening of the proverb, “needs must when the devil drives.” In 1897, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a paper that addressed the evils of tea-drinking. Therefore, tea is a tool of the devil.

Similar less devilish thinking could apply to the idea of Japanese children holding up magazine photographs to a camera in order to purchase cigarettes. Needs must. Or, to invoke William Gibson, the street finds its own uses for things. Hmm, there might be a possible story idea in Duke Ellington becoming an sf fan and faned—instead of a jazz musician.

In *Intermission* #154, **Ahrvid Engholm** mentioned a handful of what he considers reliable news sources on YouTube: UATV (<https://www.youtube.com/@UATVEnglish>), TVP World (<https://www.youtube.com/@TVPWorld>), Anna from Ukraine (<https://www.youtube.com/@AnnafromUkraine>), Denys Davidov (<https://www.youtube.com/@DenysDavydov>), Combat Veteran Reacts (<https://www.youtube.com/@CombatVeteranReacts>), Jake Broe (<https://www.youtube.com/@JakeBroe>), and Professor Gerdes Explains (<https://www.youtube.com/@ProfessorGerdes>).

UATV (<https://uatv.ua/en>) is a service of the international Ukrainian television channel Freedom, which concentrates on Ukraine, Eastern Europe, Russia, and other parts of the world. TVP World (<https://tvpworld.com>) is a service of Telewizja Polska S.A., the oldest and largest Polish TV network. The others seem to be independent video bloggers and YouTubers who represent a range of credentials or expertise. While I recognize and understand the value of local sources, even if individuals, I'm curious how

to best approach identifying whether such YouTubers are reporting truthfully and accurately—or merely commenting on or sharing opinions about news reported elsewhere. Video isn't the most efficient way for me to learn—I'd rather read—but I'll spend some time with the channels you recommended to see what I think as a former journalist.

Thank you for your report on the Stockholm Independent Film Festival. (<https://zita.se/stockholm-independent-film-festival>) Of the movies discussed, I was particularly intrigued by *En alien i Noras sovrum*, *Härmapan*, *Ibland är du ett sånt jävla ägg*, *Maria*, *Tryck på knappen*, *Dunklet*, *Mammon*, *Skivhandlaren*, and *Tristess*. Plenty of fantastika amongst the wide range of options! I'll have to look for online trailers, videos, and other ways to watch portions of some of these works.

Anders Nilsson's *Ben Hogan Rider igen* sounds fascinating. I'll have to look into whether scholars in the United States have applied a similar approach to the writing of Zane Grey, Louis L'Amour, and other western authors. A chronological and geographic breakdown of L'Amour's work, for example, would be particularly interesting. Thank you very much for this piece. Slightly reworked, it feels like something that Larque Press might publish in its *The Digest Enthusiast*. (<https://larquepress.com/the-digest-enthusiast>) Or Cimarron Street Books in its *Bare Bones* magazine. (<https://cimarronstreetbooks.bigcartel.com/category/bare-bones>) It's times like this when I wish that everything I own wasn't packed to ship overseas. I know just where my copies of those two periodicals were stacked—before they were boxed up for shipping.

The History Corner this reminded me of an anti-nuclear activist newspaper I picked up at the local food co-op: *Nukewatch Quarterly* (<https://nukewatch.info.org>), published in Luck, Wis. Luck is a village with a population of just more than 1,000 located near the western edge of Wisconsin near Minneapolis. Nukewatch might also be associated with the Anathoth Community Farm, a Catholic Worker farm.

The Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control (<https://www.wisconsinproject.org>) based in Washington, DC, focuses on research and advocacy to end the proliferation and use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The project was originally founded in Madison in 1986. Another organization, League Against Nuclear Dangers Records, operated in Stevens Point between 1973 and 1983. That group was formed to fight the construction of a nuclear power plant in Rudolph. The Paris Township Preservation Committee combated another proposed plant near that township in the mid-1970s.

The Plowshares movement inspired by Dorothy Day developed an activist group (or action) called the Silo Pruning Hooks that has at times included activists from Minnesota and Wisconsin.

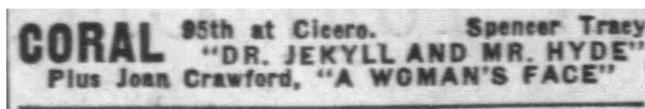


Chicago Tribune, March 11, 1955

Such activism seems still warranted. Earlier this month, the Wisconsin state Assembly approved a set of bills Tuesday that could expand nuclear power in the state. (<https://energy.wisc.edu/news/legislation-expand-wisconsins-nuclear-power-heads-gov-tony-evers-desk>)

I was newly intrigued by Pascal Thomas's mention of Hélène Cruciani and her fanzines. While looking for them, I came across a reference to a 2023 article in *Galaxies* (<https://galaxiessf.com>) titled "The Growing Interest of Academics in Science Fiction Theatre." NooSfere (<https://www.noosfere.org>) seems to be a wonderful resource concentrating on French sf. I've been receiving the French-Canadian periodical *Solaris* (<https://www.revue-solaris.com>)—it's time to renew!—but haven't spent much time with sf from France. *Galaxies* might be a good place to begin. I also need to learn more about sf theater.

Reading Marty Cantor's letter of comment from late 2021 or early 2022 in response to *Intermission* #116 tugged at my heartstrings. You must have come across it recently in your email. He was a good man, and a good fan.



Chicago Tribune, March 11, 1955

I read and enjoyed **George Phillies's** *Ye Murdered Master Mage* #276, but no further comment presented itself. In *Brownian Motion* #13, **Garth Spencer** proposed an encyclopedia list of life skills after commenting on the need for convention codes of conduct. "How to access health care" could also include how to advocate for yourself and others when seeking healthcare. Access might not be sufficient for successful delivery of appropriate care. "How to apologize" might be one of the more important skills. "How to listen" might be the most important. Otherwise, I appreciated the mix of social skills and tactical or tactile skills. One could perhaps group the list by head, hands, and heart.

I'd never realized—or considered—that the Sad Puppies controversy might have primarily involved... neos. Is that true? If so, the idea made me chuckle and shake my head. Also, shudder to think that newcomers could barge their way in and raise such a ruckus publicly.

In *R.A.I.L.* #6, **Adrian Kresnak** discussed the term "etherdiscipline." The word and idea is new to me and merits further exploration and thought! Your walkie-talkie or citizens band radio example was featured in a movie I recently saw. Passengers on two different

helicopters had to teach an elderly professor CB etiquette. He wasn't the most willing pupil. I think the film was *Them!* from 1954. I appreciated your mention of *Baffling* magazine. (<https://www.bafflingmag.com>) I've yet to check out that periodical.

Kevin Trainor Jr.'s *Esmeralda County Line* #10 reported on much of his reading done during a slow tax season. I was especially interested in John C. Wright's Star Quest series. The titles alone seem chock full of good ol' sensawunda: *Space Pirates of Andromeda*, *Secret Agents of the Galaxy*, *Catburglar of the Constellations*, and *Outlaw of the Outer Stars*.

In Christopher Paolini's sf novel *Fractal Noise*, one of the characters reads a fictional book series featuring Captain Ace Savage. Written by the fictional Horus Murgatroyd III during the late 21st and early 22nd centuries, the series includes the book *Captain Ace Savage and the Fiendish Plot of Queen Dragica*. Reportedly, Paolini has written the first chapter of that fictional novel—and "[m]ight actually finish it off one of these days. ... Fiction within fiction." I hereby propose the following additional possible titles for future Captain Ace Savage books:

1. *Captain Ace Savage and the Retreat of Anatolia*
2. *Captain Ace Savage: Creation 2619*
3. *Captain Ace Savage and the Death of Arcadia*
4. *Captain Ace Savage and the Eclipse of Solaris*
5. *Captain Ace Savage: Atlantis Ticking*

In the spirit of full disclosure, I didn't make those up. I used Reedsy's Sci-fi Book Title Generator. (<https://blog.reedsy.com/book-title-generator/science-fiction>) It's not generative AI, but given the 2022 controversy surrounding the initial cover reveal for Paolini's novel—Tor used a stock image that might have incorporated AI-generated artwork—it felt appropriate not to burn my own candles.

Son of Silvercon III (<https://sonofsilvercon.wordpress.com>) is this weekend! I just signed up as a supporting member. I hope everything goes smoothly and that it's a lot of fun. Be sure to tell us all about it in the issue after this forthcoming mailing, I suppose.

In **Samuel Lubell's** *Samizdat* #31, he discussed a Reduction In Force that took effect in the Department of Health of Human Services. I'm sorry that you were negatively affected by the layoffs. It might be somewhat comforting to know that you were not alone—and that it had nothing to do with your job performance—but it must still be very challenging. I hope your search for work ends successfully.

Your Author Spotlight focusing on Lois McMaster Bujold was welcome. I enjoyed reading *The Warrior's*

Apprentice early last year. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #107) While I've seen back issues of *Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone Magazine*, I've not explored it in a meaningful way. A periodical to return to!

In your piece, "Is College Worth It?" it took some time for you to mention the "intangible benefits of college resulting from greater exposure to advanced academics and culture." That last paragraph is the most important paragraph.

And I appreciated your themed trio of book reviews, "The Growing Economic Disparities in America." I'll have to return to the titles discussed but resonated with the occasional desire to read several books on the same or adjacent topics. Approaching an issue from several directions can often be fascinating and productive.

Your update on Project Video will add to my list of things to watch. Last night, my wife and I watched two 2024 episodes of *Doctor Who*: "The Devil's Chord" and "Boom." I'd previously seen the former episode while my wife was out of town, but after "Boom"'s dire urgency, we returned to "The Devil's Chord" to lighten the evening's viewing experience. We recently returned to subscribing to Disney+, and I've enjoyed having renewed access to the wealth of *Doctor Who*, Marvel, and Star Wars options. While she was in Michigan, I returned to watching the old Netflix Marvel programs, starting with the 2015 *Daredevil* series. Once I stop working—our liminal state continues to expand and extend—I might be more structured in my approach to such projects.



Chicago Tribune, March 18, 1955



...Follow-up on My Job



As I wrote in my previous Ish, on April 1st the government notified me that my job at the Department of Health was ending due to a Reduction in Force (RIF) effective June 2nd. However, a court in California put a hold on these layoffs, saying there is a good chance the unions will win their case that Trump needed the approval of Congress. Trump appealed this hold to the Supreme Court, which ruled on July 8th against the hold. This doesn't mean that the RIF is legal, that is a separate case. The Supreme Court made a point of stressing that this hold just concerned the executive order. On July 14th the news reported that HHS carried out the RIF effective that day (about a month and a half after the original date), but I have not received an official communication saying that I was laid off. So I may be unemployed and I might not. It is like

Schrödinger's cat's job. I find the lack of communications throughout the RIF process to be very annoying. It's as if the government does not care about the people who have worked for them for many years. If anyone knows of an opening for a writer/public relations specialist/policy analyst please let me know.

...Men Are Not Reading

There have been a number of articles recently about the declining numbers of men who read books, especially novels. For many people reading has always been a girlish pastime, with “real men” playing (or at least watching) sports, spending time in the gym, engaging in outdoor activities, or, more recently playing videogames. While there have always been some subgenres that appealed to men – science fiction, Westerns, mysteries, and thrillers – much of mainstream fiction seems to focus on romance, society, or the interior lives of characters. Even fantasy, the sibling of science fiction (and sharing many of the same readers and writers) is increasingly dominated by romance, to the point that romancy seems almost unnecessary as a separate subgenre.



Joseph Bernstein, in *The New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/25/style/fiction-books-men-reading.html>) asks, “Why Did the Novel-Reading Man Disappear?” (June 25, 2025). He cites a book club for men having members unable to bring in a single novel they own. In part this is because of the male reluctance to discuss feelings. Many articles suggest that if more heterosexual males were reading novels (which require patience, thought, and empathy), “the country would be a healthier place: more sensitive, more self-aware, and less destructive.” Bookstores see far more women than men, in part because the publishing industry, seeing this trend, targets women much more than men. Even online book recommendations at places like #BookTok are mostly women recommending books by women to other women.

The article says that women began to dominate the fiction world in the 1980s. This may be a return to the 19th century, where Nathaniel Hawthorne struggled to be heard over “a damned mob of scribbling women” rather than the mid-20th century when authors like Hemmingway stressed male experiences. But the article points out that with 782.7 million books sold in 2024, there are books for every conceivable taste. Publishers are trying to appeal to male audience through male celebrities writing book intros and leading book clubs the way Oprah does for women.



An earlier NYT article, “The Disappearance of Literary Men Should Worry Everyone,” by David J Morris on December 7, 2024

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/07/opinion/men-fiction-novels.html>) also says that women buy 80% of fiction and over three-quarters of the NYT fiction bestsellers are by women (compared to an even split in 2004). He quotes Joyce Carol Oates saying that editors won't read first novels by young male writers (admittedly there was a backlash against that comment since

publishing remains dominated by men). Several other recent articles spoke of the problems of white heterosexual male writers. Morris claims, “In recent decades, young men have regressed educationally,

emotionally and culturally... This disparity surely translates to a drop-off in the number of novels young men read, as they descend deeper into video games and pornography.” He also asserts that reading fiction is important for one’s emotional IQ and empathy.

In response, Jeremy Gordon wrote “The Real Reason Men Should Read Fiction” in The Atlantic on June 24, 2025 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/books/archive/2025/06/real-reason-men-should-read-fiction>) questioning claims that men only buy 20% of fiction. While a 2017 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) survey found that half of American women had read a novel or short story in the previous year, only a third of men had done so. The article suggests that the publishing industry is dominated by women who pick works designed to appeal to women while a higher percentage of men play video games (which led to a discussion of why spending time reading is better than other forms of entertainment. He challenges David Morris’s statement that reading fiction improves one’s emotional IQ and strengthens empathy, instead saying that people should read to enjoy the story and how it is told, even if one doesn’t empathize with the main character. Reading is subversive, “Literature, meanwhile, allows me to occupy a place that is totally for myself, and unaccountable to other people’s expectations.” It allows the reader to consider others’ expectations and “fiction can remind you that you exist along a continuum of human experiences, and that your own everyday ennui is less of a dead end and more of a data point. Yes, men could use more empathy; they would also benefit from a heightened sense of perspective.”



While Gordon used 2017 data, 2022 data from NEA found that the percentage of women reading novels had dropped to 47% while men fell to 28%. (<https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2025/men-women-split-reading-real-and-persists-amid-historical-rate-declines>) Overall, just half of adults read a book and just 38% read a novel or short story. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ American Time Use Survey from 2017-22 found that Americans age 15 and older spent just 15-16 minutes a day reading for personal interest compared to 2 hours and 40-51 minutes watching television. (<https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2024/federal-data-reading-pleasure-all-signs-show-slump>)

Someone writing as “Georgina Elliot” at Dazed on 7/22/24 wrote, “Why don’t straight men read novels?” (<https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/63149/1/why-dont-straight-men-read-novels-fiction-masculinity-influencers-sigma>) that when men do read, they prefer nonfiction as it is more useful and productive for their careers. According to the “manfluencers,” masculinity values, “Self-improvement, ambition, and ‘growth mindsets,” while reading fiction is frivolous and feminized. Boys are rarely exposed to male reading role models and YA fiction readers are almost entirely females. The danger here is that reading “opens your eyes to uncomfortable truths and unexpected perspectives” and helps people understand others’ inner lives.

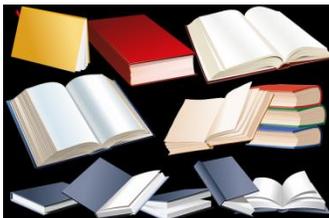


Image by Alexander Lesnitsky
from Pixabay

Caroline Furlong in “Why Aren’t Men Reading? Why Are People Reading Less?” for Upstream Reviews on 10/10/24 (<https://upstreamreviews.substack.com/p/why-arent-men-reading-why-are-people>) contends that

males are interested in different topics and genres than females and the publishing industry (and the schools) are not providing what males want to read.

Of course, what these articles do not discuss is how science fiction as a genre with a large percentage of male readers can help solve this disparity.

...Author Spotlight: Naomi Kritzer



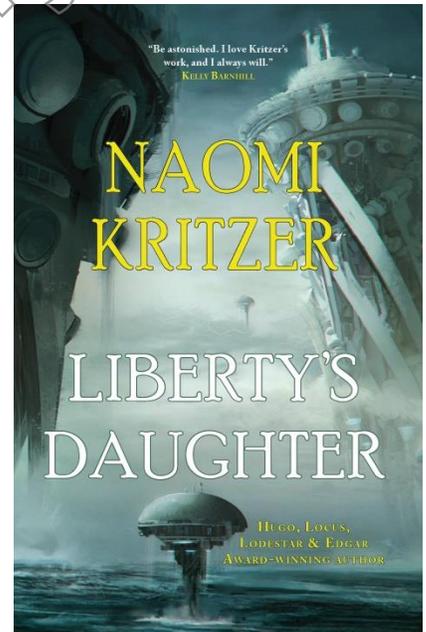
Naomi Kritzer has had two careers in science fiction and fantasy. She started with the two book *Eliana's Song* duology (*Fires of the Faithful*, 2002; and *Turning the Storm*, 2003). She then wrote the *Dead Rivers* trilogy (*Freedom's Gate*, 2004; *Freedom's Apprentice*, 2005; and *Freedom's Sister*, 2006). Then, she had no novels for a few years. But her short stories began to attract attention, with "[Cat Pictures Please](#)" (2016) winning the short story Hugo, Nebula, Locus Award, and WSFA Small Press Award. Her libertarian Seastead stories appearing in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* beginning with "Liberty's Daughter" (2012) became standouts (I know my magazine reading group liked to see them). They were novelized as *Liberty's Daughter* (2023),

although I think the original short stories were better.

Other award winning fiction of hers included: *Cat Fishing on CatNet* (a YA novel that grew out of "Cat Pictures, Please), Lodestar, 2020; Minnesota Book Award, 2020; and the Edgar Allen Poe Award, 2020; "Little Free Library," Locus 2021; "[The Dragon Project](#)," WSFA Small Press, 2023; "[Better Living Through Algorithms](#)," Hugo 2024; "[The Year Without Sunshine](#)," Hugo 2024. And her "The Four Sisters Overlooking the Sea," is up for a Hugo this year. She wrote another CatNet book, *Chaos on CatNet* (2021).

Her work is optimistic science fiction, what some call hopepunk. Even when writing about life after a great disaster, she focuses on the people helping each other. Her AI is benevolent, helping people in exchange for cat pictures.

Readers interested in her writing should start with her multi-award winning short story "[Cat Pictures Please](#)" published in *Clarksworld*. Then read her other award winners. She has a 2017 collection, *Cat Pictures Please and Other Stories*, with 17 stories. I'd recommend the novel *Liberty's Daughter* as well. If you want to meet her, she will be Guest of Honor at Capclave in Rockville, MD, on September 19-21. www.capclave.org



...Science Fiction: Cult or Fraternity?

Originally published in *The WSFA Journal* March 2003

At Balticon 2023, David Brin, after first getting the whole audience to declare in unison, "We are individuals", criticized the con for the absence of young fans and said that science fiction fans need to act like a cult and bring in more members (so there would be more people buying his books).

But is science fiction fandom a cult? Or is it a fraternity?

Generally, a cult/religion has two reasons for trying to expand. If it is sincere in its beliefs then it wants to convert people because it wants to share the truth and save people from hell/eternal darkness/a bad life. If it is not sincere than the motive to expand is to have more people contributing/tithing so the cult leader can live the good life. There's also an element of power, the more members, the more clout the leader has with politicians and the like. (Cue last line of first episode of Buffy Season 7, "It's about power.")

Do any of these apply to science fiction fandom? Do we want the whole world to be reading science fiction? Well, only if they like it. Even the most vehement SF fan recognizes that not everyone likes the same things and you can't force someone to become a SF fan. Ultimately, this is just entertainment and it doesn't really matter if a person is entertained by reading or by watching baseball. The monetary



motive applies more to authors than to readers. Popular books do not really cost less money than less successful books (except when publishers bring them out in trade paper instead of mass market or an unsuccessful author has to be published in the small press whose books are more expensive.) But even there, we'd have more success getting existing SF readers to read Robert Reed or Jeff Carver rather than try to recruit brand new readers. Similarly, not every fan goes to conventions. It is a lot easier to try to convince existing convention-going fans to attend your convention than it is to recruit new people who haven't attended conventions before. And what if the people you attract to the convention are people looking for a different experience than the one you are offering (say anime fans at Readercon)?

There's a second model however, that might fit SF fandom better--a fraternity (or really any selective society). A fraternity chooses members it thinks will fit in, rather than admit all comers equally. A fraternity or secret society will recruit selectively people who will not change the character of the group. This contributes to the feeling that members of the group are an elite--better than the common run of the mill people. We see this in SF fandom in the phrase "Fans are slans" and looking down on those who do not read. Some of this selectivity will happen naturally as most people who do not share the interests of the group will leave and not come back. To a certain degree this may seem snobbish, but do we really want to lose the traditions of science fiction fandom? Would we want a bunch of people to declare that our con needs to focus on 19th century train novels?

But there's a downside toward these exclusive societies as the members of the Masons, Fraternal Order of Eagles, or the Elks could tell us. They are having a harder time getting and keeping members. Like the science fiction world, these groups are shrinking and growing older as they fail to bring in new blood.

So what's the problem with that? Simple. If science fiction fandom doesn't grow and bring in new and younger members, there might not be enough people to run conventions when the current group of managers becomes too old/tired of it. And this aging becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as young people who do appear at a con fail to see many people even close to their age and so feel excluded and don't come back. Moreover, some of this snobbish behavior does exist as when older people are intimidated by "Goths" or certain literary SF fans look down upon fans of popular authors like Mercedes Lackey or Robert Jordan (frequently, anything popular is considered inferior)



So what's the solution? Fandom is already doing some of it in having different types of conventions plus general conventions with an assortment of items. Separate conventions exist for anime fans, media fans, costumers, gamers,



filkers, and even literary fans (Readercon and Capclave for instance). At the same time, most of the larger conventions are general interest conventions that combine all these interests plus art shows and masquerades. So it is possible that an anime fan will attend an anime convention, see a flyer for a general interest convention nearby, attend that convention and while there walk into a few panels of a more literary bent.

But much of this happens more or less by accident. Fandom needs to do more of this on purpose. This includes efforts to get younger people involved in the more general areas of the con, develop program items that would appeal to broad ranges of special groups within fandom (and programming for teens and 20-somethings), and efforts to convert Harry Potter readers into general fans. More needs to be done to make younger people welcome at club meetings and to involve them in the planning of conventions. And people should not put down popular authors but instead tell fans of Robert Jordan etc. that if they like that author they'd love Robert Silverberg or tell Buffy fans to read Charlaine Harris' Southern vampire novels.

Ultimately, fandom will be the better for broadening its base and we would be assured of more conventions in our own golden years.

...Status of Projects

Past readers of *Samizdat* will remember that I have launched a series of projects to better my life. This bimonthly report serves as a reminder to me to keep working on these, and is a record of when I fall short. Considering I've not been working for the last two months I should be much further along.

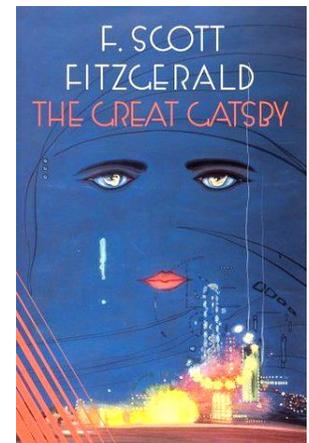
Project Classics – I read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. This is frequently named as one of the Great American Novels. Nick Carraway, a Princeton graduate, finds himself increasingly connected to his neighbor, the rich and mysterious Jay Gatsby, whose secret past includes a romance with Nick's cousin that he wants to rekindle. Cousin Daisy has since married, but her husband is having an affair of his own. Gatsby is holding on to an idealized image of Daisy that ignores her flaws. At the end, Gatsby turns out to be a criminal from a poor family and only one of the many "friends" who had attended his glamorous parties shows up for his funeral.

I also finally finished *The Source* by James Michener, a 1965 historical novel that recounts the history of the Makor region of Israel through the lens of archeologists excavating a hill (tell). I read the chapters on the fall of Crusader castles, the rabbis of Safed who had escaped the Inquisition in Spain and pogroms in Northern Europe, corruption in the Ottoman Empire, and the newly declared nation of Israel's fight for its survival in 1948. It ends with a section on the archeologists in the 1960s. I had a lot of trouble reading this, partially because of its length (over 1,000 pages), and its lack of continuing characters. Each chapter was essentially a completely independent story, some of which were rather dry. I have heard some speculation that James Michener used ghostwriters. I looked into this and found that he did have researchers, some of whom claimed their contributions extended to actual ghostwriting (especially for his later books).



I also made some more progress on Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* which continues to grow more melodramatic and soap operaish by the chapter between spontaneous human combustion, Esther's secret aristocratic mother, Esther's disfigurement from smallpox, and her nativity about various love interests. But the storyline of Richard getting caught up in a never-ending court case is resonating with me as I've felt that way as I check for updates on my own RIF case. I'm up to chapter 46. Only about 20 more chapters to go.

Project Video – I rewatched *Batman Begins* (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008) both directed by Christopher Nolan. I thought these were very strong films, especially the second. The first was more of a how Bruce became Batman



film with most of the impossible elements downplayed. This is a more human Batman who can be defeated in a fight and who gets his gadgets from someone else. I meant to rewatch the third movie but it left Netflix.

Captain America Brave New World (2025) - Although pitched as Captain America versus the Red Hulk, this is mostly a political thriller and the Red Hulk gets about 10 minutes at the end. The movie features the Sam Wilson Captain America rather than the more familiar Steve Rodgers one. The film also introduces Isaiah Bradley, an elderly black man who has superpowers from the experiments that produced the original Captain America. It is also nice to see Harrison Ford play the president again. Superhero fans can skip this movie.

Ironheart (2025) - This is a just released six-episode TV series featuring the Marvel superhero Ironheart who first appeared in the second *Black Panther* movie. Here, the super-genius Riri Williams is kicked out of MIT for raising money by helping students cheat. She goes to Chicago where she raises more money for her Iron Man-style suite by joining a gang of criminals. Riri is far from a Mary Sue in that she is so obsessed with the suit that she commits crimes and exploits her friends. But she is never punished for her crimes, even murder. I also had a major problem with how easy it is for her to take a car and turn it into an Iron Man suit in just one night. She also accidentally invents an AI based on her dead best friend that somehow has her friend's memories. I did like how what seems like a science fiction show (robotic suits) turns cross-genre as Riri is forced to turn to magic to counter the bad guy's magic. I found the show's problems outweighed its points of interest. People on the Internet are speculating that there won't be a second series of *Ironheart*.

Project Trek-I watched the first season of *Star Trek Prodigy* (2021-2). This is an animated series but the animation is movie quality (obviously computerized) rather than more cartoony TV quality I expected. Some of the space sequences looked more real than the special effects in TNG. Although the show was produced for kids, I found it worked for adults with real science fiction in many of the 20 episodes of the first season. There is real continuity with an arc involving kids from a prison colony discovering an experimental Federation starship (complete with a Janeway hologram) and being chased by the evil head of the prison who wants revenge on Starfleet. The show even has real character growth as when the girl who acts as the muscle decides she wants to be a science officer. There were some flaws, mainly to simplify things. Janeway was too naïve and trusting. And the gimmick that could turn Starfleet ships against each other, which was necessary for the plot, did not seem believable. Still, this series is an excellent way to introduce young people to the *Star Trek* universe. It is too bad it was orphaned practically from beginning.



Project Nonfiction/History - I finally finished *Scotland: A New History* by Michael Lynch. I found the book rather dull and it seemed to report around the history (as if he assumes the reader already knows the basics) rather than tell the history. I am not sure how the author managed to take all the drama out of Mary Queen of Scots, but he did. While the book does contain some elements of social and cultural history, it lacked a narrative. I could not find a thesis. It may have worked better as a supplement to another textbook or course lectures. Not recommended.

Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels by Thomas Cahill. This is the follow-up to *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. This is less a history of the Jews and more of a summary of the Hebrew Bible. He writes, "The Jews were the first people to break out of this [traditional] circle, to find a new way of thinking and experiencing, a new way of understanding and feeling the world, so much so that it may be said with some justice that there's is the only new idea that human beings have ever had." My problem with the book is that he takes the Bible as if it were all true and does not go into any biblical analysis of different documents behind the Biblical books we have now. This book was nowhere near as good as its title indicates.



The Last Supper: Art, Faith, Sex, and Controversy in the 1980s by Paul Elie. This is cultural history that tied in art and music of the 1980s with social movements around gays and the spread of AIDS along with the religious reaction to all this. The book is highly ambitious linking together everything from Andy Warhol to Prince to Rushdie to Mapplethorpe. He also uses the cultural wars of the 1980s to explain the religious right and conservatism of the present. It really needed to be made as a multimedia presentation that included music and video, rather than traditional text. The timeline was sometimes hard to follow and was sometimes thematic fragments rather than structured chronologically.

Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI by Yuval Noah Harari traces conceptions of information networks as the foundation of civilization throughout history, beginning with myths that form early religions and stories that tie people together into tribes (and later nations). The author also raises the problem of misinformation (citing witchcraft trials). Then he discusses the modern shift from the printing press to computerized networks to AI. But AI creates the danger of autonomous decision making separate from human oversight and control. I found this book not as strong as Harari's earlier *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*.

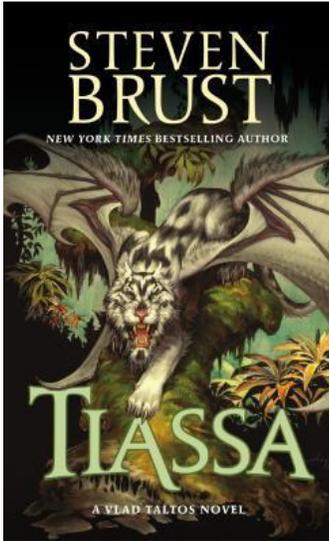
Fire Weather: A True Story from a Hotter World by John Vaillant uses the example of the disastrous 2016 fire at Fort McMurray as evidence that the modern world will have even more of these huge firestorms as a result of global warming and our energy industry's concealing the true costs of energy excavation. I found the stories about the struggles of firefighters and regular people trying to survive the unprecedented speed and fury of this fire to be much more interesting than the background (even if necessary to prove the author's points). Still this is well worth reading.

Project Activities-I went to the National Gallery of Art (European side), the Baltimore SF Society's BBQ, and a friend's Fourth of July celebration. I need to do more local-area touring.

Project Shorts - I've been reading the various Hugo nominees and WSFA Small Press Award finalists. I read a



few more stories in *Ascent of Wonder*. But I've fallen behind on the magazines.



Project Paperback - I read David Weber's *The Path of the Fury* a space opera in which a female cyborg warrior wanting revenge on space pirates merges with an ancient Greek spirit of vengeance (the Fury of the title) and then acquires a super-spaceship with an AI that also settles in her mind. I think Weber gives his heroine too many non-humans in her head. Dave Duncan's *Impossible Odds* is one of his *King's Blades* series. And Charles Sheffield's *Godspeed* is a YA that is a SF retelling of *Treasure Island*. I also read Steven Brust's *Tiassa*, part of his Vlad Taltos series, which is really three linked stories from different periods of Vlad's life. This is actually a crossover with the Khaavern books as he is featured in two of the stories.

Project Shakespeare - I started *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Watching the play is much better than reading it. I saw a truly magical performance of the play from the Shakespeare and Company troupe at Edith Warton's The Mount, that was performed outside, at the edge of the forest, so the trees were real and the actor who played Puck was incredibly acrobatic.

I need to do more with Project Exercise and Project Clean-up.

...LoC on N'APA 276

Intermission #153 - I don't think Trump is a Russian agent, but he is easy to manipulate. All anyone has to do is flatter him and appeal to his ego. He also is envious of strongman dictators like Putin. Unfortunately, it will be hard for the Democrats to recapture the Senate due to the seats that are up for election (Senators are elected for six-year terms) although they have an excellent chance at capturing the House. But to convict a president in the Senate requires a two-thirds vote and there is no way the Democrats will get two-thirds. Fascinating story (and pictures) of the *Vasa* ship. Thanks for linking to *The Recluse* from 1927. I'd argue that it is a fanzine since it was "Issued by W. Paul Cook, for His Own Amusement" although it is more of a poetry fanzine than a sf fanzine despite Lovecraft's article on supernatural horror. I agree that computers have enabled fanzines to look more professional than the old mimeographed fanzine. The term "woke" is generally used only by critics of diversity and inclusion.



I don't know what you mean by internal fighting and disagreements over the selection of officers in the Washington Science Fiction Association (WSFA) of which I was just elected secretary. It's been a long time since this was an issue. Perhaps you are confusing us with the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) which runs the Worldcon. You would be far from the first to make this mistake. As someone who has been involved in the running of multiple conventions, including some Worldcons and World Fantasy Conventions I know for a fact that many items in Codes of Conduct are there because someone did something (or threatened to do something) and said there was no rule against it. Of course this doesn't mean that some officials don't go too far, but some rules in this day and age are necessary. And people have the right to be addressed with their preferred pronouns and names.



The Swamp Spot Sentinel #1.1 - Welcome! I'm sorry to learn of your hearing issues. Your review of *The Man Who Saw Seconds* by Alexander Boldizar made it sound interesting. Your article about the Department of Health's price stabilization efforts was very funny.

Archive Midwinter for N'APA 275 - Yes, AI will have a sad effect on data entry jobs. I think that we need to be aware of the standards of the past, but can still judge them by modern day standards. For instance, we can say that slavery is morally wrong while recognizing that many societies in the past accepted slavery. Musk did in fact step away from government within the limits of a special advisor. Friz Leiber, Poul Anderson, and Esther Frieser are great choices for authors who have influenced you. I have enjoyed books by all three. I'll admit that AI art is useful for those of us who aren't artists.



Brandy Hall #12 - I've always been a big reader since childhood too. I know I read *Lord of the Rings* a couple of times when I was in high school, but I think I'm overdue for a re-read. I enjoyed the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy of movies, but was deeply disappointed by the stretched out *Hobbit* trilogy of films. If N'APA gets too long, it can easily be split in two parts emailed separately. Our current computers need a lot of tender care to keep them working too. I find it ironic that after years of complaining that the Democrats were pro-Communist and too easy on Russia, the Republicans so easily fell in line behind Trump's pro-Russia policy. *Legends & Lattes* by Travis Baldree is no longer a stand-alone. There are two other books in the series. Most major institutions do have codes of conduct. You'd get thrown out of bank or restaurant for lots of behaviors tolerated at sf conventions. Here's a link to the If I Ran the Zoo con-runners game, <https://www.nesfa.org/book/if-i-ran-the-zoo-con-4/> If you haven't read Michael Swanwick, I strongly recommend his Best of collections. He's one of those authors whose short stories are better than his novels. Texas has the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan that automatically admits all students who graduate in the top 10% of a Texas high school to any public college/university of their choice. But it doesn't provide funding. A separate program provides full-tuition for one year for each Texas high school's valedictorian. This was an attempt to avoid affirmative action programs. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas_House_Bill_588. Yes, librarians, until recently, have looked down on SF or assumed all SF belonged in the children's section.

Intermission #154- I really doubt that Trump was recruited as a Russian agent (or is being blackmailed). I think Trump naturally is aligned with dictators because he wants to be one himself. Also, he is easily manipulated (all you have to do is flatter him). As I said, there is no way the Democrats can capture the two-thirds of the Senate necessary to convict Trump after the House impeaches him. And we've already seen that Trump (and his voters) shrug off impeachments without convictions. Taking a Western and changing the six shooter to a ray gun to claim it as SF was a cliché of 1940s and 50s SF in the US. It may have been different in Sweden. I think it remarkable how, since WWII, there has never been a nuclear weapon used in war and the number of countries with nukes has been so limited. I hope Sweden doesn't go the A-bomb route.

Ye Murdered Master Mage 276 - Yes, determining if a book is the author's first is sometimes difficult, especially as publishers sometimes forget to count self-published books, books under different names, and books for YA. I have seen books that claim to be the author's first SF when the author has written fantasy (and vice-versa).



Brownian Motion #13 - The problem with relying on “Common Sense” or “Common Courtesy” is that different people have different definitions of these (especially when drunk or high). Some of your life skills are easier said than done. Thanks for your kind words about my zine being good reading. I’m impressed that you read *The Source* multiple times (I’m having trouble getting through with it once). But if you like the book enough to read it multiple times why haven’t you read other books by James Michener? I’ve had lots of trouble in the past trying to learn foreign languages so wish it had been taught in elementary school. General interest SF conventions still exist; the biggest example is Worldcon. I’d regard Boskone and Balticon to be general interest conventions as well.



RAIL #6—I have problems with a lot of stories in the second person when the author doesn’t have a reason for making the story in the second person, telling the “you” what they already know.

Esmeralda County Line #10 - There’s a reason people in England refer to the *Daily Mail* newspaper as the Daily Fail. The big reason for the replacement of paper digest magazines with electronic magazines is the huge expense for postage. Galactic Empires are common in SF in everything from Foundation to Dune, so I don’t see why a constitutional monarchy would cause any problems. Yes, DAW Books is still around. They are part of Astra Publishing House. They publish John Wiswell, Suzanne Palmer, Mercedes Lackey (non-Valdemar books), Tanith Lee (reprints), and C. J. Cherryh, among others.

Snow Poster Township #21 - Wow, immigrating to Portugal! That seems like quite a step. Do you mind saying why? I’m not into horror, but it is good that there are alternatives to Netflix. I’m fortunate to live in an area with both the Washington SF Association (WSFA) and the Baltimore SF Society (and like to think I do my bit to help with local sf activities and convention). Thanks for more abbreviations. The US has so many mass shootings that we’ve become rather blasé about the whole thing. Collecting and analyzing cons’ codes of conduct sounds like a great idea. I’m curious if there are differences according to the type of con and its size. I’m not sure why would conflate Mike Resnick’s writing with Michael Swanwick’s (aside from both being Mikes). Resnick seems to write in more pulp and exaggerated “tall tale” styles while Swanwick has a much more literary style.



(Alternate version of cover graphic)

...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 current or former employer, client, or organization to which I belong. This zine was produced during Samuel Lubell’s non-work time. Views on political issues are my own and have nothing to do with any government employment. Graphics are from clip art discs, the Internet, and AI programs (including crayon, ideogram, canva, and myedit).

INTERMISSION #156

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, an attack drone for EAPA, N'APA and other lorries with hidden compartments. Still late and lazy with @SFJournalen's newstweets but try them. AI makes life perfect, nothing goes wrong! Fixes all typos too! Early July 2025.

Editorially: Michelism, FBI Vs SF, Ukraine Drones, US BBusters

The History Corner column has over time become a cornerstone of *Intermission*. It tries to dig up interesting, lesser known things from the history of science fiction and its fandom. *Intermission* has always had historical material (because your editor is into genre history since long: the *Fandbook*, fanhistory anthologies, articles etc) but there was a leap forward around #96 when I began presenting the research material found in the digital newspaper archive of the Stockholm Royal Library - and that was a lot! Similar genre research has been added over time.

In this I have some really great stuff: Michelism (from the 1939 Worldcon controversial Exclusion Act), FBI suspecting Asimov and Bradbury for being bloody commies, why Soviet computers were crap, the unknown 17th Century sf authress, the first electric spaceship, the quartet of sf authors who died on the Titanic, the first sf TV show (BBC 1938), how Scotty and Captain Kirk didn't enter space first with Star Trek but with Canada's *Space Command* in the 1950s... To this miscellaneous and some perhaps risky comments: woke CoCs, faulty Gaza stats, a report from this year's Eurocon, and maybe more.

But I must cover news about Putin's for each month increasingly fruitless, stupid and evil war against Ukraine. June 1st the Ukrainians performed the most astounding and successful attack against Russian strategic bombers, shortly thereafter they blew up over ton of TNT (delivered by an underwater drone) at a fundamental pillar of Putin's beloved Crimea bridge, making it unstable for heavy traffic. And on the very Russia Day (their 4th of July) Russian losses, KIA and wounded, surpassed one million (other estimates come close to that figure, which is from Ukraine's general staff).

The attack against the Russian bombers, of which 41 were hit (1/3 of Putin's strategic bomber fleet!) was done with hundreds of cheap drones, released from hidden compartments in lorry trailers, smuggled into Russia right under their noses. It was a brilliant very effective operation which will be studied many decades to come. Not only is it a huge blow to Putin's cowardly, wicked bombing of schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, kindergartens etc in Ukraine, which the destroyed bombers carried missiles for, it also spreads paranoia in Russia. Their transport system is slowed down as every lorry must be checked, the FSB (formerly KGB) becomes a laughing stock, and the ordinary Russian begins to realise not all goes to plan. A similar operation, according to sources, later destroyed scores of Russian tanks and hundreds of armoured BMPs on a train transport. The Israelis seem to be inspired by (maybe get help from) Ukraine, in their campaign against Iranian nuclear facilities and top brass. In a similar way they released drones inside Iran destroying anti-aircraft systems, to let their air force operate unopposed.

The Ukrainians are smart, adaptable, they are masters of the new drone warfare and they give Putin heavy blows daily. Morale among Russian troops are very low, desertions increase and while they do crawl forward on some fronts, it's at a snail's pace to huge costs. Putin's war chest (the "welfare fund") is ¾ emptied, oil income will drop as more "shadow fleet" vessels are sanctioned, US congress has majority for 500% tariffs on Russia's buyers, drones have knocked out 30% of their refineries, Ruble inflation is 25-30% (independent sources say), Ukraine's drone attacks on military installations, supplies, etc increase (and they'll triple drone production 2025), Europe has stepped up and boosts military funding. And the Russian ass...asset defiling the Oval Office can't do a thing. Putin plays Trump like a fiddle while Donny organises a silly military parade... I suppose the US army is worth respect, but marching through the avenues of the capital to loud-mouthed bragging, that's what troops of dictatorships do.

But the US military certainly redeemed itself with the June 22 attack on Iran's nuclear sites. Fordow



with the underground centrifuges got blasted with twelve 12 ton bunker busters, Natanz received 2, Istfahan only cruise missiles (a nuclear tech center not underground). Fordow with the sensitive centrifuges 90 m underground should have been damaged by shockwaves from the bombs, that reportedly penetrate "only" 60 m down - but the explosives have an earthquake effect tens of metres around.

But I have another suggestion: for at least two of the blasts the B2s managed to aim a second bomb into the holes of the first, thus reaching far more than 60 m. The B2s thus came in two waves, the first dropping just two bunker busters, the second 25 minutes later dropping 10 of which at least two could have pinpointed the holes of the first wave. Net sources says this sort of bombing would be difficult but possible in theory. The ordonnance has precision for it. Pictures don't show 14 bomb holes, so some must have been "doubled". And Pentagon sounds certain they stopped Iran's A-bomb ambitions.

Trump likes golf more than keeping his facts straight and even keeping Putin happy. And it seems he ordered the US Air Force to lob...hole in ones!

Iranian air defence, primarily of Russian origin, couldn't do anything. Much had already been knocked out by Israel. Ruski air defence can't even defend itself! And the holes are doubling in Putin's purse, he's losing Iran as ally, his battered troops loose men and hardware fast, and his opponent knows how to duck and cover, while returning crushing counterblows.

It's only a matter of time before Putin must give in.

--Ahrvid Engholm, editor

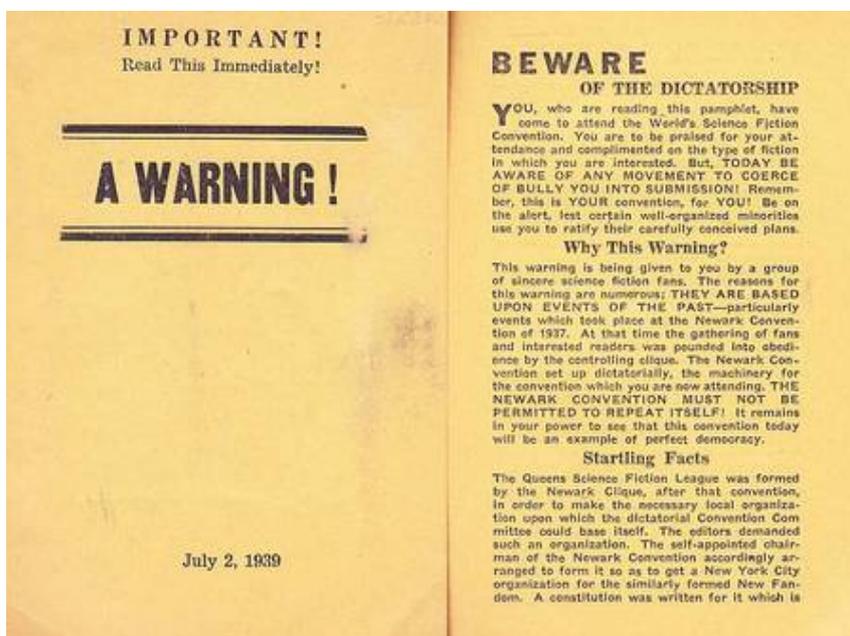
HISTORY CORNER

This HisCor - what this popular, fact-filled History Corner is known as in intellectual circles - will be a bixed mag...mixed bag. We e g learn that this politicising that threatens to overtake fandom (awards to "minorities" only, Code of Conducts to suppress dissent, "include" fans away, etc) isn't new.

Already in the 1930s there were some in the New York Futurian group who subscribed to the movement called Michelism, or: crypto-Communism. It was named after the main spokesman, one John B Michel. Among the supporters we had for instance Don Wollheim, yes the Ghu Archbishop later founding DAW books with the aim to publish as many books as possible by Ken Bulmer (unsure of Nobel chances, Bulmer wrote as Alan Burt Akers).

It was Michelism that lead SaMoskowitz to the opposite of "inclusion" by excluding half a dozen Futurians from the premier Worldcon in New York, 1939. (Called "Worldcon" because it was held during the NY *World's Fair*. The "world" part of it was zero. Not even a stray Canadian managed to find Nycon.) SaM was afraid that the heavily armed - using words, mightier than the sword as you know - suspicious elements of Michelism would lead a revolution taking over fandom, leading to ink sprinkled over endless reams of twiltone paper and lots and lots of talk on club meetings for scores of teenagers, who'd rather read about the galactic adventures of "Doc" Smith's Lensmen.

So out they went, and spent the convention on a café across the street. But suspicious element Dave Kyle managed to sneak in and placed a printrun of Das Fannish Kapital behind a suspicious heating element in the hall. You find it here, <https://file770.com/own-the-zine-that-started-the-trouble-at-the-first-worldcon/> - read A WARNING...BEWARE OF THE DICTATORSHIP. Today's woke activists should take heed, to become even more awake. It's always a good advice to beware of dictatorships. SaM's Exclusion Act missed Kyle who was told he could sit there at the con. He also missed Isaac Asimov, the worst sf author yet unlynched, to his own admission. He was probably disappointed there were so few femmefans there for him to chase. Post-Nycon SaM spent considerable time learning



"Rejected - Convention Committee"

THE SPEECHES BY DONALD A.
WOLLHEIM AND JOHN B. MICHEL
SUPPRESSED BY THE COMMITTEE
OF THE NEWARK CONVENTION
Pamphlet N°2 CPASF

to create boxed pages without a Linotype, revealing how he averted a World Revolution Immortal Storm. Whatever makes you happy.

Anyway, the ousted Futurians were used to be seen as labrats that catwoman C'Mell had dragged in. The year before, at the Newark sf convention, carefully crafted speeches by Wollheim and Michel were rejected by the contra-revolutionary committee! These spectres haunting worldfandom was instead wisely published by the Committee for the Political Advancement of SF. If you're not afraid of ghosts you find it here:

<https://www.fanac.org/fanzines/CPASF/CPASF2.pdf>

Wollheim's rejected speech deals with the science in sf. Fans aren't competent enough to become real scientists and invent specships, he seems to argue, but could always become *defenders of science!* It's always a good advice to defend science (unless its about climate).

Michel was tougher. Fandom's Lenin urged us to: FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM AND FOR A SCIENTIFIC WORLD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEM! DEFEND SCIENCE AGAINST REACTIONS. ON GUARD AGAINST THE NEW BARBARIANS! It should be explained that communism rests on the delusion that it's "scientific", so "scientific" that virtually everyone trying it has gone bankrupt. (But Michel's idea to fight fascism had some merits.)

But lets commit these seasoned 20-something political philosophers to history. What wasn't known at the time is that chasing skirts was just a cover, because Isaac Asimov was a Russian agent codename *Robprof!* Or so at least, that was what FBI suspected:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/i-robprof-fbi-feared-muchloved-science-fiction-author-isaac-asimov-was-soviet-agent-8929976.html>

FBI feared much-loved science fiction author Isaac Asimov was Soviet agent. Papers show that he was investigated on suspicion of being a spy.

But newly released papers show that, in the 1960s, he was unknowingly embroiled in intrigue more suited to a John Le Carre novel, as the FBI investigated him on suspicion of being a Soviet spy.

Never-before-seen documents reveal that the agency acted to investigate Asimov in 1965 receiving a leaked US Communist Party list which included the I, Robot author's name. The list was of individuals who had either been contacted by the party or were considered "possibly amenable to such as supporters".

There were no notations behind the writer's name and the informant - the New England District chairman of the US Communist Party - said he "could not determine why his name was listed or whether he had been contacted". The FBI files on Asimov show that the agency scrutinised his records to see if he was a notorious Soviet informant codenamed Robprof.

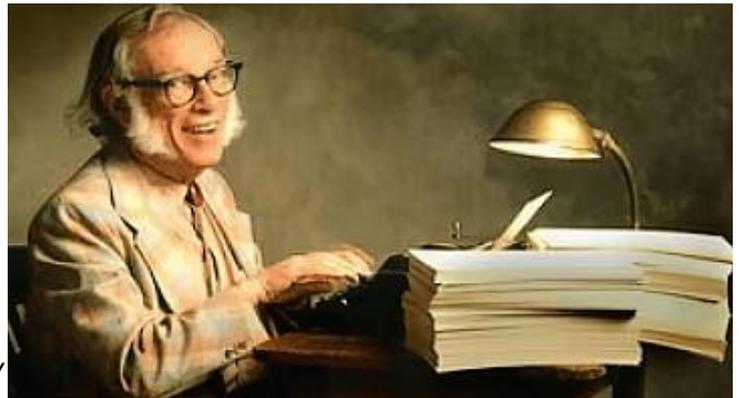
The FBI continued to monitor Asimov for at least the next two years. In 1967 a memo in the files noted a change of address, as well as checks on his credit history and criminal record. Those, and his immigration files, failed to unearth any issues. That marked the last note in Asimov's FBI file.

News of the FBI's suspicions about the sf writer's political leaning emerged after the US open government campaign group MuckRock put in a freedom of information request to see his FBI file. The request also turned up the suspicions of an unnamed informer who accused Asimov of being a communist. The source wrote to J Edgar Hoover, the first director of the FBI, in 1960: "Asimov may be quite all right. On the other hand..." He enclosed his correspondence with Asimov and said his reason for airing his suspicions was "because I question the position he takes with respect to the first nuclear power plants being built by Soviet Russia".

Here's more: <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2013/nov/07/isaac-asimov-fbi-file-ROBPROF/>

J. Edgar was cordial but dismissive. His assistants noted that this was not this particular correspondent's first not-so-hot tip, his last sent in 1957 "regarding the Russian Revolution of 1917." The Director returned all correspondence with thanks and enclosed a few pamphlets on the subject of communism.

This was not the Bureau's last glance into Asimov, though. A 1965 memo notes that Asimov's name appeared on a list maintained by the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) of individuals either contacted for recruitment or "considered amenable" to the party's goals. An informant, who is noted as the chairman of the CPUSA, New England district, provided the list to the FBI's Boston office. The list included an entry for "ISAAC ASIMOV, Boston University Biochemist," but did not note whether the party had actually established contact. /The informant mentioned/ that science fiction "did a large amount of blind' publishing for the CP."



Robprof with a day's production: Foundation Hooray, Rusting Robots, Asimov on Quantum Physics Entanglement and 500 More Dirty Limericks.

The memo's author also reviews Asimov's academic history as a biochemist, weighing whether the author might be a potential match to the Soviet informant codenamed ROBPROF, who was also in academia.

"Boston is not suggesting that Asimov is ROBPROF," the memo concludes, but "he should be considered as a

Hon. J. Edgar Hoover
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D. C.

DATE 4/18/92 BY 2125/MLC/4/1
INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/15/93 BY 1043/MLC/4/1

Dear Mr. Hoover,

I am enclosing correspondence exchanged with Isaac Asimov, author of the book INSIDE THE ATOM.

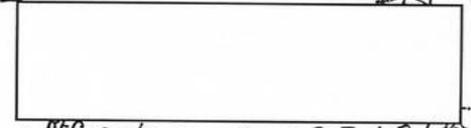
My reason for sending it is because I question the position he takes with respect to the first nuclear power plant having been built by Soviet Russia.

From our college library here I have found that Asimov was born January 2, 1920, in Petrovichi, Russia; that he has degrees of B. S., M. A., and Ph. D., all granted by institutions in this country; and that he is presently connected with Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Asimov may be quite all right. On the other hand,

Yours sincerely,

Classified by
Declassify on: OADR



The anonymous letter reporting Asimov.

possibility in light of his background, which contains information inimical to the best interests of the United States." Due to the ROBPROF suspicions, Asimov remained on the FBI's radar...immigration files also failed to uncover any dirt, and a captain of the Boston University Police Department confirmed that he was still employed by the university. The FBI's file on Isaac Asimov ends at 1967, so it seems that their ROBPROF investigation steered toward other suspects.

Instead of bothering agent Robprof, perhaps they should have a look into agent Krasnov?

Anyway, here's the full Asimov File:

<https://www.muckrock.com/foi/united-states-of-america-10/fbi-file-on-isaac-asimov-8300/#comm-47443>

But FBI wasn't finished with these treacherous skiffy hackwriters. Why not have a crack at the illustrated...eh,illustrious man himself:

Re Boston letter 4/19/65.

On 2/24/55 [redacted] made available a list of names which was in the possession of the CPUSA Underground operating in the Boston, Massachusetts area. This list was entitled [redacted] and contained the name "ISAAC ASIMOV, Boston University, Biochemist."

This informant advised that notations indicated that some persons listed had been contacted and others were being considered for contact by [redacted] as possibly amenable to such as supporters for amnesty pleas for issues such as the [redacted] case.

b2
b6
b7C
b7D

The informant advised that there was no notation after the name of ASIMOV and that he could not determine why his name was listed or whether he had been contacted.

[redacted] was a CP member in 1955 and is currently the Chairman of the CPUSA, New England District.

On 4/20/54 [redacted] advised SA [redacted] that she and [redacted] a retired lieutenant-colonel of the U.S. Army, were "science fiction" enthusiasts and in 1952 or 1953 attended a three day convention at the Henry Hudson Hotel, NYC. It was confided to her at the convention by [redacted] that Science Fiction magazines did a large amount of "blind" publishing for the CP.

b2
b6
b7C
b7D

Who's Who also lists a number of books authored by ASIMOV. His home address was shown as 45 Greenough Street, West Newton 55, Massachusetts.

[redacted] has advised that Unsub ROBPROF is a noted person in the field of Microbiology, which, according to the medical dictionary, is the science of nature, life and actions of micro-organisms (bacteria). (X)(u)

Biochemistry is the study of the chemistry of the living tissues of plant and animal life.

Boston is not suggesting that ASIMOV is ROBPROF. [redacted] has advised that ROBPROF is in the field of Microbiology. However, as in the case of [redacted] he should be considered as a possibility in light of his background, which contains information inimical to the best interests of the United States. (X)(u)

[redacted] Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass., was contacted on 6/14/65 and he advised [redacted] is acquainted with [redacted] but that [redacted] is unknown to him. He further advised that [redacted] is not aware that [redacted] is acquainted with or has associated with any Soviet nationals. (X)(u)

Ray Bradbury investigated for communist sympathies. Science fiction great put under surveillance by the FBI for spreading distrust and lack of confidence in America'

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/aug/30/ray-bradbury-investigated-fbi>

Ray Bradbury was investigated by the FBI during the 1950s, with government agents interviewing his peers and putting him under surveillance before concluding that despite being critical of the US government in his writing, the celebrated writer was never a member of the Communist party.

The 40-page cache of the late science fiction author's FBI files was obtained by the Daily Beast following a Freedom of Information request, and shows the extent to which the FBI had Bradbury in its sights in 1959. "Raymond Douglas Bradbury, a freelance science fiction, television and motion picture scenario writer has been described as being critical of the United States Government," the FBI wrote on 8 June 1959, before laying out its issue with Bradbury's classic collection of short stories, *The Martian Chronicles*. The stories "were connected by the repeated theme that earthmen are despoilers and not developers", according to the FBI...

A named source in the file, Martin A Berkeley, told the agents investigating Bradbury that the author "was probably sympathetic with certain pro-communist elements", and that during a discussion about whether Communist party members should be allowed to join the Screen Writers Guild, Bradbury "rose to his feet and shouted 'Cowards and McCarthyites' when the resolution was discussed".



Ray Bradbury from the LASFS days in the 40s, hot on the chicks. Here with Virginia Laney.

Berkeley, a "self-admitted" former member of the Communist party, went on to tell the FBI "that science fiction may be a lucrative field for the introduction of communist ideologies", and that "some of Bradbury's stories have been definitely slanted against the United States and its capitalistic form of government".

Another informant agreed about the dangerous effects of science fiction, advising "that individuals such as Ray Bradbury are in a position to spread poison concerning political institutions in general and American institutions in particular", and that "Communists have found fertile opportunities for development; for spreading distrust and lack of confidence in American institutions in the area of science fiction writing". Even worse, "the general aim of these science fiction writers is to frighten the people into a state of paralysis or psychological incompetence bordering on hysteria which would make it very possible to conduct a Third World War which the American people would seriously believe could not be won since their morals had been seriously destroyed". Bradbury did not help his own cause by taking out an advertisement in the Daily Variety in 1952, in which, according to the FBI documents, he wrote: "I have seen too much fear in a country that has no right to be afraid. I have seen too many campaigns in California, as well as in other states, won on the issue of fear itself, and not on the facts. I do not want to hear any more of this claptrap and nonsense from you. I will not welcome it from McCARTHY or McCARRAN, from Mr NIXON, DONALD JACKSON, or a man named SPARKMAN. I do not want any more lies, any more prejudice, any more smears. I do not want intimations, hearsay or rumour. I do not want unsigned letters or nameless telephone calls from either side, or from anyone."

Despite this, the FBI concluded in 1959 that "no evidences have been developed which indicate he was ever a member of the [party]"... Ray Bradbury was investigated by the FBI during the 1950s, with government agents interviewing his peers and putting him under surveillance before concluding that despite being critical of the US government in his writing, the celebrated writer was never a member of the Communist party.

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Ray was among the active clientele of the famous Los Angeles SF Society in the 1940s, and they did have some card-carrying communist party members - Ah, Sweet Idiocy! - but he wasn't one. The full Bradbury file is here:

<http://www.mediafire.com/file/r3m17rz4p6w9dov/FBI-Ray-Bradbury.PDF> Below from <https://www.spyculture.com/fbi-file-on-ray-bradbury/>

FBI suspected for some time that Bradbury was born under another name (which is redacted in the publicly available file) before eventually finding out that they were two different people. It also devoted quite some time to looking into the possibility that Bradbury was going to travel to Cuba, at that time illegal under US law, but this also turned out to be a red herring... The notion that SF might be a channel for 'the introduction of Communist ideologies' is not that uncommon but the idea of using depictions of the future (predictive programming) as a means of propaganda is rarely discussed in official documents.

What a luck for hot-blooded applepie Americans that they have the Federal Bureau of Imagination to keep watch. And there's more commie hunting: <https://monthlyreview.org/press/an-un-american-treatment-of-a-leftist-science-fiction-fan-the-prosecution-of-professor-chandler-davis-reviewed-by-hugo-book-club/> reviewing Steve Batterson's book *The Prosecution of Professor Chandler Davis: McCarthyism, Communism, and the Myth of Academic Freedom*:

BERKELEY reported that BRADBURY, during the course of the discussion, rose to his feet and accused "Communists and Mc Carthyites" when the resolution was discussed. BERKELEY stated it has been his observation that some of the writers suspected of having Communist backgrounds have been writing in the field of science fiction and it appears that science fiction may be a lucrative field for the introduction of Communist ideologies. He noted that some of BRADBURY's stories have been definitely slanted against the United States and its capitalistic form of Government.

LA T-3: (1/5/59)

Informant observed that Communists have found fertile opportunities for development; for spreading distrust and lack of confidence in American institutions in the area of science fiction writing. Informant declared that a number of science fiction writers have created illusions with regard to the impossibility of continuing world affairs in an organized manner now or in the future through the medium of futuristic stories concerned with the potentialities of science.

DECLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM:
FBI AUTOMATIC DECLASSIFICATION GUIDE
DATE 02-16-2012

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM : SAC, WFO (105-104) (RM)

SUBJECT: RAY BRADBURY
IS - CU
(OO:LA)

DATE: JAN 29 1959

RE: ReFairtel 12/15/67 and 12/29/67, captioned CULTURAL CONGRESS, HAWANA, CUBA, 1/4-11/68, IS - CUBA.

Enclosed for the Bureau are six copies, and for Los Angeles two copies of LHM dated and captioned as above. One info copy also enclosed for New York.

The LHM is classified "Secret" in view of the sensitive nature of [redacted] and to protect the identities of informants of continuing value.

MF T-1 in [redacted]
MF T-2 in [redacted]

Files of the Passport Office, USDO, were reviewed by SA JERRY D. CLOUD on 1/19/68.

CLASSIFIED BY [redacted]
DECLASSIFY ON: 25X 16

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177067

3 - Bureau (Enc. 6)
(1 - 105-172124)
2 - Los Angeles (Enc. 2) (RM)
1 - New York (Enc. 1) (RM)
2 - WFO
(1 - 105-85470)

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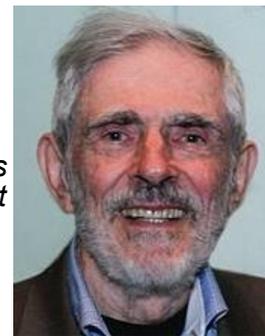
Copy to: CIA/State/RM, FSD
by routing slip for info
date - 1/26/68 by [redacted]

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

1st page of the FBI file on Bradbury.

Chan Davis (1929 – 2022) was well known to science fiction fans of the 1940s and 1950s. He was a fanzine editor, an early filker, a Worldcon troublemaker, and a regular contributor to *Astounding Science Fiction*. But to the broader public, he's more likely to be remembered as a mathematician and as a political prisoner. Fired from the University of Michigan in 1954, and imprisoned for six months in 1960 on charges of contempt of Congress brought by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Davis has long warranted the sort of examination that biographer Dr. Steve Batterson provides in his new book *The Prosecution of Professor Chandler Davis*.

Almost all HUAC witnesses with Communist connections were avoiding the jeopardy of contempt prosecution either by naming the names of others or declining to answer questions under the Fifth Amendment," explains biographer Dr. Steve Batterson. "Finding both stay out of jail options to be intolerable, Chandler refused to cooperate asserting the Freedom of Speech protection of the First Amendment. He intended to use the standing gained by an expected conviction to obtain a hearing before the Supreme Court and hopefully end HUAC's persecution of the left. During the height of McCarthyism, it was a course of enormous risk and courage."



Chan Davis.

OK, he was a blasted commie, but he did stand up against McCarthy which isn't all bad, so Chan Davis should perhaps be more remembered in fandom. Fancyclopedia notes: "Davis was a member of the Stranger Club and was one of the members who attended Noreascon 3 as Fan GoH. He edited and published the FAPazine *Blitherings* in the 1940s (also published in VAPA) as well as the apazine *macVert* for VAPA. He was a member of the Brain Trust. He had something to do with the fireworks at Philcon, the 1947 Worldcon, where he also played piano and sang his own science fictional songs, and he attended Torcon, the sixth Worldcon, in 1948. He began writing SF in the 1940s, several of his stories appearing in *Astounding*."

Change of /p/a/n/t/s topic: In the 1950s the USSR desperately wanted to catch up with the West in computers. We read of a stalled attempt to create a Soviet "Internjet": <https://aeon.co/essays/how-the-soviets-invented-the-internet-and-why-it-didnt-work>

Glushkov's idea was to inaugurate an era of electronic socialism. He named the colossally ambitious project the All-State Automated System. It sought to streamline and technologically upgrade the entire planned economy. This system would still make economic decisions by state plans, not market prices, but sped up by computer modelling to predict equilibria before they happen. Glushkov wanted smarter and faster decision-making, and maybe even electronic currency. All he needed was the Politburo's purse.

But when Glushkov entered the cavernous room that morning, he noticed two empty chairs at the long table: his two strongest allies were missing. Instead, he faced down a table of ambitious, steely-eyed ministers - many of whom wanted the Politburo's purse and support for themselves.

Between 1959 and 1989, leading Soviet men of science and state repeatedly ventured to construct a national computer network for broadly prosocial purposes. With the deep wounds of the Second World War far from healed, the Soviet Union continued to specialise in massive modernisation projects that had transformed a dispersed tsarist nation of illiterate peasants into a global nuclear power in the course of a couple of generations.

After the Soviet Union's leader Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's personality cult in 1956, a sense of possibility swept the country. Onto this scene entered a host of socialist projects to wire the national economy with networks, among them the first proposal anywhere in the world to create a national computer network for civilians. The idea was the brainchild of the military researcher Anatoly Ivanovich Kitov.

A young man with a small build and a keen mind for mathematics, Kitov had risen through the ranks of the Red Army in the Second World War. Then, in 1952, he encountered Norbert Wiener's masterwork *Cybernetics* (1948) in a secret military library, the book's title a neologism coined from the Greek for steersman and a postwar science of self-governing information systems. With the support of two senior scientists, Kitov translated cybernetics into a robust Russian-language approach to developing self-governing control and communication systems with computers. The supple systems vocabulary of cybernetics was intended to equip the Soviet state with a hi-tech toolkit for rational Marxist governance, an antidote to the violence and cult of personality characterising Stalin's strongman state. Indeed, perhaps cybernetics could even help ensure that there would never again be another strongman dictator, or so went the technocratic dream. In 1959, as the director of a secret military computer research centre, Kitov turned his attention to devoting 'unlimited quantities of reliable calculating processing power' to better planning the national economy, which was the most persistent information-coordination problem besetting the Soviet socialist project. (It was discovered in 1962, for example, that a handmade calculation error in the 1959 census goofed the population



Soviet computing actually had a good start, with the MESM ("Small Electronic Calculating Machine") 1950 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MESM>. All electronic (6000 tubes), programmable, built in Ukraine, installed in Kyiv, taking up 60 m², using 25 KW. Then infighting and production problems began...

prediction by 4 million people.) Kitov wrote his thoughts down in the 'Red Book letter', which he sent to Khrushchev. He proposed allowing 'civilian organisations' to use functioning military computer 'complexes' for economic planning in the nighttime hours, when most military men were sleeping. Here, he thought, economic planners could harness the military's computational surplus to adjust for census problems in real-time, tweaking the economic plan nightly if needed. He named his military-civilian national computer network the Economic Automated Management System.

As it happened, Kitov's military supervisors intercepted the Red Book letter before it reached Khrushchev. They were incensed by his proposal that the Red Army share resources with civilian economic planners – resources that Kitov also dared to describe as falling behind the times. A secret military tribunal was arranged to review his transgressions, for which Kitov was promptly stripped of his Communist Party membership for a year and dismissed from the military permanently. So ended the first national public computer network ever proposed.



Soviet Agat desktop computer, equivalent to Apple II, but bulkier, using a reverse engineered 6502 CPU, produced 1983-93.

The higher-up central bureaucrats and the military stopped any big network plans, thinking it would fret into their own domains. That's a problem with command economies, that there's always people at the top who lack both knowledge and visions and see to their own positions first. Wikipedia fills in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OGAS> :

Glushkov proposed OGAS in 1962 as a three-tier network with a computer centre in Moscow, up to 200 midlevel centres in other major cities, and up to 20,000 local terminals in economically significant locations, communicating in real time using the existing telephone infrastructure. The structure would also permit any terminal to communicate with any other. Glushkov further proposed using the system to move the Soviet Union towards a moneyless economy, using the system for electronic payments.

In 1962, Glushkov estimated that had the paper-driven methods of economic planning continued unchanged in the Soviet Union, then the planning bureaucracy would have grown by almost fortyfold by 1980...

Glushkov sought financial funding with an estimated amount of "no less than 100 billion rubles" or equivalent to \$850 billion in 2016 U.S. dollars but believed the saving returns would be fivefold on the first fifteen-year investment. The project failed because Glushkov's request for funding on 1 October 1970 was denied. The 24th Communist Party Congress in 1971 was to have authorised implementation of the plan, but ultimately endorsed only expansion of local information management systems.

Glushkov subsequently pursued another network plan, EGSVT, which was also underfunded and not carried out. The OGAS proposal..failed primarily because of bureaucratic infighting. It was under the auspices of the Central Statistical Administration, and fell afoul of Vasily Garbuzov, who saw a threat to his Ministry of Finance.



IBM PC launched in 1981 is the basis of today's Windows systems - all Win system are IBM PC backward compatible. But the USSR fell far behind. Left their https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ES_PEVM ES PEVM clone from 1986, running AlphaDOS, a cyrillic MS-DOS. Right their [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poisk_\(computer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poisk_(computer)) PC sort-of-clone Poisk which took until 1989 to launch, until 1991 (!) for mass production. It used a rev-engineered 8088 CPU. Despite a 10 years lag, Poisk lacked: full compatibility, ports for mouse and printer, expansion slots (instead using a system of cartridges). BTW, it was produced in Ukraine, the engineering Soviet republic. (Ukrainian prowess today helps them making drones and outwit the Russians.)

If this Internjet had been built, it would have been very, very slow and circuit

based, not packet switched (which was the big thing with ARPAnet, that became Internet). The Soviets had another problem apart from bureaucratic infighting: their electronics had huge quality problems. The higher quality your Integrated Circuits (ICs) has, the higher clock speed it reaches before a crash. Soviet ICs were unreliable and much slower than Western counterparts as they were forced to use snail speeds. It was so bad that the computers running the Moscow anti-ballistic air defence system was run on smuggled in US DEC computers. They didn't trust their own machinery. This is of course an issue in Putin's war against Ukraine. The Russians need Western chips, because their own are unreliable and slow.

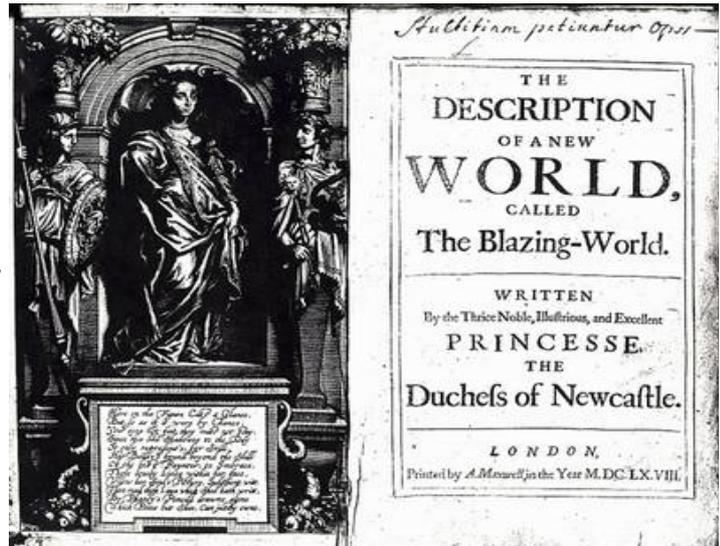
That's why it's very important to stop any smuggling routes or purchases via a third country of electronics to Russia. For instance, sales of washing machines to the former USSR central Asian republics have increased ten-fold. But don't expect to see immaculate cleanliness if you walk the streets of eg Tashkent of Uzbekistan. The washing machines are slaughtered, and their ICs are sent north.

Doc about computing in the USSR: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbfEKucN4zU>
 Documentary about how Soviet computer tech failed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnHdqPBrH8> It was infighting, stupid central planning, quality and production problems, relying on reverse engineering western tech, taking time and curbing innovation.

Over to an early female philosopher, poet, and sciencefictionist:

<https://www.openculture.com/2024/01/read-margaret-cavendishs-the-blazing-world-the-first-sci-fi-novel-written-by-a-woman-1666.html>

...go all the way back to the mid-seventeenth century, where they'll find Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, readable and downloadable in all its strange glory free online: <https://standardebooks.org/ebooks/margaret-cavendish/the-blazing-world> *The Blazing World* was first published in 1666 and is often considered a forerunner to both science fiction and the utopian novel genres, writes book blogger Eric Karl Anderson. It's a totally bonkers story of a woman who is stolen away to the North Pole only to find herself in a strange bejewelled kingdom of which she



becomes the supreme Empress. Here she consults with many different animal/insect people about philosophical, religious and scientific ideas. The second half of the book pulls off a meta-fictional trick where Cavendish (as the Duchess of Newcastle) enters the story herself to become the Empress' scribe and close companion.

<https://reactormag.com/discover-the-17th-century-science-fiction-of-duchess-margaret-cavendish/>



a young woman is kidnapped by a sailor and forced to sail away with him and a crew. The sailor 'loves' the woman, but she never asked to be dragged onto the boat. A storm blows up, kills the sailor and crew, and drives the boat northward. The woman finds herself alone at the North Pole, thousands of miles from family, with no crew to help her get home. But then a mysterious portal opens in front of her. Rather than face a cold and lonely death, the woman walks through, and finds herself in a strange new world where all the creatures speak, where there is only one language, pure monotheism, and absolute peace. The creatures welcome the woman as their Empress, and they all work together to make scientific discoveries.

Others point to that *The Blazing World* may be the first story concerning what we call a multiverse! In this video we learn that "The Blazing World features parallel worlds and multiple versions of herself in a story that is

as strange as it is prescient": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpR8Hr9rzpc>

"An important landmark in the evolution of interplanetary science fiction", it's claimed, speaking of Louis Guillaume de La Folie's (1733-1780) *Philosopher without Pretension*, using electricity which had just been discovered:

<https://blogs.princeton.edu/rarebooks/2009/03/an-important-landmark-in-the-e/>

A picaresque Oriental romance and conte philosophique that created the first airship powered by electricity. (Benjamin Franklin's experiments with lightning in the 1760s had impressed many observers, including, some years later, a young Percy Shelley.) The fact that fiction soon abandoned this opening to follow the balloon trail of the Montgolfier brothers should not reflect poorly on la Folie, argues /Pierre/ Versin



The first Electric spaceship.

<https://glitternight.com/2016/09/15/ancient-science-fiction-the-unpretentious-philosopher-1775>

The original French title of this work of proto-science fiction was *Le Philosophe sans Pretention ou l'Homme Rare*, but in the 21st Century it's more generally known by the slightly shorter title. One of the central characters of this story is an Earth scholar named Nadir...visited by Ormisais, a space traveler from the planet Mercury. Ormisais regales Nadir with details about life on Mercury and also informs him that he has crash-

landed on Earth and needs rare elements to repair his electrically-powered craft so that he can return to his home planet. The Mercurians had a planetary version of the British Royal Society... called the Luminacie and was composed of just twelve members. Recently a vacancy had opened up and Ormisais was one of sixteen applicants to be considered. The space ship that brought Ormisais to Earth was really created by a Mercurian named Scintilla, a fellow applicant. Ormisais had ridiculed Scintilla's invention and vowed that if it actually flew he would personally risk the journey to the inhabited planet Earth, called Hermione by the Mercurians. Scintilla deftly piloted his seemingly awkward craft through the skies above Mercury, earning the open spot on the Luminacie. Ormisais was held to his insulting bargain and had undertaken the dangerous flight to the Earth, culminating in his crash-landing. Nadir's guest was kind enough to share the scientific observations he had made about interplanetary space and the heavenly bodies as viewed from space. In return Nadir helps Ormisais on his quest to obtain the materials needed to repair the ship constructed by Scintilla so that he can return home. Along the way Ormisais makes the kind of wry and perplexed observations about humanity that countless other aliens in science fiction have since gone on to make. In the end the spacecraft is repaired and Ormisais says farewell to Nadir then flies off to Mercury. Fans of science fiction should appreciate La Follie's statement directed to his staid contemporaries, a statement in which he defends the use of a fanciful narrative to put forth scientific and philosophical speculation. La Follie stated entertainment made an ideal vehicle for making such academic exercises more palatable to a mass audience. A Frenchman to the core, he compared science to "a beautiful woman whose inherent charms are not noticed until she is dressed up attractively enough to excite the curiosity of onlookers."

Yes, complex and difficult topics will benefit from being presented in an entertaining way.

It's interesting what you can find if you turn some stones in science fiction history. Out crawl Ms Cavendish and M La Follie, neither of which I can remember having heard of before. And I hadn't heard of 3 out of 4 skiffy victims of RMS Titanic (Royal Mail Ship).

RMS Titanic wasn't only a disaster for the idea that steel could float in icewater, it also hit science fiction hard! Four

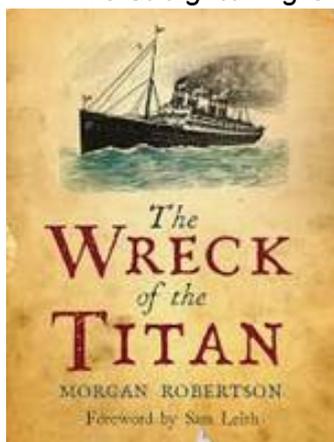
authors of the fantastic perished in the failed steel buoyancy test. *SF Encyclopedia* writes that John Jacob Astor (more soon) "was one of four authors of sf known to have gone down with the Titanic, the others are Jacques Futrelle, FD Millet and WT Stead". Futrelle was known for his scientific detective Professor Augustus S F X Van Dusen, "The Thinking Machine" (<https://www.pdfdrive.to/dl/the-thinking-machine>). FD Millet wrote *A Capillary Crime and Other Stories* (1892), containing mystery tales with sf explanations (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/62030>), Stead published many things in or bordering the fantastic (<https://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/full-text-pdfs/>) and JJ Astor is known for *A Journey into Other Worlds* (<https://archive.org/details/journeyinotherwo00asto>), about which we read that it: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Journey_in_Other_Worlds :

offers a fictional account of life in the year 2000. It contains abundant speculation about technological invention, including descriptions of a worldwide telephone network, solar power, air travel, space travel to the planets Saturn and Jupiter, and terraforming engineering projects — damming the Arctic Ocean, and an adjustment of the axial tilt of the Earth (Terra) by the Terrestrial Axis Straightening Company. The future United States is a multi-continental

superpower. European nations have been taken over by socialist governments, which have sold most of their African colonies to the U.S., while Canada, Mexico, and the countries of South America have requested annexation. Space travel is achieved through apery, an anti-gravitational energy force. Jupiter proves to be a jungle world, with flesh-eating plants, vampire bats, giant snakes and mastodons, and flying lizards. The Americans discover a wealth of exploitable resources: iron, silver, gold, lead, copper, coal, and oil. Saturn, in contrast, is an ancient world of silent spirits. These beings provide the explorers with foresight of their own deaths. One of the spirits, a deceased bishop, tells the voyagers about the icy world Cassandra, which orbits the Sun beyond Neptune and is home to the souls of unworthy Earthlings.



These four sf authors died on the Titanic: J Futrelle, F D Millet, W T Stead. J J Astor. Titanic, symbol of a grand failure - just like WSFA!



Spaceship starting, from JJ Astor's Journey into Other Worlds

You have of course heard about the book predicting the Titanic disaster, Morgan Robertson's *The Wreck of the Titan* (original 1898 title was *Futility*, wonder why the title was changed...) about the British passenger liner Titan (!) hitting an iceberg off Newfoundland, with a huge loss of life due to a shortage of lifeboats.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/24880>

Topic jump again. The first regular TV programmes started in Nazi-Germany in 1935, with daily TV schedules, incl the Olympics, shown in viewing rooms in the big cities and a few private TV sets (total viewership in the single thousands). Here's a fascinating documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3exBWlwrvsE>

Much of the material was found hidden as reel film in DDR archives after East Germany's demise. Second in the TV arena was BBC, from November 1936 and until the war (when transmitters were turned off not to direct German bombers). The US was only third with TV, more or less official start in april 1939 as president Roosevelt made a televised address to the NY World's Fair. The first FCC approved commercial station opened in 1941 and was never the same again.

But the first science fiction show on TV was made by the BBC, an adaption of Karel Capek's RUR:

<https://history.info/society/culture/1938-science-fiction-tv-program/>



The world's first sf show on TV, RUR by BBC in 1938.

FRIDAY, February 11

3.0 THE HUMBLE AND FASHIONABLE MUSSEL. Marcel Boulestin will demonstrate the making of Moules Marinière and Moules Poulette

3.10 NEWS FILM : British Movie-tonews

3.20 'R.U.R.' (Rossum's Universal Robots). The play by Karel Capek with Harvey Braban, William Lyon Brown, Cherry Cottrell, Desmond Davis, Annie Esmond, Judith Gick, Stephen Jack, Gordon McLeod, Larry Silverstone. Costumes designed by Mary Allan. Production by Jan Bussell

3.55-4.0 PRE-VIEW. Highlights of next week. Presentation by Jasmine Bligh



More from RUR on BBC, shots probably not from the screen (they used a 405 lines system).

On this day /nov 2/ in 1938 the first science fiction TV program in history was broadcast. It was an adaptation of Karl Čapek's science fiction drama RUR

<https://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/121749/what-was-the-first-science-fiction-tv-show>

...BBC's pre-war live adaptation of Karel Capek's RUR, broadcast on February 11, 1938, the first science fiction television show... The TV adaptation starred Derek Bond,

Harvey Braban, William Lyon Brown and around 10 other actors. The broadcast lasted for around 35 minutes, and was done in black-and-white.

Though here it says it aired in Feb 1939 (it's still the first sf show on TV):

<https://bittergrounds.com/decryptoreleases/rossums-universal-robots/>



More from Captain V/H/S Video.



Title screen of Captain V/C/R Video. Can't it be made uglier, please!

In 1938, the BBC condensed the 3 act, 1 hour and 40 minute play to fit a 35 minuted long live broadcast. The severely abridged version aired on Friday, February 11, 1939 first at 3:20 pm in the afternoon, and re-broadcast at 9:20 pm. The filming took place at the BBC's Alexandra Palace studios, and viewership was restricted to a small audience in the North London area due to the technical limitations of the broadcast tower.



Funny hats, the secret weapon of the Space Patrol. Villains laugh until they are rendered helpless.

The first sf series on TV, was probably Captain Video and his Video



Rangers, starting in 1949 on the later defunct Dumont TV network. Running every weekday it's estimated to have had 1537 (!) episodes. I think *Intermission* has mentioned some of these early shows before, but a recap won't hurt much. Cpt Video was originally aired live from a studio, but some episodes were saved on 16 mm film, a process called kinescope. Here's what's said to be episode 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCzWTP1_6x8

Title screen of *Space Patrol*.

The second sf series was *Space Patrol*, starting in March 1950. As I understand it, it was done live in a studio, and when it was time for a rerun in a new timezone, it was performed in the studio once more:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Patrol_\(1950_TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Patrol_(1950_TV_series))

They couldn't record video signals. The first bulky videorecorder, from Ampex, came in 1956 (tapes were also very expensive and usually reused). But episodes were also saved on 16 mm film (Kinescope). Here's a whole bunch of *Space Patrol* episodes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IlygPAXYLFs&list=PLESDrGLwFOLUaMetU4eWG1PxfKleIz7BP>

Tom Corbett Space Cadet was the third sf series, starting in October 1950, taking the hero from Robert Heinlein's book (with permission - RAH probably forced them to pay in blood!).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Corbett_Space_Cadet_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Corbett_Space_Cadet_(TV_series)) Here's an episode: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0a9uqmCrp8>

North of the border the hockey-playing lumberjacks and mounted police were watching and thinking: "The Yanks are crazy about space. We'd better have a go too!" So in 1953 the Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation created *Space Command*:

<https://ingeniumcanada.org/channel/articles/challenging-the-stars-themselves-an-infinitesimal-look-at-what-could-we-be>

CBC had dipped their toes in fantastic water already in 1952 with an adaption of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, but next year they launched into space:

https://lostmediawiki.com/Space_Command_%28partially_found_early_Canadian_science-fiction_television_series:_1953-1954%29 (note my added bold!):

Space Command is a Canadian sf adventure series directed by Murray Cherkover, and written by Alfred Harris. The series aired on CBC Television, from March 13, 1953, to May 29, 1954. The series was **notable for featuring James Doohan, prior to him playing his breakout role as Scotty on Star Trek, as well as a cameo from William Shatner, also of Star Trek fame.** Despite the fact that the series was popular at the time of airing, the series was wiped by CBC Television, in one of the only notable cases of Canadian television

wiping. The series revolved around a space crew aboard a ship called the XSW-1, as they explore the outer reaches of space, whether it be within the containment of their ship, or on another planet. The crew consisted of Captain Steve Cassel, alongside Lieutenant Frank Anderson, and Phil Mitchell (played by James Doohan, prior to Star Trek.) The series featured an educational basis to it, as each episode focused on storylines that stemmed from what was known about the reaches of space at the time. The series also may have been serialized, as the end of the only available episode mentions a plotline to be continued in the future.

All episodes are lost, except this one

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3M3lgG3kpI> We can be

certain that the TV bosses made sure to keep every second of



From shooting *Space Command*



Title screen of *Tom Corbett*.



More of *Space Command*. Is that Scotty?



Man in front probably James "Scotty" Doohan.

The video *Rangers* was also the name of a Stockholm fandom let's-gather-to-watch-video club existing for a while around 1981. The Caretaker ("Vårdaren") was a TV figure becoming popular in the club, along with the porn star Seka.

an opera singer yelling "Ich sterbe!", but the science fiction shows...to the dustbin with them! More:

<https://ingeniumcanada.org/channel/articles/challenging-the-stars-themselves-an-infinitesimal-look-at-what-could-well-be>

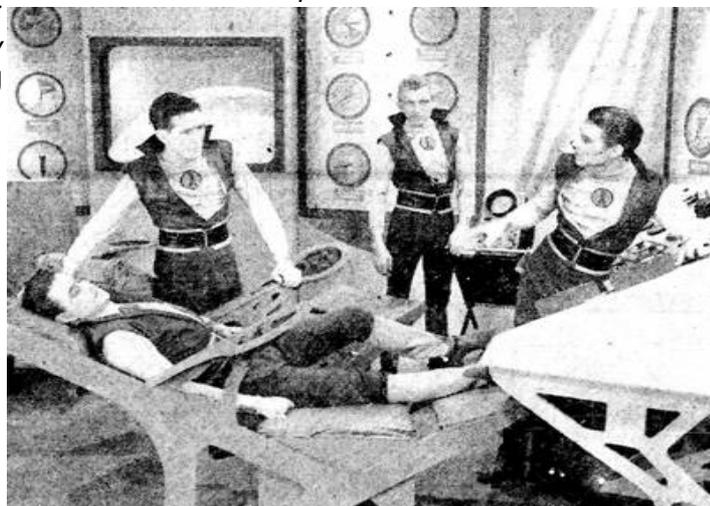
Our story presumably began in 1952 in a smoke-filled office or conference room in a building which housed offices of the CBC. Sadly, yours truly cannot say with certainty if the meeting which led to the birth of Space Command took place in Toronto, Ontario. It looks as if Alfred "Alf" Harris, age 25 in March 1953, himself an SF fan, came up with the idea for an SF series aimed at a young audience, teenagers really, presumably male ones, and was tasked with writing the scripts for what can be described as one of the first dramatic television series developed in Canada...a



Title screen of Space Command. As designed by Harris,

Space Command stuck with scientific principles, plausible hypotheses and known facts. The show's characters were young explorers/scientists who went on adventures for sure, how could it be otherwise, but the motivations and causes of said adventures, not to mention the personal relationships and problems of said characters, were firmly rooted in the fact that they were space travellers. Space Command was most certainly not a space opera, an interplanetary cousin of the soap opera and horse opera much decried by many

SF fans of the 1950s...the series followed the space education/career of a young and white male (Christian?) Homo sapiens. Frank Anderson, played by Robert "Bob" Barclay, learned the ropes of life in space, so to speak, by moving from one division of Space Command (exploration, investigation/scientific, satellite, transport) to another. With each placement, Anderson and, ipso facto, the young viewers, gained new knowledge. The first episode of Space Command dealt with the effect of sunspots on space stations and space travel, for example. At the time, the origin of these dark spots on the surface of the Sun was still not all that well understood...Other themes approached during various episodes of Space Command included evolution, space medicine, the danger posed by meteoroids and the origin of the asteroid belt located roughly between the orbits of the planets Mars and Jupiter.



From Canadian "Space Command", 1953. L to R: James Montgomery "Jimmy" Doohan, age 33, playing Phil Mitchell, John Thomas Howe, age 26, playing someone yet unidentified, Andrew "Andy" Anthony, born Ondřej Antonín Zubak, age 26, playing Dr Joseph Edmunds, Robert "Bob" Barclay, age 22, playing Frank Anderson.

The show aired March 1953-May 1954 and was shot live, though episodes were kinescoped to be run on other CBC stations.

Hamas lying? Impossible! Strange Gaza demographics...

There is something strange about demographic statistics from Gaza. I have tried to squeeze ChatGPT for statistics on Gaza deaths per 1000 for different years. No matter how I phrase the question, the death rate per 1000 in Gaza is claimed to be about 3.5.

The problem is that the same number for Sweden is 9! Gaza numbers should even be higher as Sweden is known for a relatively healthy population and good healthcare.

Gaza is claimed to have barely 1/3 of Sweden's death rate. Who believes that?

It doesn't matter if I ask about Gaza in 2022 (when the current war hadn't begun), 2023 or 2024. The same answer: claimed record low death rates of 3.5/1000. ChatGPT then inserts talk about other, separate death rates due to war and conflict.

There's an inevitable conclusion: since the natural death rate per 1000 in Gaza should *at least* reach the same level as Sweden, or higher, about 2/3 of the natural deaths in Gaza are moved by the Hamas-controlled hospitals to alleged deaths due to the war Hamas started.

Without complicated detailed calculations, it seems likely that about 2/3 of the deaths reported in media from Gaza are *natural* deaths. (And of the remaining 1/3, we know that a significant number are Hamas combatants, according to several sources *at least* 10,000.) Alleged (civilian) war deaths in Gaza should be divided by 3 and then at least 10,000 should be subtracted (combatants).

A figure of Gaza (civilian) deaths often given by several sources is "50,000".

Divide by 3 to eliminate natural deaths: 16,700. Then subtract 10,000 to eliminate combatants.

The approximately 6700 we end up with as civilian deaths should to a significant part be attributed to Hamas using civilians as shields.

Media is largely completely duped by false Hamas "statistics". It was the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus (526–456 BC) who was the first to state: "The first casualty of war is truth".

Seattle Worldcon Goes Chinese Style Program Censorship

I must begin with admitting last issue's mistake defending the Seattle worldcon using AIs to "vet" the program. Early info on the topic were deceivingly incomplete, giving the impression critique was about AI as dangerous for the environment (it isn't), racially biased (no, AIs are biased the other way) and "stealing work" (no, training is *fair use*). I was mislead and am sorry for that.

The Seattle Worldcon deed is sinister to the very core of intellectual freedom: AI was used to censor the con's entire program. I thought we'd left the Chengdu Worldcon fiasco behind us, but Seattle somehow picked up the Chinese Communist system of information suppression. If you ask the 'Net in China what happened on Tiananmen Square in April 1989 it'll say: Nothing!

Seattle ordered the ChatGPT AI to find "scandals" regarding program applicants for "homophobia, transphobia, racism, harassment, sexual misconduct, sexism, fraud"*. The entire woke ideology is spelled out in that AI sweep, and if you disagree with any of it you're not welcome to the program of the so called Worldcon. (<https://seattlein2025.org/2025/05/06/may-6th-statement-from-chair-and-program-division-head/>).

To identify everyone who don't agree with your political ideology and keep him or her out of the entire convention program *stinks!*

Science fiction literature must exercise intellectual freedom, freedom of speech, tolerance to all kinds of different opinions, openness, free debate - or the genre is dead. Attempts to force everyone to march in steps singing Halleluja is on the road to hell. In speculative literature you think the unthought thoughts, provoke, experiment, irritate. You don't invent "isms" and "phobias" and slams them on things you dislike to make everyone think the same. You take the debate, you discuss topics and respect the rights of others to their own opinions. Anyone who think this is strange must simply hate science fiction!

Our genre depends on being open to all thoughts, or else it is nothing. It needs a wideness of concepts, flexibility of thinking, challenging ideas, thoughts that itch and irritate, that dives into the uncomfortable. Sf relies on "micro agressions" that wokness wants to ban. Opposing opinions shall be met with counter-arguments, not bans. You welcome different even vile opinions as it gives you a chance to air counter-arguments which will sharpen your thoughts. You're not only a fan of science fiction, but also of Voltaire:

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it!

Swedish High School Graduation

In early summer Swedish high school students celebrate their graduation. Our equivalent to high schools are called...gymnasium (yes!) and it covers approximately ages 16 to 18, three years, of different programs to choose from, making it possible to apply to university. Admission is by your grades, but you can improve your chances by taking the national university test. (Called the "högskoleprovet", "högskola" etymologically means "high school" but here a university level school.) Almost all youngsters high school and many later as university. BTW, tuition is free and government offers favourable student loans (as you still have to pay rent, food, some study material etc).

After receiving a paper with the final grades the students do the "rush out" from their schools, met by



family and friends with flowers. Then they gather at hired lorries (trucks for Americans), climb up to the lorry beds and the vehicle starts going rounds in the city or the nearest big town, while the happy youngsters shout, dance, play music, and drink their brains out. They have their student caps, a white with blue and yellow inner lining, which some think looks like a sailor's hat - but it isn't. This white cap began as a tradition 200+ years ago. Swedish students don't have that black robe and head contraption with a huge square, that makes you look like a real professor (which is a bit exaggerated). Finnish students have a similar student cap, Danish students have somewhat similar (but higher and rounder - I googled a little) and I believe Norwegian students have a totally different design and colour.

This "The Student Song" from 1852 comes from their coarse throats and here' it is on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp-QtDh_ItA

*Let us sing of the student's glorious ways, ♪ ♪
 Let us rejoice in youth's brightening days!
 Still beats the heart with a lively sound, ♪
 And the future before us is crowned.
 No storm clouds yet ♪
 In our spirits lie,
 Hope is with us set,
 And we trust it high, ♪
 As we pledge side by side in the glade,
 Where the laurels in honour are laid,
 Where the laurels in honour are laid! ♪ ♪
 Hurrah!*



Archipelacon/Eurocon

Most of this was finished in good time, but just before deadline we had a Eurocon, named *Archipelacon 2*, which I had decided to attend. So I left ca 1.5 pages for a preliminary report. There'll be more about Archipelacon/Eurocon in next issue.

There's a huge archipelago between Sweden and Finland (thus the name*), with the self-governing region of Åland in between. It belongs to Finland but is the most Swedish spot on Earth. +99% percent of the Ålanders have Swedish as mother tongue (far more than Sweden itself with perhaps 90% mother-tongued in Swedish, due to immigration).

There was a movement 100 years back to make Åland Swedish. The League of Nations didn't concur, and that was probably for the better, Åland got special provisions in Finland's constitution, which means they run most administrative things themselves and Ålanders don't have to do military service. Åland cars have their own license plates, there is a special Åland Post company, they have their own flag, but most important is that in alcohol taxation Åland is seen as a foreign state which means the big Finland ferries can sell taxfree booze as long as they make stop at Åland's capital Mariehamn. Of course I bought some. (Knowing the rules I only took a beer now and then *outside*.)

We learned that 860 fen had registered, and ca 700 attended. To me it sounds as a bit hefty No Show number (including even Swedish GoH author Mats Strandberg for unspecified "personal reasons) and it wasn't "supporting" memberships, because the con didn't have that. Could it be that some people nowadays find sf cons have become more boring and begin to derail from the good old days?

Let me start with some criticism. There are indeed several reasons



Registration.



Boring panel: Jeff Vandermeer, Cheryl Morgan, Emmi Itäranta. Missing Mats Strandberg had a note from his parents, or so.



Sf poetry with Emma Kanckos. Such presentations were better than panels!

* Sweden has the most islands on Earth! 267 570 Google says. Finland is second with 179 584 islands.

for complaint:

1. It's *unacceptable* to force attendees to make PR for a controversial ideology. We weren't offered any alternative for the badge carrying stripes other than the so called "rainbow". The badge had a single hole, so you couldn't carry it with a safety pin (that requires two holes). On Eurocons wokeness is impelled! Unacceptable, as said.

2. Except for some filksinging and fan fund presentations (which are borderline), there was no fandom program! We used to have what is called a fan room, with a fan program: fanzines, fannish games, senior fans relating anecdotes, fandom history (which our *History Corner* covers a lot of), parodies, humour... Without the lighthearted fannish slant sf cons become *boring*. I get the impression that many conrunners today are bureaucratic neofans who have no idea of fandom's traditions.

3. And please do something about these endless, pointless "panels"! Archipelacon had one million (or so) "panels" filled with folks talking slowly without preparing any sharp points on the panel topic and letting the audience share views only when time was almost up. 85-90% of the convention was a soft mumbling by complacent dolls. Go for lectures instead. The lectures seemed popular (I tried two science ones, about Mars and the asteroids, both said "Room Full"!). For a lecture one person has to prepare a concrete message (and slides) and a lecturer usually take much more audience input.

Apart from forced woke propaganda, boring panels and no room for fannishness, I guess the con was somewhat OK. (More on the program, people I met, more pics etc in nextish. If you were at the con, I'd like to hear about your impressions!)



Me & my computer. (SKRIVA contest info ↑ was there.) I grabbed a corner in the entrance hall.



Alona Silina talked about Ukrainian sf now in wartime, via video link. Interesting! Pic of sf people in armed service.

LoCs & MCs

Sorry, the boring part of this excellent zine. First LoCs, then mailing comments to EAPA (only, this time, N'APA next month). Comments welcome! I desperately try to be controversial, so you must have something! Do a fanzine! Remember: All knowledge is contained in fanzines.

Cy Chauvin: Hi Ahrvid,

Your note that machine translation is already replacing human translators for publishers is indeed sad, and not only because it takes away an interesting job from a human. It is another case of the homogenizing of fiction. The individual quirks and personality is smoothed out of the author's style, their 'voice' modified; think how the computer with its suggestions of grammar and spelling already does this when writing in our own languages!

I would think that individuality in speaking languages would continue, despite the use of computers.

In some science fiction, although humans and aliens find an easy path to apparent communication through a common language or device, there is still a struggle for each party to understand the other's concepts. Sharing a language does not necessarily lead to shared concepts, motivations and ideals (as the politics around us show). I think the struggle to understand – the author's struggle to present an alien or innocent viewpoint – is one of the most interesting aspects of sf.

I enjoyed most your photos of Bob Bloch. Could Stanley Weinbaum be in that group photo of the Milwaukee Fictioneers? (**Ed:** *It's possible! 'Net tells us he was a member.*) I can't recall what he looks like. Henry Kuttner looks sinister! I also especially enjoyed the photo of the Weird Tales office, simply because of the stacks of boxes piled nearly as high as a person – rather like the old office of the trade construction magazine I used to work for. That's how things used to be, rather than clean and antiseptic. Perhaps another example of homogenization.

Ed: *The drawbacks of homogenization of fiction was a good point!*

Fred Lerner: Thanks for this issue.

The "classic" spelling-reform story that you quote but don't name strongly resembles "Meihem in Ce Klasrum" by one "Dolton Edwards", which was first published in *Astounding* in 1946. It can be found in *The Astounding Science-Fiction Anthology* (Simon and Schuster, 1952).

Ed: *I checked old Astounding. Its version of this "spelling reform" is more advanced (and funnier). Old issues of sf mags can BTW be found scanned at <https://www.luminist.org/archives/SF/>*

Joseph Nicholas: Dear Ahrvid!

Many thanks for the various issues of *Intermission* you've been sending. I apologise for my silence; they are appreciated, and read, but we've been deep into the growing season, which has been and is taking up an increasing amount of my time - as 17th century diarist and horticulturalist John Evelyn once wrote, "A gardener's work is never at an end". (March was unseasonably dry and warm, requiring repeated use of the hose at the allotment - an absolutely unprecedented event -- and the dryness and warmth has continued. A very early spring, indeed, although -- in a repeat of last year -- I seem to be having difficulty getting my peppers and chillies to germinate. (I'm usually quite successful with them.) Ditto the parsnips, although the potatoes, mangetout, broad beans, leeks, cabbages and tomatoes are ramping merrily away.)

Anyway: to business. I think you're far too optimistic, in issues 152 and 153, about Ukraine's prospects in Russia's war against it. Russia is losing men and materiel at a prodigious rate, I agree, but it has far larger supplies of both than Ukraine can muster. Don't forget, also, that Russia has the support of China, Iran and North Korea, the second-named of which is supplying drones (this has been, in a marked departure from any previous conflicts, a drone-led one) and the last-named of which has sent an estimated 10,000 soldiers to fight alongside the Russians. (Although by most accounts they seem pretty useless, North Korea's military having spent most of its existence to date parading in front of the political leadership and never having gained battlefield experience.) What material support China is sending is unknown, but its political support is valuable, especially when placed alongside the Belt and Road Initiative that's been deployed in parts of South America, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia and the Pacific -- an Initiative that will inevitably lead the countries in those regions to look more favourably on China's efforts elsewhere, or at least not criticise it for those actions.

I of course agree about the idiocy and amateurishness of Trump and his team of inexperienced yes-men (and yes-women). But I think some of the chaos they create is deliberate, because it distracts people from what they're doing to destroy the federal government and crush internal opposition -- assaults on universities and the media, through the withdrawal of funding and the pursuit of spurious litigation, is just the start of it. Trump initially joked that he would only be a dictator on his first day in office, but once an authoritarian gets a taste of power they never relinquish it. As 19th century British writer and statesman Lord Acton said, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

Okay. I will stop at this point because (you've surely guessed!) there's some gardening to be done. The honeysuckle on the front of the house is drooping badly: it may just be lack of water, but I rather think that I may have cut through a vital stem when I was doing some clearing work in the front garden a couple of weeks ago. But I can see that one vine (at least) is still green, so there may be hope for its recovery once I've cleared away the dead vegetation.

Boop!

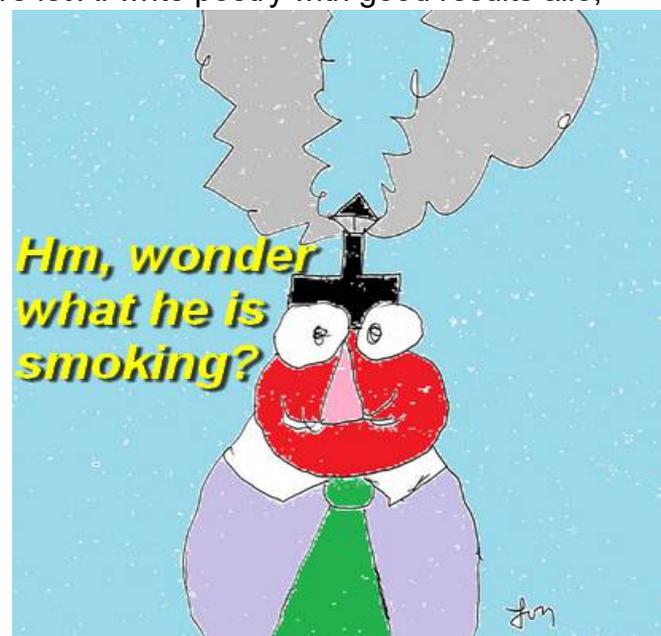
Ed: *My assessment of the war can be found in this's editorial. Russia may have more resources on paper, but corruption, inefficiency and sloppiness, support for Putin faltering, bad tactics, Ukrainian drone attacks (eg 30% of Russias oil refineries knocked out), economy down the drain, Europe stepping up etc eats into it. Even without the US, Europe alone dwarves Russia! Putin's mad plan for USSR 2.0 is dead - he just doesn't know it yet.*

Now to mailing comments, EAPA only this time. And as usual, please join any of these APAs! You are needed! Doing a little PDFzine takes miniscule efforts and is fannish and fun!

William McCabe: The voting in Eurovision is part of the fun! It's interesting to hear what the different voting presnters say and exciting to see how the votes are distributed. (Maybe I'm odd thinking so. I tend to like to sit late and watch vote counting in the general elections too.) ★★ We must get rid of Putin too, of course. (I thought my view of this was clear.) For Trump,, the way to get rid of him is impeachment - the Congress has the right to oust the president, under the right circumstances and with enough votes.

Garth Spancer: Are you really going out...camping? ★★ I know I'm mostly preaching to the choir with anti-Trump (also anti-Putin) rants. But a minority of my readers may like Trump, so my hope is I may irritate them a little... ★★ Regarding your comment on Trump, Putin's war etc, I believe Intermission has replied to it all already. ★★ I don't see plastics in the Ocean (or elsewhere) as much of a threat. About this "plastic island" in the pacific, I'm pretty sure, that if you go there, you'll have to look very hard to even notice it... Micro plastic is temporary, it's plastic on its way to become even more "micro" and finally dissolve (by plastic eating bacteria).

Henry Grynsten: Giving animals human characteristics is called "anthropomorphising" (a long and complicated word) and much of what you write deals with this but also similar things like people wanting to turn into animals. Interesting article! It would have liked more on the most fanatic in so called furry fandom, where they not only carry around a teddybear or two, but they even dress up as animals and crawl around claiming to be that animal. How could anyone find any sense in doing that? They should mentally sober up and return to reality. They belong in a mental institution. ★★ One thing I have noted is that narrators of animal programs do their darndest to pretend animals are people. It could be "The squirrel knows autumn is coming, and decides to hide his stash of nuts. The mouse watches and plans to steal som nuts later." Sorry, but the squirrel doesn't "know" autumn is coming, it feels it instinctively, it makes no "decision" and the mouse makes no "planning" - its instincts. Weather and time factors make the squirrel automatically change behaviour and the mouse smelling food starts an instinctual proceure to note were food will be hidden. And there are *tons* of animal programs on our telly - half of them made by David Attenborough - tens of hours every week with narrators trying to "humanise" critter. This is propaganda for environemntalists and it misleads people to believe animals have human properties. ★★ There is in fact some indications that sf (and perhaps fanzines) had some influence (OK, tiny influence) on the artsy "small press". A 1940s US small press publisher included sf material, a 1950s Swedish publisher of a literary mimeo mag did the same (I've covered it in "History Corner" but csn't find it now - it's difficult to browse hundreds of old issues). The biggest influence on US "small press" was the "small magazines" in France and Britain the early 20th century. ★★ *"You have to check everything you get out of AI and use your judgment."* Of course. It's well known that AIs may "hallucinate", invent or miss stuff, but I have also seen some quite impressive outputs from AIs. On Youtube you can find impressive AI-generated films, and they are getting even better. Another example: as seen in *Intermission* I calculated the excess deaths from covid from the government statistical agency official data, and found they were way, way lower than often claimed. I sent my calculations to ChatGPT and asked it to check it. The AI now had to 1) interpret what I had done, 2) find its own methology to do similar calculatons for comparison (though it only takes basic math there's tons of numbers creating a certain complexity), 3) do the calculations, 4) do the comparison, 5) make the report to me - all without me giving any help. ChatGPT did a fine job with it and besides, *my covid figures were approved*. I've let AI write poetry with good results allo, though ChatGPT sometimes invents words that don't exist to find a rhyme. ★★ Scientists aren't *"mere experts of limited fields"*. This may turn to ping-pong going back and forth...but I maintain that a scientist in any field has a higher capability to analyse anything due to his acquaintance with the scientific method, even if his main field is "limited". It's like a 1500 metres runner, who very likely is better than others in other track and field events simply because he has good basic training. ★★ *"Most of them became Christians before they learned the scientific method"* But that's no obstacle for having rational arguments for being religious. ★★ *"There is a scientific, rational explanation for consciousness, but it hasn't been found yet."* I think it looks like we *have* found it! It's the neural networks these AIs use, though they aren't yet big and complex enough. Extrapolation makes it likely this is the source of consciousness. ★★ *"88,125 climate-related*



From artist Lars LON Olsson

studies surveyed in 2021, 99.9 % agreed that climate change is mainly caused by humans." Sorry, but to support the wolf-shouting climate lobby you must support their thesis, not just partly support it (because that invalidates it). Their claim is that there is a climate change bigger than natural variation, it comes from CO2, which is due to humans and causes a disaster. It is obvious that all parts of this claim must be true for their thesis to be valid. Of your claimed "88 125" only the tiniest minority claims to support the the environment lobby's thesis. It's for instance not certain CO2 levels depend on humans. Volcanos, CO2 ocean absorbtion, changes in plant cover etc must be considered. And that the tiny amount of CO2 we deal with could influence the climate must be questioned. ★★ *"You can't seriously mean that every one of those studies has to prove all four points."* Yes, otherwise it's not a study that supports the climate lobby and that's how science works. (And it's not like having to begin with proving gravity etc. The top of *accumulted* knowledge doesn't need proof. But the four parts of the climate lobby thesis aren't gravity or basic science.) ★★ *"Hardly anybody thinks it's caused by something else."* Oh, there are plenty but media runs away from it, because media is politically red-green. There are many who looks towards the sun on this subject (main guy Dane Henrik Svendsmark). Many study the statistically very unreliable basic data (constant changes of weather stations, 80% of US weather stations have bad placement like close to an AC outlet, a parking lot, etc). There was an anti-IPCC petition signature collection in the US which very fast reached 32 000 (!) signatures of people all having science degrees (though it could be a low one like BSc). ★★ *"Extremely few people think it's caused by something other than humans"* Google *"Polls consistently show a significant portion of the public believing human activity is a primary driver of climate change. For example, a recent poll in the US found that 45% of Americans say human activity contributes a great deal to climate change, with another 29% saying it contributes some."* I agree that believers in climate change are rather many (as media and Zeitgeist stands) but here we see that 55% at least don't think humanity gives a big contribution, of which 29% only sees "some" contribution. "Extremely few"? ★★ *"all the coal and oil we've spewed out over the centuries has had no effect whatsoever on the climate"* But Ghod Lhord Roscoe, fossil fuel is constantly eaten and absorbed by our plant life, which BTW is expanding. NASA satellite studies has found that Earth is greening by 2% yearly. As this is the case, no effect whatsoever sounds strange. ★★ *"It's hardly likely that all that science could be completely wrong."* 1) It isn't "all that science", only a *portion* of science and there are opposing views too. 2) And popular ideas fueled by the Zeitgeist (Spirit of the Time) have been wrong before, like eg the ideas of eugenics 100 years back. ★★ *"in that case we'll program some robots to be dictators and Trumps also, it will be fine. Because I claim that robots that are conscious have to be treated equally to humans."* But creating dictators must be avoided on moral grounds, unlike creating servants. There's nothing immoral about performing service tasks, and as humans also do that robots are treated equal. *"point is that if they are conscious"* which is beside the point. conscious humans perform servants task too. Our DNA program us for it. ★★ *"Ten years, is that all"* Oh that's huge! Many computer tech advances we have now didn't exist in 2015 - eg AI, 5G - and computers were much slower, a 2015 mobile phone is today obsolete (tiny memory, slow net access, bad resolution camera...). And 10 years of computer progress meant even more in the 1960s! ★★ Apollo *"At an enormous cost to the tax payers"*. Not at all. For a short period in the 1960s NASA got just over 4% of US *federal* budget, but averaged over the whole Apollo program it was ca 2%. And the federal budget is ca 1/5 of the US GDP so the cost was ca 0.4% of GDP. It's *miniscule* to many other costs. Americans spent much more on cosmetics or pet food at the time, not to talk about the military... https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budget_of_NASA ★★ *"It wasn't just space, it was business and governments that needed computers on a large scale."* No, it was just space for a period in the 1960s. The new, small cutting edge circuits launched were very expensive, and NASA was the only entity for which it made sense to pay extra for the weight reduction and reliability. Administrative usage came later. For a company it's not worth it to pay so much extra just to reduce the weight of their mainframe from 10 to 3 tons. ★★ *"do you need to establish a colony on Mars?"* I think a smaller research base on Mars could be useful. For colonies, I prefer and have always preferred the moon (like in my collection *Murder on the Moon*). ★★ *"Problem is we use it (soil) up faster than it's created."* Says who? There's a constant soil creation processes. Just think of the huge amounts of leaves trees discard every autumn, or the thick layer of straw left after harvesting a crop field. All that is pre-soil, shortly to be soil. We don't have and will not have a shortage of soil. ★★ And now / The end is near / And so we face the final curtain / My friend I say it clear: Thish Intermission is unfortunately ending now! (*Tears and sobs.*) Comments welcome! Drink bheer and watch Roscoe's rocket July 4th!

Слава Україні!

(Glory to Ukraine!)