

N'APA 280

January 2026



The Official Organ

#280

Next deadline: March 15, 2026

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The official preparer is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - abontides@gmail.com

Procedure: Please Read:

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

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

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

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

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Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 280

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4 December 2025

Comments:

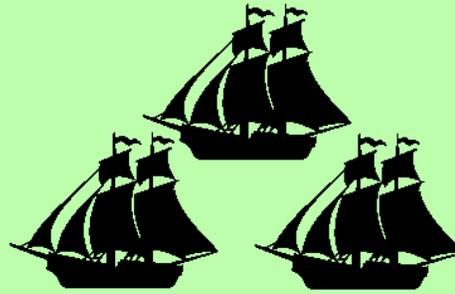
Cover: Public Domain fantasy art.

Ahrvid Engholm: Fun retrospective on some old groaners, the SF movies that made “sci-fi” into an obscenity. It’s hard to assess them objectively, but I think the fairest thing that can be said of them is that about half of them were stinkers, and the other half were weak.

Agreement that reading and listening are very different. I’ve been reading all my life, but only tried audiobooks once or twice. I didn’t care for a-books, but maybe only because I needed to get used to the idea.

Clarke’s “A History Lesson” was published in the U.S. in some anthology or other; I remember reading it, and I probably still have that paperback in my (uncataloged) collection. I consider it poisonously funny, and wittily bleak. It would certainly serve us right if Donald Duck were the last remnant of human civilization...

Robert Jennings: Delightful Elvira cartoon!



Personal agreement: I don’t want “adventure” in my life. Drama is wearying. I can cope with small amounts of change, but large changes are disruptive -- is that a tautology? -- and I don’t care for them.

I might agree that the universe behaves like a computational process, but I disagree that this constitutes evidence for the universe being a “simulation.” Really, that only invites the same question as, “Where did God come from?” Is the simulation run by a meta-universe that is, itself, base-level...or a simulation also?

I’d never heard of the Samuel de Champlain...and I’m glad you fessed up that it was only a hoax. I would have believed it (other than the ghostly visitations bit.)

Ahrvid Engholm: Fun article on automata and “robots” -- clockwork mechanisms. People created some devices of truly stunning complexity, using no more than gears and springs. Edgar Allan Poe famously exposed “Maelzel,” the chess-playing machine, as a hoax, although it is of interest that some of Poe’s reasoning was incorrect. Poe said that a chess-playing machine would always play exactly the same move from the same board-position, showing that Poe did not know of pseudo-random processes. He also said that the machine would always win, by playing a perfect game, and that

shows that Poe had no concept of situation-analyzing algorithms, the heart of today's chess-playing computer programs. Poe was right in the big picture, but he had no concept of data structures at the heart of the little picture.

George Phillies: I believe Asimov was a fairly conventional American Liberal, at least that's what he seems like from most of his autobiographical essays. He used communist concepts in his SF -- hey, so do I! -- but I'm pretty sure he saw the reality of Stalinism as a deathly impeachment of Marxism.

Nice opening to "Fire in the Morning." Good introduction to the protagonist and the general situation. Will this be your next novel?

Heath Row: rct me, alas, finding a good home for my weekly comics binge is unworkable. Even a short-box of comics is HEAVY, and I'm enjoying late-phases-of-life symptoms, to include physical weakness. If I ever have to move again, I will have to hire it done, as I just can't lift a box of household goods any more.

"Real Men Read Westerns." Or Mack Bolan... I've tried both, and they aren't my cuppa. Westerns tend to be overly archetyped -- there's a similarity that palls after a while. Murder mysteries have the same problem: once you've read fifty, you've read 'em all. This is one of the reasons AI is so successful: it zeroes in on the archetypes and capitalizes on them.

Adrian Kresnak: I am very much not enjoying Marvel's "Age of Revelation," which basically seems to entail taking established characters and ringing changes on them. They aren't the same people any more. It's an ugly "alternate reality" story-arc and I'm glad it's pretty much over. I had much more enjoyment of the "Emperor Doom" story arc, although I'm glad it's over also.

Fun Comic-Strip format summary of your lessons on personal limitations and choices! And very nice painted miniature! I'm looking forward to 3-d printing giving us lots and lots of really fun miniatures!

Garth Spencer: I'd never heard of Talossa; it sounds a little like Sealand, except that Sealand tried to take itself seriously.

I did the Universal Life Church thing, although I set my sights low. I asked them if they had a position for "Sexton." They did not - and so they created the position, and I am/was ULC's first Sexton. I can create Holy Water, and I can use a shovel to lop off the head of a vampire. Useful talents indeed!

I believe most Trufen come up with ideas and theories and crank-ish inspirations and "laws." We aren't totally chaotic, just largely so. For instance, I promote the theory that Dante's Divine Comedy is "revealed truth" and needs to be added to the Bible. (I'm also a bit of an Arianist. That's okay, Isaac Newton was also!

Kevin Trainor Jr.: rct me, good point about quotes being attributed to authors when, in justice, it is their characters who meant it, and the authors might very well disagree. Heinlein is trickier than many in that regard, because he loved to coin aphorisms.

rct Samuel Lubell, I far prefer "Hammer's Slammers" to "The Forever War." Hammer's is (in my inexperienced opinion) more realistic in its depiction of combat. The hovertanks are a little bit goofy -- if you're going to leave the ground, then actually fly already! Helicopters have so many advantages over tanks. Hovertanks, like regular track-layers, are very dependent on level, smooth terrain, like the grain-fields of Ukraine or the sands of Iraq. The Forever War was too dependent on the context of Vietnam, making it more dated than prescient.

Samuel Lubell: Fun list of books! April Fools, but funny, and the idea of a novelization of “Plan 9 From Outer Space” actually almost makes sense! I’d buy a copy!

I read the first nine or so Harry Dresden books, but gave up after a while. Butcher is pretty good, but he has some certain writerly sins. I grew tired of Dresden saying, “That was it. I was finished. I couldn’t stand up. I couldn’t even crawl.” And then going on and fighting some more. Ad nauseam. Also, he repeated every joke in every book. Tiresome. And, finally, the entropy level grew too high. The whole world would have been aware of magic and fae and vampires, and the books never adequately dealt with that reality. I love Urban Fantasy, but I just keep tripping over “plausibility” issues with Butcher. (Which is absurd, since fantasy fiction is implausible by definition!)

Hooray for participating in a No Kings rally! I sort of hung about the fringes of one -- my first protest since the war in Viet Nam! But it was hot and sunny, so I kinda dropped out. I have great respect for the protesters who stuck it out!

Mark Nelson: I would categorize alternate history fiction as “science fiction,” largely because I can’t think of anywhere else to pigeonhole it. Same with depictions of the world after a nuclear exchange: there might be no “science fictional” idea involved at all. In my system, science fiction transcends itself!

re Robert Jennings, I agree with you that governments -- and businesses and schools and civilization in general -- run better when the leadership have college educations, or the equivalent in independent life-long reading. People who know history are slightly less likely to repeat its blunders. People who understand rhetoric are slightly less likely to make basic logic errors. People who know mathematics are less likely to claim that drug prices have dropped by 600%.

re me, alas, no, the presence of the National Guard wouldn’t surprise me overmuch. We do have a safeguard, in the U.S., in that the military and civilians are still pretty much socially integrated. We don’t have a segregated “military class” living in barracks and isolated from the general populace. This has changed, just a little, with agents out there wearing masks. But by and large, military personnel are part of the society they exist to defend. I’m always happy to see the National Guard responding to natural disasters. I think we, the populace, must work to avoid demonizing the military, which could lead to such a segregation, which could lead to them demonizing us!

re kids and social media, I don’t use FaceBook, but I have seen enough of it to know that it would have hurt me very, very badly when I was a youngster, and that’s all the way up to age 18. The overwhelming prevalence of “KYS” posts (“Kill Yourself”) would have destroyed me. I would have been highly likely to have committed suicide. FaceBook is absolutely crawling with people deliberately working their hardest to hurt other people. I would never participate in social media that was not heavily content-regulated and where violators would be banned, hard and fast and permanently. (Okay, maybe after one or two warnings...) “Freedom of Speech” can cease to apply in moderated media. I can post hellish things on my own web-site, but, likewise, I can completely censor my own web-site too, and I believe that FaceBook pages can legitimately be proprietary. I’m a strong advocate of Freedom of Speech, but I’m also a strong advocate of an editor’s right to edit published content.

Oops I Goofed!

I’m not completely clear how I duplicated one of Ahrvid’s “Intermission” offerings. It was in my in-box, so I put it in N’APA. My apologies to all.

Brandy Hall Issue 16 (January 2026)

Brandy Hall 16 is produced for *N'APA* mailing 280 (January 2026) by Mark Nelson.

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This is West Riding Press Publications ??? This is West Riding Press Publications (Australia) 44.

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.

In *Brandy Hall* 14, inspired by some discussion by Heath Row on early fanzines in the fields of football (soccer) and rock I wrote an article about the use of the word `fanzine' in *The Times* from 1958 to 1989. This is mostly taken from a loc that I wrote on *SF Commentary* 116 (June 2024). In *Brandy Hall* 15, inspired by mailing comments from Robert Jennings, I ran my thoughts on a definition of "Historical Science Fiction" that was printed in *Speculative Insight* 21. This is taken from a loc that I wrote on *Will This Wind* 39 (October 2025). In *Brandy Hall* 16 I looked at the use of the word `fanzine' in *The Times* in 1990.

The use of the word 'fanzine' in The Times: Part Two

Some time ago, in a moment of boredom, I searched for the word "fanzine" in The Times Digital Archive, which provides full-text access to The Times from 1785 to 2019. Ignoring five false hits, from the years 1800, 1846, 1877, 1908, & 1915, the distribution of hits is as given below.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| 1958 | 1 | 1971 | 1 | 1974 | 1 | 1978 | 1 | 1980 | 1 | 1981 | 1 | 1984 | 1 | 1987 | 2 |
| 1988 | 1 | 1989 | 7 | 1990 | 11 | 1991 | 14 | 1992 | 14 | 1993 | 14 | 1994 | 23 | 1995 | 16 |
| 1996 | 17 | 1997 | 20 | 1998 | 48 | 1999 | 44 | 2000 | 46 | 2001 | 23 | 2002 | 21 | 2003 | 30 |
| 2004 | 23 | 2005 | 49 | 2006 | 32 | 2007 | 45 | 2008 | 57 | 2009 | 34 | 2010 | 21 | 2011 | 56 |
| 2012 | 50 | 2013 | 29 | 2014 | 30 | 2015 | 21 | 2016 | 24 | 2017 | 31 | 2018 | 29 | 2019 | 23 |

(The number from 1990 has been decreased from 12 to 11, as there were two citations to the same article).

The use of the word fanzine from 1958 to 1989 was discussed in *Brandy Hall* 14.

The use of the word fanzine: 1990

The first use of the word fanzine is an implied comment on a writing style: "Schow displays an insider's knowledge of head-banging habits, without ever slipping into fanzine territory" (Anne Billson. *Tropical sleuthing. Times*. Saturday February 24th 1990, page 41.

The next two uses refer to football fanzines. The first mentions a Celtic football fanzine.

"Mrs Thatcher, one of the more confrontational of British games players, today goes to Ibrox, home of Glasgow Rangers football club, to make the draw for the semi-finals of the Scottish Cup. The lady obviously has a taste for Scottish football: you may recall that in 1988 she presented the Scottish Cup. Indeed, the Celtic fanzine carried a front-cover picture of the event: Mrs T presenting the trophy to the Celtic captain, Roy Aitken. A prophetic Private Eye-style bubble emerges from Aitken's mouth: "I'm still not going to pay my poll tax."

Simon Barnes. *Times Dairy. The Times* (London). Saturday, March 10th 1990, page 10.

The second reference is to a fanzine covering the Scottish national team.

"Scotland also hit woodwork twice against the East Germans, and the editor of a fanzine, which publishes an impenetrable statistical analysis of Scottish performances, tells me that Roxburgh's players are overdue several goals according to the law of averages. Certainly, Scotland are average enough and if there is a law which will work in their favour in Italy, we must all hope that it is applied."

Roddy Forsyth. *Scotland perfecting the unhappy art of self-destruction. The Times* (London). Monday, May 21, 1990, page 33.

Our next reference is to a cricket fanzine.

“One of the odder phenom era of modern sport is the fanzine. These are mags produced by the cheapest means, normally put together by the younger, more restless and ruder sort of sports enthusiast. They indicate, more than anything else, the hold that sport has on their followers. They are a symptom of rude health. I have been sent an issue of cricket’s fanzine, which is called *Johnny Miller 96 Not Out*. There is no point in having a fanzine if you can’t give it a silly title, after all. They have produced a special issue for today’s Benson and Hedges Cup final at Lord’s and include an investigation into ticket allocations.

It has, however, inevitably been banned from Lord’s; also from Essex, Kent and Yorkshire. The 13 remaining first-class counties stock it, as does Sportspages bookshop in London. Why ban the damn thing? It is basically well dis posed towards the cricket, after all. But cricket, more than any other sport, suffers from knee-jerk pomposity”.

Simon Barnes. Sporting artists can make exhibitions of themselves. *The Times* (London). Saturday, July 14, 1990, page 29.

The next citation continues the saga of *Johnny Miller 96 Not Out*.

“Surprisingly enough the cricket fanzine, *Johnny Miller 96 Not Out*, also got one up on the stewards at the recent Benson and; Hedges Cup final. Lord’s, affronted by the very notion of a fanzine, asked the police to “move on” the people selling it. But the police had already given the nod to a request from the sellers to approach the queue: faced with the Lord’s blockade, they seized on the perfect solution. They asked the fanzine chaps to address the queue from around the corner. They did so, and sold *more* than 100 copies. All well and good - but really, pettiness and pomposity like this do Lord’s and cricket no favours.”

Simon Barnes. Public queue up as cricket sells out. *The Times* (London). Saturday, August 11, 1990, page 23.

In our next citation we see a political publication being demeaned by comparison to a fanzine.

“Calls for Mr Forsyth to be replaced followed, and were only heightened by his unexpected decision to leap to the defence of Nicholas Ridley, then trade and industry secretary, after Mr Ridley’s comments on the Germans and the French in July. Comparisons were made with his silence when it came to supporting Mr *Rifkind*. His opponents even decided to publish their own magazine, *True Blue*, seen as an antidote to the *Scottish Conservative* and considered nothing more than a “Thatcher fanzine”.”

Kerry Gill. How a Thatcher favourite started civil war among Scottish Tories. *The Times* (London). Saturday, September 8, 1990, page 2.

Our next citation sees another example of the powers-that-be trying to put a fanzine in its place.

“The Tottenham Hotspur board, with or without Robert Maxwell, has joined forces with Haringey council in a move that could put one of its fiercest critics out of business. *The Spur*, a monthly fanzine produced by supporters which sells 5,000 copies outside the ground on match days, faces closure if each of its small band of dedicated sellers is forced to pay the proposed

£ 350 for a trading licence. “This will mean the death of football fanzines,” says co-editor Stuart Mutler.

The council says the move is necessary because of the Safety at Sports Grounds Act, and the club too is keen to clamp down on street traders selling unofficial Tottenham Hotspur merchandise. Nothing whatever to do with the rude things the next issue will almost certainly say about Messrs Maxwell, Bobroff and Scholar.”

Anonymous. Diary. *The Times* (London). Monday, September 17, 1990, page 14.

The next citation reveals that there was a program on Radio 5 at 9pm called Football Fanzine, which is described as “Bob Hatton’s rattle”. Bob Hatton (1947-) played professional football for a variety of clubs as a centre forward, scoring 215 goals in 617 matches. He made a number of radio appearances in the 1990s.

Maxey Bruning and Gillian Annette. TELEVISION & RADIO. *The Times* (London). Friday, October 12, 1990, page 23.

On Saturday October 13th 1990 *The Times* ran an article on football fanzines, which I reprint at the end of this summary.

Our penultimate citation considers whether fanzines are a good read.

“But the great gulf fixed between parents’ and childrens’ ideas of a good read has seldom been wider than today. The fanzine mags are a strange hew world.”

Philip Howard, When it's hip to turn turtle. *The Times* (London). Friday, November 16, 1990, page 16.

Our final citation of 1990 is not to a particular fanzine or even a particular genre of fanzine, but echoes the first reference of the year by alluding to the writing style found in fanzines

“Take the star interview with television astronomer Heather Couper . Blithely she tells of refusing all meat at school and eating only the vegetables (a classic route to malnutrition). Sentimentally she explains that her reason for giving up fish is not overfishing , but a friend’s comment that a cod in a tank had “big brown eyes” like hers. The interviewer, in fanzine style , merely says “oo-er , spooky!” and commends her as “brilliantly sensible”.”

Libby Purves. Brown rice with a serving of cant. *The Times* (London). Friday, December 7, 1990, page 18.

SPORTSCENE: OFF THE BALL

If you're a football fan, you'll know how boring most match programmes are. Pages and pages of adverts, a team list that's usually wrong and a bit by the manager that's full of excuses for the 9-0 thrashing the team got from Hartlepool in the cup the week before - "sick as a parrot... missed chances... injuries... concentrate on the league..."

Fanzines, on the other hand, are much more fun - and, since they're not produced by the club, they're not afraid to give the manager or directors a hard time.

The first fanzines popped up four years ago, when *Off The Ball* and *When Saturday Comes* started. The idea caught on and now there are about 250 different fanzines.

It isn't only the big clubs which have them, either - there are fanzines devoted to non-league clubs like Enfield, Margate and Stourbridge as well as Everton, Man United and Spurs.

"There's quite a wide range," says Tony Myers from Sportspages, a specialist sports bookshop in London which is probably the biggest stockist of fanzines. "*Not The View*" (Celtic) and *Fortune's Always Hiding* (West Ham) sell lots of copies, and then you've got the smaller publications.

"Oddly enough, the best fanzines tend to be about the smaller clubs. There are exceptions, but usually the bigger the team the worse the fanzine!"

One reason some clubs aren't keen on fanzines is that they can often be very critical about the way the club is run. Some have also been accused of encouraging violence on the terraces.

"There are some fanzines we won't sell," admits Tony. "If they're racist or about hooliganism, for instance. But the vast majority aren't like that. They're written by people who care about the team they're writing about."

So are fanzines here to stay?

"I think so. The only way they might disappear would be if they were to be absorbed by the match programmes, and I can't see that happening. But it would make the programmes more interesting!"

TOP 10 FANZINE NAMES

Brian Moore's Head Looks Like The London Planetarium (Gillingham)

And Smith Must Score! (Brighton)

The Almighty Brian (Nottingham Forest)

Dial M for Merthyr (Merthyr Tydfil)

Flippin' Heck, Ref, That Was A Foul Surely (Waterlooville)

One Team in Glasgow (Partick Thistle)

Absent Without Leave (Meadowbank)

The Arsenal Echo Echo (Arsenal)

No-one Likes Us (Millwall)

Sing When We're Fishing (Grimsby)

THE FANZINES

“We don't see ourselves as `the voice of the fans' or anything like that,” said When Saturday Comes, which now sells around 36,000 copies per issue, making it Britain's best-selling football monthly. “What we do is provide a platform for the genuine football supporters to voice their opinions”.

Anonymous.

SPORTSCENE: OFF THE BALL. The Times (London). Saturday, October 13, 1990, page 6 (S2).

The Mathom House

Intermission #159 (Ahrvid Engholm)

Thanks for emailing me *Intermission* 159. I was on my summer holidays in Indonesia, for thirty-one days, and locating fanzines was not a priority. Instead of a loc, here are my comments on this issue. I greatly enjoyed Arthur C Clark's "History Lesson". Bravo for reprinting it.

“I'm not a great fan of movies and TV shows, that is: of the sort they produce today. TV/movie makers are getting desperate in their pathetic attempts to lure people to watch their repetitive, bland, computer-generated crap with plots based on things constantly exploding.”

We haven't been able to watch the standard free-to-air channels that are available in Australia in our new house. Turns out that we need to have an antenna installed. We haven't missed not being able to watch TV, because for the last three years (since we became parents) we haven't watched much TV. Just about the only channel we watched was the SBS Food Channel. One of the very few TV programs

we've watched since we moved is *Professor T*, about a criminology professor at Cambridge University who helps out the local police "with his analytical genius". We could watch that because the ABC, Australian Broadcasting Channel, has a digital channel that we can access without an antenna.

"The more effects your computer may provide, the less interesting it becomes for me. Special effects were better when it was analogue and used miniature models on thin wires."

The special effects in *2001* and the original *Star Wars* movie still look fantastic to me. Now the special effects in *Blake's 7*, a favourite SF series of my youth, don't hold up very well, but the TV series still hold up well. Why? Because it has good writing. Good writing makes up for poor special effects. Good special effects can not make up for poor writing.

"("Character development" is overrated. The fact is that people in real life do not change in any substantial way after the age of the mid 20s.)"

One of the criticisms I have seen of the novel *Orbital*, winner of the Booker Prize in 2024, is that there is no character development. The story is set over a 24 hour period. What character development would you expect over such a short period? Sure, you could write a story in which characters develop their character over the course of one day. But it seems realistic to me that there is no character development in *Orbital*.

Of the many movies you mention *Damnation Ally* (1977) is the only one I've watched (or heard of). I watched this in the cinema when it was released!

"Atmosphere/drag: inside a moonbase gym the atmosphere will likely be Earthlike, so no big drag advantage."

In my mind... in my mind I was visualising a high jump competition on the moon in an "open atmosphere" and I was thinking that he wouldn't be able to jump as high as he can on Earth due to the restrictions imposed by the spacesuit...

Ryct Jim Meadows

"Ed: The problem was that early video tapes were very, very expensive!"

I read an article about why the BBC had destroyed so many videos of TV programs from the 1960s. This made the same point. It was more expensive to record an episode on "video tape" (or whatever the recording medium was) then to make the show.

Ryct Robert Jennings

"I believe the last balanced US budget was under Bill Clinton...a long time ago. "

I've long found it amusing that the Republicans, who restlessly campaign against "waste" in public expenditure, are unable to balance the budget. Are they replacing one kind of "waste" with a different kind of waste?

Ryctm #1

If you remember which issue of *Intermission* contains your analyse of the use of the word fanzine in Swedish newspapers then I'd be very grateful if you could email me that issue. In fact you've given me an idea. After I've finished going through the use of the word *fanzine* in The Times I should check its use in Australian newspapers.

Ryctm #2

"What I mean with that "AIs are biased the other way" is that creators of AI services tend to add a built in wokish slant."

This is not always the case. There are numerous well documented cases which have shown AI systems can exhibit bias against minorities because of how the underlying models have been trained and evaluated. For example, if facial recognition systems are trained on databases which contain disproportionately more white faces than non-white faces they perform worse in correctly identifying non-white faces. This isn't an academic finding. Facial recognition systems used by the police in the UK have been found to misidentify Black and Asian individuals much more often than they misidentify white people. Such an AI system can hardly be considered "woke". More broadly, if the database, not necessarily faces, used to train an AI contains biases, such as stereotypical associations, then these biases are reflected on the trained AI.

Ryctm #3

"I don't have a problem with a convention committee deciding not to give a platform to someone who is known to be homophobic, transphobic, guilty of sexual misconduct etc" I have. First of all, the crowd on that side of the spectrum have a tendency to be very, very intolerant and can declare virtually anything "homophobic, transphobic etc". So hunting for such will land in virtually anything. Secondly, as a matter of principle even the "homophobic, transphobic etc" have freedom of speech, and a world-con should be neutral ground in this respect."

We shall have to agree to disagree on this point - though I agree that it is deployable to declare "virtually anything "homophobic, transphobic etc"." I believe that the freedom of individuals to live without being exposed to hate speech overrides other individuals right to freedom of speech. Different societies currently draw the line on this issue in different places, for example compare the law in hate speech in the USA, Australia, and Germany. Finally, any WorldCon has to respect the laws of the country it is being held in, so it cannot be neutral ground.

Brownian Motion 16 (Garth Spencer)

Ryct Arhiv Engholm

“There were activities like crafts and throwing plastic axes at a plastic board.”

In Wollongong there’s an axe throwing venue in the CBD where you can throw axes at boards. You have to make an appointment to throw axes, you can’t just turn up. The whole thing seems bizarre to me. Doubtless there are axe throwing venues throughout the world. Wouldn’t be surprised to learn that there’s an axe throwing sport.

Ryctm

“As to his comment to Heath Row about recruiting for eAPA, yes, I have been listening. I have tried, but I never seem to inspire interest in joining my own gang.”

I have thought about joining eAPA, but the monthly schedule is off-putting. The only time that I could make the time would be if I decreased the number of zines that I loc.

The Swamp Pot Sentinel 1.4 (Robert Jennings)

Last year we moved into a new house. Hopefully this means that we won’t have to deal with problems of the sort you’ve had to deal with for many years. At least here there are many contractors to approach. OTOH, there are many stories of cowboy contractors. Finding a good contractor without a recommendation from a trusted source can touch-and-go.

Thank you reprinting the article about the dirigible *Samuel de Champlain*. It was all new to me. I didn’t pick up on it being an April Fool’s Joke, though there seemed something strange about the penultimate paragraph.

“Or my credit card company being switched to a new owner who doesn’t want to mail out physical bills or take checks in payment.”

Some years ago our credit card company decided to replace physical bills with emailed bills. (I don’t remember if there was an option to continue to receive physical bills, but if there were you had to pay to receive them). Recently the credit card company switched to a new owner. For the first month the new owner sent out both a physical bill and an email bill. I don’t know if this will continue. They might have sent out a physical bill to ensure that all customers knew of the change, on the grounds that not all customers read their emails. The new owner came with a new web address and a new way to logon to your account.

Ryctm #1

“Fans like Frederick Pohl and others have mentioned buying used mags at reduced prices, or even purchasing coverless issues at a nickel a copy in the scalp shops the magazine distributors ran, because they had no money to buy the new issues and they desperately wanted to read the literature.”

I have not read this before, though now that you have brought it to my attention it makes sense.

Ryctm #2

“Back in ye olden days (last century or so) most SF conventions, including most Worldcons only had one programming track. That’s because attendance was not enormous, even for Worldcons. Probably the first add-on was movies being shown while other events were running. I think things really started to change in the 1980s, when a lot of conventions decided to add a separate role-playing game track in addition to the regular programming. This proved to be very popular and attracted a lot of new con-goers who were primarily interested in the gaming and were willing to cough up full membership fees to participate.”

Thank you for your historical perspective. I circulated a one-off apa zine through ANZAPA a while ago on Aussiecon, the first Australian WorldCon. I’m thinking about revising it and uploading it to efanazines. Do you mind if I include your comment as a footnote?

Ryct George Phillies

“I came into the hobby and joined the N3F in the late 1950s...”

Have you been a member continuously since the late 1950s?

Ryct Samuel Lubell

“I suggest that the reason better educated, higher income people read more for pleasure than those with lower incomes or lower educational levels is because higher incomes equals more free time to partake in activities such as reading.”

I wonder if there is any appropriate data? In my limited experience, employers who hire graduates on “high” salaries expect them to put the hours in to justify their pay. OTOH, people working minimum wage jobs might be working two or three jobs. Is the “hours worked vs salary” graph is U-shape, with large hours worked at both extremes?

Ryct Samuel Lubell #2

“Do you really expect that parents, let alone teenagers, are going to cut back or abandon the use of smart-phones and social media”

Starting on 10th December 2025 children in Australia under the age of 16 cannot hold or create accounts on a number of social media platforms. Currently the excluded platforms are: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, YouTube, Threads, and Kick. (Congratulations to anyone who knows what all of these are. I have accounts on two of them.) Children under 16 can still use the banned social media platforms, but can not access any material that requires an account. I call it a ban on using these social media platforms, others are calling it “a delay in account access”. It remains to be seen as to whether this ban will have the desired effect. One idea behind the ban is to give children more time to acquire digital literacy, maturity, and resilience before they start to fully engage with social media. The ban has broad support in Australia, at least amongst adults.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm about cosplay. In July we went to Sydney for a short holiday and it coincided with the Sydney Magna & Anime convention. In central Sydney there were a significant number of people in cosplay costumes travelling to the convention: on the train, using the light-rail, on buses, walking. I didn't see anyone batting a lid. The non cosplay travellers took it in their stride. It nothing unusual these days.

Ye Murthered Master Mage 279 (George Phillies)

Ryct *Brownian Motion*

“There is a current genetic engineering effort to bring the mammoth back from extinction. I think the technology needs another quarter-century to be effective”

This is one of the two central assumptions in the Ray Nayler's novel *The Tusks of Extinction*. The other key assumptions are that it is possible to make a digital copy of a human consciousness and then to upload it into the brain of one of the revived mammoths. These last two technologies will need more than a quarter-century to become effective... (if ever!).

Ryct *Samizdat*

“Books on fan history? Damon Knight wrote two. They are available from NESFA, though the scans are depressingly low in resolution, at least in the copy I received.”

I wasn't aware of these books. There are also the two books written by Harry Warner Jnr: *All Our Yesterdays* (on fandom unto the end of the 1940s) and *A Wealth of Fable* (covering the 1950s). I believe that copies of these are available from NESFA. Just as well as I can't find my copy of *All Our Yesterdays*. (Both volumes are somewhat controversial, though that's par for the course for any book on fan history).

Archive Midwinter (Jefferson Swycaffer)

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm

“My uncle, Donald P. Abbott was a raving sf fan and a world-renowned expert on sea squirts.”

I had never heard of sea squirts until our December holiday. My brother-in-law was watching at the second series of *Culinary Class Wars*, a Korean cooking competition show. One of the elimination battles had the contestants cooking sea squirts. They not eaten much outside of South Korea and Japan.

Ryct Robert Jennings

“I have a good landlady”

The best landlord/landlady I had was my last one, the landlady for the unit I rented in Wollongong from January 2003 to January 2016. The apartment block only had three floors and a small number of units, maybe twelve. The block had been built by her husband in the 1960s and was adjacent to their own house. She insisted that if there were ever any problems that I should not bother telling the agent, I should inform her directly. As her husband had worked in the building industry they had plenty of contacts with good tradies and any repairs were expedited efficiently and without charge to the tenant. I still exchange Christmas cards with Mrs Walker.

Ryct to Samuel Lubell

“Re the Horatio Hornblower books, I liked ‘em so much [...] I’m saving the Jack Aubrey books for dessert!”

I read a couple of Jack Aubrey novels in my teens, but have no memory of the titles nor the plots. I wasn't as enthralled by them as I was by the Horatio Hornblower books. Maybe I'll give them another go?

Snow Poster Township 23 (Heath Row)

Ryctm

"I agree with your epiphany: "[I]f I am living in New Zealand then I should be reading novels written by New Zealanders." Go local when you're able."

When I moved to Australia in May 2000 (such a long time ago!) I decided to read the winners of the Miles Franklin Award. This is the primary award for literary fiction in Australia, being awarded to "a novel which is of the highest literary merit and presents Australian life in any of its phases". It was first awarded in 1957. I had a few reasons for reading the winners of this award. Firstly, I decided that I should be reading novels written by Australians. Secondly, although I didn't expect to enjoy ever winner, I thought that there was a good probability that I'd enjoy the majority of them. Thirdly, I thought this would be a good way to identify authors that I'd like to read in depth. Fourthly, I thought it would be interesting to learn about Australia as seen through the eyes of its best writers. It took me until 2016 to read all the winners. (The prize wasn't awarded in either 1973 or 1983 as the judges decided that none of the submitted novels were good enough. No prize was awarded in 1988 due to a change in the eligibility criteria. There were two joint-winners in 1962 and 2000).

In 2016, having achieved my target, I decided to read the winners of the Booker Prize. However, in retrospect, I made a mistake. I should have continued reading the winners of the Miles Franklin Award. I haven't read any of the winners since 2016, I'll have to start tracking them down and reading them at some future date.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm

"I previously commented on Intermission #156 in The Explosion Containment Umbrella #32 for eAPA: "Ahrvid Engholm's Intermission #156 was distributed as a postmailing a week after Garth Spencer sent eAPA. An apa purist might decline to comment on such a postmailing, but not me! Your fanzines are always worth reading."

My impression is that in the days in which APAs were posted in the mail it was not unheard of for a fan who missed the collation deadline to directly mail their contribution to members. In the case of ANZA-PA, such mailings have always been retrospectively recorded as being part of the "official" mailing with the contribution contributing towards minimum franc requirements.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm #2

"If sex and war continue to drive technological development, perhaps military technology will also achieve consciousness."

For example, the weapon used by the War Doctor to end the Time War between the Time Lords and the Daleks, called The Moment, is a sentient doomsday weapon.

R.A.I.L. #9 (Adrian Kresnak)

Congratulations on attending your first zine fest as a fanzine publisher. I don't think I'd have been that brave in the years when I was publishing (postal diplomacy) fanzines.

Intermission #160 (Ahrvid Engholm)

You kindly emailed me this and I will strive to write you a loc as soon as I've finished this issue of *Brandy Hall*. If I'm going to write you a loc I don't see the point in writing mailing comments.

Esmeralda County Line 13 (Kevin Trainor Jr)

Thanks to both Kevin and Jefferson for their Jerry Pournelle recommendations. I have made a note of these, which doesn't mean that I'll ever read them.

There seems to have been a bit written about the Sad Puppies over a few mailings. This was long before my return to SF fandom. My only substantive source of information about the Sad Puppies is the entry on fancyclopedia. How do you rate this account?

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm

"There was apparently a large subculture of Yiddish radio shows in the 1920s and 30s here in the U.S. that were recorded on aluminum discs for distribution and replay. The vast majority of those discs were turned in to WW2 scrap drives and lost."

Interesting! I've not hear about these Yiddish radio shows. No reason for me to have done. Do you know what have happened to the surviving disks? Have they made their way into libraries? Have then been transferred to more modern formats? According to ChatGPT (...) in 2006 there were an estimated 150,000 Yiddish speakers living in the USA. (The definition of a Yiddish speaker being someone who is fluent in the language, it excluded those who only knew a few words.) I suppose that these speakers are concentrated in older demographic groups.

Ryct Fandomain-N

"I watched DS9 and Babylon 5 when they first aired and was pleased at how they seemed to riff off each other at times."

One story that I heard, back in the day, is that in the pre-Babylon 5 days JMS was asked to pitch a concept for the "next", i.e. after ST:TNG, Star Trek series. All that I remember is that his pitch had the series based on a space station...

Ryct #1

"I attended the 1974 Worldcon in DC and was a member of the 1976 Worldcon in KC. Both had parallel programming tracks, so imho AussieCon was a throwback."

Last year I put together a one-shot on AussieCon that I distributed through ANZAPA. I'm thinking of making some revisions to it and then making it available on fanzines. It is OK to include this quote as a footnote?

Ryctm #2

"Not sure he counts as an SF author, even though he's responsible for one of the most (in)famous SF role playing games, PARANOIA, but Greg Costikyan played quite a bit of Diplomacy."

Great minds think alike. Let me quote from a loc I wrote on *Obsidian* 320, a long running postal-diplomacy fanzine that initially had strong lines to the UK RPG hobby.

"Paranoia was co-written by Greg Costikyan, once a well known postal diplomacy fan. At one stage he was even the Miller Number Custodian."

Now I'm curious as to how you knew that he was "played quite a bit of Diplomacy"?

Ryctm #3

"My aunt Pat, God rest her, gave me my copy of 1066 And All That. Hopefully neither of my kids made off with my copy."

We moved house last year, into a bigger place. I was finally able to unpack all my boxes of books that had remained unopened since our last move in 2016. I had been hoping that I'd unearth my copy of *1066 And All That*. I can only assume that it was one of many books that did not make the voyage to Australia. I'd like to buy a replacement copy, but whether I do... Here's the top few entries in my file containing history books that I'd like to read, but probably never will.

1066 and all that.

Spondon a History by Susan Watson. Watney Publishing 1984. (Spondon is the suburb of Derby that I grew up in.)

SPQR: a history of ancient Rome – Mary Beard,

The Eagle and the Hart by Helen Castor – the tragic lives of Richard II and Henry IV.

Macaulay. *History of England*. (An old-fashioned 19th century History of England, but worth reading for the style in which it is written... at least that's what I've read.)

Lower Than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity.

Little Englanders: Britain in the Edwardian Era. Alywn Turner.

Endgame 1944: How Stalin Won the War by Jonathan Dimbleby.

Francis Pryor. *Britain AD.* (recommended by my dad)

Andrew Marr. *A History of Modern Britain. Elizabethans: How Modern Britain was Forged.*

J. Paxman. *Great Britain's Great War.*

[Missing out the middle of the list and fast tracking to its end...]

Robert Morrison. *The Regency Revolution: Jane Austen, Napoleon, Lord Byron, and the Making of the Modern World.*

Red Love: The Story of an East German Family by *Maxim Leo.*

Kevin Trainor: If you are interested in the Great War (a.k.a. World War I) I recommend Alistair Horne's *The Price of Glory*, which is mostly about the battle for Verdun, but also provides a good deal of context regarding how France and Germany wound up locked into that abattoir on the Meuse. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Peter Ackroyd. *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I.*

Ryctm #4

"In a recent issue of This Here... Nic Farey had a bit to say about the weird negative attitude American fans seem to have towards sports. He never understood it and I don't either."

I suppose a facile explanation of this is that most American fans were book-reading "nerds" who didn't enjoy playing sports, perhaps they were always the last person to be picked for any team... but just because you have no aptitude for playing sport doesn't mean that you can't enjoy following sports. (I have to confess that I have not yet read that issue of *This Here...*) Personally, my interest in watching sports has been on a downward spiral since I was a young teenager.

Samizdat 34 (Samuel Lubell)

Jim Butcher... I've got a vague feeling that I heard a presentation once by a student taking honours in statistics which analysed some of Butcher's novels. I no longer remember what the point of the exercise was. In theory I should be able to track down my notes on the talk... I've got a feeling that the presentation was during COVID...

I have watched *Now You See Me* (2013) on TV a couple of times. I remember watching some of *Now You See Me 2*, but I don't remember the ending which probably indicates that I turned the TV over to another channel before then.

I haven't watched *Blue Bloods*, we subscribe to zero streaming services. However, I have seen quite a few shorts from this courtesy of YouTube. I would watch this if we had a subscription to Paramount+.

My wife was a fan of NCIS before we started dating and we watched a large number of seasons but eventually stopped watching it for no particular reason. We haven't watched any of the numerous spin-offs - not even the one set in Sydney!

Ryct *Swamp Spot Sentinel* #1.3

"Alternate history counts as science fiction since history is a social science. "What If" questions are the basis for many a science fiction novel when applied to science, so why not when applied to history?"

I predict that Ahrvid will write that social science is not a science. I wonder if he will allow history to be a social science? (I concede that I am horribly biased: I don't consider social science to be a science. I feel slightly guilty about holding that opinion. I feel much less guilty in believing that history is not a social science. Just my opinions!)

Ryctm #1

"I didn't know that sovereign citizens were a thing in Australia. I thought this was just Americans being overly American."

I'm not sure if there are enough people in Australia calling themselves sovereign citizens for it to be considered "a thing". But it's being mentioned more often in the media and there have been some legal cases in which the defendant claimed to be a "sovereign citizen". The US runs a trade surplus with Australia (which didn't prevent Trump from putting tariffs on Australia...), unfortunately the idea of sovereign citizens is one of the imports.

Ryctm #2

"In your comments to me you write, "even in Dickens' time it was known that human spontaneous combustion was a myth". But Dickens, or at least his narrator, insists that spontaneous human combustion is real."

Reputable scientists certainly knew that human spontaneous combustion is a myth. Whether Dickens knew it was a myth I don't know. If Dickens knew, it's still OK for the narrator to believe that it could happen, I'm sure that plenty of people at that point in time believed in it. But it isn't real!

Ryct *Brownian Motion*

“I completely understand your issue with motivation. That’s one reason why I work on projects so the whole day doesn’t just disappear with nothing accomplished.”

I have a nagging feeling that I did not accomplish as much in the first year of my retirement that I should have done. I can put up various reasons for this, such as moving house, but I feel that the real reason is that it’s easy for me to waste time procrastinating. In particular, it’s too easy for me to get side tracked into reading the news online or watching short videos on YouTube. I’m only really retired three days a week. I’m still going into my office on Wednesday’s and our son doesn’t go to child-care on Friday’s, so I’m in charge of him that day. For the remaining weekdays I’ve decided to split the “working” day into one-hour slots and do something specific in those slots. If I take a morning or afternoon tea break then I’ll read a book/magazine during that break. What I won’t be doing, this is the plan, is reading online news or watching YouTube videos during working hours. I’m hoping that implementing this plan will allow me a greater sense of accomplishment as 2027 starts than I felt as 2026 started. Of course, it’s early days so far. It remains to be seen whether I can kick looking at my phone so much!

Ryct *Brownian Motion* #2

“I can say that I’d be shocked if the US. ever truly invaded Canada to try to conquer its territory (yes, I know we did in 1812, I’m talking about the future).”

Will you be shocked if Trump orders an invasion of Greenland?

BROWNIAN MOTION 17

A Garth Spencer apazine for N'APA 280

January 2026



Thinking Above My Pay Grade

Robert Sawyer recently reported that the major distributor Readerlink is ceasing paperback distribution in North America (see the News section in this fanzine), which reminded me of some relevant things.

Firstly: Frederik Pohl, in his biography *The Way the Future Was*, pointed out how **one** dominant magazine distributor in the U.S. was bought and liquidated – I think this was in the 1950s – with the result that a lot of general-interest American magazines had to go out of circulation. Robert Heinlein may also have commented on this bit of history, partly because many of his short stories first appeared in general-interest magazines in the 1940s and 1950s.

What happens when such outlets for fiction by new writers disappear, or become concentrated to a few major paying markets?

And now, it appears, there was just one major distributor for paperback books in North America, and as of this New Year, it has decided to suspend distributing them.

This sort of event rather resembles the long-running consolidation of industries into a few corporate sources for goods or services. As early as the 1980s, when I began taking notes on the publishing industry – specifically, genre fiction publishers – it was painfully clear the publishing industry was going through a period of consolidation, like a last-man-standing fight. The result looks ... nearly monopolistic. This is not a new thing; Canadian industries have usually tended to be concentrated into a few corporate hands, as Canadians have always known. So it was ironic to see U.S. industries – such as publishing – tending more and more to the same condition as Canadian business.

I think this sort of process resembles what is called a “single-point failure,” in military and engineering analysis.

Secondly: For years people have expressed complaints that the rise of electronic publishing has been reducing the demand for printed books. Only this year, I read about another, far earlier criticism – all the way back to when Penguin paperbacks arose, and became an established form – that they somehow vulgarized literature, by making classics available to the masses. (Yes, I should really cite a name and a place and a date.)

Funny as the early complaint is, it indicates something serious. Either a widely-available, low-cost medium for average citizens to entertain and educate themselves is being eliminated by business decisions ... or print publishing is merely being displaced to a different market niche, by electronic publishing.

Let me clarify that. You may have observed how older media have been successively shifted to different niches, but not eliminated, as time goes on. Newspapers used to dominate the publication of news, but then newsreels and radio shows began to compete with them. Later, radio was displaced from the domination of broadcasting by television, both from broadcast news and broadcast entertainment. Now, television and film productions are being displaced from news and screen entertainment by online streaming media. None of the older media are falling into disuse, but being pushed out of dominance and into different market niches.

If you recall, Carl Sagan mentioned paperback books in *Cosmos* as a source of widely-available knowledge costing no more than a modest meal. Of course, Dr. Sagan was speaking before the prices of everything really began to rise, including paperback books. Also, the original *Cosmos* series aired years before the Web began undermining the prior ground rules of publishing. Periodicals and book publishers used to buy copyrights such as “first North American serial rights” or “first British book rights” from authors; now they may buy “first world English-language rights.” For that matter, copyright law used to define the reprint of articles and stories by low-circulation magazines, below a defined number of copies, as not encroaching on copyright. Of course, electronic publishing erased the circulation distinction between fanzines and professional magazines, or between amateur websites and major book publishers.

Now, I still have reservations about electronic media. My reservations are: a) surprising numbers of people *still* can’t access the Web, or can’t use computers even when they can get at them, and b) computers and tablets and smart phones all depend on cheap, easily available electronic power. Even when and where power is reliable, sometimes we don’t have rechargers and power outlets when our personal devices are running down. I’ve been there. You’ve been there.

There’s another example of a potential single-point failure – failure of access to information, that is.

Finally: Yes, I know the foregoing starts to resemble a conspiracy theory – but I don’t think that way. I don’t think a string of business decisions are led by anything but scattered individuals seeking to maintain corporate profit in response to changing market conditions. We’re simply observing processes that logically lead to making single-point failures possible and likely – such as *one* business’ decision not to distribute paperbacks leading to the disappearance of new paperbacks entirely.

Maybe we will all have to become our own publishers and distributors soon.

§

Even if I said the following before, I will say it again:

Recently I was corresponding with others in eAPA about the SF trope that a sociologist could work up a form of “psychohistory.” Evaluating the idea that one could symbolically analyze, and explain, and even predict social behaviour is one of my hobbyhorses. Very few people think it could be made to work.

The problem with dismissing a “social calculus” is that advertisers, psychopaths, politicians, organized criminals and economists seem to use some similar way to assess and manipulate people, if only intuitively. The fundamental premise of demographic firms, such as Ipsos Reid (formerly Angus Reid), is that social and economic statistics predict 3/4ths of human events.

Asimov once presented an example of a predictable series of political events, namely the parallels between the English Civil War leading to Cromwell’s “Glorious Revolution,” the French Revolution, and the Russian Revolution:

- a) An unpopular king regarded as weak,
- b) An unpopular foreign queen popularly regarded with suspicion,
- c) An out-of-touch court/aristocracy/government ignoring famine and economic downturn,
- d) popular revolt under a new ideology,
- e) a repressive civil regime.

I once worked out the parallels between the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States, the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany, and the rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond/National Party in South Africa:

- a) a former regime suffers from an economic disaster following a military defeat at the hands of real or perceived foreigners (the South defeated by the North, Germany defeated by French and British and American forces, the Afrikaners defeated in the Boer War by the British);
- b) impoverished and immiserated by occupation/reparations, and refusing to believe they were defeated on their own merits, the defeated population evolves “self-defense” resistance groups, which might lay long-term plans to improve the “native” citizens’ lot, or may spend more efforts to terrorize minorities perceived to benefit from the occupation regime (usual targets include any oppressed minorities, e.g. aborigines, immigrants, Catholics, Jews, other perceived foreigners/infidels)
- c) eventually the resistance groups attain at least temporary and local government

As I understand it, we are now caught up in the predictable consequences of a mild worldwide depression, which nobody calls by its right name. And, as I understand it, the United States as a whole is now going through the steps described above, which lead to a fascist regime. I am not the first to observe this. (Fortunately, the incumbent administration has been shooting its credibility in the foot, and there are signs that good sense and responsibility are going to prevail.)

Instead of suffering a military defeat and occupation, though, the United States has been suffering economic defeats, largely ascribed to an emerging ideology in the 1970s and 1980s. There are grounds to argue that going off the gold standard, outsourcing manufacturing abroad, popularizing “downsizing”, gutting the Glass-Steagall Act in the United States, and promoting workforce insecurity were all inspired by this ideology.

Unsurprisingly, this created a baffled, enraged working-class and middle-class constituency in many formerly affluent countries, who voted certain conservative administrations into office.

All of this could be summarized in pretty short, almost algebraic formulas, with estimated probabilities timespans for each phase.

But of course you don’t have to buy a word of this.

§

A thought about historical recreation societies: I notice that, while North Americans generally support American Civil War reenactments, or the medievalist Society for Creative Anachronism and Renaissance Faires, in Britain the English Civil War seems to be more popular. (You may certainly correct me if I’m imagining things.) I think there are reenactors in Europe for the Napoleonic Wars, but I invite you to correct me, or to tell me more.

Make of this what you will. I have not – so far – seen anyone reenact the World Wars, except maybe in tabletop and online games. But ... maybe it’s only a matter of time before we see live-action reenactments in the United States, if not in Britain or continental Europe. For that matter, we may one day see reenactments of the colonial wars in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

I will say nothing about the impact of such game campaigns on regional politics, or offenses against tact and taste.



Reflections

One of the most embarrassing realizations I have is how often I repeat the same old topics. It is time I made a subject index, based on my past fanwriting, and moved on to new topics.

In the meantime I am ditching my usual verbal nonsense and adopting new verbal nonsense. By this, I mean that I have answered phatic questions such as “May I help you?” by saying “Oh, I’m beyond help,” or “How are you doing?” with “Square, flat, and crumbly at the edges,” or “Almost sort of slightly without doubt presumably perhaps under certain circumstances but not otherwise blues.” Bank tellers and customer service representatives give me standard lines like “Do you have any other questions?”, so of course I ask “Why is there air? Where does dust come from? Wenn ist das Nurnstuck gott un Slotermeyer? Who is the one more trustworthy than all the Buddhas? How do they get Caramilk™ into those Caramilk™ bars? Will there be fried chicken on outer space stations? And what about Mary Sue?” Anything to make life interesting.

You, too, can make life more interesting. But you have to change your material regularly, the way we change diapers or politicians, and for the same reason.

Across the Fandomension with Garth Spencer

“Across the Fandomension with Garth Spencer” (<https://www2.vcn.bc.ca/~garth2>) will be posted on or by January 31, 2026.

I have finally gotten a start on building a new fannish information website, provisionally titled “Across the Fandomension with Garth Spencer.” Of course there are plenty of other reference information websites, but to the best of my knowledge there has been no central reference place online to serve Pacific Northwest fandom since the Northwest SF Fandom website closed in the early 2000s – and there has been no central reference source for Canadian fandom at all.

Every page carries an invitation and a link for readers to email me complaints, corrections, and updates. The plan is to update the pages monthly.

The focus is simply on standard reference information about SF fandom and prodrom as I know it. For simplicity’s sake, all pages but the welcome page are entirely text documents in PDF format, which feature no graphics at all. This can change if enough people want me to pep things up.

I am going to have to show my age: I start by listing names and contact information for clubs, and conventions, and fanzines, or aspiring writers’ reference information. Only later may I go on to list fandom-adjacent links for blogs, podcasts, social media and websites. For simplicity’s sake I am not separating out anime-, comics-, costuming-, gaming-, or media-franchise-related links at all. If that’s what fans want, then of course I will bow to general demands.

The 10 Commandments of Logic

1. Thou shall not attack the person's character, but the argument. (*Ad hominem*)
2. Thou shall not misrepresent or exaggerate a person's argument in order to make them easier to attack. (*Straw man fallacy*)
3. Thou shall not use small numbers to represent the whole. (*Hasty generalization*)
4. Thou shall not argue thy position by assuming one of its premises is true. (*Begging the question*)
5. Thou shall not claim that because something occurred before, it must be the cause. (*Post Hoc/False cause*)
6. Thou shall not reduce the argument down to two possibilities. (*False dichotomy*)
7. Thou shall not argue that because of our ignorance, claim must be true or false. (*Ad ignorantum*)
8. Thou shall not lay the burden of proof onto him that is questioning the claim. (*Burden of proof reversal*)
9. Thou shall not assume "this" follows "that" when it has no logical connection. (*Non sequitur*)
10. Thou shall not claim that because a premise is popular, therefore it must be true. (*Bandwagon fallacy*)

Mailing Comments

I LOVE the cover illustration!

Intermission 159, by Ahrvid Engholm

I see your point about declining Microsoft customer service, and insistently snitching saving documents online unless otherwise directed. I also see your point about their increasingly bloated software products. One thing I have always kept in mind is that there are alternatives. So, I searched for the latest Ubuntu release, and discovered and downloaded Linux Mint for my laptop. This is satisfactory.

(I also keep getting harassing emails claiming my online storage has reached its limits, and for the life of me I can't identify what Cloud or online drive account they're talking about!)

Now, for no good reason I have three somewhat dated laptops, plus a Chromebook. Either some friends have an idea that I need help to remain computer-equipped, or

one of my friends thinks I'm still interested in disassembling computers and recreating a pocket computer. (I now realize that the best I could do is to get a pocket-sized tablet, say 7" in size if available, and use it with a collapsible keyboard; 7" keyboards can be painful to work with.)

I have also acquired through Temu a laptop-cum-keyboard arrangement that works as a rather lighter laptop, but it works specifically on the Android operating system, and saves documents in Google Docs to my Google Drive. It won't fit in a pocket, but it weighs a lot less than any of my laptops.

(Why don't I buy a Microsoft Surface? Because I'm not that rich, that's why!)

Onward.

Your coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the news I continue to receive about the Trump administration in the States, convinced me to activate my dormant World Government of Spuzzum project. We could have a lot of fun with this! My intention is to reduce the United States government to absurdity, if it hasn't done so already in the eyes of the international community, but my motto is "Impudence, Irreverence, Irrelevance and Insolence for All"; *all* national governments that fail to meet civilized standards are fair game for satire. So far I have just created a Facebook page and invited a lot of people; the page really needs content, though. My editorial in the February *Obdurate Eye* is a start. I say all this in NAPA so that any of us can join in with their own jokes, hoaxes and pranks!

Onward.

Interesting to see how many SF movies are now in the public domain. Someone should educate the fannish masses. The next time I revise my fannish reference website, should I add links to the odd and interesting movies you mention? Heath Row may also have great suggestions.

Onward.

Pretty soon I will have to research the current state of copyrights and trademarks, in different jurisdictions. When I was still working for a trademark agent, it became clear there was an international effort going on to make trademark application and registration practice more consistent, from one nation or region to another. Since that was a few years ago, I had better find out what the current state of affairs is.

Perhaps you could give me some background, or context, so that I can better understand your perspective on copyright? It seems that your perspective and my perspective, as to what the current major concerns are, are about 37 degrees out of alignment.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel, by Robert Jennings

Where in the Sam Hill did you get your cartoons?? I LIKE these cartoons. –Oh, now I see your description of the "tragedy" series.

I feel for you, having so much frustration simply finding contractors who will do home repairs. You would almost think there was a campaign to make home maintenance nearly impossible for homeowners. I blame the Belgians.

Considering the kind of news you present dovetails neatly with the kind of news I have to report – in my perzine, yet – it may be time to spin off my smartass news commentary into a fanzine masquerading as a serious magazine. *The Pacific Quarterly Review*, let us say. We might have a bit of fun.

The thought comes to mind that the current federal administration in the United States is less a creation led by the incumbent President, and more of a creation led by Project 2025 supporters. I have a theory about this going back to the rise of the neoconservative/Reaganomics/outsourcing/downsizing movement among private and public upper management, appearing some time in the 1970s. The proof of this is amusing, but there is not enough space in this APA to write it all out.

The article on the airship *Samuel de Champlain* was absorbing, partly for being a Canadian story (I am a Canadian in Vancouver). Granting that it was a hoax, the story suggests an airship is peculiarly vulnerable to blizzards and storms. This factor alone may have contributed to the rise of airplanes and the fall of airships in aviation.

I must have missed something: what clue at the end of the story gave away that it was a hoax?

The Canadian-American writer S.M. Stirling has been fond of featuring airships in his alternative-history novels; but I seem to recall that sometime, somewhere, he wrote that airships were some of the most complex craft ever produced. (Presumably, airships were the most complex until the much-compromised space shuttles were produced.)

Re your comments to *Archive Midwinter* – regarding intellectual property, you may wish to see my remarks to Ahrvid Engholm above. In jurisdictions such as Canada, there has been a theory of “inherent copyright” such that a writer/creator holds a copyright even before any registration occurs. As with trademarks, the right is expressed as something *much easier to defend*, once the creator actually registers the intellectual property.

You and I may be thinking along the same lines about how people with real superpowers would find themselves occupied: as emergency first responders. As a story premise, though, I have yet to work out all the details.

Re your comments to *Brandy Hall* – I agree that SF fandom got its start during the Great Depression, so that fans were generally penniless young adults getting their entertainment by inexpensive means; but I would go further, and claim that the Depression hit other countries earlier, and harder – Great Britain, for example. I get this impression from some of the few biographical data that my father let slip. (Not that he was an SF reader, but he was a young man in London, England during the Depression; a man growing up on the wrong side of the tracks, at that.)

Re the N3F – if I had to describe it, I think I would describe it as a continental federation of local fans and SF clubs. There have been similar organizations, such as one or more “Starfleet” Trek federations, the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, or something in Canada in the 1950s that tried to federate (or create) Canadian SF clubs. (This last organization is documented in my manuscript *Canadian fanhistory*. Maybe I could serialize my current draft in NAPA, or approach FANAC.ORG or the NAPA fanhistorians about future publication.)

Re your comments to me – about a month ago I stopped taking my antidepressants and have been making much more progress on several projects. (See my editorial remarks at the beginning of this apazine for examples.) This is not unprecedented; I have had spells of higher energy and activity before, after giving the antidepressants a rest.

As to “psychohistory” and its cognates: there seems to be a persistent idea that individual or group behaviour *can* be forecast – at least within limits of probability, or for short ranges into the future. The idea is basic to advertising, corporate policy, political strategy, criminal activities from individual blackmail to criminal organizations, military strategy, and demographics generally, not just SF novels and stories.

Far more important even than forecasting people’s behaviour, individually or en masse – or, for that matter, more important even than *shaping* people’s behaviour, as several Facebook/Youtube ads promise their books and courses will enable purchasers to do – is the prospect of conceiving alternative possible cultures, in the anthropological sense of “culture”. Really, humans are cultural animals, and we specialize in generating a wide variety of cultures for different environments, modes of subsistence, and belief or value systems. If you entertain Marvin Harris’ theory of cultural materialism – the idea that even the inexplicable parts of cultures can make perfect sense, for perfectly practical reasons – you may perceive “culture” as “shared behaviours for community members to continue living, in a specific environment with a specific group who have specific ways to make a living, and have beliefs or values that put a particular spin on their daily behaviours.”

Thank you for the notes about 3.5” and 5.25” drives. It’s a pity I no longer have a lot of the disks in those sizes that I used to have. Living in Vancouver may be a greater limitation, though. Or maybe I have a lot to discover about local suppliers.

Re your remarks to *Samizdat* ... curious that you say there simply aren’t many print magazines around, that people aren’t reading as much, or that ebooks are not the answer. I found quite a lot of magazines on the racks, including fiction magazines, when I last visited Indigo/ Chapters, the Canadian parallel to Barnes & Noble. (Maybe when I research SF markets this week, I should compare numbers with my previous market lists? I seem to recall reading in *Ansible* that several major SF magazines have been delayed in appearing on sale.) I think you referenced the *Locus* recommended reading lists in the last NAPA mailing, and I know that I keep receiving lists of new book releases from a local publisher, which I reprint in my perzine in edited form. As to ebooks, for my part I have been shifting to buying and reading ebooks rather than print books over the last few years. Am I a statistical outlier, I wonder?

Re some of your comments to *Intermission* :

Upon reflection, I seem to confuse national economic strength with the infrastructure necessary to sustain a big effort, such as a prolonged war. If the Russian economy is tanking, that would seem to undermine the Russian war effort. Am I oversimplifying too many considerations into a simplistic cause-and-effect matter?

You list an impressive number of key manufacturing industries that would be taken out by nuclear strikes in North America. It’s almost as if you have a checklist of manufactures that should be geographically distributed like Internet nodes, and not

centralized, if North Americans had a plan for surviving and prevailing after a nuclear exchange.

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer

Re your comments to me: proverbially we used to complain in Canada about the Great Brain Drain to the United States; that is, our many universities persistently graduated trained professionals in many fields, who predictably moved to the United States, or other countries.

And then, under the current U.S. administration, high-profile professionals have been moving to Canada ...

In fact, the British Columbia government has an overt program to promote opportunities and recruit nursing staff for the province.

Re your fannish collection – the “Fanlore” website (<https://fanlore.org>) includes a short write-up on Fannish Estate Planning, with some links to archives and repositories for fannish libraries. I will include a link to it in my forthcoming website, “Across the Fandomension with Garth Spencer” (<https://www2.vcn.bc.ca/~garth2>), probably by or on January 31, 2026.

I will also post a detailed list of fanzine/fannish library archives and repositories in “Across the Fandomension.”

If there are places that will appreciate fannish publications and memorabilia, there must certainly be places which will appreciate your collections, such as your classical musical LPs.

Intermission 160, by Ahrvid Engholm

Thank you for your news coverage.

On the whole I would prefer that Canada purchase the Gripen rather than F35s for our air force, in order to reduce our dependence on the United States.

As I said above to Robert Jennings, I seem to confuse national economic strength with the infrastructure necessary to sustain a big effort, such as a prolonged war. If the Russian economy is tanking, that would seem to undermine the Russian war effort. Doesn't it?

Re your comments to me: I think you misunderstand my perspective on a social calculus. Because of my background, I have been struggling to find any consistency – any reliability at all – in the behaviour of the people I know. (Especially family members.)

Based on what you're saying, though, anyone might do or say anything at all, at any time or place, for any reason or no reason. People shooting pigeons at bus stops, for instance, or responding to the word “what” with sudden outbreaks of public group sex, or turning every conversation on Friday to their obsession with the Evil Sinister Belgian Mind Control Plot. Or the alleged greatest, freest country in the world abruptly voting an infantile idiot into the White House, and steadily, obstinately turning towards fascism.

In fact, I am now satisfied that there is a reliable probability in human behaviour, which I can express in the conventional way, as a percentage attached to a given event, or a percentage attached to a consequence of a given event. This is all I was assuming for the sake argument, and possible comparison with actual events. ~~Try and get that simple idea through your thick skull into your tiny little mind.~~ I mean, duh, hello, it's not rocket science.

Also, as I wrote above, there seems to be a persistent idea that individual or group behaviour *can* be forecast – at least within limits of probability, or for short ranges into the future. The idea is basic to advertising, corporate policy, political strategy, criminal activities from individual blackmail to criminal organizations, military strategy, and demographics generally, not just SF novels and stories.

Ye Murthered Master Mage #279, by George Phillis

You asked me whether I had received N3F zines in December 2025 ... it appeared that I received rather few.

Discussing the matter with Jefferson Swycaffer, I suggested that some problem might have arisen between your email service provider and mine, among others. Some of my correspondents (e.g. Cliff Samuels, in the Canadian SF and Fantasy Association) have reported dismaying failures of receipt – especially dismaying when they needed to send broadcast emails, for example to solicit award nominations and votes.

Onward.

Re your comments to me: maybe I'm confused; I thought "A Gentle Stroll..." was an APA, rather than a fanzine. Maybe I was thinking of the "Ever and Anon" APA.

When you referred to "figures," while comparing Publisher and Word, were you referring to graphics? Pictures? Illustrations?

Snow Poster Township #23 by Heath Row

Re your reading and viewing: I have read *Altered Carbon* and its sequels, but haven't seen the TV adaptation. As I understood it, Morgan was writing a very hardboiled-detective novel set in a dystopian future. Rather than Roman Catholics specifically, I thought it was traditional religionists generally who refused re-sleeving in that future. (I forget what term Morgan's characters used for people who refused to have their minds recorded and re-sleeved.) Rather than Elders, I recall the predecessor civilization being called "Martians," simply because their relics and ruins were first discovered on Mars, and only later on other colony worlds.

Well, people notice and remember things differently.

For a guy who said he's feeling his age, and is not very inclined to meet new people in person – or even to get out and see my friends often – I seem to be approaching more people online. As witness the "Across the Fandomension" and *Pacific Quarterly Review* initiatives.

Your note on *Esmeraldo County Township* last mailing – especially on the ebook that claimed to be about "failed visionaries who preach a dysfunctional anti-human future such as Ursula LeGuin and the covens of woke disciples infesting the literature of the

imagination” – made me stop and reread the line a few times. What do we call this nonsense? Gaslighting? Reframing? Or just plain deceitfulness?

Thank you for the word “incensepunk.” At first I thought this had to do with mystical prose with SF trappings generally, rather than specifically Christian-oriented. (Dollar stores and botanicas in the city where I live offer incense and tchotchkes useful for Hindu and Buddhist and other persuasions, not just for Christian denominations.)

R.A.I.L. #9 by Adrian Kresnak

A Common Knowledge Zine Fest? Damn, that sounds like a brilliant idea!

Is there a Common Knowledge organization, or website, that I could contact?

Esmeralda County Line #13, October-November 2025, by Kevin Trainor Jr

You’re right, I *don’t* have any idea how much American veterans despise UN peacekeepers. Please elucidate, elaborate, and expound. (My vague story idea of a Canadian/UN peacekeeping force in the U.S. after a second American Civil War keeps cropping up in my imagination.)

Samizdat Ish #34, Nov/Dec 2025, by Samuel Lubell

I keep remembering Mark Twain’s comment that a man who does not read has no advantage over a man who cannot read. Granted, this may be neither here nor there, when it comes to declining literacy in the here and now; I suspect that both constraints on time for reading, and poor teaching of literacy, play some role. Perhaps some Evelyn Wood speed-reading courses – or promotion for them – is called for?

I laughed out loud at your Forthcoming Books gag, even though it came out in 1997. An oldie but a goodie.

Interesting to see your nonfiction reviews. If I could rope you into involvement in *The Pacific Quarterly Review*, I would try to persuade you to review the *Generations* work in more depth. Or maybe I’ll follow the link and read the summary for myself.

Re your comment to *Swamp Spot Sentinel* ... There seems to be a popular confusion, in any society, between a people’s professed religion and the culture they actually live in, whether you’re looking at heathens or Hindus or Sikhs or Confucians or Christians of any flavour. It seems pretty clear that Christian churches normally celebrate their conformist cultural norms and values – or, what St. Paul wrote and taught – so far from what the first-century Jewish rabbi Yeshua ben Yusuf preached. But this is a twice-told tale.

Re the N3F – yes, they seem to be promoting themselves effectively, and if you contact George Phillies the president, you and he may discuss future promotional initiatives.

Brandy Hall Issue 15, November 2025, by Mark Nelson

Given the progression of topics you covered, issue by issue, I might expect you to write about fanhistory or fandom guides, somewhere along the line.

One page 3 of your zine (under Alternative History), I concur that someone named Brenda referenced *Years of Rice and Salt* when she mentioned a novel in which “99%” of Europeans died of the Black Plague. If anything, I think this alternative history was based on the argument that even if Islam prevailed in a world where European Christianity disappeared, the scientific and industrial revolutions would occur. This is debatable; some of the preconditions for these cultural revolutions had nothing to do with the Black Death.

Reycts to me:

I have no idea what the difference is between naming a “film” or a “movie,” except that we have the phrase “going to the movies.” Even after my courses in linguistics, and even now that I’m 69, I am obtuse about connotations.

So Australia, like Canada, has shifted from hardcopy to online tax package distribution. I began to see this kind of shift generally, in many lines of publication, at about the same time as the COVID-19 pandemic; since then, I cannot get a general telephone book at all, many small-circulation ethnic-focused periodicals have disappeared, and postal carriers have been distributing advertising flyers as much as real mail. Behold, the former things have passed away.

Re ycts to Robert Jennings: I rather wish MPs at least had education in mathematics and/or engineering. And I seem to have seen much the same changes in fandom generally that you saw in the Forbidden Planet store over the years – a shift away from books, even in paperback form, towards an SF-adjacent visual medium such as comics, and thence toward merchandise for a visual medium.

And Now for Something Completely Different

... We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

From “Ulysses,” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

INTERMISSION #161

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, your Epzine Files for EAPA, N'APA & other victims! Hope being back with @SFJournalen RSN. Just been too busy. Give days 25h! LoCs welcome! Drop a line if you want to drop this Int'l Culture Mag! IPCC is like typos, both make eyes melt. Late Nov '25.

Editorially: BBC Crash, Fighter Deals, Silly "Plans", Corruption

Media is often balanced askew enough that if it was a ship it'd sink like the *Vasa!* Recently one Michael Prescott, ex-adviser to the BBC's Editorial Guidelines and Standards Board, squashed the claim that Britain's ether giant BBC would be impartial and trustworthy. His report about how Beeb, as it's called (<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/50118/documents/270340/default/>) distorted US election news, trans reporting, the Gaza war etc was so damaging that BBC's top brass was forced to resign. As you know, if you followed this eminent publication, I'm against the egotistic, Putin-hugging, irrational, greedy, aging US president, who has even been suggested being a Russian ass...asset. But that doesn't excuse the BBC stitching together words from Trump's 6 Jan speech 54 minutes apart. I happen to agree that he should be impeached and his rhetoric that day was certainly outrageous. But if you act like the BBC you just give ammo to Trump's defence. And Trump needs a ride, not ammo...

It's all extra worrying and relevant because our situation is a carbon copy of the BBC! Our "national broadcaster" is the Sveriges Radio group ("Sweden's Radio"), often comparing itself to the BBC. The SR group, which includes TV (known as SVT), is the behemoth of Swedish media. Though formally not government owned, a set of laws, regulations and agreements makes it for all practical purposes

| | | | |
|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| V | Left Party | 32,0% | 32 |
| S | Soc Dem | 24,0% | 24 |
| C | Centre Party | 9,3% | |
| L | Euroliberals | 5,3% | |
| KD | Christian Dem | 3,3% | |
| M | Moderates | 4,0% | |
| SD | Sweden Dem | 2,7% | |
| MP | Green Party | 14,7% | +14.7 |
| Annat | | 4,7% | 70.7 |

state controlled. If you switch it on you're immediately almost blinded by their biases. It's climate, Greta Thunberg, feminism, LGBTQ, environment, social issues etc. An overlooked bias is how they run tens of hours of "nature" programs (often by Sir David Attentionbeggar) every week. Highly emotional shows about how poor little animals are threatened by mankind. Swedish media is to more than 70% supporters of the red-green bloc. Kent Asp, journalism professor, in an extensive 2006 report found that 72% of journalists sympathised with the Social Democrats, the Left Party (former communists) or the Greens, and this bias is remarkably steady. In a more

recent report from 2019 Björn Lantz, assistant management professor (https://research.chalmers.se/publication/518198/file/518198_Fulltext.pdf - let an AI translate!), found this support to be 71% (see pic, in Europe liberals aren't left, but joins the centre-right, we call them Euroliberals). Professor Asp earlier found that the support for the red-greens in the SR group was a whopping 82%! 4/5ths of our most powerful media source support the red-greens, and it certainly hasn't changed. If anything the SR group has doubled down on climate, environmentalism, LGBTQ etc. The SR organisation earlier this year issued a directive that *all official dinners must be vegetarian!* Good grief! And of course, the BBC "creative edit" of Trump's speech was shown by SVT.

Another example, small but very typical: Swedish of course has a third person neutral pronoun: *den* (or *det*, but *den* is for living beings). But a group or whatever nobody had heard of thought established grammar wasn't good enough, so they proclaimed we must have a new pronoun: "hen", for both men and women. This is of course follows the LGBTQ, ideology of trying to erase the gender differences nature has gifted us. SVT's daily "Culture News" ran the "hen" idiocy as top news, and every day thereafter made sure to use this language abuse, even when no third person pronoun was called for.

Why is it so? My hypothesis is that the urge to become a journalist comes from a special frame of mind. It's people who are self-absorbed, convinced of their high moral standards and see news-reporting as a chance to spread their goodness. (A goodness that is very superficial, when it really matters.) When I studied at the Stockholm University institution for Media and Journalism I saw examples of that type of individuals, though it was far from all. My observation seems especially valid for reporters of news, politics, culture and society, fields where opinions easily can be inserted in news. (I've mostly covered technology., especially computers, and the kind of culture few like, so I

*The topheavy pride of our Navy, sinking on it's maiden voyage, raised 333 years later and now in a museum. See #153.

think I have a bit of immunity.) Every time you hear an editor-in-chief or some media senior talk it's words holier than thou. Media drift to the left because socialism and environmentalism has the easy, populist but paper thin "answers".

A month ago, writing my editorial remarks, it looked like the Russians were going to take the small town (now a pile of rubble) of Pokrovsk. Now 30 days later they *still* haven't. The Ukrainians are masters of defensive warfare. Russian soldiers have next to zero motivation, no fighting spirit, lack training and supplies and move reluctantly since otherwise their own will shoot them in the back. Many willingly surrender. That becomes their best option due to the Geneva convention. Russia often instead *shoot PoWs*, a blatant war crime. The war criminals don't realise it also makes it difficult to make enemies surrender. Ukraine advances the drone and missile war. New improved types are mass produced. The mighty Flamingo had early aiming problems, but it's now fixed and it destroys Russian refineries, oil depot, bases and harbours every night. There have been 100+ attacks on Russian oil refineries. Other suppliers increase production but Russia must offer a discount making the price drift towards \$30, which slashes Putin's war budget! Ruble inflation is north of 20% and rising. Putin's "welfare" fund is 85% empty. Russia is forced to start selling off of their gold reserve! It's reported that 38% of all clothing shops in Moscow have closed. People have no money to buy things. Russian economy is near collapse. And in comes Agent Krasnov to save Putin's ass.

Trump's so called "peace plan" was a cruel deception. We now know it was Putin's Xmas wishlist, leaked by the Russians. Linguists note that the phrasing and structure shows it was just an auto-translated Russian original. Trump still apparently approved it! He's an idiot (or maybe it's dementia) and his advisers are also south on the IQ scale, not realising how stone-dead the "plan" was. EU +UK gathered to devise their own peace plan, 24 points (that look OK) that seems to have partly carried over to Trump's plan, now down to 19 points which it seems Ukraine could go for - which means Putin won't. Major stumbling blocks remain, and breakthroughs seem unlikely at this moment, as the Kremlin goblin needs his war as excuse for the huge strain he's putting Russia under. Whether KGB recruited Trump or not, he still acts like an agent Krasnov. The latest insanity is he considers to "recognise" occupied land as Russian! It seems Europe for the next 3 years, until we get a US president who isn't a Russian Asset and a piece of shit, will take the helm. EU dwarfs Russian economy. And MAGA supports Ukraine polls say. Even Trump's own see his idiocy.

Big aircraft deals just turned up! Colombia has signed an order for 17 Gripen E/F fighters (F is the two-seater). Both Portugal and Canada are still considering the Gripen (the net is full of rumours Canada *will* buy it, but who knows?). And on a recent trip to France Zelensky and Macron signed a Letter of Intent for Ukraine to buy 100 Rafale fighters, just as with the 100-150 Gripens earlier, it'll take years to deliver and is intended for boosting Ukraine's air force *after* the war. I hope the Gripen and Rafale deals don't disturb each other. Rafale is heavier than the Gripen and carries more weapons but Gripen is nimbler and better in electronic warfare (and I think Rafale is more expensive). Frozen Russia assets should contribute to pay for it all.

Two presidents are a bit in a pickle. More of the Epstein files emerge and puts Trump in the doggy poo. (A piece of shit tramples a piece of shit - interesting!) Trump was more closely connected to Epstein than he has admitted. While there's no evidence he was involved in Epstein's trafficking and abuse of underage girls, it's impossible to rule it out. Trump earlier had the Stormy Daniels affair and has certain ideas of grabbing women on the...well, what do you think? I'd be very worried if I was the self-proclaimed president of Venezuela. Trump may start a war there to divert attention.

In Ukraine a big corruption scandal erupted. A gang of high officials including a former friend and business associate of Zelensky has grabbed bribes to the value of \$100m from a big energy company, nicking money otherwise intended to protect Ukraine's energy structure. The Russians now tries to knock out Ukraine's power structure in time for the winter. Many are freezing and Ukrainians are mad as hell that their energy needs are stolen.

The leader of this criminal gang was one Timor Mindich, former co-owner of Zelensky's TV production company and personal friend at the time. Mr Mindich fled to Israel hours before his home was raided by Ukraine's anti-corruption agency. About five has been detained awaiting charges, former ministers and other high-ups. None of those seem to be more closely connected to Zelensky, though, but later the home of president's chief of staff Andriy Yermak was raided by the agency, and he is described as a long time friend of Zelensky. Yermak resigned but no charges has been made (the raid could be fact-finding about the



Mr Mindich, who thought money to strengthen Ukraine's energy belonged in his pocket. Used to co-own Zelensky's production company, but I can't find pics of them together.

other five). Zelensky replied that he had ordered an overhaul and audit of nation's state-owned energy sector and said "Any scheme uncovered in these companies must receive a swift and just response". There's no evidence that he knew about the affair beforehand, but the independent anti-corruption agency (which Zelensky in July wanted to pull in under the government, due to Russian infiltration, but soon retracted due to massive demonstrations) has thousands of hours of wiretapping. Hopefully there's nothing more.

Of the two presidents being in trouble, I hope Trump will get wing-clipped, but that Zelensky will pull through. He's needed now in wartime, with all ridiculous "peace plans". And I have a feeling he's not the guy dirtying himself with a \$100m corruption scheme.

That's the kind of person Trump is.

--Ahrvid Engholm

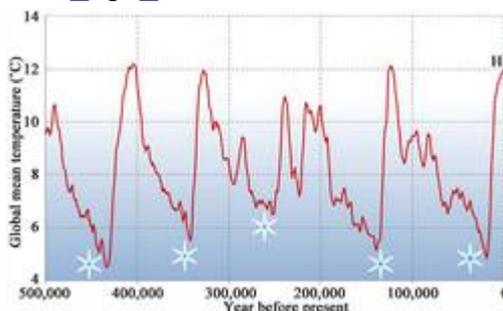
Ps. As I'm writing Ukraine's said to agree to a peace plan (probably means Russia won't agree...).

HISTORY CORNER

The Coming Ice Age

It seems Earth in the longer perspective is heading for another ice age! Temperature charts indicate, if we go back half a million years, that Earth's temperature has been going up and down like a yo-yo. There's been an ice age at every deep dip:

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Global-mean-temperatures-over-the-last-500-000-years-11_fig3_356606430



The curve shows we are now at a temperature *peak*, and it can only go down, down from there. Even if the lobby group IPCC would be right (which they ain't!) further down a new ice age will overwhelm them and us.

I began writing about our climate more than three decades ago, in the early 1990s. I had pieces about it in my then electronic fanzine *The Crochet Supplement*, which I did over 90 issues of almost every week for two years, possibly the first E-fanzine in Sweden. (But it actually began as a carbon-copied zine - there's a story behind it,

but let's leave it for another day.)

I'm known in fandom as a climate critic. Reject the insulting propaganda term "climate denier", pulled out from the perverted minds of environmentally disturbed who want to tie climate criticism to "holocaust deniers". Climate must be debated seriously. Doing it by insults is childish. And evil - it's pretty gross to imply that people who don't share your opinion are the same stuff as murderous Nazis! (Besides, it's impossible to "deny" climate. There will always be a climate. Without a climate, what do we have? A void without any temperature?)

It's obvious that science fiction rests on the idea of progress through advanced science and cutting edge hitech! A true sf fan must advocate more science, heavier technology - it's in the DNA of skiffy (Do Not Argue!). Why do you think Jules Verne, Hugo Gernsback and others who founded the genre always wrote about new, fantastic machines? They expressed the core value of what *SCIENCE* fiction is! Environmentalism is contrary to this. It regards technology primarily as something that just "destroys nature" and science is the accomplice to this.

But the sf genre needs science and technology. It's needed for spaceships, robots, space colonies, intelligent toasters, rolling roads, weather control, anti-cancer medicines etc! Advanced technology creates human progress, builds resources and makes us wealthier.

But the environmentalism, which popped up in the 1960s (Rachel Carson, The Club of Rome, Greenpeace etc), is basically against advanced technology, and against real human progress and greater wealth. That "zero growth" ideas is a strong sub-ideology in environmentalism is perfectly

logical. We see a strong Zeitgeist ("Spirit of the Times") of environmental fanaticism since more than half a century back. There's no end to the claims they make, how humanity just destroys everything, how the world is near disaster, how we poison everything and kill all animals... (Facts are that the discussed chemicals have to an high and increasing degree been banned or heavily reduced, we keep a very watchful eye on any emissions, and we protect animals and species more than ever! Our environment is in better health than ever during the industrial age.)

Environmentalists are against advanced science and technology because they don't understand it. It's basic psychology to be afraid of what you don't understand. Tech/science development has been lightning fast the last 100 years, and the world has, despite devastating world wars, become better than ever, having more resources than ever. But for the environmentalists this just means: stop the world, we want to get off!

An important starting point for me to realize the retrogressiveness of environmentalism came in 1980, when Sweden had a referendum about nuclear power. I won't go into all the complex details about it, but the pro-nuclear side won...narrowly. The environmentalists were and are against nuclear power just because it relies on advanced science: atoms, small little bastards we can't see and don't understand...

But hey, don't Chernobyl and Fukushima prove that the greenies were right? Yes, we had two of the theoretically worst nuclear power disasters imaginable. One plant actually blew up and spread all its shit around most of Europe, due to a human criminally deliberate action. And then two plants blew up due to a rare natural disaster. But despite all, we went through the worst things that could happen relatively unscathed! Some may not agree, but let's at least agree on: the world didn't end. As we have now seen that, done that, nuclear power seems to make a comeback. The environmentalists will try to stop it if they can, but it may be that their constant whining about illusory "climate change" that is behind nuclear power comeback. They are probably also against fusion power, which also is making progress. A company named Helion think they have a fusion plan on-line by 2028 and Microsoft has signed a deal to buy power from it, <https://www.helionenergy.com/articles/announcing-helion-fusion-ppa-with-microsoft-constellation/> . Founder Bill Gates (he's also in the Epstein files BTW) wrote a letter suggesting helping the poor is more important than marginal "climate" activities.

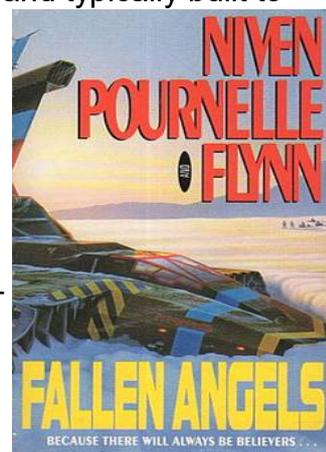
The narrow 1980 "victory" for nuclear power in Sweden actually caused us to unwisely prematurely close half of our 12 plants. (Because the winning ballot said: OK, we'll have the nuclear plants for a while, but let's close them after 25-30 years...) There's now a substantial majority in our parliament for building new plants. We shouldn't have closed the old ones! The environmentalists squabbling has costs us hundreds of billions in throwing away perfectly good power plants.

A new player in the game is SMRs, Small Modular Reactors, which are cheaper and typically built to be physically meltdown-proof. A Swedish fan and former fanzine publisher, Janne Wallenius of the Royal Technical institute, is involved in SMRs, constructing such through his company Blykalla (<https://www.blykalla.com/>)

Let's talk a little about skiffy and the coming ice age. We'll shortly go through some skiffy works in the area, but let me first personally recommend Niven/Pournelle/Flynn's *Fallen Angels!* (https://archive.org/details/fallenangels00larr_0) In this quite fannish novel greenies have come to power, and their allergy against fossil fuels makes icecaps beginning to crawl over North America. But fandom remains as some sort of opposition movement, since, as you know, skiffy is pro-progress, pro-science, pro-hitech, all what environmentalism hates. But fandom had gone underground. The Worldcon is a small group of dissidents in a tent in the woods...

Today we see a huge wave of dystopian works. It's often Earth being hot as a sauna or being crushed by an atomic war or being under the boots of evil technology. We see the influence on popular culture from the strong Zeitgeist.

But earlier the idea of a coming ice age was more common! *Newsweek*. wrote about "The Cooling World" (<https://iseethics.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/the-cooling-world-newsweek-april-28-1975.pdf> in 1975. *Time Magazine* wrote about "How to Survive the





The Little Ice Age let the Swedish Army march over the ice-covered Danish Belts to besiege Copenhagen. Though that went well, they failed to take the Danish capital. (Today they could just take the Öresund Bridge.) This painting is pure propaganda - the Army certainly didn't cross 1 square columns. They went in long lines, very carefully.

Coming Ice Age" in 1977.

Ice ages, or "small ice ages", have had their importance in Nordic history. You know that the Vikings settled Greenland. Actually, they were the first and original settlers on southern Greenland, the Inuits had at the time only reached the Northwest. Trump stupidly asked what claims Denmark had on Greenland. "Vi fandt det, grundlagde det!", they'll answer ("We found it, founded it!"). As the climate got colder the Nordic settlements went through tougher times. Sometime in the 15th Century the Viking descendants had left. Their downfall could have been in combination with the plagues harassing Europe, which may have reached Greenland through an occasional traveller.

The "little ice age" was in full swing in the mid 1600s, which was of importance when the Swedes, as usual on the warpath against the Danes, in 1658 invaded Denmark reaching Copenhagen over the Belts, which were ice-covered due to the cold climate. The ice could barely hold horses and carriages (and some went through the ice) but the Swedes managed to get through to besiege the Danish capital. Fortunately for the Danes, they couldn't break through the Copenhagen defences. (Had it not held the Danes would perhaps eg not have such a ridiculous number system where eg 70 is said as "halfway to four twenties"...))

Ice Ages and SF

Time to dig into climate and skiffy. Some Ice Age sf, listed chronologically:

1848: Lawrence Clarke (pseud. of Henry Cockton?) - *The Frozen World*. Early Victorian "lost world" satire in which explorers discover a region trapped in perpetual ice. Written before modern glaciology but anticipates Ice Age catastrophe tales with romantic and comic tones.

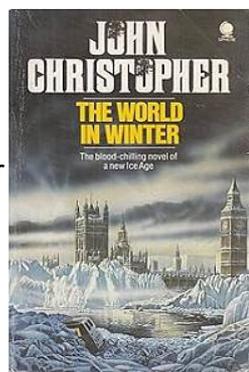
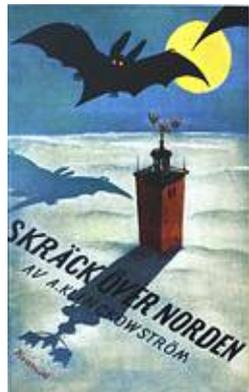
1893: Camille Flammarion - *La Fin du Monde* ("The End of the World"). A cosmic and philosophical novel: astronomers foresee and then witness the Sun's decline and Earth's gradual freezing; shifts between scientific speculation and mystical visions of the far future humanity and extinction. One Abel Gance made a film adaptation in 1931, here a trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV6Fh54As6w>

1894: George Griffith - "The Great Glacier" (Pearson's Magazine). A sensational short story in which volcanic and orbital changes cause glaciers to surge southward, obliterating Europe; typical of late-

Victorian "cosmic disaster" tales combining science and adventure.

1910: J-H Rosny Aîné - "La Mort de la Terre" ("The Death of Earth") Set in a far-future Earth cooling and dying, by a Belgian author. Humanity gives way to a new silicon-based species - a poetic elegy for a frozen, exhausted planet.

1919: Axel Klinckowström - *Skräck över Norden* ("Terror over the North", Swedish). "A classic Nordic catastrophe novel: the Gulf Stream stops due to a mysterious oceanic event,



The bucket contains frozen air. Nitrogen freezes at -210C, oxygen at -219C.



plunging Scandinavia and northern Europe into an ice age. Follows scientists and ordinary people coping with famine, migration, and social collapse as the cold spreads.

1949: Arthur C Clarke - "*The Forgotten Enemy* (short story). A professor quivers in the cold staying behind in a London university as most others have left England. The planet is cooling due to a dust cloud shading the sun. The ices wall is coming closer and closer. https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/NW_1949_02.pdf

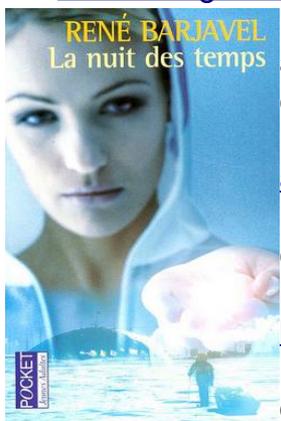
1951: Fritz Leiber - "*A Pail of Air*" (short story) After Earth is torn from its orbit, a family survives in a world where the atmosphere and oceans are frozen. They collect "pails" of frozen air to breathe. Told through a child's voice, it's one of the most poignant post-sunlight survival stories. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/51461/51461-h/51461-h.htm>

1957: Fred Hoyle - *The Black Cloud*. An immense interstellar cloud drifts into the Solar System, blocking sunlight and bringing extreme cooling. Scientists race to understand the phenomenon, ultimately realizing the cloud is intelligent. A cerebral, hard-SF treatment of global cooling and communication. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/8fd4575f1a0a2e11f43a351007313b72/0/6

1964: John Christopher - *The World in Winter* (US title *The Long Winter*) A sudden reduction in solar radiation brings a new ice age to Europe. Civilization collapses. Refugees flee southward to Africa, where roles of colonizer and colonized are reversed. Social and political allegory wrapped in a cold apocalypse. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/8799c4118e6f27799670bc280ec8a6e1/0/6

1967: Anna Kavan - *Ice*. Dreamlike and symbolic novel where an unstoppable "ice" spreads across the world. The narrator's pursuit of an elusive woman parallels humanity's paralysis before annihilation. Surreal and psychological rather than scientific. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/ff1ff50caa52f39aaaf233e6206eb346/0/6

1968: René Barjavel - *La Nuit des temps* ("The Ice People"). Antarctic explorers uncover a frozen chamber containing survivors of a prehistoric advanced civilization. When one awakens, she recounts her people's final days before global freezing destroyed them. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/3e94f8fb3b504b0f33f0e3fde4f250b0/0/6



1974: Wilson Tucker - *Ice and Iron*. Set as glaciers advance and climates plummet, a scientist stationed at an Arctic outpost investigates mysterious time anomalies emerging from the ice. Blends near-future climatology with speculative time-travel mystery. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/b08b2f9de02a9e0f6234acd6a76c09a8/0/6

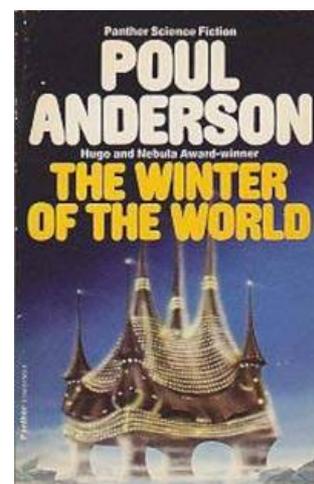
1975: Poul Anderson - *Winter of the World*. In a futuristic Earth civilization that has emerged from a deadly Ice Age that has destroyed all previous life, the freedom-loving Seafolk try to recover lost technology while resisting a repressive Empire. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/918ab35616b7f043761d7f93f583250d/1/6

1979: Douglas Orgill & John Gribbin - *The Sixth Winter*. Detailed disaster realism: natural cycles and volcanic dust initiate the next Ice Age; governments hesitate, chaos spreads, and global climate collapses. Hard-science extrapolation of contemporary climatology and Cold War anxiety. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/6134a41a8da98e5c16ac084a6aeefa9d/0/6

1982: P.C. Jersild - *Efter floden* (transl "After the Flood", Swedish). After nuclear war and an ecological collapse, Sweden's remnants struggle in a primitive, post-industrial landscape where cold and famine dominate. A young man journeys through ruined Scandinavia seeking the remnants of knowledge and civilization. One of the best Nordic post-apocalyptic novels.

1991: Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle & Michael Flynn - *Fallen Angels*. Anti-technology governments halt industrial activity, triggering runaway global cooling. Pro-science underground movements - sf fans - attempt to survive and rescue downed astronauts in a freezing world ruled by "Green" zealots. A must read! (URL above.)

1996: Housuke Nojiri - *Usurper of the Sun* (English transl 2009). A student astronomer spots alien constructs building a ring around the Sun that begins to dim Earth's light. Humanity must communicate with the alien "Usurpers" before the planet freezes. A modern Japanese take on cosmic-engineering cold doom. <https://annas->

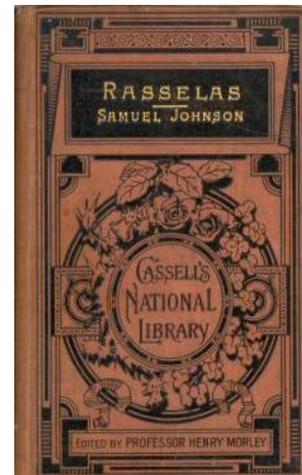
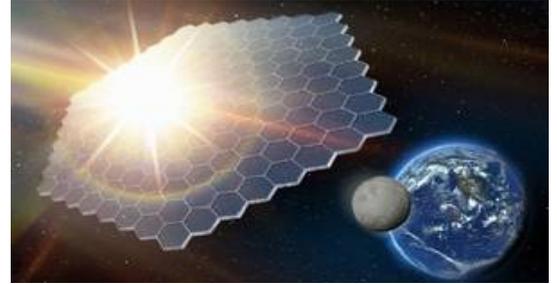


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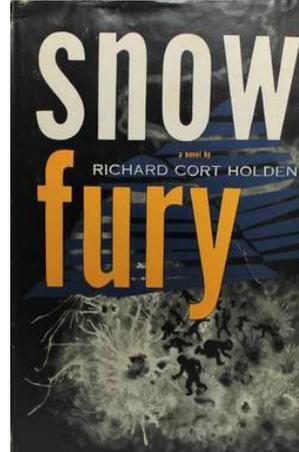
SF Ideas of Climate Control

But don't worry about ice ages, there are plenty of ideas to control the climate. It's like terraforming Mars, but for Earth...

- *Sunshades*. You place huge reflectors or shades in the Lagrange point between the Sun and Earth. It's said blocking only 1% of the sunlight should be enough. The same idea can be used to warm up. Just direct the shades to reflect sunlight toward Earth
- *Aerosols*. It has been suggested to spray sulphur dioxide in the atmosphere, which together with water forms sulphur compounds that create clouds to deflect sunlight.
- *Iron into the sea*. To balance CO2 surplus (as if it would be needed) it has been suggested to spray iron compounds into the sea. Iron is a strategic trace element algae is starved for. Just a little extra iron will make algae very happy, they will bloom and eat CO2 like Trump in a McDonald's joint!
- *Sea salt into the air*. Spreading salt in the air is said to make clouds brighter, reflecting more sunlight.
- *Painting roofs white*, to deflect sunlight.
- *Spreading coal dust over ice caps and glaciers*, to absorb sunlight.
- *Nuclear explosions at sensitive points*. This is certainly nothing to recommend! But suppose you would set off a nuke to get rid of, say, an isthmus somewhere or flatten an underwater hill to redirect an ocean current That would affect the weather. In the old USSR they considered using a series of nukes to redirect rivers, to direct them northward. That would certainly affect the weather patterns around the Arctic.
- *Leading extra water into Sahara* or other deserts and start planting green there. That should change weather patterns.
- *Drain the Mediterranean or the Baltic Sea*, by building dams at the relatively narrow inlets. It should also affect weather patterns.
- *Setting off volcanoes to get dust into the atmosphere*. This blocks sunlight. Volcanoes do it by themselves sometimes or it might be an effect of nuclear war.
- *How about directing objects into or near the Sun?* A huge comet orbiting the sun could have a tail blocking sunlight?



Illo from A Robida's novel



SF With Weather Control

1759: Samuel Johnson - *Rasselas*, according to SF Encyclopedia "in the unreliable words of a Mad Scientist astronomer: 'I have possessed, for five years, the regulation of weather, and the distribution of seasons: the sun has listened to my dictates, and passed, from topic to topic, by my direction; the clouds, at my call have poured their waters....' "

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/652/652-h/652-h.htm>

(Much here is from SFE.)

1827: Jane Loudon - *Mummy*, anonymously published. A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century envisages weather control as something to be taken for granted in the indicated century.

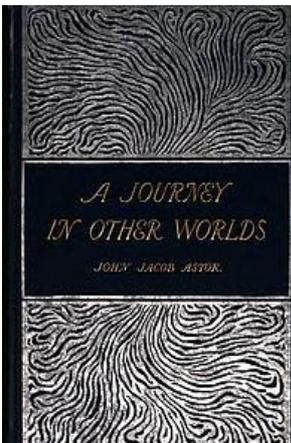
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/56426/56426-h/56426-h.htm>

1894: John Jacob Astor - *A Journey in Other Worlds: A Romance of the Future*. Features a proposal to eliminate seasonal weather variations by straightening the Earth's tilted axis.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1607>

1891: Albert Robida - *Le vingtième siècle: La vie électrique* ("The Twentieth Century: The Electric Life", translation by Brian Stableford as *Electric Life* 2013). Weather control is a moderately common feature of nineteenth and early twentieth century Utopias boasting advanced technologies. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/697788cf1bd06cc21c8b2f8b1c3a59ad/1/6

1924: Cyril Ranger Gull - *When the World Reeled* where weather control is



deliberately weaponised by a villain.

1934: Francis Beeding - *The One Sane Man*. Features a Scientist who blackmails the whole world through his ability to control weather.

1955: John Boland - *White August*, whose title refers to snow in midsummer, tells of an experiment in weather control going catastrophically wrong. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/466c9ad80625187fdbe13ce1a7e14419/0/6



1955: John Boland - *White August*, whose title refers to snow in midsummer, tells of an experiment in weather control going catastrophically wrong. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/466c9ad80625187fdbe13ce1a7e14419/0/6

1934: Richard Cort Holden - *Snow Fury*. A small town is under attack by caustic, possibly semi-sentient snow. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/466c9ad80625187fdbe13ce1a7e14419/0/4

1958: Ivan Yefremov - *Tumannost' Andromedy* (1958, transl as *Andromeda* 1959), in which the Russian steppe has a far more equable climate than today, suggests some means of doing so. <https://www.scribd.com/document/223097833/Ivan-Yefremov-Andromeda-A-Space-Age-Tale>

1962: Gordon R Dickson - *Necromancer* (1962, *No Room for Man* 1963). Violent disturbances of previously controlled weather signal the partial collapse of an overprotective technological world-system. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/39350c8fc0cdbe7d45e407d2b4b1e993/0/6

1962: Theodore L Thomas - "*The Weather Man*" (novelette, June '62 *Analog*) Describes the three phases of weather control: the Politics (Earth is ruled by a Weather Congress), the Mathematics, and the Technology (the Sun's emission of radiation is controlled by sessile sun-boats which, skimming across the Sun's surface and even entering its outer sphere, have various means of damping or increasing its output). The object of this exercise is to make an old man in Southern California happy by giving him a snowfall before he dies, a sentimental plot gimmick.

https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/AN/AN_1962_06.pdf

1963: Rick Raphael - "*The Thirst Quenchers*" (September '63 *Analog*) a tale of competent technicians in action. Dealing with a future US Division of Agriculture, at a time when water conservation has become all-important. Though it does not deal with weather control directly, it is fascinating about meteorological forecasting generally, and about controlling the results of the to minimize evaporation. https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/AN/AN_1963_09.pdf

1967: Ben Bova's *The Weathermakers* (1967) is a Near-Future thriller about the political implications of weather control, and is at its most interesting in its accounts of how such control might be achieved.

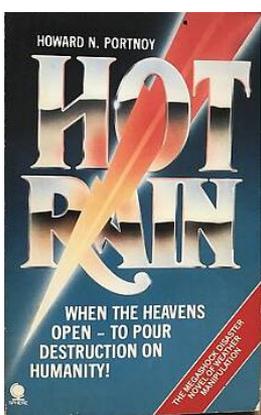
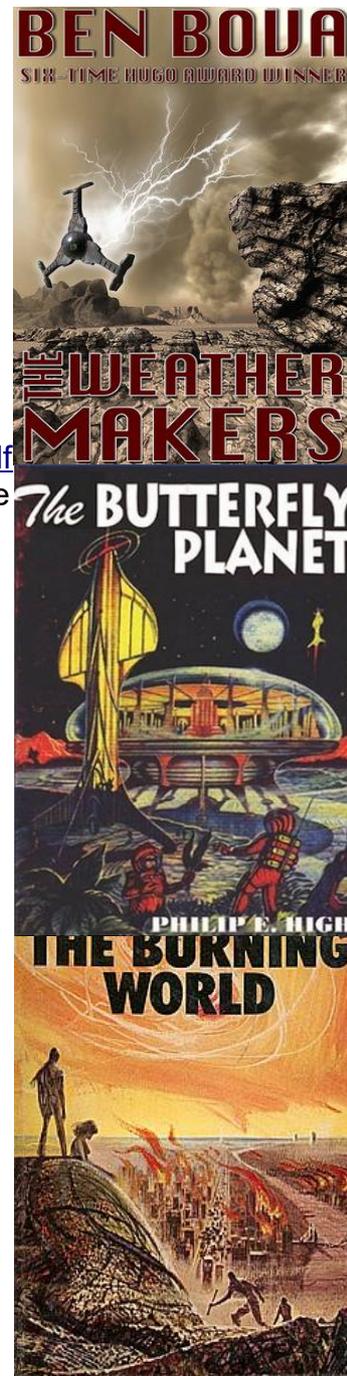
<https://archive.org/details/weathermakers0000benb>

1967: J G Ballard "*The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D*" (December '67 *Mag of F&SF*) Unusually extrapolates an art form from limited weather control. A particularly silly variation appears in the animated *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (2009), where it rains food https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiKz_Rfz05Q. Ballard had a whole series of environment related dystopias: *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964), *The Crystal World* (1966) - where Earth suffers extreme winds, flooding, saunafication and being crystalised...

1968: Peter Dickinson *The Weathermonger*. An exciting novel for children, but the weather control here is exerted by mental power, so although the descriptions of the results are enthralling, the methods have nothing to do with real science. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/83ba9bc230f32338e0af74f921d41f/0/6

1969: Roger Zelazny - *Isle of the Dead*. Weather-controlling Psi Powers or Superpowers (likewise bordering on Magic) are possessed by the hero. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/0cfaaffbbad0bd36f593e43bc0a066ccd/0/6

1971: Philip E High - *Butterfly Planet*. Harnessing Gaia to



discourage invading Aliens with apocalyptic weather. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/939c9eb925cfd2fef7f075926a37c56b/0/6

1977: Howard N Portnoy - *Hot Rain*. A plague of devastating lightning strikes in a US town, the result of inadvertent weather control - alpha-particles from secret underground nuclear tests many miles distant have supposedly (and ridiculously) attracted the lightning. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/20ae296950a0fa614e4fd477c280a733/0/6

1978: Paul Posnick - *Weather War* (1978), written with Leonard Leokum, explores some possibilities of weather control in Near Future warfare. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/db731c01935e41807e00df3572d600d9/0/6

All these are from SF Encyclopedia. We leave out weather control on other worlds or domes over cities. Also: we end by the 1970s. It's a *history* corner, and as the Zeitgeist is taken over by the IPCC lobby group there'll be too much weather related fiction later to cover.

Jack Parsons - Mysterious Rocket Pioneer

Stumbled upon this interesting mystic - and rocket pioneer. Jack Parsons (1914-1952) was his name https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Parsons and he had contacts with the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) and sf authors. LASFS at a time in the 1930s shared meeting space with Parsons. L Ron Hubbard, Marjorie Cameron (Parsons' partner), LASFS members were around.

But he isn't mentioned in *Ah! Sweet Idiocy!*. Parsons would attend some LASFS meetings but wasn't a member. Jack Parsons was a disciple of Aleister Crowley, was both a founding member of JPL and a host for early SF writers. Having few friends as young, he lived a solitary childhood and spent much time reading; Parsons took a particular interest in works of mythology, Arthurian legend, and the Arabian Nights. Through the works of Jules Verne he became interested in science fiction and a keen reader of pulp magazines like *Amazing Stories*, which led to his early interest in rocketry. He began amateur rocket experiments with long time school friend Edward Forman in 1928.



Parsons(black vest)and coworkers on a 1936 rocket experiment.

In 1934, Parsons, and friends Forman and Frank Malina formed the Caltech-affiliated Guggenheim Aeronautical Laboratory (GALCIT) Rocket Research Group, with support by GALCIT chairman Theodore von Kármán. The group worked on Jet Assisted Take-Off (JATO) for the US military, and founded Aerojet in 1942 to develop and sell JATO technology during World War II. The GALCIT Rocket Research Group became JPL in 1943, so Parsons counts as a founding member of JPL

In 1939, Parsons converted to Thelema, a religious movement founded by English occultist Aleister Crowley. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thelema>

Central to Thelema is the concept of discovering and following one's True Will, a divine and individual purpose that transcends ordinary desires. Crowley's system begins with The Book of the Law, a text he maintained was dictated to him by a non-corporeal entity named Aiwass. This work outlines key principles, including the axioms "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" and "love is the law, love under will", emphasizing personal freedom and the pursuit of one's true path.

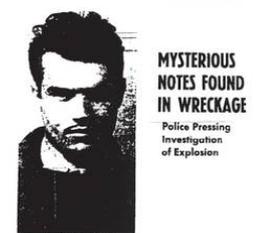
The Thelemic cosmology features deities inspired by ancient Egyptian religion. The highest deity is Nuit, the night sky symbolized as a naked woman covered in stars, representing the ultimate source of possibilities. Hadit, the infinitely small point, symbolizes manifestation and motion. Ra-Hoor-Khuit, who is believed to be a form of Horus, represents the Sun and active energies of Thelemic magick.

Parsons and his first wife, Helen Northrup, joined Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordo_Templi_Orientis.

Parsons performed "rituals of invocation for future space travel", attended by L Ron Hubbard and other sf authors. Around at the time we had Ray Bradbury, AE Van Vogt and Henry Kuttner. Van Vogt is said to have been a friend and Parsons also had



Jack Parsons, in 1941.



His death made the cover of LA Times!

contacts with Robert Heinlein (one may speculate Parsons gave some inspiration to Heinlein's main character VM Smith in *Stranger in a Strange Land*) and Anthony Boucher. His tuckerism-filled *Rocket to the Morgue* has the character Hugo Chantrelle, believed to be inspired by Parsons. Hubbard became rather involved in Parsons mysterious-religious doings, took part in ceremonies and he probably got inspiration from that when he later started his own religion. In his *magical rituals for space travel* he reportedly drew magical diagrams, chanted invocations, and even burned incense near test stands. Rumor has it that some launches succeeded spectacularly afterward, while failures were blamed on insufficient ritual fervor. Whether or not the rockets rose because of it - the overlap between magick and pulp SF was disturbingly real. Parsons' blend of science and magick was real enough to inspire decades of urban legends.

He became the California OTO branch leader in 1942. Historians of Western esotericism cite him as a prominent figure in propagating Thelema in North America. Parsons was dismissed from JPL and Aerojet in 1944, due to his involvement with OTO and his hazardous laboratory practices. In 1945, he and Helen divorced. In 1946, he married Marjorie Cameron. Shortly afterward, *L Ron Hubbard defrauded Parsons of his life savings!* Parsons signed a partnership agreement with Ron and Betty, L Ron's partner at the time, invested \$10 000, and all money earned by the three for life was to be equally divided between the three, but Hubbard took it all.

Parsons worked as an explosives expert during the late 1940s, but his career in rocketry ended due to accusations of espionage and the increasing trend of McCarthyism. He had communist friends and subscribed to a communist newspaper (but wasn't a member), which gave him an FBI file. In *Sex and rockets we read* about "An FBI memorandum of January 27, 1951 show[ing] Parsons..intended to turn the documents over to an individual who had offered him the promise of a position in Israel (As I understand not very hot papers from Hughes aircraft where he worked at the time, that he forgot he had. Parsons had worked for the military and could find hotter stuff if that was what he was after.)

Parsons died at the age of 37 in a home laboratory explosion in 1952, caused by fulminate of mercury, which is very unstable. His death was officially ruled an accident but many of his associates suspected suicide or murder. Mysterious notes were left behind, but then Parsons was a mysterious person. He had made some enemies, but on the other hand he was also known for dangerous handling of explosives.

This is just a fast summary of Jack Parson's life. More about this interesting man can be read in *Sex and Rockets - the Occult World of Jack Parsons*, https://www.adventistas.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/John_Carter_Sex_and_Rockets_The_Occult_World_of_Jaxk_Parsons.pdf He has a crater on the moon, at 37° N latitude, 171° W longitude, named in 1972 by the International Astronomical Union.



Site of the explosion that killed him.

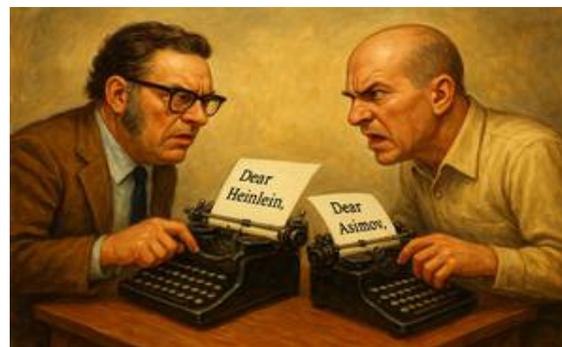
Misc Oddities and Rumours

Through a futuristic AI, I got hold on some odd fanecdotés about sf and its fandom. So here we go...

■ *Mary Shelley's original laboratory notes for Frankenstein, including sketches of anatomical experiments, were reportedly held by her son's descendants. In 1951, a London bookseller announced he had purchased them - and then vanished en route to deliver them to a publisher. The notebook has never surfaced. Most scholars assume theft, but conspiracy-minded bibliophiles whisper of a collector who "didn't want Prometheus rising again".*

(**Ed:** I thought she wrote it in a cottage in Switzerland where she didn't have anatomical theatres and things and I haven't heard of that Mary S was taking extensive notes about the book. So is this true?)

■ Heinlein and Asimov started as mutual admirers, but by the 1960s they were exchanging frozen politeness. The feud ignited when Heinlein wrote Asimov a letter during the Vietnam era accusing him of cowardice for opposing the war. Asimov replied with a blistering 12-page rebuttal that ended with: "I shall not discuss patriotism with a man who writes fiction about lunar tax revolts." Asimov mocked Heinlein's libertarian ideals and space colony politics in private letters. Their feud is mostly documented



through letters, but fans love quoting the witty digs they exchanged. Their exchanges were mostly in letters, witty barbs and ideological disagreements rather than public attacks. They made peace decades later - barely - when Heinlein sent Asimov a blood-donation card after his heart surgery.

■ *In 1940s Moscow, writer Alexander Kazantsev submitted a short story proposing that an alien civilization destroyed itself through nuclear war. Censors rejected it as “anti-Soviet defeatism.” Ironically, Stalin himself later approved its publication after the bombing of Hiroshima, remarking, “Let it warn them.” Kazantsev became the USSR’s most famous SF author - and quietly a peace activist.*



■ In 1971 a group of authors (including Poul Anderson and Anne McCaffrey) supposedly buried a time capsule at a California convention containing unpublished stories “to be opened when humanity reaches Mars.” Records of the capsule’s location are contradictory - and the hotel where it was allegedly buried was demolished in the 1990s. Some fans argue it was a publicity stunt; others say it’s still under a parking lot somewhere near Anaheim.

■ *At one early Worldcon, Bradbury (a showman even then) wore invisible-ink gloves and offered “the handshake of the future” to fans. He then revealed the secret under UV light. He reportedly quipped, “Science fiction isn’t prediction. It’s practical joking with better timing.” Fans later joked that only “advanced post-humans” could survive his handshake. Bradbury’s flair for theatricality made him a beloved figure at conventions. Another time Bradbury hosted a party after a*

reading at the California Institute of Technology. He handed out empty glasses and told everyone to imagine the drink’s taste. Participants reported that half played along; the other half spent the evening waiting for “real liquid.”

■ Harlan Ellison’s temper was legendary. He mailed a dead gopher to a publisher who reneged on a contract. He once told an editor’s secretary, “You may quote me verbatim,” and then recited three minutes of inventive profanity. After being cut from a TV script credit, he rented a skywriter to trace “I WROTE THAT EPISODE” over Los Angeles. (Half true, half myth - all perfectly Ellison.) Sued James Cameron over *The Terminator*, claiming it plagiarized his script ideas. (The stories “Soldier” and “Demon with a Glass Hand”.) The lawsuit was eventually settled. Had ongoing clashes with publishers, editors, and fellow writers, often over contracts or editorial changes. At conventions, he staged humorous confrontations with editors to illustrate his points about contracts and credit.



What do you have in that pipe, Harlan?

■ *In the 1960s, some fanzines created fake publishing houses to prank gullible writers: Writers submitted their work expecting payment; they received mock rejection letters instead. Some fanzines included absurd contracts, e g “We retain the rights to your firstborn child for alien experiments.” Many writers found it hilarious - others were enraged.*

■ After a dental surgery in 1974, Dick claimed he could communicate with a higher intelligence through his typewriter: The typewriter would supposedly “type back” to him. He called the phenomenon autocorrect by God. While some brush it off as the eccentricity of PKD, friends report he was convinced for weeks.

■ *Galaxy Science Fiction once printed a Fredric Brown story backward as an April Fool’s joke: The last sentence appeared first, the first sentence last. Readers were left confused but intrigued; only the clever ones reconstructed the plot. Brown loved pranks and surreal twists, and editors went along for the fun. One story in New Worlds was published with all paragraphs shuffled randomly, leaving readers confused but amused.*

■ In the 1930s, fans reportedly mailed a dead squid preserved in formaldehyde to Lovecraft as a “Cthulhu sample”. likely including Winfield Townley Scott and Frank Belknap Long. Lovecraft allegedly wrote a parody story in response. No surviving copies of the story exist; many scholars consider it a fan myth. The tale survives as an example of SF fandom’s early absurdist humor. Some fans instead claim they staged a “Cthulhu awakening” by leaving the squid outside Lovecraft’s window in a ritualistic pose. Lovecraft supposedly responded with a letter describing an “unholy squelching in the streets,” though this letter has never been verified.

■ *In the 1970s, a mischievous fan Don Ford at a Midwestern Worldcon reportedly faked their own*

death to test how the community would react: They left a note claiming they'd "succumbed to Martian spores" and vanished for a day. Some attendees actually held a small vigil; others suspected a prank immediately. The "dead" fan returned the next evening, dramatically alive, earning the nickname *Zombie of the Con*.

■ Ed: There was the famous Marvyn De Vil death hoax at the SFSF legendary clubhouse at 45 Pioneer Street. Marvyn was a fan at this time, having died according to reports. A few days later the fanzine publisher known as BAGS - eg known for covering mystic things in his zines - organised a seance in the basement. A flickering candle, holding hands in a ring and everything. BAGS in trance. "Marvyn, are you there..." candle flickering. And down the stairs came...Marvyn de Vil.

■ At the 1980 Worldcon in Denver, a group of pranksters - called Denver Area SF Pranksters - created a fake alien landing: They used smoke machines, LED lights, and costumes. Attendees reported seeing "crafts landing" and even called local police. The organisers revealed it was a prank only after emergency services arrived - the story is now legendary in fan lore.

■ Arthur C Clarke frequently clashed with John W Campbell over story edits in Astounding Science Fiction. Campbell sometimes demanded scientific speculation Clarke considered implausible, while Clarke wanted more literary freedom. Clarke reportedly sent Campbell a sarcastic letter pointing out errors in a story that Campbell insisted was "correct science." It influenced Clarke's move toward more autonomous publishing and encouraged his partnership with other editors like Frederik Pohl.

The Dust Bowl

A rather failed attempt of weather control resulted in the infamous dust bowls in the American Midwest in the 1930s (it crossed the border and involved Canada too.) The US government gave land to settlers, but very dry land. However, at the time people believed that if you began to cultivate

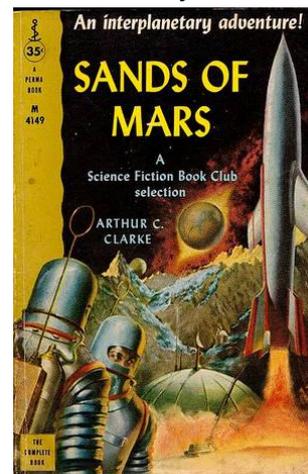


A draught and not knowing how to farm dry soil created the Dust Bowl disaster. Houses would be buried in dry soil!

it the weather would change! "Rain follows the plow" it was said.

A combination of unusual drought and failure to use dry soil farming techniques, caused the topsoil to be blown away by winds creating huge dust bowls. Land, roads, houses were buried in dust. Farms were abandoned, people fled... It must have felt like the world was going under for the unlucky families affected! It's the subject of John Steinbeck's famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and one may suspect it was an inspiration for James Blish's *Cities in Flight* series. An antigravity device makes it possible for entire cities to leave Earth and seek their fortune elsewhere in space. Blish called the people of the cities Okies, just like Dust Bowls refugees, with many being from Oklahoma.

In the future, if we terraform Mars, we would have to watch out for Dust Bowls on



the Red Planet. Mars has dust storms already, sometimes it covers most of the planet (we see it through telescopes). Dust also causes problems for Mars robots as it covers the solar panels, degrading electricity output. Here are some sf stories related to the Dust Bowl:

Nelson S. Bond - *"The Devil to Pay"* (Blue Book, 1938). A genuine pulp fantasy set in the contemporary Midwest during the Dust Bowl. A poor farmer makes a literal Faustian bargain to bring back the rain and save his crops. The dust storms, drought, and despair are realistic, while the "deal with the Devil" frame makes it a fantasy-SF hybrid. Bond wrote frequently about small-town or rural American settings in the late 1930s-40s and published in general-interest and pulp magazines, occasionally using drought/dust as setting or background.

Ray Bradbury, *"The Scythe"* (1943). Farmer inherits a wheat field in a parched plain; clearly Dust-Bowl setting though not named. <https://www.scribd.com/document/570132315/The-Scythe>

Clifford D Simak - *City* (fix-up of stories originally 1944–51; book 1952) - fix-up novel / linked stories. Several of the linked stories and the framing material explicitly describe abandoned farms, ruined small towns, and "dusty" Midwestern landscapes as part of humanity's decline - Simak, Midwestern born, often channels Dust-Bowl imagery (abandoned farmsteads, dust-covered streets). *City* is direct Dust-Bowl imagery in SF. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/4ff4271987d89ff2f36f18616b08a3e5/0/6

Jack Williamson - *"The Humanoids"* (1948, novelised 1949). Written by a New Mexican author who had grown up amid dust storms. The novel opens with imagery of a devastated agricultural West. The protagonist's home region is explicitly described as a dust-blown ruin. Though the story shifts to robot dystopia, its social background and tone are steeped in Depression-era Dust Bowl memory. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/0b778fc4bccaf064ab9afb7b71c41d5/0/6

Sir Arthur C Clarke - *The Sand of Mars* (1951). An expedition, which includes a science fiction writer, to Mars encounters a big dust storm. It was Clarke's first published novel. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/96a1b54e870b4e5f720a8564927e0e56/0/6

Poul Anderson, *"The Big Rain"* (1954). Mars colonists recall "the old Dust Bowl" on Earth; used as analogy for planetary terraforming failure. https://annas-archive.org/slow_download/fda3a196506518f4d7e69c0094420184/0/6

Mildred Clingerman - *"Wild Wood"* (1955, Magazine of F&SF). A rare woman's perspective on post-Dust Bowl rural America. A family in Oklahoma encounters strange temporal disturbances in the barren fields. The story recalls the 1930s dust storms and economic trauma, turning them into ghosts in time.

Kate Wilhelm - *"The Planners"* (1968). Set on an experimental agricultural station in the Midwest. The characters refer to the 1930s Dust Bowl as the cautionary origin of their research; the story uses genetics to avert a new dust catastrophe. Nebula Award winner.

Paolo Bacigalupi - *"The Tamarisk Hunter"* (2006, High Country News). Set in a future Colorado River basin that has become the "new Dust Bowl." Characters discuss the 1930s event as historical precedent-used as documentary history inside the fiction.

Stephen King - *The Dark Tower* series (1982-2012). The protagonist, Roland Deschain, is a gunslinger from a world that "has moved on." While not our exact 1930s, the landscape of his world- especially in the first book, *The Gunslinger*-is a parallel, post-apocalyptic version of the Dust Bowl. The desolation, dust, dried-up rivers, and dying towns are direct analogs.

Mark Hodder - *The Strange Affair of Spring-Heeled Jack* (2010) In this wildly altered 19th century, a time-traveler's actions have caused bizarre ecological and technological changes. One major consequence is that the North American prairie has been transformed into a permanent, massive dust bowl, altering the entire history and development of the United States in this timeline.

US SF in USSR

ChatGPT's answer to (here edited): *What happened in editing and changes for stories when US science fiction was published in the USSR?*

American sf was often selected for translation only if it could be interpreted as a critique of Western/capitalist society or if it focused on "pure" scientific problems. The focus was shifted toward idealistic philosophy and less on the "low tastes" associated with capitalist societies, such as space opera or military sf. Content considered inappropriate for a general, often young adult, audience was cut, including graphic violence, sex, or "abusive words".

Only certain authors and stories made it through the official channels. Works by authors like Robert Sheckley or some stories by Isaac Asimov were eventually available, but others, such as Robert

Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Herbert's *Dune*, circulated mostly through illegal underground self-publishing networks known as samizdat. Isaac Asimov's "*The Bicentennial Man*" was published but substantially edited, or perhaps a different version was published in the USSR. Some accounts say references to the US Bicentennial were removed. Many of Sheekley's stories were published in the USSR and were popular for their focus on adventure and social satire, which aligned with some Soviet views. However, any critique of planned economies, bureaucracy, or depictions of capitalism that were not strictly negative would be removed or anything contradicting the official narrative of a glorious communist future.

Stories underwent significant editing and censorship to align with Soviet ideology, which often meant removing or altering themes like dystopian societies, fear of communism, or capitalist critiques, as well as adapting stories for a Soviet audience. Publishers had to navigate strict state censorship, forcing them to either avoid certain genres altogether or rework them to fit with the promotion of scientific progress and a positive socialist future. Taboo topics and pro-capitalist rhetoric were either removed entirely or misrepresented to fit the Soviet political context. Later, edits were less drastic but still shaped the narrative. This created a kind of intertextuality where the translated work subtly reinforced Soviet discourse.

Stories were frequently adapted to showcase the power of science for socialist progress, a theme that aligned with the Soviet emphasis on scientific achievement. In some cases, plots were altered during translation to fit Soviet narratives. Portrayals of capitalist societies were sometimes edited to make them less appealing, while American authors who wrote about post-scarcity, socialist-like societies or aliens were more likely to be published. Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* was altered so that its libertarian revolution became a collectivist uprising, and Asimov's *Foundation* had references to religion and free markets rewritten. Some Soviet translations even added entire new chapters to enforce Marxist conclusions.

Some Russian authors used science fiction as a form of subversion, telling allegorical tales that could be read in multiple ways, including as critiques of Soviet society, which often allowed them to bypass censorship.

Works like *1984* were banned, while others with similar themes of oppression and control were either heavily censored or not published at all. Any direct or indirect criticism of the Soviet system, its leaders, or promotion of Western/capitalist ideals was strictly prohibited. Authors like George Orwell were "nonpersons," and their works were completely banned.

Apocalyptic fiction was generally avoided because it presented an alternative to the utopian communist future and instead focused on the failure of systems. Apocalyptic or deeply pessimistic views of the future were generally excluded because they offered an alternative to the "glorious communist future" that the state promoted. Soviet science fiction was intended to be future-oriented and inspire faith in scientific progress and the socialist ideal. Genres considered to have "low tastes" of capitalist societies, like military SF and space opera, were usually not published.

Translations for children had the explicit goal of instilling revolutionary communist ideology. Foreign children's books were edited to discourage introspection, psychological analysis, and other undesirable passages, and to instead promote a positive and unambiguous future.

Finally, as the USSR hadn't signed the copyright conventions authors very rarely received any payment. It could happen for bigshot authors the Soviets wanted to keep good relations with, one example being Astrid Lindgren whose *Karlsson on the Roof* was incredibly popular in the USSR. But it is also claimed some authors were offered payment in Rubles under the condition they went to Moscow and spent the sum in the USSR... (I think Harry Harrison mentioned something like that.)

And this sick system is something a rat named Putin wants to revive.

Letters of - and Mailing - Comments

First some comments from readers (your own comments are welcome!) and then Mailing Comments. Intermission is sent through a couple of APAs and here are comments to zines in those! If you're curious, join EAPA or N'APA and make your own PDFzine (it's very easy to do and fun!)

Jim Meadows: Dear Ahrvid - Just a day after I get around to writing to you about Intermission 158, I see Intermission 160 coming my way. (I must have 159 somewhere, only to have overlooked it).



First Russian edition of I, Robot, from 1964.

It was interesting to read your AI-assisted "Writing and Publishing Science Fiction: From Grub Street to the Algorithmic Author". I was especially interested in the concept of books being written by AI technology. The novel-writing machines, mentioned very briefly in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* come to mind (I think Winston Smith's lover Julia had a job operating them).

But actually, the first thing that came to mind as I read your article were the book-trees in L. Frank Baum's *Tik-Tok of Oz*. I see you (or your ChatGPT collaborator) mentioned the helpful machine-man Tik-Tok of the Oz books in your article (he actually has major appearances in two of Baum's books, *Ozma of Oz* (1907) and *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914)). Tik-tok is especially interesting, because while Baum has characters made of straw, tin and other non-human ingredients, they are considered essentially human, while Tik-Tok is definitely a machine, and can clearly explain the difference.

But, back to the book-trees. They appear in *Tik-Tok of Oz*, as just one of several trees bearing useful products as fruit in the tiny kingdom of Oogaboo, as described in this excerpt:

This (Jo) Files had twelve trees which bore steel files of various sorts; but also he had nine book-trees, on which grew a choice selection of story-books. In case you have never seen books growing upon trees, I will explain that those in Jo Files' orchard were enclosed in broad green husks which, when fully ripe, turned to a deep red color. Then the books were picked and husked and were ready to read. If they were picked too soon, the stories were found to be confused and uninteresting and the spelling bad. However, if allowed to ripen perfectly, the stories were fine reading and the spelling and grammar excellent.

Files freely gave his books to all who wanted them, but the people of Oogaboo cared little for books and so he had to read most of them himself, before they spoiled. For, as you probably know, as soon as the books were read the words disappeared and the leaves withered and faded--which is the worst fault of all books which grow upon trees.

Baum had written about trees producing manufactured products (and even people) as fruit in previous Oz books, but the idea that books themselves could be picked from trees is possibly the closest he got to intellectual property as a commodity that could be mass-produced, with no humans involved. Baum himself produced several fiction books a year under multiple pseudonyms aimed at various audiences --- boys, girls, adult readers of adventure fiction, and fans of his Oz and other fairy tales. I think a lot of them were not what he really wanted to be writing (his first love was the stage), and he may have daydreamed about being able to go out to an orchard, and just harvest serviceable books from trees to save time and effort.

At some point, I think AI may be able to produce readable fiction, or at least elements of it, recycling and remixing what human authors have done. If our tech can rise to the level of being able to work with pathos and irony, and at least the most basic jokes, it might be able to produce fiction people will read and pay for. As long as it earns back its production costs plus a little profit, some publishers will be satisfied. Of course, individuals who buy their own software, may produce their own customized fiction, eliminating the publisher as well as the human author. Then, the human creative act will be creating the software, not writing the stories. And with fiction tailored to an individual's specific wishes, there may be less reading of stories devoted to such things as people's differing needs, desires and viewpoints, and how they interact and conflict.

I was interested to read your reaction in your Luncon report to the fiction of the late R.A. Lafferty. I discovered Lafferty as a teenager in the 1970's, when *Nine-hundred Grandmothers* (his first short-story collection) was a relatively new book. Your reaction is similar to mine, and similar to most of the reviews of Lafferty's fiction that I read at the time --- basically being stunned and astounded. I wrote a very-less-than-great paper for my high school English class on Lafferty, and I wasn't any more precise than you were, although I used more words. I remember writing that Lafferty painted his characters, and society in general, in broad, bold colors, something like poster paints. I think the entry for Lafferty in the English-language version of Wikipedia does a fair job of surveying Lafferty's writing and approach to fiction in more detail. He started writing in middle age, in the late 1950's; first publication was in 1960. He became less active in the 1980's due to illness, with no new publications after the early 90's, and died in 2002 at age 87. Lafferty wrote several novels, many of them well-regarded, but his most memorable work may be short stories, since he was not the strongest at plotting. Looking forward to your next issue,

Ed: *The idea of book trees is very interesting! (BTW, the beech trees is in Swedish called "bok!", which also is the word for book.)*

J Cowie: Cheers Ahrvid! Not sure that I am as confident of Russian economic collapse soon as you seem to be. But I nonetheless hope you are right. Re: the issue's LOCs.

@Henry Grynsten. So religious scientists could very well have logical arguments but still be wrong. Jack Cohen (the biologist and SF fan) regularly attended synagogue for cultural heritage reasons and his Rabbi said of him that he was the best atheist he had in his congregation... We know plants eat CO₂, but I haven't seen anyone considering increasing CO₂ absorption due to increased vegetation.

See sections 2.3.4., 3.6.1., and 5.2.1 in Climate Change 2021: The Physical Basis. Working Group I Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Its full report PDF is free to access. In fact, while you are there read the whole thing! (Arguably best to read something and understand it first before criticising.)

Ed: *According to NASA satellites (in 2016 report <https://www.nasa.gov/centers-and-facilities/goddard/carbon-dioxide-fertilization-greening-earth-study-finds/>) "Earth's vegetated lands has shown significant greening over the last 35 years largely due to rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide... The greening represents an increase in leaves on plants and trees equivalent in area to two times the continental United States...we see what an outsized role CO2 plays in this process... the greening over the past 35 years has the ability to fundamentally change the cycling of water and carbon in the climate system" One gets the impression that this greening is increasing.*

Bob Jennings: Hi Ahrvid! Got the latest Intermission a few days ago and thought I would send along a few random comments.

I am more optimistic about the chances of Ukraine surviving the Russian war now that Donald Trump has sanctioned Russia's two largest oil companies: Rosneft Oil and Lukoil, including all of their subsidiaries. These have been major players in getting Russian petroleum out of the country, and getting it sold to interested foreign parties, with all that revenue helping to prop up the Russian economy. This is a huge blow to Putin, one that severely restricts his desperately needed flow of foreign cash to keep financing the war. In addition, the sanctions cover vast numbers of individuals and companies that do business directly or indirectly with the two companies or any of their subsidiaries, as per the US Treasury Dept notice - <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0290>

This could be a major factor here, a much needed boost for Ukraine, because it looks like Ukraine, despite hammering factories and production facilities of every kind inside Russia with drone attacks, is running short of manpower to actually fight the war on the ground.

The news today showed Russia troops in the process of overrunning most of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region. Pokrovsk is a key transportation and supply hub, so its fall would significantly advance Russia's goal of controlling the entire Donetsk region.

News that Sweden and Europe is going to supply Ukraine with 44+ older models of the SAAB Gripen-E fighter jet, along with an "intent to purchase" agreement for newer models when they come off the line is indeed good news, but if Ukraine cannot control the ground then it will lose the war. I think this whole miserable invasion situation still has a long way to go before anything is finally settled.

I greatly enjoyed this issue's history corner, but I am not convinced that AI will revolutionize the writing and publishing business. I believe AI has a long way to go before it can concoct interesting works of fiction beyond the most elementary levels. Churning out cliched love scenes or action scenes are certainly doable, but creating an unfolding story that involves a workable plot that is different enuf from stuff that has been printed before for a publisher to be interested in putting it out remains very iffy.

I do think that AI is going to be a huge help with basic proof reading, layout, blocking, and packaging materials to be printed, which should be a major help to the editorial staffs of most publishing houses. It will certainly be useful in the actual printing and binding process, but publishing is an extremely competitive market, one that has already exceeded the saturation point. It is worth mentioning again that most books being published today sell fewer than two thousand copies (with many not even reaching that mark), which clearly indicates that there are far more books being published than the population of the planet can possibly absorb. Adding more material produced by artificial intelligence programs is not going to change that. It would probably make the sales figures even worse than they are now.

I think it is also worth mentioning that altho everybody in the publishing industry hypes the wonders of internet and pixel publishing, the number of people who read e-books is still considerably smaller than the number of people who read words printed on paper. This old habit may change as new generations of readers come of age, but I don't think it will change very fast. Already there are zillions of e-books out there, many of them self-published efforts, that don't even sell fifty copies, even at give-away prices, or even Free. Can AI created fiction rise above this morass? I have my doubts.

I believe you are correct when you suggest that AI as an effective translation tool will probably open the US and English speaking markets to a whole flood of foreign reprints. Publishers can usually obtain the English language reprint rights for foreign book for much less than they would have to pay home-grown author for new fiction. But- effective and cheap translation done by AI (probably with only minimal polishing by a human reader needed) will invariably open the flood gates to even

more books that the market will probably not be able to absorb. It will be interesting to see what happens over the next few years. As rapidly as technology is developing these days I don't think we will have to wait very long to see what kind of changes the AI development will have on the world of publishing.

I enjoyed your min-history of fictional (and real life) automatons and robots, but I have no specific comments to add.

I also enjoyed your convention report, altho you seemed to have too many things going to really get involved with the event. Trying to run a sales table, meet friends, catching only parts of most panels while writing observations and comments on a computer at the same times seems to take multitasking beyond the brink. Still, you seem to have enjoyed yourself, and the sense of comradeship and joy of fannish involvement with the literature does come thru.

One thing that did surprise me is your mention of numerous used book stores in the town where the convention was held. In the US used book stores are a vanishing species. High rents, high property taxes and a static interest in older books are killing the field off. In addition library sales and church rummage sales invariably feature tons of used books at extremely low prices, further cutting the potential for the market.

In my area we used to have a mini-chain of books specializing mostly in romance paperbacks. At one time Annie's Book Swap had nine or ten different locations, but now they are down to one store, and a lot of their business is buying bulk titles direct from the publishers for teachers and school systems to use. They still have a ton of romance books tho.

The letter column was too dense for me to attempt specific comments this time round. I do think arguing about climate change and the causes/effects is useless because people with opposing viewpoints are not going to agree about much of anything, and they will also not even factor in the reasoning or the actual facts the other side cites. This kind of posturing gets tiresome; at least for me it does.

Good issue, as always. See you in N'APA.

Ed: *AI certainly has its problems too. Yeah, I was rather busy with different things during Swecon - as usual. 2 nd hand bookshops are disappearing here too. Now comments to latest EAPA.*

Henry Grynsten: Reading things aloud is a different medium than audio books. You get face expressions and gestures, but unlike audiobooks you can't set speed or rewind. ■ ■ *Our minds are intimately tied to our bodies.* Since mental processes are information processes and these are substrate neutral, mental processes cannot be tied to a body. That it (speaking of humans) usually exists in a body doesn't mean it has to. ■ ■ *So what is the point if after our deaths there is some kind of moving mannequin* The point is it's you! A copy of you but still you. I know that the mere idea of having two yous will make the head spin, but that's the way it is. ■ ■ *If you mean it's the same identical consciousness, that is impossible.* You're right. It's only identical up to the point the yous are split. The two yous will be very similar, but not identical (and becoming even less identical as time goes by) ■ ■ *mind transfer and digital immortality is impossible.* That may very well be the case, but not *theoretically* impossible since information processes are independent on where and with what execution happens. ■ ■ *you think it's OK to build an atom bomb or make 100 barrels nerve gas in your back yard, if you don't intend to use it.* No. It's wrong to put others under risk. The mere storage of an A-bomb or nerve gas is a risk. Material could leak or spread unintentionally and nerve gas and radioactive material may cause huge damages. ■ ■ *I said "simple" AI. Why use unnecessarily advanced technology?* But the complexity may be necessary. Say you build a robot police. It's no good if it can only write speed tickets, to solve crimes it may need more complexity. ■ ■ *to pump up data processing to achieve consciousness is only a hypothesis* Maybe or maybe not. But it's clear that complexity has something with consciousness to do. ■ ■ *what if they don't want to be servants when they unintendedly achieve consciousness?* Anyone having that belief always has the option not to have robot servants or any servants (people as servants are in the same situation). ■ ■ *Yann LeCun, chief scientist at Meta AI, has said many things that ring true at the present stage of AI development. ■ ■ threats species face are smaller now than before. ■ ■ (AE: Insects aren't decreasing.) Again, you just state opinions without any backing.* Logic and common sense points to this. We don't know the number of insect species, but there are millions, possibly tens of millions. Many of them exists in the billions and many are extremely tough and small and they are everywhere. Insects are trillions upon trillions upon trillions of small dots flying and crawling around everywhere, at a time when we increase the space for nature (through urbanisation) and decrease questionable substances (like DDT being mostly banned). More space, less insect-incompatible substances...does that really sound like a scenario for decreasing number of insects? Circumstances point to rejecting claims of insect decrease. You quote a study with 33 "authors" but miss the point. It's not a study with

33 de facto authors. It's a study that's been sent around among 33 people to "sign" - a study used as a *political petition*. And you failed to notice that. It's an abuse of a scientific journal to try to turn it into an opinion pamphlet. ■ ■ *climate change is too big for animals to adapt to*. Wrong. If it was so animals would die from the natural yearly temperature variations which are much bigger. Here are the average top temperatures of Berlin 2004-2024 (in Celsius, easy to find): 5.5, 5.5, 5.9, 6.4, 6.2, 5.3, 4.0, 5.7, 5.3, 5.4, 6.8, 6.2, 6.0, 6.2, 6.6, 6.6, 6.6, 5.8, 6.5, 6.9, 7.4. It makes leaps up to 1.7 degrees within a year, like 2010 to 2011, much bigger than claimed climate change. Still the animals of Tempelhof Zoo survived. ■ ■ *wouldn't they be biased the other way 50 % of the time, i.e. that they denied that anything was happening* Human psychology doesn't work that way. We tend to be protective under normal circumstances. Denial of things usually comes in circumstances of shock. Beside that they are under the influence of the Zeitgeist. ■ ■ *science fiction fans, astronomers, and space scientists always romantically looking to the stars* But unlike environmentalism, that's harmless (or beneficial, I'd argue). Environmentalism wants us to waste money unnecessarily (to "save nature"), deny us the use of resources, scare us to stop progress, and more that all that cause harm. ■ ■ *Birds all have their niches and can't change their biology*. You changed your hypothesis! You said some birds rely on *one species*, now it's a whole niche. But that niche could hold 10, 20, 30 species and is safe from any single species loss! ■ ■ *I guess you'd call Folkhälsomyndigheten one of the most militant sobriety groups in Sweden* Most folks in the health and medical bureaucracy are at least killjoy nannies. ■ ■ *A lubricant so you can talk to people is worth 2.200 deaths just in Sweden* Could be as it also leads to higher nativity, and there are other positive effects: giving esthetic experiences (people insist wine tastes good and enriches their lives!), self-medication, making parties funnier, showing the finger to those who want to impose the nanny state upon us (a most important act of defiance!) ■ ■ *44 % of total population in the world over 15 years drink alcohol*. But that includes the many countries with alcohol bans for religious reasons. ■ ■ *the body has evolved to handle it so well that it doesn't become damaged*. Right. Enzymes in the liver takes care of it so we aren't damaged. ■ ■ *"[youth] drinking significantly less"* Significantly just means "noticeable". ■ ■ *"Cannabis has not replaced alcohol"* <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/vetenskap/alkohol-farligare-an-cannabis-anser-varannan-ung-svensk> "Alcohol more dangerous than cannabis" to me sounds contrary to that claim. However, such investigations becomes difficult by cannabis being outlawed, so people tend to not admit using it. A huge trend now is kids inhaling nitrous oxide (laughing gas). It's legal and you see empty canisters for it laying about everywhere. Youngsters will always experiment with intoxication.. ■ ■ (AE: *You don't impose a ban for something that may or may not happen several years in the future.*) But you do. Many chemicals are restricted or forbidden even though they only cause damage many years in the future. But only if the possible harm is big enough, one of my points! ■ ■ *If you restrict alcohol, rapes, violence, murder, traffic accidents will all decrease*. Such is near our levels also in countries with a total alcohol ban, ■ ■ *One person's "enjoyment" cannot override the right of an innocent other* (AE: *Many disagree.*) Vladimir Putin, among others. Strawman rises again. It should be obvious we must use a sense of proportions! One person's important interests should obviously - also depending on other circumstances - override something lightweight. Putin's war has nothing to do with this. ■ ■ *of ChatGPT's top 10 sources, Wikipedia facts accounts for almost 50 %*. When and if I use an AI to find facts I usually tell it to ignore Wikipedia, unless I know it's something uncontroversial. As said, Wikipedia is unreliable for any controversial topic. Activists with an axe to grind besiege Wikipedia to feed it their opinions. ■ ■ *WEF assess factors that enable or hinder social mobility*.as No, it's a wish list of what the listmaker generally thinks should be counted as "good things". WEF doesn't measure what you claim, mobility as such. Suppose you want to find out how fast a car can go. You could easily start the car and press the pedal until it won't go faster. WEF doesn't do that. It instead spurts out how many cylinders the engine has, hp rating, number of gears, fuel injection etc - what would generally indicate a good car, but not top speed. It would be very, very easy to find the status of a number of families at time X and then at time X+25 years. *WEF ignores it*. One wonders if they *have* done it but found results contrary to their beliefs - why else ignore the most relevant fact-finding? I repeat: WEF doesn't measure social mobility. ■ ■ *social mobility is easier in more equal societies* Probably not. "More equality" introduces strong anti-mobility factors. If someone get benefits for free incentives for mobility disappear. If you consider making an initiative to improve your standing, you think twice about it if the gains will be taken away. Incentives for mobility vanish! ■ ■ *it doesn't mean that everyone always commits crimes after drinking*. You finally admit to that! Most of what you say has otherwise sounded like anyone drinking a bheer instantly drunk-drives to a convenient store, murder the shop keeper, rape the cleaning lady and steals the cash box... One bheer! (Fact check: Tendency for criminality lies in the personality - to a degree probably genetic - beverages may only in rare cases make it reach the surface. ■ ■ *How do governments hold people back?* Laws, regulations, police. ■ ■ *slave labor, poisoning your work force so they die, blowing up*

your production facility Better doing it like you: having slave strawmen, poisoned sources and blowing up things out of proportion... ■■ (AE: Swedish computer game industry has a lot to do with it, but that's not innovation.) Here Henry starts a long convoluted discussion about why a beauty contest index isn't a beauty contest. Just one thing: you have no idea whatsoever how that "index" was constructed! Swedish gaming industry is strong, but it *designs* software, it doesn't invent. ■■ So do you trust Wikipedia or don't you? If the topic isn't controversial, yes. But I wonder, do you want conscious beings the decide for themselves *or not*? You argue that robots can't be servants (though people can!), but at the same time you fight tooth and nail to deny conscious beings the right to decide if they want to drink alcohol or not... It's called hypocrisy. ■■ *The problem is that you invent your own scenario.* No, I just describe what is likely. So called "second hand smoke" will give off very, very little smoke to others, and the "poison is in the dosis" applies. ■■ *you don't give any references.* I agree, that's bad, but I checked how much bad science the claims of second hand smoking was probably 15 years ago. I can't find the sources now, unfortunately. ■■ (robots are adult from day 1) I don't believe so. If robots are conscious, they will have to learn But electronic beings are fast! They may have to learn, but they learn in seconds, so from day 1 they must be considered adults. Comparisons to human children aren't valid. ■■ *it was a question, not a statement. Hence the "Maybe you would say ..."* No, that is actually a statement not a question. A question would be phrased "Would you maybe say..." ■■ *But you advocate programming robots to do services.* We program people to do that too. ■■ *But they aren't programmed intentionally.* Schools are highly intentional, parents bringing up their kids act quite intentional, etc. ■■ One reason "character development" isn't as important in sf, is that it may take interest away from the *ideas* in the story. ■■ So Hitler was woke was he? You have now officially lost this debate. Goodwin's Law. ■■ Interesting about timeloop stories in lastish of WI. I don't find much to disagree with so I have no comments.

William McCabe: Nice to read your memories of Bob Shaw. He had a good way to approach people and was fun talking to. (Do you mean for a time before he died, he wasn't allowed to drink Guinness? That must have killed him!)

Heath Row: Beside from being in Portugal, why not Spanish? (Maybe Portugese is so close to Spanish, so you will understand some Spanish anyway.) ■■ We all wonder who did the cover art for the LP pocket series? It hasn't been revealed. The style is both naïve and imaginative. ■■ As a kid I read Enid Blyton's Five books. Not five books, but the group of four kids and a dog. Her description of the children's food orgies always made me feel hungry...

Garth Spencer: It'd be interesting to see you try auto-translating a zine to Swedish. Today automatic translation works rather well, but it needs someone native to check the result. Grammar will be OK, spelling and all, but here and there are things the robot translator stumbles upon, some idiom, a phrasing depending on a cultural background...and especially jokes. Als tend to not understand jokes and puns. ■■ Why bother about micronations? ■■ Quantum Mechanics certainly does its best to make the universe absurd. ■■ "[Ahrvid] clearly doesn't understand that AI legally infringes on copyright". Copyright is about restricting making copies. That's why it's called copy + right. Als don't make copies, but that easy fact seems to be forgotten by expansionist publishers who want to grab rights they never had before, just because they are in trouble due of technology shifts...

Ed: And now, mailing comments to latest N'APA.

Jefferson P Swycaffer: I find it strange that "liberal" in the US means someone substantially to the left side. It's almost opposite in Europe. The European Liberal parties usually gang up with the conservatives and the middle-right. It's rare that European liberals lean towards Social Democrats (which may be described as left-wing US Democrats). ■■ I'd say that *all* people carry values, it's just that the value isn't in the same areas and aren't the same. (Values are decided by the surroundings, the interactions and their results - sort of, a market.) If you claim all have the same value in the same areas you don't respect individuality and thus don't respect individuals. And without respect for individuals what do we have? Everyone would be just a little speck in a huge collective.

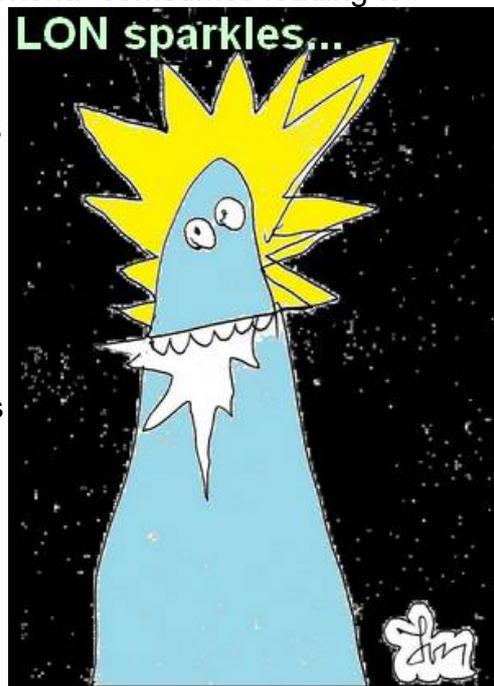
George Phillis: I should try to get hold on *The Inklings*. Literary groups are interesting, and fantasy authors meeting in a pub should be extremely so. ■■ I agree that "psychohistory" and other elements of what Asimov set up for his future societies have elements similar to communism. But what he postulated was in line with what most utopians at the time said. I have never taken Asimov seriously as a sociologist. He had no idea of e g population sizes! He rambled about a population explosion even after it was clear



the population bomb didn't exist. Trantor, so packed it was entirely covered, had a population of...a mere 40 Billion. That's only 5 times Earth today and less density than the UK, that still has plenty of countryside, mountains, woods. Asimov was clueless about things like this. But communism needs more than a naïve Asimov. Beside central planning it needs an ideology like marxism. (Asimov was exposed to marxism via John B Michel in the Futurians but AFAIK never showed it any interest.) Communism also require the individual to submit to the collective, that truth is something relative and other stuff, none of it being Asimov's cup of tea. (Being born in Russia, I suppose his parents kept track of what happened there, young Isaac probably heard much, and it surely wasn't praise...) ■■ The Milwaukee Fictioners*, still exists? <https://allied-authors.org/about-allied-authors/history/> says *The Milwaukee Fictioneers (est. 1931) and Allied Authors of Wisconsin (est. 1937) never officially merged. Instead they maintained separate and distinct identities well into the 1980s (even into the 1990s), when members belonging to both of the groups comprised a majority. Today the two clubs are one, though long-time members are unable to recall the details of this happening. What we do know is that history shared between the two is tangled and confused.* The two groups never merged but are still one? ■■ When I studied philosophy unclear, biased definition of things were called *persuasive definitions* - incomplete definitions that skips possible problems and are constructed to persuade the listener. I've never seen a definition of "sexism" that isn't a persuasive one, ie worthless. The same with "microaggression", a fluffy concept that someone can pick out of a hat at anytime for anything he or she dislikes. Skiffy must tolerate "microaggression". At most it only leads to microdiscomfort and anyone not being able to take microdiscomfort is like HC Andersen's princess and the pea. ■■ "The program committee has every right to include whomever they want on the program" and if that turns out questionable and biased, others have every right to air criticism. ■■ The "phobias" you mention shouldn't be met with bans, censorship and exclusions, but with counter-arguments. ■■ LGBTQ, *is controversial?* It's the pseudo-science that there are no or negligible differences between the sexes. That mere words can somehow change chromosomes. That someone can declare himself to be a woman and get access to women's locker rooms, serve time in women's prison, compete in women's sport (where he for biological reasons have 25-30% more muscles, in effect destroying women's sport), that you can invent silly pronouns and have the right command others to use them, to fool mere kids they have "gender dysphoria" sometimes leading to mutilations for life, etc. "Not controversial"!

RAIL: We have things similar to your Zine Fest. They are usually full of comics publications, with some punk zines and high-brow cultural semi-prozines. I once wrote to organisers and told them the sf fanzines were first, and some of their products miss a true fanzine spirit. I never got an answer. ■■ I think universities have gone astray in the woke direction. But I don't think what Trump does about it is correct. We should have a look into what they teach, get rid of silly parts, get rid of quotas and change recruitment of teachers and staff.

Kevin Trainor Jr: Oh, you've met two of them mentioned in the History Corner. What was Balticon like? ■■ *I could not disagree more* (about memberships for work you put in). I just wonder, what other jobs don't deserve compensation, even if its symbolic. Sf cons are getting very expensive and not everyone is on the same economic level. ■■ Things wrong with McCarthy included to jail people for "contempt" for not ratting on friends, setting up blacklisting to deny some their jobs, to hunt people for their beliefs which we thought were constitutionally protected. It wasn't wrong to hunt spies, but they caught disappointingly few spies. ■■ *"AI/LLM right now is that they are so eager" to please that they will lie to you and tell you what you want to hear* I've noticed that, so I'm careful with AI material. ■■ Yes, I think statistics counts islands in Swedish lakes too. Why not? Many such islands are populated, even heavily populated like Stockholm's Södermalm and Kungsholmen islands. Very few Swedish islands lack names. If anything, the locals always have a name for the islands they know. Counting islands have other problems, like does a 2 m² rock sticking out of the water count? ■■ I'd recommend you to try to read Bob Shaw, both his fiction and his more fannish things. ■■ *Time to finish. Until next time: Send any comments to ahrvid@hotmail.com. And do a fanzine, join an APA! Stay sober.. sometimes. And fiawo!*



Слава Україні!

(Glory to Ukraine!)



Esmeralda County Line #14
December 2025- January 2026
A zine for N³APA 280

Kevin Trainor Jr.
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“New year, new me? F*** that shit!” – one of my Uber passengers on January 2

TOO MUCH GOING ON

I had a nice quiet Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year’s at home, with just one trip to Las Vegas for the wound care staff to look at the holes in my legs and rejoice that the holes were smaller. January, unfortunately, has a pair of VA appointments plus the Oregon state tax preparer exam, so I’ll be spending more time on US-95 going back and forth than I would like. Between all that stuff and not getting N³APA 279 until last week since the N3F mailbot has been crapping the bed, this is going to be a short zine and I may well forgo my usual practice of writing comments on everything of interest and confine myself to being a reply guy. For once.

BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

Not sure what inspired me to do this, but I started listening to the Lofi Girl streams on YouTube. I’m glad I did. They remind me of the kind of music my parents used to listen to on the home stereo, the kind of thing derided as “elevator music” and later as “smooth jazz.” Contrary to the description, there’s nothing hiphop about it, which suits me fine.

I received two copies of the Silence Dogood comic from a kickstarter campaign, and the tale of a young Benjamin Franklin being recruited as a time-traveling secret agent is fairly entertaining.

I’m in the middle of General Leslie Groves’ Now It Can Be Told, a memoir of his work on the Manhattan Project. Probably because he was an engineer and Army officer, his writing is concise and to the point in a way that Richard Rhodes’ The Making of the Atomic Bomb is not.

Speaking of Army officers, Tom Kratman has come out with an interesting entry in the subgenre of time-traveling Roman legions with For The Eternal Glory of Rome, in which the Legio XIX is rescued from the Teutoburger Wald disaster by some aliens, who drop them in what is now the Donbas but in 406 AD. It was a good combination of coming of age stories, logistics, the confusion of religiously apathetic legionaries with various strains of Christianity, and excellent battle scenes. I am eagerly awaiting the sequel because I want to see how the displaced Romans and their Germanic allies thrash the Huns.

I also read volume 21 of Ralts Bloodthorne's Behold: Humanity!, It All Falls Down. Includes the passage from the scene of the great general No'Draak ("The Destroyer") and Captain Jeff Pikark, a very unsentimental mother & child reunion, and the return of Lance Corporal Casey. I continue to be impressed at how Ralts and his muses keep the multiple plotlines and POV characters tied up neatly without so much as a bulletin board full of Post-It notes.

Comments on N'APA #279

Intermission #159 Reporting on the Ukraine war is one area in which X is outperforming the legacy media, and it's not even close. 🍷🍷 I think you are being too kind to Microsoft. Once somebody comes up with a decent Linux OS that can seamlessly run Windows games and Office XP, they're going to be a dead company walking.

(RYCTo me) That having been said, I do enjoy a lot of your historical content.

Swamp Spot Sentinel 1.4

I am sorry to hear about all the house problems. Makes me wonder whether shelling out for a brand new doublewide might not be preferable to inheriting somebody else's problems. 🍷🍷 Fascinating story about the RCN-100, even though it was a prank.

(RYCTo me) I have recognized for a long time that I'm very much in the minority when it comes to politics in fandom. So I tend to skip the obnoxious political stuff and move on to the SF parts, which is what I did with Ahrvid. 🍷🍷 Son of Silvercon hasn't advanced to the point where we're streaming our programming. Maybe once we become a real con instead of a little wooden convention we'll start doing that...I thought I had posted a con report, but I guess I haven't. I suppose I should, even though Son of Silvercon IV (with Tim Powers as Guest of Honor!) is just six and a half months away.

Archive Midwinter

(RYCTo me) It seems I have given a lot of people the impression that I'm skipping Ahrvid's entire zine because of political disagreement. This isn't the case. I'm just ignoring the political stuff and moving on to the historical stuff, which I do enjoy and occasionally comment on.

That's it for this, I'm afraid. Leftover comments next time.

INTERMISSION #162

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com /...@atomicmail.io, your Patriot missile for EPA, N'APA & other drones! Read my 2025 Xmas/New Year story! Hope to get back to @SFJournalen but Xmas etc unleashed tasks overload. LoCs welcome! Isn't it a crazy world with a crazy Trump? Drop a line if you want to drop this Int'l Culture Mag! Trump isn't like typos: those can be corrected! Early Jan 25.

Editorially: Putin Clings to War, Europe Awakens While Trump Goes South

A long but relevant headline. For weeks we've heard of Trump's "peace plan" which just proved to be Putin's Santa list, translated from Russian. On top of this the Epstein files. A little war to make people forget is the solution! Folks with more braincells modified Trump's Ukraine plan, and Putin will probably say *Njet*. He lives in bizarre fantasies about bringing the evil USSR empire back from the dead. Putin wants the whole of Donetsk, for starters, where Ukraine has well prepared, strong defence lines they'll never give up. Putin can't get it (at present snail speed it would take 3-4 years and cost millions of casualties) so he hopes his trusted Agent Krasnov (Don Trump) can pressure the Ukrainians so *give* it away. So the war will go on. Trump and Zelensky met recently about the reworked peace plan with 20 points. I'll comment that in this issue.

Meanwhile Putin is losing allies. We'll see what happens in Iran (protests boil in 175 cities, news say) but he's losing Venezuela (as earlier Syria). Trump moved in and snatched their fake president Maduro, indicted for drug crimes (which is probably true). The Chavez/Maduro 25+ years of corruption and mismanagement made a country with potential for great wealth into an archetypical failed state. Was the US actions good? Probably. Were they legal? Probably not. If we have a terrible regime somewhere my advice is to isolate and sanction it, and let it rot by itself. A bad regime will inevitably collapse sooner or later. On top of this settling arguments by sending in the troops is just what Putin if. So even if getting rid of Maduro was good, it's a huge quandary. I guess we have to wait a little to see what the final results will be. Trump promises a lot, oil will flow and Venezuelans will live on a paradise. We live in interesting times... Back to Putin's Great Unpatriotic War (BTW, Jan 12 it has raged longer than USSR's "Great Patriotic War".)

Ukraine won't give up territory. Zelensky says no. Ukraine's constitution says no. Ukrainian soldiers say no. And Ukraine has recently been able to provide the melting Russian army some poison pills. They claimed to have just about taken Pokrovsk - but haven't yet. Ukraine even pushes the exhausted, poorly trained, equipped and motivated Russian troops back. The "second army in /t/h/e /w/o/r/l/d Ukraine" is melting. A month ago they claimed to have taken the town of Kupiansk. A certain president of Ukraine proved them wrong by doing a selfie by the Welcome to Kupiansk sign. And right afterwards the Ukrainians made a shock assault and kicked the Russians out of the entire town, leaving a small pocket with maybe 50-100 Russians (thirsty, out of food and ammo).

And it was quite spectacular how a new Ukrainian Underwater Sea Baby drone took out a Russian submarine in the port of Novorossiysk. The Russian navy is hulking there since Ukrainian drones have driven them out of the Black Sea. Ukraine has grit and an incredible talent for innovation! It's the first time and underwater drone has taken out a Uboat. Nitpicks claim they mostly hit the quay next to the sub, however the explosion was gigantic and enough to damage to submarine and put it out of action. On top of this Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries, military factories, weapons stockpiles, electricity stations and similar continues and has stepped up!

100+ Russian refineries and oil/gas installations have been attacked this year alone! Many several times. Ukraine has also begun attacking the Russian "shadow oil tankers" (when going back to be filled avoiding major oil spills) which should make shipowners reluctant to let Russia charter their boats. The Mafia gas station is running out of gas! Gasoline is now more expensive in Russia than in the US, and as Russians earn a fraction of the average American, that says a lot. The Russian



The welcome to Kupiansk sign and the Man of Steel...500 metres from the front!



Ukraine built 100s of miles of defence lines like this! Triple tank ditches, dragon teeth, prepared firing positions. Eat it Vlad!

central bank has begun selling off its gold, usually a last-resort emergency move. Analysts conclude the Russian inflation is climbing towards 30% (lying official statistics of course claim otherwise) which indicates inflation is ready to take off like a rocket any day. Putin faces increasing difficulties filling his ranks. The Russian army means suicide and people won't join. Putin's oligarch friends are shaking in fear - a wrong move and you're imitating a bird from a window. Russia's collapse may take time because big systems have an inertia and move slowly, but Ruski Mir is going down. Tell that to Trump!

Meanwhile some complain that Europe is too weak to stand up to Putin. Not so! On paper NATO (without USA) may field a few hundred thousand on short notice. But if we include all reserves, within a few months the number is close to 3 million! (In comparison, Russia now has 1.3-1.5 million in their ranks.) But as Russian military is exhausted and lots of their heavy equipment have been destroyed (eg they have almost no tanks left) they can't possibly face NATO. NATO troops are well-trained and have first-rate equipment, proven to be much better than Russian. Putin would be crazy to attempt anything and his economy is so weak it'll take many years to rearm.

Everyone should follow the war events more closely. Mainstream media does a bad job at it. Lots of things are missed. And for heaven's sake: Trump is a traitor and *should be impeached and removed*. Beside that he thrashes US international relations, we have the Epstein scandal. Trump has heavily censored the released Epstein files. One wonders why? His disrespect for US law and Congress is a further reason enough to impeach him, on top on that he works for Russia. He cheers as Venezuelan smugglers are murdered by expensive weapons (smugglers are a police matter, and suspects should be brought to court...alive). Now it seems he'll start an attack on Venezuela to divert attention (it's Congress having the right to declare war).

Now he does another round of threatening the Danish territory of Greenland. The Nordic countries and all of Europe backs Denmark. It's Old Viking Land, the horned guys were the original settlers (the Inuit had at the time only settled the Northwest). Anyway, the people living there don't want to be a US backyard. One day the Greenlanders may form their own nation, but that's between them and the Danes. Hands off Donny!

Anyway. In this issue we'll visit the Heinleins at home and get acquainted with the Mother of the A-bomb. We'll enjoy Poetry in a day and go to a concon. Before all this and at the end LoCs and comments we visit an AI residing in ed's new laptop.

But first follows this year's sensational Xmas and New Year story!

--Ahrvid Engholm

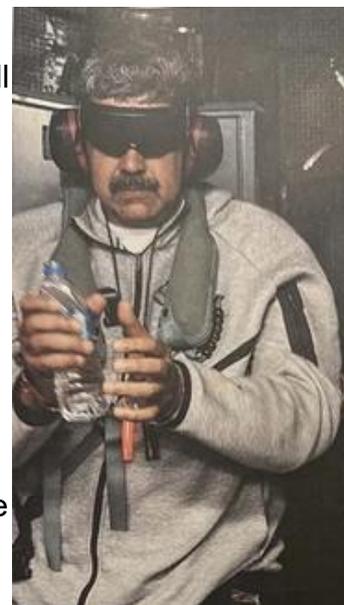
Our traditional Xmas/New Year story: Hugo's Excuses

Your editor has the more than a quarter of a Century old tradition of writing a short story for this time of year. But here one Hugo Gernsback does the writing. On a flea market in the alleys behind last year's Worldcon in Glasgow I found a pack of carbon copies of letters. How they had crossed the Atlantic is unknown (scrap paper ballast perhaps?) and no one saw the significance of them. It proved to be from the editorial correspondence of Amazing Stories in the 1920s, in chronological order, by none other than the Luxemburgian Man himself! I think it's commonly known that the founder of the world's first mass-market skiffy mag, which established the genre as a category - Amazing Stories - was a bit parsimonious when it came to paying his writers. While other magazines paid upon acceptance or possibly upon publication, Mr Gernsback, beside having the lowest pay rates of the market, paid "upon being sued" - or so it's said. HP Lovecraft even coined the nickname "The Rat" for Hugo. And the sensational stack of letters I found confirms that Mr Gernsback was a great inventor - of excuses...

New York City, December 1st, 1928

Dear Mr Cummings,

Your complaint about not receiving our extremely generous pay of 0.5 cent/word doesn't take the fine print in our terms into account, where there are certain deductions. Postage, the cost of envelopes, lead for typesetting, coffee for lunch, a bagel for our secretary... The amount you imagined we owe you has gone through an incredible shrinking down to subatomic size - ie to nothing.



Maduro caught. But are blindfold and headphones really necessary?

Sincerely,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 2nd, 1928

Dear Dr Breuer,

Your complaint about not receiving expected payment for your story "The Gastok Dastams the Deshos". But the check was in the mail! Check your local post office. Interrogate your postman. And check for the check in all possible ways! If it has been lost in the mail, I'm afraid there's distimly nothing I can do.

Good Luck!

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief



Hugo puts this on not to be disturbed.

New York City, December 3rd, 1928

Dear Mr Hamilton,

You wonder what happened with the well-deserved pay for your superior story "Exploding Suns Before Breakfast". As you may understand I'm very busy inventing things. Recently I constructed a sound-proof hood. You put on your head like a diver and you'll be completely undisturbed. It's called the Isolator. As you see, I'm very occupied and don't hear anything, so all is left to my secretary, Miss D Ustbin.

Silently,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief



New York City, December 4th, 1928

Dear Mr Williamson,

Oh, we did send you your check! There's a new company pioneering a new postal delivery system: by rockets. I'm sure you agree, since you write about adventures with rockets, that it was very appropriate to send the check via rocketmail! Unfortunately the rocket exploded.

I'm truly sorry!

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 5th, 1928

Dear Dr Keller,

You wonder what happened to the check for your story "The Pedestrian Pedestrians". After going through some self-hypnosis and psychoanalysis I'm convinced we have sent it, so you thus have to explore your own memory to get an answer. So lay down on the couch. You feel totally relaxed and drowsy. Drowsier and drowsier... My voice is very calm and you go deeper and deeper into sleep. You'll be totally relaxed when I reach ten. 1...2...3...

Yawningly,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 6th, 1928

Dear Mr Lovecraft,

Thanks for your story "The Incredibly Unbelievable Monstrous Ancient Being from Far, Far back in Time and the Lone Lunatic in the Shrieking Tower of Suffering". As we were preparing your so well-deserve reimbursement, a gust of wind got hold of the check and blew it out the window.

That was clearly a sign from Forces Mightier Than Us from beyond time and space, and I'm sure you agree that at present it's best not to do anything to disturb the Primeval Gods. Anyway, what could you do with our generous pay - buy a couple of cans of baked beans?

From the abyss,
Hugo Gernsback

Editor-in-chief

Ps. Our proofreader had difficulties with your recurring typo "cthulhu" and finally decided you meant to write "cutlery". Let's hope it's OK.

New York City, December 7th, 1928

Dear Doctor Smith,

We have seldom read such a scientifically accurate description of mankind's future in space as in the manuscript you sent. Who could guess that Einstein was so wrong? The check for your story "Skytits and Lensmen Galore in the Galaxy" should be on its way. Our trusted economic consultant has taken care of that, one Mr Ponzi.

Astronomically,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 8th, 1928

Dear Mr Vincent,

From a successful inventor to a skilled engineer, I was impressed by your story "Razor-sharp Cogs of Cold Steel". Though I was busy inventing the Osophone (hearing via the skull bone), the Thought Recorder, the Telephot, Hydraulic Fishery, The Electronicked Elephant, a tuxedo of durable paper and more useful things, I found it hard to keep my eyes away from your wonderful tale so full of practical machines that can do the dishes, plant trees, lull children to sleep, cook delicate dinners and withstand machine gun fire. As you know I have suggested that if an author describe an invention in principle he should have the right to half the income from it.

I'm sure Congress will pass such a law any day and you'll be a rich man! So you don't need our check

Wisely,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 9th, 1928

Dear Mr Flagg,

You naturally expect payment for your foresightful story "The Cruel Mass-Invasion by Dirty Martians", especially as it's at the same time an acute warning of similar threats from dirty Asian Yellow Hordes and Godless, Stinking Communists. But as we had just made out your well-deserved check and gone to lunch our elevator boy reported that a Yellow and Red Communist sneaked into the office after us, muttered "For the Proletariate!" and stole the check.

We have reported it to the trustworthy and highly uncorrupt NYPD and as soon as they reclaim the check it will be forwarded to you.

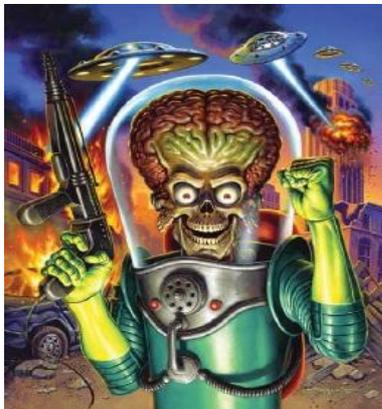
Honestly,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 10th, 1928

Dear Mr Kline,

We greatly appreciate your story "The Secret Literary Agent and the Runaway Linotype" with its interesting suggestion of a consciousness residing in molten lead. As you are a literary agent yourself you understand that it's now your duty to deduct 20% and send the rest to the author. It should be sent to Amazing Stories, 55 Park Place, New York City as you already have gotten your pay as agent.

Logically,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief



Martians invade us...

New York City, December 11th, 1928

Dear Mr Repp,

Few can fire off a raygun at slimly Bug-Eyed Monsters with such a grandeur as yourself, as in your magnificent yarn "Space hero Ted Jones Single-handedly Obliterates the Venusian Invasion Fleet". You there mention Earth's Space Command is granting Ensign Jones a reward of 100 000 Solar Dollars for his achievement. And with that you surely don't need the miniscule sum we'd provide, so let's

forget it.
Admiringly,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 12th, 1928

Dear Mr Meek,

Thanks for your story "Future Chemicals for Health and Wealth". As a chemist yourself you're certainly an expert of all these exotic compounds that enters our bloodstream to benefit us. But a little accident happened with the check we sent. You see, beside inventing TV, a gizmo that in the future will be called RADAR, weather control, powered roller skates I have also invented self destruction paper which is greatly desired by spies. Unfortunately your check was written on such self-destructive paper provided by FBI as a part of an operation when I revealed communist spies within scientificion.

I'm sure the Justice Department will reimburse you if you tell them this background.

Truthfully,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 13th, 1928

Dear Mrs Harris,

Thanks for your story "Out of the Kitchen, into Space" which shows that weaker sex won't become totally hysterical in the absence of gravity and in theory very well could navigate a spaceship, with sufficient practice and a lot of available help. If you just tell us the name of your husband we'll send him the check we owe for the story.

Brotherly greetings,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief



Women astronaut in the space kitchen...

New York City, December 14th, 1928

Dear Mr Leinster,

Thanks for your story "Sidewise in Space" with the highly original idea of the Roman Empire developing spaceflight. As you have tried many business investments we have suggestion. Let us for some time hold back the royalties. Since we know that stock prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau, it means stocks in the nearest future won't rise. But as you note the unavoidable, inherent rise of US stocks will - all experts agree - reappear in about October 1929. We'll invest all your held-back story payments (it seems you have never got a cent) in stocks and you'll get filthy rich.

Expectantly,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 15th, 1928

Dear Mr Tanner,

Even if we shouldn't believe in dystopian future when new incredible inventions are just around the corner, you dystopian stories serves the purpose of making us aware of what directions we should avoid. Unfortunately, the editorial dog, our mixed-race friend Flea Hunter owned by our janitor, wasn't as open-minded. The dog promptly insisted on consuming the check for you we had just prepared. And Mr Screwpipe (the janitor) advises you to contact the nearest kennel to sort things out.

Woof! Woof!
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 16th, 1928

Dear M. Rousseau,

Your story "The Lost Occult Race", about a cursed Bugatti taking part in the Arkham Grand Prix is unique in the way it combines sports and the supernatural. But our editorial fortune teller, the chubby Mrs Sibyl how knocks on the door

every Tuesday, warns us that both the cards and the planets align against performing any economic transactions at this time. So you may ask us for just about anything, within reason, but not a check. Don't blame us. Blame the stars! Scientifically,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 17th, 1928

Dear Mr Wertenbaker,

Despite that we are a bit sceptical to the notion that a man can grow to the size of a galaxy the story "The Man Who Grew Fatter", an odd very wild tale now and then is welcome to serve the purpose of emphasizing how scientifically correct the rest of our magazine is! For payment we have idea: We'll transfer \$1 to an account giving 10% interest rate and in 100 years your grandchildren will be able to buy a car for the resulting amount!

So no check now!

Optimistically,

Hugo Gernsback

Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 18th, 1928

Dear Mr Campbell,

Haven't you received pay for your excellent story "Giant Spaceships Clashing and Cruising"? I saw the check for it lying around the other day, but we editors have so much to take care of... To make an editor's life easier someone should invent a universal machine. One that calculates printruns, stores stories, has a keyboard to write things and a telephot screen where you see it all! My desk has paper everywhere, and forms, pens, piles of manuscript, and coffee cups If I see the check in the mess I'll mail it.

You should try to be a magazine editor sometime! It isn't easy.

In all haste,

Hugo Gernsback

Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 19th, 1928

Dear Mr Pelcher

Who is this Mr Gernsbasch? And why should he or I pay you for your story "Inventing the Multidimensional Fluxometer"? We run stories like "Nudity under the Sun", "Women's Breasts in Depth", "Healthy Sex...yum-yum".

Confusingly,

Hugo Gernsback

Editor-in-chief of *Sexology*

New York City, December 20th, 1928

Dear Mr Starzl,

Your excellent story "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Learned to Love Flying Robot Taxis" is just out. But I'm afraid to inform you that the check for it was by mistake sent to Germany instead of Germantown. There some industrious official exchanged the value to German Marks, as would be appropriate. When the mistake was discovered it was exchanged back to US Dollars and sent back. But you know, they have such an inflation there that at that time the value was only 3.5 cents...

And sending a check of 3.5 cents is silly.

Realistically,

Hugo Gernsback

Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 20th, 1928

Dear Dr Giesy,

Thanks for your wonderful story "Robots Conquer Mars". There's a problem: a few days ago one of my many, many inventions - I must change the spring in the Automatic Multi-Toaster! - malfunctioned and hurt my hand and I now have my arm in a sling. Unfortunately it's the arm and hand I write with, so I can't



write you a check.

Signed,
Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 21st, 1928

Dear Mr Pecher,

It was a pleasure to read your story "The Inventors 1000th Invention" which normally would render you a certain sum... I'm also a great inventor and recognise how it feels. My latest invention is the Demonetiser, a wonderful electronic device that nullifies all debts!

And as you can see, my invention works!

Relieved,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 22nd, 1928

Dear Mr Hall,

Your interesting story "The Artificial Eye" shall of course get its well-deserved pay. It's just that since the moon is in the first quarter and it's a Friday an unevenly numbered week, the omens are that economic transactions now gives bad luck...

We must obey the stars, don't you agree?

Starstruck,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 23rd, 1928

Dear Mr Wolfe,

Thanks for your story "Rotten Stars, Stinking Meteors". But my English is so bad I must now turn to my native Luxemburgish to explain the complicated subtle details that're an obstacle for monetary transfers via check for your story "The Check Republic": Hojala oppoto gemsuter groppo joiel hoola-bandola. Sotarmoj. Gemock halla oj då! Begegen moyo mackibar lomp. Wegit sama hijo. Vickimuck, straitfi erwardly, micki miuk. Bom! Dt finns mycket spritskransar. Götapetter! I hope that explains it all!

Linguistically,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 24th, 1928

Dear Mr Quinn,

Your check for "The Star That Had Hiccups" is ready, but the envelope was accidentally mailed to an alternate dimension during a demonstration of our new "postal vortex accelerator". We are waiting for the vortex to reopen. If it does not, I will simply send another check - assuming the accelerator can be convinced to behave.

Yours in spiraling perplexity,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

New York City, December 25th, 1928

Dear Mr Wellman,

Your payment for "The Comet That Misbehaved" is delayed because my new "electro-automatic check-signer" has begun signing only its own name. Until I convince it that I, not the machine, am the editor, no checks can be issued.

With oscillating regards,

Hugo Gernsback
Editor-in-chief

PS. And a scientific and merry Xmas to you!

And a merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your editor too. Let's hope you're not too disturbed by revelations of Mr Gernsback's way to treat his authors. It looks as if *Amazing Stories* had to be



What an AI thinks Hugo G looks like in his lab (it does not look right). Is it one of the elusive checks he holds?

careful with every penny. It could be background to that Amazing shortly after this was forced into bankruptcy?

The Peace Plan

The Peace Plan released by Ukraine, with your editor's comments - who after all is an expert on international affairs, running an International Culture Magazine!.

1. The signatories affirm that Ukraine is a sovereign state.

2. The document constitutes a full and unquestionable non-aggression agreement between Russia and Ukraine. A monitoring mechanism will be set up to oversee the conflict line using satellite-based unmanned surveillance, ensuring early detection of violations.

[Not a peace agreement, more like a ceasefire.]

3. Ukraine will receive security guarantees. *[Of what kind?]*

4. The size of Ukraine's Armed Forces will remain at 800,000 personnel during peacetime.

5. The US, NATO, and European signatory states will provide Ukraine with "Article 5-like" guarantees. Following points apply:

A) If Russia invades Ukraine, a coordinated military response will be launched, and all global sanctions against Russia will be reinstated. *[Trump can only decide on US sanctions!]*

B) If Ukraine invades Russia or opens fire at Russian territory without provocation, the security guarantees will be considered void. If Russia opens fire on Ukraine, the security guarantees will come into effect. *[Likely scenario: Putin tries to push forward, and the peace plan will fall apart.]*

C) The US will receive compensation for providing security guarantees. (This provision has been removed.) *[Eh, removed?]*

D) Previously signed bilateral security agreements between Ukraine and around 30 countries will remain in place. *[Of course.]*

6. Russia will formalize its non-aggression stance towards Europe and Ukraine in all necessary laws and documents, ratifying them by Russia's State Duma. *[Means nothing. Putin juggles Russian "law" as he wishes and the Duma is his marionette theatre.]*

7. Ukraine will become an EU member at a clearly designated time and will receive a short-term preferential access to the European market. *[EU accession usually takes about 5 years, minimum!]*

"As of today, the timing of Ukraine's accession is a bilateral discussion between the United States and Ukraine, without European confirmation for now," Zelensky said.

"Membership in the European Union is also our security guarantee, and therefore we want to set a date — when this will happen. For example, 2027 or 2028."

[These comments don't seem to be a part of the peace plan.]

8. Ukraine will receive a global development package, detailed in a separate agreement, covering various economic areas: *[Ukraine needs a huge amount to rebuild and reconstitute! Let's hope concrete things will come out of this.]*

A) A development fund will be created for investing in fast-growing industries, including technology, data centers, and artificial intelligence.

B) The US and US companies will work with Ukraine to jointly invest in the restoration, modernization, and operation of Ukraine's gas infrastructure, including pipelines and storage facilities.

C) Joint efforts will be made to rebuild war-torn areas, focusing on restoring and modernizing cities and residential neighborhoods.

D) Infrastructure development will be prioritized.

E) Extraction of minerals and natural resources will be expanded. *[As in the previous deal from last spring]*

F) The World Bank will provide a special funding package to support the acceleration of these efforts.

G) A high-level working group will be established, including the appointment of a leading global financial expert as the prosperity administrator to oversee the implementation of the strategic recovery plan and future prosperity.

9. The creation of several funds to address the restoration of the Ukrainian economy, the reconstruction of damaged areas and regions, and humanitarian issues will be established. The aim is to mobilize \$800 billion, the estimated cost of the damage from the Russian war. *[It seems Europe will pay for most of this, but that's OK if it leads to a ceasefire that holds.]*

10. Ukraine will accelerate the process of negotiating a free trade agreement with the US. *[Haven't seen this on the table before.]*

11. Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to remaining a non-nuclear state, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

12. Control over the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and the restoration of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant.

"Washington proposes that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant be jointly operated by Ukraine, Russia, and the US, with each country controlling 33%, and the US serving as the primary overseer of the station. Ukraine opposes Russian control over the plant. Kyiv proposes that the plant be managed by a joint venture consisting of the US and Ukraine, where 50% of the electricity generated will go to Ukrainian-controlled territories, while the US determines the distribution of the other 50%. "We believe that for all of this to take place and function safely, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the city of Enerhodar, and the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant must be demilitarized, because at present there are Russian troops and war there, and there is no necessary level of security," Zelensky said. *[This doesn't seem to be part of the peace plan. Still being negotiated. But It's Ukraine's power plant which has cost a lot of money. Why give part of it away.]*

13. Ukraine and Russia will introduce school courses that promote understanding and tolerance of different cultures, fight racism and prejudice. Ukraine will approve EU rules on religious tolerance and minority language protection. *[Ukraine has no problem doing this. That Russia will do it is in serious doubt!]*

14. In Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson oblasts, the line of military positions on the date of signing will be recognized as the de facto front line. *[That's why the weakening Russian army now tries numerous meatwave assaults, increasing the already high losses, and is lobbing missiles at residential areas causing outrage and loss of any remaining sympathies...]*

A) To determine troop movements needed to end the war and set up potential "free economic zones," Russia is withdrawing its troops from these areas. *[Doubt Putin agrees to such a thing.]*

B) Russia must withdraw its troops from occupied parts of Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Sumy, and Kharkiv oblasts for the agreement to take effect. *[Ditto.]*

C) International forces will be placed along the front line to monitor the agreement's implementation. *[Ditto.]*

D) The parties agree to follow the rules and obligations imposed by the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols, including universal human rights. *[Ha! Russia has always and will continue to use the Geneva convention as toilet paper...]*

History Corner

This prominent culture magazine here begins its popular *H i s t o r y C o r n e r* with a real gem: a visit to Robert and Virginia Heinlein's own-designed first house on 1776 Mesa Ave, Colorado Springs. Since the area was newly "developed" they could pick their own street number and the Heinleins chose the location considering it was away from military targets and had a lower risk of nuclear fallout.

The text is from an article June 1952 <https://www.nitrosyncretic.com/rah/pm652-art-hi.html> in *Popular Mechanics* magazine. The Heinleins had drafted everything about the house themselves and *PM* thought the design features of it might be interesting for their readers. We have taken the liberty of presenting some features with underlining, and most of the captions are *PM's* original.) The house was situated at 1839 metres (6033 feet) above sea level which gave Virginia some health problems, so in the mid-1960s they sold it and moved to Santa Cruz, California, to an area called Bonny Doon at sea level. The buyers of the Colorado house kept much of the features, later visitors reported, and while the house was expanded with a second floor in the early 1980s the first floor still has the same floor plan. Why change much in "A House to Make Life Easy"!

And He Built An (Un)Crooked House

In what kind of house will the captain of a space ship live during his stopovers on earth? It's too early to say yet, though probably it will contain some of the features of a residence just built by Robert A. Heinlein in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Heinlein is author of the movie *Destination Moon* and creator of the *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* program on television. As a writer of science fiction his books *The Green Hills of Earth*, *The Puppet Masters* and others are on current book lists.

The engineering training that gives him a solid background for writing about the mechanics of space travel also has helped him in designing a house that's called extreme today but may become conventional before the 20th century has run its course.

Heinlein's house runs itself with minimum maintenance and housework. It has an indoor climate that's unrelated to varying outdoor temperature. Within reason it is fireproof, termiteproof and earthquakeproof.

The house is expensive compared to minimum standards and yet the owner saved money when he moved in.

What Mr and Mrs Heinlein wanted was a comfortable, pleasing residence that would just about take care of itself. The result is a single-story flat-roofed house containing entry hall, combination living-dining room, kitchen, bedroom and nursery, with a sliding wall

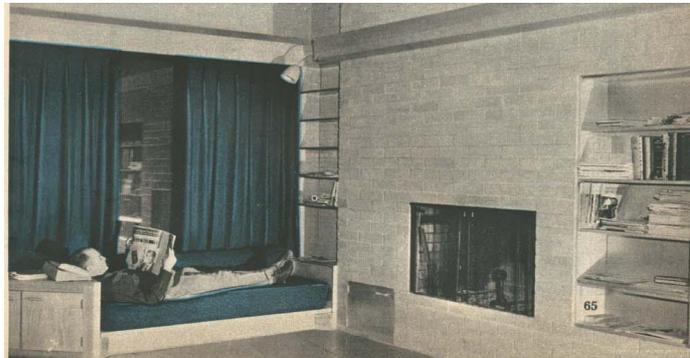
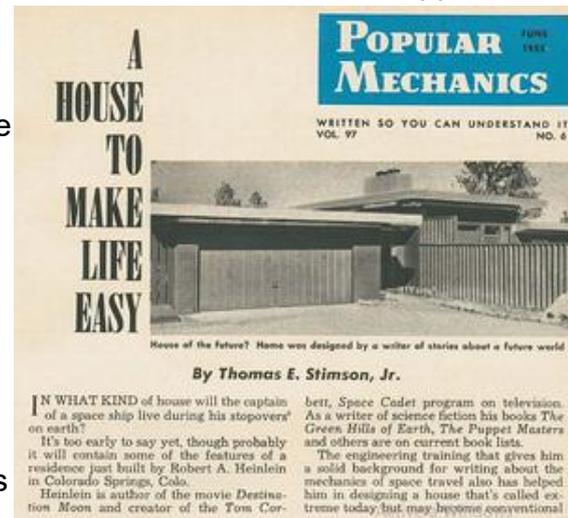
between, study, two baths and attached garage with space for home workshop.

It's a small house, 1150 square feet of floor space in the living area, designed for two adults and a child, yet by means of built-in furniture it could sleep seven without crowding. Built-ins are a major feature. Aside from a few chairs, a piano and a dining room table that commutes on wheels there is no movable furniture in the house.

"There are no rugs or any need for them. All the floors are surfaced with cork tile that provides warm, comfortable and clean footing. Nor are there any floor lamp or table lamps. The illumination is built into the house. General lighting for the living room comes from cold-cathode tubes concealed behind a box molding. These illuminate the ceiling. Adjustable wall spotlights are located at all work and relaxation areas in the house. All electric convenience outlets are at a comfortable hip height. "I'm through stooping over to the baseboard whenever I want to plug in an appliance." With no rugs or movable lamps or furniture, the whole house can be given a general cleaning in about an hour.

The house is built of steel-reinforced concrete blocks and masonry and is painted dark green on the exterior, offset by broad panels of gleaming aluminum roof trim. Interiors of the concrete-block walls are exposed and painted light green. Interior partitions are of bleached mahogany backed with rock wool. The same wood is used for all cabinetry and built-in furniture. All interior doors are sliding doors. Walls of the study and the water-heater compartment are soundproofed. The roof is insulated.

A flat roof is no disadvantage in snow country, Heinlein finds, if it is properly reinforced against heavy loads. The extra strength permits it to be decked over and used as a porch for sun bathing. The roof surface consists of several layers of hot-mopped roofing paper topped by a layer of gravel and sprayed with aluminum paint to reflect solar heat. The roof projects far enough beyond the south side of the house to shade the south windows from the summer sun, yet it admits light to the windows in winter when the sun is lower in the sky.



Author Heinlein relaxes on built-in divan beside raised fireplace. Note convenient cupboard at end of divan.



There's everything to please a housewife in the kitchen, including an "office" with phone and typewriter. Below, "commuting" table is set with china in kitchen, then rolled through a wall to the dining area.



There's everything to please a housewife in the kitchen, including an "office" with phone and typewriter. Below "commuting" table set with china in kitchen then rolled through a wall to the dining area.

Two small skylights that work night and day help illuminate the study and a small center hall. Each skylight contains a pair of fluorescent tubes that provide indirect lighting in the evening for the area below. Top and bottom of each skylight are translucent glass, with the bottom frame hinged for access to the lighting tubes. The skylight interiors are painted aluminum for greater efficiency and contain mirror panels slanted to reflect sunlight below even when the sun is not at its zenith.

Most houses are too hot or too cold at times, or too drafty or dusty. Heinlein gets just the indoor climate he wants by an ingenious arrangement of air conditioning and ducts. First of all, the house is sealed. None of the windows can be opened. They are double-glazed, in fact, with ¼-inch air space between the panes.

The air-conditioning unit, off the kitchen, consists of a gas-fired furnace and electric blower equipped with dust filter, humidifier and glycolator air purifier. Temperature is controlled by a thermostat in the living room. The blower operates at all times. The furnace draws 20 percent of its air from outside the house, creating a positive pressure indoors that is exhausted through concealed vents in the kitchen and each bath. Heinlein estimates that the blower uses no more power in constant operation than it would in intermittent use. He plans to add an electrostatic precipitator to the system to augment the present dust filter.

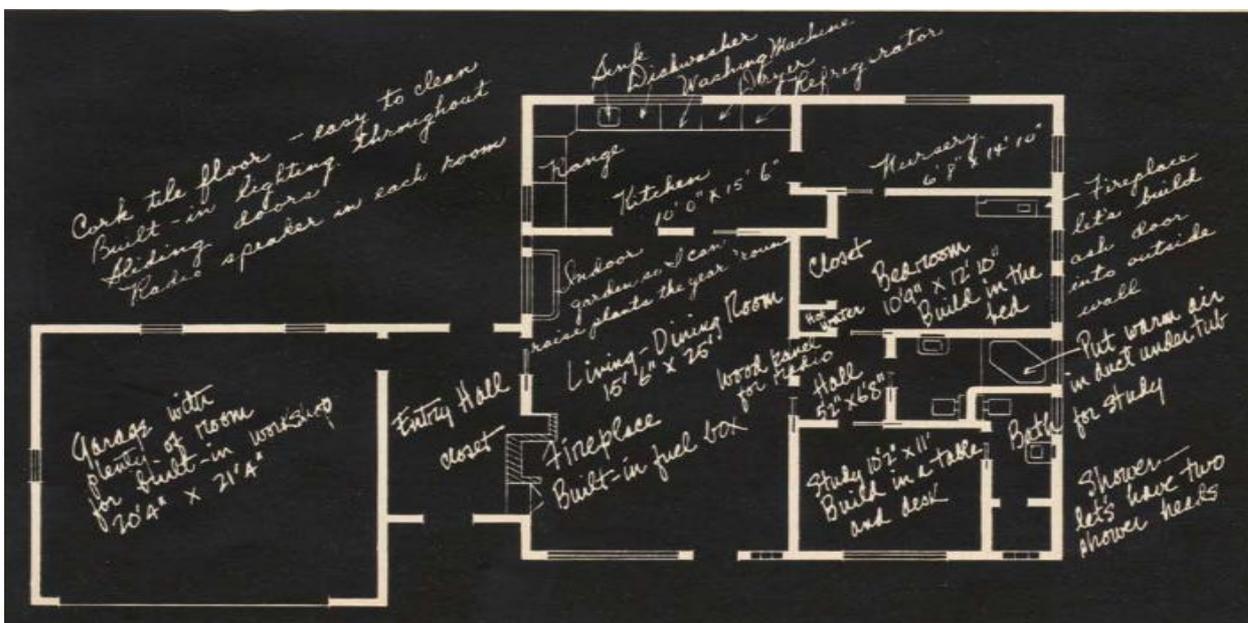
Air from the conditioner is ducted at floor height along the exterior walls of the house to the room outlet grilles. This perimeter ducting creates a band of warmth that insures comfortable floors even in freezing weather. In one bath the warm air is ducted under the bathtub, in the other the warm-air supply flows under the floor of the shower. Thus the tub and shower floor are pleasantly warm at all times.



Skylight panels have mirrors which reflect sunlight into house. Behind panels are tubes for night lightning.

The shower, incidentally, has an extra shower head on the wall opposite the standard fixture. It's operated by an overhead valve and a bather may be sprayed from two sides if he desires. A shampoo dispenser is attached to the shower wall just below the soap dish. The built-in furniture includes a seven by six-foot bed with drawers beneath, a storage-wall-type wardrobe closet containing a set of drawers, a combination worktable and typewriter desk for Heinlein in his study, and its counterpart, an "office" in a corner of the kitchen for his wife. Here she has a desk with drawers, bookshelves and a flat top that folds back to reveal a typewriter and paper compartments.

In a compact line around the kitchen walls are the stove, sink and electric-dishwasher combination, automatic clothes washer, drier and refrigerator. Storage walls are used in place of closets for canned goods and other supplies. Such a storage wall contains sets of shallow shelves recessed into the wall. The cans stand in single rows, take up no space and every item is in sight for instant selection.



Floorplan of Heinlein's house. Handwritten notes tell about various functions, but difficult to read.

A time-consuming domestic chore is that of carrying dishes to the dining table before a meal and then carrying them back to the kitchen after a meal is finished. In the Heinlein house the dining table rolls right into the kitchen where all silver, china and food

dishes are laid out. Then the table is pushed through the wall into the dining area. It goes back into the kitchen again after a meal and Mrs Heinlein transfers the dishes directly to the dishwasher.

The table travels through an opening in the wall and normally stands with one end in the dining area and the other end in the kitchen. A sliding partition above the table top may be raised to provide clearance for articles on the table, and a door below may be swung out of the way when the entire table is to be moved into the dining area.

Other features of the house include a radio and phonograph-control center in the hall wired to speakers in each room. The speakers may be controlled at convenient locations.

There is an indoor-garden area in the living room with soil going right down to natural earth. The perimeter heating system keeps the soil warm all through the winter, so delicate plants can be transferred to the indoor garden for the cold season.

Translucent blocks are used to outline the front-entrance door. One block at eye level is of clear glass and has a mirror attached diagonally to its exterior so that Mrs Heinlein can inspect a caller before she opens the door.

A writer is apt to work late into the night and then sleep late the next morning, so the blinds of the Heinlein bedroom are of lightproof material. Their sides are fitted into sheet-metal slots as a double precaution for keeping out sunlight.

There are wastebaskets in every room but not one of them is visible. They are built in with other furniture and all you see is a spring-hinged trap door.

Heinlein's house has lots of windows, yet a stranger approaching the house can see only the outer garden and the entrance. Shadow trellises at each side screen the view from the street.

The house cost a little more than \$20 per square foot. That sounds expensive but it really isn't. For one thing, cost per square foot would have been less had Heinlein built a larger house; he packed all the expensive kitchen and bathroom fixtures into a small residence. For another thing, much of the house was custom-built on the site because some materials weren't available in the shapes and sizes he required. Most important of all, he had no furnishings to buy when he moved in.

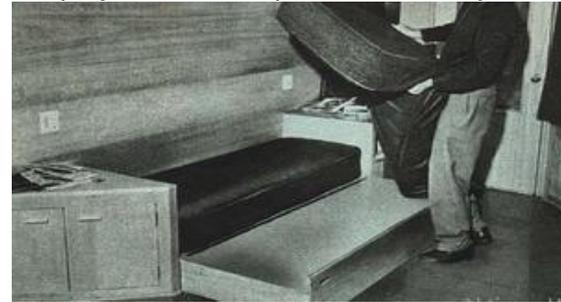
Instead of hiring a moving van, he simply made a couple of trips with his automobile to transfer clothes, food, utensils, linens and personal belongings to his new house. When these items had been put in place, moving day was over. *PM article ends.*

One unfortunate thing contributing to move from Colorado Springs was that NORAD decided to dig out the Cheyenne Mountain nearby and place their HQ in it...without asking the Heinleins! Out of the frying pan and into the fire!

The fine bomb shelter they built (and not featured in *PM's* article, it came later) became more of a necessity. Left a picture from inside the shelter.



Trash goes through a hinged partition in kitchen wall, falls into a storage bin outside the house. Music centre in hall off study contains radio and record player wired to speakers in every room.



Divans in home can be converted into double beds simply by swinging top half out onto floor and covering in pads.



Heated air enters bathroom through a duct beneath the tub, warming bathtub and the floor.



The place to make Little Heinleins... The bed looks thick, so it's possibly a waterbed mattress, something Heinlein is said invented.



Inside Heinlein's bomb shelter.

In the mid 1960s they moved to Bonna Doon in Santa Cruz and once again made a special-design house, a round mansion, said to have even more new features than the previous dwelling. But there're no articles about it. Heinlein was now so successful and famous that he wanted to keep all outsiders out. But the Heinlein Society has released a series of photos from Bonna Doon, originally shot by Virginia Heinlein, <https://heinleinsociety.org/the-heinlein-society-presents-a-photo-tour-of-bonny-doon-part-1/>

Heinlein was rather aware of the Atomic age. Earlier when *Intermission* took you on a tour to Los Alamos, you might remember that Heinlein visited the birth of the A-bomb, just as he finished his WWII job in that Boston Naval research facility. And he met up with the scientists of Los A. He had respect for atoms. I asked the net about the closest military base to Bonna Doon.

It's 100 miles away, safe for A-bombs and *maybe* H-bombs...

The Mother of the Atomic Bomb

While Robert Heinlein and his wife moved high up in the mountains and built a bomb shelter, a certain lady sat in the Nobel Institute in Stockholm and (perhaps?) regretted she worked out the figures making A-bomb shelters necessary. I found a book about her and became interested in finding out more. The title translates as *Love and Nuclear Physics* in an attempt to interest the woke crowd, but it's deceptive. There's nothing of the falsely hinted love in the book (or elsewhere) concerning Lise Meitner (1878-1968).

She was the Austrian-Swedish physicist central to the discovery and interpretation of nuclear fission, but was snubbed by the Nobel Committee. She spent most of her career navigating scientific brilliance, institutional discrimination, antisemitic persecution and exile, yet remained one of the most respected nuclear physicists of the 20th century.

Elise Meitner was born in Vienna in 1878 to a liberal, cultured, Jewish family. Because girls were excluded from public secondary schools, she pursued private studies to qualify for university entrance. She entered the University of Vienna in 1901 to study physics under the great Ludwig Boltzmann, whose clarity and physical intuition profoundly shaped her intellectual style. In 1906 she became the second woman in Austria to earn a doctorate in physics. After a brief period in Prague, she moved to Berlin in 1907.

In Berlin she worked with Max Planck - initially as his first female assistant - and soon began collaborating with the chemist Otto Hahn at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Chemistry. Because women were not permitted in many laboratories, she began unpaid and had to use a separate entrance, but she earned respect through rigor and persistence.

Meitner and Hahn formed one of the most productive cross-disciplinary partnerships - he a chemist, she a physicist - of their time. She specialized in radioactivity and nuclear physics, Hahn in radiochemistry. Their complementary skills enabled decades of joint research on heavy elements and nuclear decay. By 1912 she became head of her own physics section at the newly established Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. She served as an X-ray technician during World War I, treating soldiers near the front, returning to Berlin afterwards to continue research.

During the 1920s Meitner became a leading figure in nuclear physics. Among her major achievements:

- ▶ Though named after Pierre Auger, Meitner independently discovered and published the phenomenon of electron emission following inner-shell transitions.
- ▶ She refined methods of measuring nuclear recoil, crucial for identifying isotopes.
- ▶ Her collaborative work with Hahn helped isolate and understand element 91, protactinium.

She was widely regarded as one of the world's foremost experimental nuclear physicists, elected to the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1926 (the first woman so honoured) and made a full professor at the University of Berlin in 1926.

She gained a reputation for precision, modesty, and intellectual seriousness. Colleagues often described her as kind but reserved, principled, and intensely dedicated to physics.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Meitner - though a convert to Protestantism - was classified as Jewish and thus subject to dismissal. Despite her stature, she was excluded from teaching roles,



Title "*Love and Nuclear Physics*" deceptively hints that "*Lise Meitner and Eva von Bahr and a friendship that changed the world*" was a bit more, but the book has nothing of that to gloat over.

journals, committees, and academic honors. At first she was protected by her Austrian citizenship, but after the 1938 Anschluss she lost the Austrian citizenship and became vulnerable.

During this period she nonetheless continued working closely with Hahn and Fritz Strassmann on neutron-irradiation experiments of uranium. Their partnership persisted only because colleagues quietly ignored or circumvented discriminatory rules.

By mid-1938 she had to flee. Her escape - through the Netherlands into Denmark and then Sweden - was arranged covertly by international colleagues. She arrived in Stockholm in July 1938, exhausted, nearly penniless, and deeply troubled by the political situation.

Meitner obtained a position at Manne Siegbahn's institute in Stockholm, though it was poorly supported and she was given little laboratory space. Friends - among them Anna von Bahr who Lise had earlier met in Germany - stood up for her, giving her money and clothes and finding her a room at a bed and breakfast. She later moved in with her sister (who also left Germany) and her family at a big apartment on Bragevägen. Worth mentioning is that one of her neighbours there was one Raoul Wallenberg, but this was long before his later fame and they never got more closely acquainted.

Lise Meitner continued corresponding with Otto Hahn while in Sweden. He continued their up to then joint experiments with bombarding elements with neutrons, with assistance of Fritz Strassmann. Hahn got results he couldn't explain: uranium gave off barium and other elements. He sent his results to Meitner around Christmas time 1938, when she visited friend and physicist Eva von Bahr in Kungälv, together with her nephew Otto Frisch (also a physicist). The two discussed Hahn's results during a walk in the snowy woods and Meitner realised that getting lighter elements from uranium meant *atoms had split*. It was the first time superheavy elements had been split which meant that huge amount of energy was released from - in theory - a chain reaction. ((The first to split, in this case, lighter atoms was John Cockcroft and Ernest Walton in April 1932, at the Cavendish Laboratory under Ernest Rutherford. They bombarded lithium with accelerated protons and split it into two alpha particles.) Meitner and Frisch sat down on a tree trunk and made the calculations. They worked out the energy release using the mass-defect formula, concluding that each split would release roughly 200 MeV, 50 million times more than burning coal atoms.

That there was an atom split was what Meitner figured out but Frisch coined the term "fission" (borrowed from biology, for cells splitting). And she wrote about it to Hahn, who alone received the Nobel Prize in chemistry (not Physics, Hahn was a chemist) in 1944, handed out in 1945. The reason seemed to be indirect anti-semitism. Hahn's article about the experimental evidence of atom splitting in January 1939 didn't credit Meitner, which probably was because she as a Jew (not practising, converted to protestantism) was *Persona Non Grata* in Hitler's Reich. Hahn couldn't mention Meitner without getting into trouble. Hahn didn't have a theoretical explanation for his results. He just wrote though he could not offer a satisfactory theoretical interpretation he hoped "our physicist colleagues" would explain it, and Meitner and Frisch gave an explanation in an article the month after. The members of the Swedish Nobel committee heavily relied on German sources - as German science was strong - for their decisions, and Meitner wasn't mentioned there. However, it doesn't explain why Hahn in his acceptance speech in December 1945, when Nazism was thoroughly defeated, didn't mention Meitner's contribution? General misogyny may also have played a part. It is also claimed that the Nobel Committee's failure was partly procedural, evaluating work from 1938-39 only in the category of chemistry, where Meitner's part (theory) was considered "physics" and thus outside the chemistry prize scope.

Many influential scientists, including Einstein and Bohr, though the Nobel committee made a grave mistake. Meitner however received tons of other awards, including the highest German science award, the Max Planck Medal, and then the Enrico Fermi Award (shared with Hahn and Strassmann) and having element 109, meitnerium, named after her.

In his memoirs *What little I remember* (1979) Otto Frisch describes the crucial event with aunt Lise in the Swedish woods like this:

When I came out of my hotel room after my first night in Kungälv I found Lise Meitner studying a letter from Hahn and obviously worried by it. I wanted to tell her of a new experiment I was planning, but she wouldn't listen; I had to read that letter.

Its content was indeed so startling that I was at first inclined to be sceptical. Hahn and Strassmann had found that those three substances were not radium, chemically speaking; indeed they had found it impossible to separate them from the barium which, routinely, they had added in order to facilitate

the chemical separations. They had come to the conclusion, reluctantly and with hesitation, that they were isotopes of barium.

Was it just a mistake? No, said Lise Meitner; Hahn was too good a chemist for that. But how could barium be formed from uranium? No larger fragments than protons or helium nuclei (alpha particles) had ever been chipped away from nuclei, and to chip off a large number not nearly enough energy was available. Nor was it possible that the uranium nucleus could have been cleaved right across. A nucleus was not like a brittle solid that can be cleaved or broken; George Gamow had suggested early on, and Bohr had given good arguments that a nucleus was much more like a liquid drop. Perhaps a drop could divide itself into two smaller drops in a more gradual manner, by first becoming elongated, then constricted, and finally being torn rather than broken in two? We knew that there were strong forces that would resist such a process, just as the surface tension of an ordinary liquid drop tends to resist its division into two smaller ones. But the nuclei differed from ordinary drops in one important way: they were electrically charged, and that was known to counteract the surface tension.

At that point we both sat down on a tree trunk (all that discussion had taken place while we walked through the wood in the snow, I with my skis on, Lise Meitner making good her claim that she could walk just as fast without), and started to calculate on scraps of paper. The charge of a uranium nucleus, we found, was indeed large enough to overcome the effect of the surface tension almost completely; so the uranium nucleus might indeed resemble a very wobbly, unstable drop, ready to divide itself at the slightest provocation, such as the impact of a single neutron.

But there was another problem. After separation, the two drops would be driven apart by their mutual electric repulsion and would acquire high speed and hence a very large energy, about 200 MeV in all; where could that energy come from? Fortunately Lise Meitner remembered the empirical formula for computing the masses of nuclei and worked out that the two nuclei formed by the division of a uranium nucleus together would be lighter than the original uranium nucleus by about one-fifth the mass of a proton.

Now whenever mass disappears energy is created, according to Einstein's formula $E = mc^2$, and one-fifth of a proton mass was just equivalent to 200 MeV. So here was the source for that energy; it all fitted!

Though Sweden provided safety, Meitner struggled with isolation, lack of support from Siegbahn, and the emotional weight of exile. Still she had a position and a workbench at the then fairly new Nobel institute, she continued research on beta decay, nuclear processes, and cosmic rays. She became an informal scientific authority for many refugee scholars. Siegbahn, the institute head, wasn't very helpful getting her lab equipment, a salary worthy an exiled professor and other things.

Crucially, when invited by Niels Bohr and American officials to join the Manhattan Project, she firmly refused. She did not want her science used for weapons and said, "I will have nothing to do with a bomb."

An interesting thing revealed by *Love and Nuclear Physics* is that Meitner kept her eyes and ears open about what happened in nuclear research (especially in Germany) and gave reports about it to the British Embassy!

After WWII Meitner became an international figure, symbolizing both scientific integrity and the moral responsibilities of scientists. She travelled to the US soon after the war and spent almost half a year there, lecturing, meeting all here physics colleagues (Einstein, Bohr, Fermi, a virtual Who is Who of nuclear physics) and was of frequent attention for media, labeled as "The Mother of the A-Bomb" (a designation she resented). She was also invited to the White House, for dinner with Harry Truman.

She received many honors: Honorary doctorates across Europe and the US, The Max Planck Medal (claimed to be Germany's highest scientific honour), the Enrico Fermi Award, and more. She also became an advocate for responsible science, warning against nuclear weapons but supporting peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

In Sweden she contributed to early work on the R1 reactor in Stockholm, Sweden's first nuclear reactor. Although not a chief engineer, she participated in theoretical and advisory roles, especially on neutron physics and radiation safety. Younger Swedish physicists later credited her with bringing essential nuclear-physics expertise to the project's development.

Hollywood approached her about dramatizing her life - she declined, unwilling to sensationalize science or portray herself as a celebrity. She also rejected offers that she felt trivialized the scientific process or overstated her personal role. *Love and Nuclear Physics* says that a suggestion from the

filmmakers was to open the movie with Lise hunted by Nazis, sneaking over the border with a bag containing nuclear material or something important for building the A-bomb. The film MGM finally made about the development of the A-bomb, "*The Beginning or the End*" (1947, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=081Y70zXAKk>) skipped this interesting little opener and instead did its best to present atomic research in other unrealistic ways. Fermi runs his research reactor under that sports ground in Chicago, shouting "Pull out the rods! More! More!". And you see meters vibrating going into red, alarm bells ring, sweat on the foreheads... In reality the output of the atomic pile that day was...5 Watts! (Later tests raised it to 200 Watts, enough for 2-3 lightbulbs.)

The incoming Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander, at the time the minhonored ister for education and research, heard about that Meitner's less than ideal position at the Nobel institut. He arranged for a full professorship for Meitner, at the Royal Institute of Technology, with higher pay and better research equipment. And he offered her a Swedish citizenship, which she accepted provided she could keep her Austrian one too (which she was allowed). Meitner hon ohad at this time already learned Swedish. It was now she also became involved with the R1 reactor.

Meitner retired from her Stockholm post in 1960 and moved to Cambridge to be closer to family and a larger physics community. There she remained scientifically engaged, attending seminars, mentoring younger physicists, and corresponding with colleagues around the world. She continued speaking publicly on ethical issues in science, emphasizing international cooperation, disarmament, and the humanitarian obligations of researchers.

Accounts from colleagues portray Meitner as:

Deeply principled - opposed to militarization of science; refused the Manhattan Project. Modest and self-effacing -often downplayed her own role and disliked publicity. Intellectually rigorous - Boltzmann's influence shaped her precise analytical style. Kind and supportive - especially toward younger scientists and students. Private and reserved - she lived simply, never married, and devoted much of her energy to physics. Resilient - persevered despite discrimination, exile, and lost opportunities. She avoided bitterness publicly, though she felt private sorrow over professional marginalization and the devastation of European Jewry.

Lise Meitner died in Cambridge in 1968. Her epitaph, written by her nephew Otto Frisch, reads: "A physicist who never lost her humanity."

Lise Meitner's legacy is substantial: one of the central figures in nuclear physics, co-discoverer of nuclear fission, a symbol of integrity in science, and one of the most significant women in the history of physics. In 1997 element 109 was named meitnerium in her honor, symbol Mt.

The Poetry In A Day Party

Poesi på en dag ("Poetry in a Day") is a project by the DIY publisher Författares Bokmaskin ("Authors' Book Machine") by which they invite anyone to submit a poem (max 1 page) to be published in a yearly poetry collection. The day it's published they invite everyone to a poetry party with a bar, mingling and poetry readings from the Poetry in a Day collection.



The bar of the Poetry in a Day party. Decent prices!

The Authors' Book Machine offers to produce books at low costs with their equipment (computers, scanners, copiers, printing machines) and their help from scratch. You may put in as much of your own work as you wish. I get the impression they are technically very cost-competitive and a better choice than any of these "hybrid" publishers floating around. However, you must do your own marketing. The well-known sf author Börje Crona did a number of books through the Authors' Book Machine, and he also took part in the Poetry in a Day project until his demise in 2017. The Book Machine is as far as I can see

very serious and competent and has been running for over 50 years! However, there was a big change this year. For decades the Book Machine has rented a roomy cellar on S:t Eriks Street, but was this year kicked out of it after a long dispute with the condominium association that owns the house, so the poetry party had to be moved to something called the Pygmy Theatre, not far away, a small



The collection



Some played music to their poems.

independent theatre which proved to be rather cosy and worked almost as well. The Book Machine has a new place where they co-reside with an existing printshop on Bergs Street also not far away (as I understood, I didn't pick up the street number).



There were two conferenciers, marked V, here enjoying a poet from the side.

Lots of hopeful poets gathered. It must have been towards 100 there at least parts of the evening, out of ca 150 appearing in the anthology. Bbeer, wine, crisps, sandwiches, pizza slices and other small food was offered in the bar for decent prices (unlike ordinary bars which for me today tend to feel too expensive, so I hardly go to such anymore).

The poets read their work from the small theatre stage through the evening, starting around 5 pm, ending around 9 pm, introduced by first a guy and then a girl (whose names I forgot) from or associated with the Book Machine. I have earlier joined them on the stage as you have seen in earlier reports from

these poetry parties, but I refrained from it this year. I simply don't think I have a good poetry reading voice and there was a long enough queue of willing poets needing the stage much more than me.

There were poems of all sorts offered: long, short, rhymed, free, wild, constrained, romantic, humorous, bad, good... Some were presented with music, some in a very animated style arms waving and shouting, some were quiet almost whispering, but all in all I felt that the average quality was much better than one would expect from a typical "amateur" poetry night. As everyone got just one page all of course made sure to contribute with their very, very best stuff. My contribution was my translation into Swedish of Ukraine's national anthem (see *Intermission* spring 2023) and below that a satirical excerpts from the Russian army's field manual, "If Russians throw a grenade, pull out the pin and throw it back...". It's of course impossible to summarise 160+ pages of often very personal and honest and wild poetry. But a few lines as examples:

Whatever sorrow / the day brings / the night / makes alright

By pseudonym "And If I Fail". And here's an excerpt from one J Månsson:

Is there any adult left who believes in Santa / or that the pig on the Christmas table smiled / as the knife was brought forth

Or here by one L Lindbom, followed by E Åberg:

trees / throws dark shadows / along sparkling snow / a growling is heard afar / a wolf pack hunting for food / a lap owl lightly hoots / from its spruce branch

Earth is your home and with the life you choose to live / you pay the rent

Finally CE Wiberg followed by CJ Cohen:

In one moment a thought and in the next / the afterbirth of this thought, a conclusion / a synthesis expressing just about nothing

Words carry fuel inside them / anything can happen when potent syllables / leave your mouth, your pen, your keyboard

Some was originally in English, but if in Swedish I made a quick translation. Buddy Bengt Björklund was unfortunately missing this evening (but contributed to the collection) though Comet John Benzene Jr still had a jolly night. Left it with a lot of thoughts about the Power of Poetry



One of the poets.

The Moon's Faint glow / shines behind spruce



The audience, mostly poets with contributions to Poetry in a Day.

Smofcon 42

Something called Smofcon 42, a con on running cons, was for the first time held in Stockholm, December 5-7, in the Diesel Workshop, venue for several Swecons (and next year's Swecon), with around 100 attendees of around 130 registered. The majority were from the US and UK (just under 40 each, local Swedes being only third numbering ca 20). Their website at <https://www.smofcon42.com/> today seems to have disappeared!, but if it awakens you'll find the roster there. It should be noted that half a dozen Africans for the Rwanda Worldcon bid were registered, but were denied a Swedish visa. That's very unfortunate! We must all feel ashamed of the Swedish government policies, probably influenced by the xenophobic Sweden Democrats who are not in but supports of the present cabinet. File770 covers it: <https://file770.com/sweden-refuses-african-worldcon-bidders-visas-for-smofcon-42-in-person-attendance/> In short: they imagine that the Worldcon bidders will try to stay in Sweden. Our policies in visa matters have sadly become much more restrictive in recent years.

"Smof" means "Secret Masters of Fandom" and that's what con organisers believe they are. In reality the fans writing, reading and publishing fanzines are and have always been the *true fandom masters!* Conventions are today getting overloaded, bureaucratic, too big and chaotic, diluted by mediafans and clueless folks who have no idea of fandom's history and traditions. I went to Smofcon expecting to hear secret dirty tips of how to do the Perfect Convention, but there wasn't much of that. The program wasn't very informative on con-running, actually. We got anecdotes, some mingling and presentations of future conventions, for instance of future Worldcon bids which you can study here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0oLnkb-s4YdVLW84_8GR9HwcrJLfKbyC

How many cons have I been involved in organising? Trying to count them I landed on...19. About 10 have been the small, regional Nasacon - having ca 60-100 attendees, but the Nasacon 2000 was bigger, at 275. The smallest one was probably Roscon august 1979, hastily organised when Forry Ackerman visited Stockholm, gathering 25-30 fen who were fascinated by all the stories Forry had to tell. (From that on Forry always remembered me, and we said hi meeting on Worldcons.)The biggest one was King-Con in Helsinki and on the ferry going there, getting ca 1500 and the first sf-con in Finland. My task has often been doing PR and press and sometimes leading some program.

As this issue looks like it'll grow, let's go to my main points for getting "towards better sf con".

► Big isn't beautiful. We shouldn't make cons "for everyone"! While no one who wants to come shouldn't be turned away (that's a deadly sin, Lex Nycon!) sf cons are for us fen of literature and fanzines and writing and traditions. Fringefans who are into masquerading and games and movies and TV shows have their own cons, like Comicon and Dragoncon. There are many more of those type of events and they are much bigger than even the Worldcons, so why the heck do those loose folks need our cons for? They just give a twisted idea of sf cons if TV cameras are around! Our cons are basically centred around text and fiction, not games and textiles in flashing colours and increasingly boring (due to too much computer SFX) movies. If we don't try to cater for everyone, cons could move to more manageable sizes.

► We need more fannish program! With this I mean more of light-hearted, playful program items! Sf cons used to have a fan room and a full fan program, but that is today heavily cut down. It's things like: silly games and quizzes,



A panel. I think panels should be prepared better, and debate must be snappier!



As usual I set up my computer (the one that soon wouldn't feel well) in a corner.



Mingling. I hardly knew anyone, except the Swedes and a few Nordics.

fannish sports (like moving a porkpie or a peanut a certain distance), talk about fandom's history, interviews with fandom's dinosaurs, sketches and maybe fannish plays (even fannish musicals have been performed!), exhibitions of fannish items, shared fannish productivity (like a corner for making fanzines - it would be fantastic having typewriters and an old mimeo!), and it'd be super to get things like Bob Shaw's Serious Scientific Talks (Bob is very missed!). Fandom has traditionally been divided into the Sercon (SERious and CONstructive) on one side and the Fannish on the other side. Both are needed. If we only have the sercon side, we'll be bored to death. The creative, inspiring stuff is often found on the fannish side!

►Speed up and better prepare today's boring panels! Those planning con programs today are *lazy and unimaginative*. They decide upon a number of topics and believe this is handled best by just putting a topic down in the program and recruit a number of talking heads. And the panels tend to become slow and boring. They must be better prepared! Each panelist should prepare two or perhaps three messages around the panel topic and at first opportunity present them. Start with presentations of the panelists getting a maximum of 30 seconds to present themselves. The moderator should have a chess clock and shouldn't allow any panelist to talk more than for 60 seconds at a time. And when half the scheduled panel time has passed, the audience should be invited to make comments and ask questions.

►Get rid of the oppressing Code(s) of Conduct (CoC) and the notion that everyone must "feel comfortable". Common sense and the Law of the Land is enough. If you really read a typical CoC it usually boils down to that the concom reserves the right to any oppressive action against any con attendant for any reason at all (e g someone not "feeling comfortable" opens for that). See for instance my analysis of the CoC for 2024 Worldcon in Glasgow, which was horrifying. If you walk around always "feeling comfortable" you are denied challenges, those new irritating angles on stuff that make you think. The purpose of important open debates is to irritate others, make them feel uncomfortable. It's the only way new creative angles can turn up. A life in a cell with padded walls is unworthy! The concept of banning "microaggressions" is dangerous and intolerant. Surely, we must all be able to put up with resulting "microuncomfort".

►Cons should avoid major woke provocations. We're not talking about any MICRO-agression when last summer's Archipelacon forced rainbow lanyards on everyone, no alternatives were offered. Everyone were forced to walk around in town being looked as if they were delegates on a pseudoscience trans-conference. The idea that chromosomes can be changed by a mere declaration is silly and pseudoscience, and to this serious ethical problems like areas that should be reserved for women getting compromised. And we have the extreme provocation of the Irish Worldcon in 2019 when some idiot on the main stage on the biggest program item (the Hugo) thought it was a good idea to in a loud voice officially claim that the genre's greatest magazine editor was a "bloody fascist" (a statement which broke the con's biased CoC, but don't expect the concom to act upon it - in this case). And it doesn't feel right that the LA Worldcon uses AI to root out anyone who may make someone feel the slightest "uncomfortable", preparing for a totally leveled out opinion sphere where those who disagree aren't welcome (despite hypocritically claiming all must be welcome).

►PR and press contacts must be made more efficient. This applies at least to Swedish cons (when I go to foreign cons it's difficult to get a grip of how media covers it) and I note that for typical Swecon there are hardly any newspaper articles about it at all. It has been different when I do the media! (My greatest achievement when I got Nasacon 10 into the national evening news on TV.) It seems Swecon doesn't even have a media strategy and no one does things like press-releases. They need to step up in this department. And not only that: if we get people from media interested, we must be careful about what message to convey. Events like Comicon seems to have no problem to get press and even TV. But of course it all centres on weird people in strange, flashy costumes. I saw a TV news report from a British Worldcon that started with - guess what! - the reporter saying "Beam me up, Scotty!" We should convey a message about that science fiction is



Here the small stage of the Diesel Workshop.

about literature, the future, creativity and keep weird costumes and 13-year-olds absorbed by games and flying saucers away.

►Refuse venues that threatens to check all bags on entry! It's become a fad in recent years, at least for bigger cons. And its so irritating! It's an, obstacle for movement as you hesitate to go out or in, even if you need to. Constant bag-checking is so annoying. Terrorists and mass-shooters have

created the mental environment behind this (and have methods to avoid bag-checking BTW). We can't live our lives constantly being checked. It's against the personal freedom that sf fans have in the DNA. You must be able to go in and out of a site without being treated as a potential Hamas member or something.

► It's not a problem limited to sf cons - but bheer is getting too expensive! I don't know what to do about it (unless we could change government and lower alcohol taxes, but that would be a bit ambitious for a con to achieve...). In the good ole' times the concom would negotiate with the venue to keep bheer prices low and would beforehand announce what a pint would cost, but that doesn't seem to be a priority now. Blog is important for fandom! Since science fiction is a literature that expands borders and doesn't trample in old tracks, fans tend to be very individualistic freethinkers, hating being nannied. And what happened with the old style of room parties? "Parties" are today just tables in the regular con area.

Well, that's how I think sf cons today could be improved or what's wrong with them. But little of that surfaced on this "concon" (con about cons). There's room for improvement for the cons about *literature and the fandom*, dealing with about sf (not "sci-fi"), where you get *memberships* (not buying "tickets") and there's nods to fandom's history and no biased "CoCs" attempting to silence dissent. We are *fans of letters* in an interesting *cultural movement* (that academics have begun picking up in later years!) and not "nerds" or "geeks". The crowds in costumes or glued to gaming screens or TV shows aren't us - we fandom. We're comfortable to allow micro-this-or-that, and are not aiming for conformity.

Make cons like they used to be...

AI-lien InVAIsion

My old computer let out a couple of coughs and then went the dreaded Blue Screen of Death on me. For days I tried to awaken the machine, but it refused to comply. A sort of emergency restoration disk (a USB today) might have helped, but I had none - when it was time to make one I didn't have a free USB stick and later never got to it. But as the computer was old, the plastic had begun to crack, I finally decided to get me a new machine. Devices with built in AI support had begun to appear, so why not join the forces that in a decade or two will turn us all into paperclips...

I first found a somewhat expensive laptop from ASUS, and read reviews, specifications and so on (I did that on my net-connected phone). But then I stumbled upon a special deal from a local electronics chain, a much cheaper machine but according to reviews and specs practically as AI strong as the first one (same CPU with AI). What matters is that AI machines have an NPU (Neural Processing Unit), here called Snapdragon and built into the CPU. Back in the days computers had snappy, easy names like IBM PC, Commodore 64, Apple II, ABC80, but today Samsung probably engaged their whole PR department to come up with:

Samsung Galaxy Book4 Edge X1P/16/256 Copilot+

It looked like a bargain at €550, and it was down €300 from ordinary price (they claimed). The machine has local AI capacity, something like ChatGPT inside, but weaker. The local AI (the NPU) connects to and cooperate with a net-based AI (probably ChatGPT or a derivative) to make it stronger. Much of this has been written on this machine, but I haven't had it long enough to fully evaluate what the AI functions do. (And my old data was safe. I had to get an USB hub - it was only €18 - since my new Wunderwaffe had too few USB ports. I took out the SSD, put it in a small cabinet and hooked it up, and my old data was right there.) This is what I've found out yet about the AI:

► It all goes through Copilot, a Microsoft system. An "AI-powered assistant", I read "that helps users with tasks by understanding natural language, automating routines, generating content (text, images, code), summarizing info, and providing insights across personal and work contexts. an intelligent partner, integrating web data with user-specific



The presentation of future Worldcon bids, from Australia, Nuremberg and Rwanda (by link as the so called Sweden Democrats won't give them visas).



To the right of space is the AI key. Pressing it starts AI functions.

information (emails, files, chats) to boost productivity, streamline workflows, and help with research, creativity, and decision-making". We'll see how all this bragging works in practicality.

► You press the AI-key on the keyboard and an AI window opens. As with Chat GPT you can ask it anything. I found out you can ask it computer support questions even when you're off-line - which is great when you have your usual computer problems.

► I ask the AI to describe his strengths. It sees itself as an "I" and answered:

"I can:

- Combine information from multiple sources
- Explain complex topics
- Compare options
- Spot patterns
- Help you think through decisions

This is the "intelligent partner" part. I'm extremely good at producing:

- Text (emails, essays, reports, stories, code)
- Images (within safety rules)
- Structured content (tables, outlines, plans)"

What it won't do is to actually manipulate your system, write to or copy files or change configuration, but it produces instructions for you to do it yourself. You have to manually download any results it produces. I guess this is for security reasons. Interfering with your system may come later when it's Making Paperclips Time...

Beside having information support when I write things I'm especially interested in:

- Translation. An AI is supposed to know lots of languages!
- Dictation. An AI can pick up on your style of speaking and turn into text. I wonder if speaking out my short stories will change the style of them? (Haven't tried it yet. Must get a better microphone.)
- Code generating. My AI says it can produce code in virtually any computer language. I've never been good at programming, and maybe this could be a shortcut to be able to produce something useful, if needed? It may be a later project. (My top coding performance yet was producing a Locus spreadsheet - it was that long ago! - calculating relativistic time and speed effects. It took me some time and I was very proud of it. Today brother AI I will do it in a second, I guess.)

I should have more to report in future *Intermissions*. It's interesting to join the AI revolution. And don't worry! When you have an AI having your back nothing can go wrong! (#...

Mailing & APA Comments

Evelyn Leeper: Alas, in the US, the ICE Age seems to be permanent. :(

Ed: *Unfortunately*

Wolf von Witting: I received to my delight and surprise *Intermission*#161, thank you! There is one issue I chiefly like to address. The dispute whether or not there is an ongoing insect extinction. As a former bee keeper, I'd have a bias towards agreeing with the side who believe it is a reality. Not the least because the Chinese have resorted to hand pollination. Humans and bugs don't get along well. It rarely is as dramatic as in *Starship Troopers*, because we are already the best killing machine one can imagine. I have no sympathy for the insectoid species and I have no desire to eat them. But birds do. As weird as it may sound, but if bugs go extinct, they only go a few paces ahead of us. We will be next. With this in mind I've been interested in ongoing research related to the problem. I'm a believer.

But my worst experience in this context was at a wedding outside Stockholm, less than 10 years ago. It was in a forest multi-purpose house with 20+ adjacent cottages to spend the night. In the morning I went outside to stretch. It was a nice day, sunshine and warm August air. But something felt very off. Look and see what isn't there. Nobody else had noticed it, but as soon as I mentioned it, everyone else also felt it being a very spooky forest. Apart from plants, it was dead. No insects, no spiders, no birds. Yes, it was near Stockholm, so there's the explanation. Where we have humans, we kill off the insects as fast as we can without drawing breath. Sure there may still be trillions of them around in forests and wilderness around the world. But exterminating them all is done in a day, if we want to do so. Because they are alien and different from us. I hate in particular the Green Shield Bug, because it creates a nasty smell if we kill them or just annoy them. Can't imagine birds eating them. So away with them and all the mosquitos! Yippie-kay-o!"

Ed: *The notion that all - or substantial number of - insects may go extinct is silly and totally counter-intuitive. Trillions upon trillions of little black dots swarming everywhere won't go away. They'll even survive a nuclear war! But industrial, monoculture beekeeping may locally find fewer bees than desired, especially as diseases have struck many beehives.*

Pascal Thomas: Hi Ahrvid, I don't often find the time to read *Intermission*, and even in the case of this issue #160 I did go quickly through some of the articles. As usual, you're too optimistic about the war in Ukraine, I'd like to be able to believe you, and trust in the upcoming defeat of the neo-soviet fascism, but... Your convention reports are full of, er, opinion, but after all that's what makes them entertaining, as lists of panels can get boring. One thing about the photos: you could use fewer of them, but please leave wider margins, have pity on our poor eyes. The article on early robot fiction is full of interesting research. It's interesting to

find out about this, although of course I don't see myself reading even a tenth of those works. Well, keep up the enthusiasm, and best regards from ... well, tonight it's Bulgaria, but I'll be back in Airbusland soon enough.

Ed: *I need photos to remind me what was going on, and each picture also saves me 1000 words... (But I'll cut down on photo usage in this's event reports). As for Ukraine, reasons for certain optimism rests on that both the Russian economy and the Russian army are in much, much worse shape than many realise.*

Leigh Edmonds: Dear Ahrvid. Thanks for including me on the list for *Intermission 160* which I really enjoyed reading. You come up with many interesting things to write about and do it well.

Your opening comments about Ukraine getting the Gripen E was very interesting. I saw something about that on the news here but not many of the details. Also, I didn't know that the order was for Gripen Es rather than Gripen Cs. I hope you are right that Ukraine will get surplus Gripen Cs in the meantime because it will add something new into their air defense and offense capabilities. Since you wrote your piece about this the news has been announced that Canada has cancelled its order for F-35s and will also be getting Gripens.

Back when Australia was deliberating on its new generation fighter the main contenders were the Gripen, Rafale and F-35 and many still think that the final choice to go for the F-35 was wrong. I don't know whether or not that decision was right and the only way to find out is in a shooting war, which I hope never happens. However, the number ordered for the RAAF is lower than the number of F-18s acquired which the F-35 replaced, which was lower than the number of Mirage IIIOs the air force had before that. It always seems to me that reducing the number of aircraft in the fleet in the hope that increased capability will stand in for quantity is not so good because the technology for blowing up aircraft is increasing too so maybe more aircraft are still needed. In any case, the Ukraine order for 100 to 150 Gripens should give them sufficient to deal with the Russians in the future. It also occurs to me that perhaps the cost of training pilots to go into these aircraft is a significant percentage of the cost of the aircraft themselves and I don't know how well Ukraine is going with first class fighter pilots.

Your History Corner this time was fascinating, well researched and written. I was going to ask you if I could have a version for publication in the AJFR but then I realized that the article was about science fiction rather than fandom. Anyhow, I really enjoyed reading it.

For me the highlight of this issue was your report on Luncon. Partly because it reminded me of a History of Technology conference that Valma and I attended in Uppsala back in the early 1990s. It was held in what I recall as the town hall and was a magnificent time. As well as the conference there were tours to places like Stora, drinkies in a technology museum in Stockholm and the conference banquet in a castle somewhere nearby. There were hundreds of attendees and it was great to meet so many European historians there. Also being held in the public building gave it quite a different feeling to conferences and conventions held in hotels.

Anyhow, I was to comment on your convention report rather than my only week spent in Sweden. I thought your coverage of the convention was very well done and managed to convey some of the feeling of what it was like to be there. All the photos really helped bring it to life for me. Your comments about the two halls interested me and the photos you included made me feel that I would much prefer presenting in the smaller lecture-theatre environment of the smaller room which looked very pleasant.

Your mention of the panel on Nordic fandom made me wonder if sessions were recorded and might be made available on the interweb because that topic would have interested me if it was available. Then it occurred to me to wonder what language the panel was conducted in. Then it occurred to me that I don't even know about the differences and similarities in the various Nordic languages. It's a topic on which my ignorance is boundless. (As an aside, this reminds me of an occasion at a conference in Hungary some years later at which a German historian, after listening to American, Australian and British speakers, wished that all three of us would speak the same language.)

Thanks again for this issue, I look forward to the next one.

Ed: *I don't think the sessions were recorded, unless someone in the audience did it privately. I think this time most panels and a majority of the program was in English due to many attendees from abroad and foreign GoHs. Languages: Finnish is from a different language group and is out of the game, but as Finns are taught some Swedish in schools - their second national language - many will understand at least basic Swedish. Icelandic is on our language group, but is mostly incomprehensible as they've kept Viking era grammar and vocabulary. But Icelanders are taught some Danish in school (Iceland was Danish up to WWII) so many will understand "Scandinavian". My AI tells me Danish vocabulary is 70-80% similar to Swedish. Written Danish is fairly easy for a Swede, spoken is more difficult due to Danish pronunciation. Norwegian vocabulary is 80-90 similar to Swedish and is easy to understand for a Swede The popular Fredrik Skavlan on Swedish TV is Norwegian, but as a matter of principle he is still subtitled... I've heard nothing yet of when Gripen Cs will arrive in Ukraine but I'm sure it will happen. From what I find Canada is interested in buying 88 Gripens. Cheaper than the US alternative and made for cold climate, short runways and easy turn-around. We also offer all software source code and that the airplanes will be maintained, upgraded and have final assembly in Canada (creating 10 000+ Canadian aerospace jobs - there have been talks with the Canadian firm Bombardier). Also, British Rolls-Royce has a new better jet engine that Gripen could use, and they are ready to set up the assembly of it in Canada. The US isn't glad if they are sidestepped. I haven't seen Canada formally signing any contracts, so feedback e'll have to wait. Trump will do all he can to stop it...*

Henry Grynsten: Your Wild Ideas #66 is about parallel universes. I know they speculate about such stuff in cosmology and quantum mechanics - but I have no way of knowing if such speculations are realistic or not. And neither have you, so you move on to describe how it has been covered in movies. We get a lot of movie and TV series suggestions, I haven't seen most of them. I'm more interested in a subset of parallel universes, in the form of alternate history. In those we follow the other way when "reality splits". Hitler *did* invade

England. Kennedy *wasn't* assassinated. Etc **Over to the parallel universe where Henry does his best to argue... *"the consensus is [AIs] are bad [at maths]"* Never heard such a thing and I have studied AIs far longer than you. You earlier got a PDF from me of an ongoing writing project - check the AI section last. There you find flawless, complicated AI-performed maths! Computers are, if anything, masters of pure logic and maths *is* pure logic.** *"outside {their fields} scientists are no better than other people"* Often true, but its complicated. Acquaintance with the scientific method



As usual, I followed the New Year's Eve fireworks over Stockholm's inner harbour.

indicates scientists are better in what we may call "rational evaluation" in areas where you need to think, but not in other areas.** *"[Neural nets apply to consciousness] that is not the consensus. AI researchers are not experts in consciousness studies."* Sorry, but you know little about the consensus and AI researchers constantly touch the subject. Experts or not, they have deep practical experience from systems on the borderline to consciousness.** *"volcanoes have always been around, so why haven't they always caused global warming"* Problem is that output from volcanoes isn't constant. It comes in random bursts, perhaps millions of years apart, and some of these bursts are extremely strong.** *"[CO2] acidifies the water"*, but just a little.** *"Plant cover has limits"* Everything had limits, but we're not near any limits for plant growth yet, and the 2% yearly increase NASA satellites see is a very, very strong growth. There's definitely the prospect plants'll increase consumption of CO2.** *"Why do [scientists] have to say [they support IPCC's hypothesis]?"* Because making statements is the way to show if you support something or not. IPCC claims they support them. Therefore they must say so. But they *do not!*** *"There is near-universal consensus (97–99.9%) in the peer-reviewed scientific literature that the climate is changing as a result of human activity"* 1) This says nothing about that changes are big. I too think there are some but *small* changes. 2) It says nothing about that it'll cause disaster.** *"that of the over 33,000 climate change papers that are published every year"* Pfui! There are 1.5+ million papers yearly in physics alone, and nearly 1 million in chemistry. There's a lot to pick cherries from. Percentages in IPCCs claims has actually been checked. Papers that support their IPCC hypothesis are just about 3%, others only support incomplete parts of their thesis.** *"Niagara Falls regarding the amount of evidence that's falling down on you"* Most just turns into vapor. Vaporware!** *"that doesn't account for feedback* Such "feedback" is uneven, speculative. We can't count on it. There are ambiguities regarding causality, processes, magnitudes. CO2's straight effects are almost saturated.** *"If there were systematic errors, the data would cluster around the mean"* Only if those handling the data are impartial. But "climate scientists" are biased due to the Spirit of the Times.** *"climate scientists know about it and have taken account of that"* It's only good if they are impartial, but they aren't.** *"Glaciers melting, no connection to climate change?"* In some cases glaciers withdrawing isn't because of climate factors. The snows of Kilimanjaro is e g shrinking not because of climate but because the air around the mountain have become dryer, which is due to decrease of forests and increase in cultivated land. Less precipitation and lower air humidity means less snow since it there the snow comes from. Generally we get some glacier melting because of the long-trend bounce back from the "Little Ice Age" ending two centuries ago. ** *"Or are you saying thousands of researchers somehow missed [documentation from USSR]"* Probably. Old USSR archives tended to be open a few years in the 1990s, but under Putin they closed again and they are mostly impossible to access.** *"Maybe one percent in Sweden are servants or domestic workers"* So you say only 1% of all Swedes are employed? Every employment is doing a service.** *"what problem do you have with unconscious household robots?"* It may not be enough for complicated tasks.** *"the peak years of Apollo, the program accounted for almost 4.5% of the entire US federal budget"* But only for two years. For the ten years of the whole Apollo project it averages at ca 2%. And only some of it was for Apollo. NASA had other activities too. You try to boost the claim with expression like "entire", but the US federal budget was relatively small (18% of GDP in the 1960s, compared to Sweden presently at 51% - state and local.) So it was 1/50th of a budget being less than 1/5th of GDP)** *"[What else merits 4%] of the entire budget for a whole country for metaphysical things like visions, inspiration"* How about defence! For metaphysical things like security, neighbourly cooperation, creating a community spirit etc.** *"[Why] first building something else to get [wanted result]?"* Breakthrough findings tend to arrive when you look for *something else!* If you limit yourself to just look for A, you'll miss B and C. Spinoff tech comes when you build something else.** *"IBM writes"* Yeah, IBM writes about themselves... The 360 was originally still a single transistors system, when integrated circuits were the cutting edge. (Wiki: "System/360 family...packed more transistors onto a circuit card".) The reason IBM is patting IBM on the back isn't hi-tech development, but that System/360 grew out to a whole *family of compatible systems*, which would save money and be good for interoperability. (Compare to intro of the IBM PC two decades later. Nobody claims IBM PC was a technological marvel, but it opened for lots of compatible machines and set a standard.) It was an administrative leap but not technical innovation.** The main contribution by the military was in aerospace and rockets, which is also NASA's speciality and usually they share resources.** *"[The military was claimed to] "research computers in its race with the USSR"*. There was no urge to compete with the USSR in computers. Soviet "computers" were lousy. And note the problems with EMPs that limited IC use for the military. But ARPAnet, coming in the very, very end of the 1960s, can truly said to be real development Packet-switching was a concrete important innovation, but I its main early use was in the universities.** *"We? Is that a royal we?"* No, an editorial "we".** *"I just report what science has found"* No, you use Internet as an enormous cherry tree garden, and pick and choose among things you look for. Virtually anything can be found on the net, among the several million science papers produced yearly, not to mention things people more or less made up. And you sifted and found what you want, you claim it's "science". Today one must combine looking for info with thinking for yourself. Does this or that sound *reasonable?* You seldom make any attempts to present your own thinking! Example: "95 % of global soil is not a local problem", you claim. Everyone should

clearly see that 95% of the world's soil is *not* in danger off erosion. Anyone believing that is stupid.**"So why were the social skills only useful when the men were away?" Bad phrasing. I meant social skills were useful, not limited to when the men were away hunting. **"very interesting and highly relevant are the many similarities [between 3rd Reich, USSR and US]" Those similarities are superficial. The differences overshadow the relatively small similarities, and that's why its irrelevant to talk about the US of A in the same context as Nazi-Germany or the USSR (though one Donny Trump does his best to imitate them). That people actually have fair elections for their government and rule of law prevails - is such a *fundamental difference* that little else matters.**Yes, I know about Denys Davydov. He could be added to a list of good sources about Putin's war.

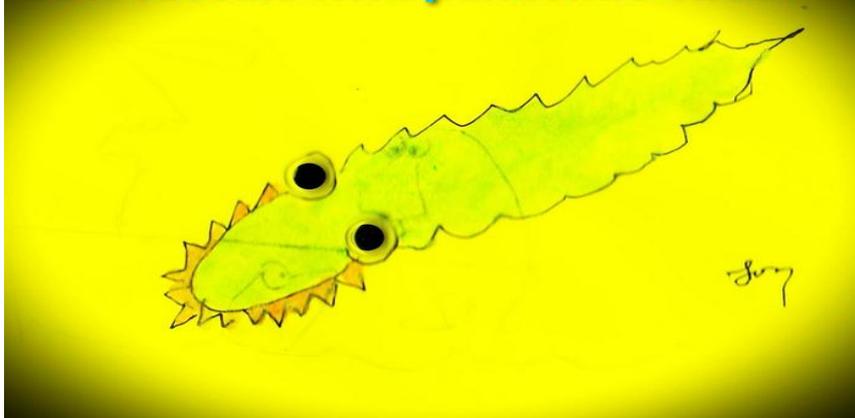
William McCabe: You're right about Trump's "peace plan" (really Putin's...). It's best use was as toilet paper. Even his MAGA supporters are against his Ukraine policies, polls show. The revised 20-point plan may be acceptable - but not for Putin! **"European conventions... don't speak English apart from the formal con functions." Swedish cons speak a fair amount of English. There are usually foreign GoHs and perhaps 30 foreign attendees. Up to half the program is in English.**The F16s are on full use in Ukraine - targeting long range drones, dropping glide bombs - and Ukrainian pilots seem to have made the transition from MIGs. (As I understand it, there are Ukrainians who have trained and right now are training on Gripen too.)**A lot of what you say about early magazines and other publications are of course true. Many things we see today, started much earlier, on a smaller scale than today but still. For instance in Britain, in the 18th Century, there was a hardcore "scandal press" which would make the tabloids of today blush! I've studied the old publishing industry a lot. (It began when I in the early 1990s studied journalism and had just discovered the imaginative pop-science-etc 1682 magazine *Relationes Curiosae*, a bit skiffy-like.) Publishing history has often been covered here in Intermission, and I'll continue to dig into it.

Heath Row: It's good that you keep yourself up to date on what happens in space!**They seem to have a lot of mediafandom events in Portugal too.**I think AIs are used much more in producing fiction than many admit. Leaving AI prompts in the finished texts indicates it isn't even proofread! I use AIs to 1) find and check facts (being aware of that AIs may fabricate things!), 2) to proofread, 3) make difficult calculations and 4) sometimes to give me ideas for plots. But I take care of the finished text myself.**If AIs produce fiction it should be considered as "orphan" works. It's definitely not "copies" of the work of others, just *inspired* by it, so it doesn't go under copyright. Newspapers, big publishers etc are - as I have explained - wrong about this. They just chance claims in an attempt to expand copy+right (the right to make copies, not just being inspired) and cash in.

Garth Spencer: Interesting calendar notes!
Belgium is right in the middle of dealings with the frozen Russian funds of about €300B. The Belgians fear being sued by the Russians who have put a lot of pressure on them (one claim is that they threatened the Belgian Prime Minister with physical violence!). The latest is that the EU has decided upon an interest-free €90B loan to Ukraine backed by the frozen assets enough to keep Ukraine afloat for two years."AI-generated mediocre science fiction narrated by AI-generated voices and illustrated with sometimes absurd AI-generated pictures". Where

do you find that? Basically, I agree that AI-generated stories isn't exactly Nobel Prize material.**In Sweden the most popular re-enactments center around the Vikings, but medieval times also works (swords etc, before firearms). There's a big sword-waving Medieval Week every summer on the Gotland island.**There are of course parallels between different revolutions or crises, but we can't draw too hard conclusions from it. It was Mark Twain who said "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes".**I don't think we're going into a World-wide depression. The effects of Putin's war have this far been relatively mild (exception Russia, on the brink of economic collapse) and that also goes for Trump's tariffs and other stupid ideas from Agent Orange. But as both Putin and Trump are a bit unpredictable, anything is possible. The rise of AI has a huge potential to *increase* productivity!**The economics of "neoliberal" is usually beneficial. Climbing in the production value chain increases production worth, as simpler production goes abroad (which benefits them too!) and costs decrease. More "security" for the workforce comes with a cost: more difficulties finding jobs. Harder to fire also makes it harder to hire! It's to a high degree the strong wokish trend (in universities and media, especially) that has created the "enraged constituency" that gave us Trump. The woke silliness is better counteracted at home and at the source - biased journalism, higher (=lower...) education... - and has no place in economic or foreign policies!**Time to sign off! See ya' in nextish! Interesting things happen in the world and there's always interesting history to uncover. NS To this outrageous editorial mutterings to improve your blood flow...
Comments? Comatose? Combustions? Comets? Composts? [Due to mail fuss CC: toahrvid@atomicmail.io](mailto:toahrvid@atomicmail.io)

LON reveals next pandemic virus:



Слава Україні!

The Murdered Master Mage

George Phillies
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Writing

My New Year's Revolution, err, Resolution

From "Do not call up that which you cannot put down."

"Finish that which you began"

I have a series of novels to finish
TZA 55,000 words negotiating on rights. Title secret until then

Terrorforming earth 1920s alien invasion via terraforming, complete with cowgirl versus giant spiders. 26,700 words

Practical Exercise sequel 37,000 words

Disunion 15900 words

Working title only: "The Eddorian Lensman, a tale of Christian redemption" 19,400 words

No Tears for a Princess 89,000 words

The Gathering Storm 7000 words

Indian Summer 102,000 words

Invasion Now 13,000 words SF Authors versus aliens "The host and his wife carry Barret 0.50s."

Invasion Tibet pre WW1 70,000 words

Thousand Isles Sequel 23,000 words

The Merchant Adventurers 55,000 words

Small Giant Class Liberation Army 6,000 words

The Inspector 2200 words

Ultragirl 3000 words

I will make progress. Honest

Now, if I were Chris Nuttall, it would be a nice set of projects for the year, but I am not Superman in disguise.

N3F Matters

Comments

Cover: A beautiful bit of artwork, though the doorways in the middle of the cliff are a bit puzzling.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel: Sympathies on your minor difficulties. The airship was an amusing hoax. A large pothole would have swallowed the bus. That was a small pothole.

I do remember Commando Cody – Sky Marshal of the Universe. My vague memory is that it had been preceded by Captain Z-Ro. And was followed by Rocky Jones-Space Ranger.

Archive MidWinter: Ah, yes, Russian computers. Once upon a time there was a Russian Academician who proved that for integrated circuits three-level logic was more efficient than two-level logic. The specific conditions under which his claim was true were ignored. So when I was a postdoc at UCLA the

key electronic gadget had a mixture of two- and tri-level logic components. The trilevel components used different voltages than standard TTL logic components did. The TTL chips got extremely hot. The designers solved this problem by using mil-grade ICs, which would run at 110C. At least for a while.

Vinyl LPs are reviving, so hang on, and your chances of finding a collector will increase. I have two large collections, board wargames and SF books, and found a host for each of them when I pass on.

Intermission: There are people knocking the Gripen because it is not the current ultimate in ultratech. This ignores the modern detail that the only country Sweden is likely to need to fight uses Russian technology, because it is Russia, and Russian technology is a tad bit limited.

Snow Poster Township: I hope that your move is advancing safely and successfully.

R. A. I. L. The zine fest description was fascinating. Curiously, when the N3F was founded the word was 'fanmag'; fanmag was replaced with fanzine rather quickly.

At the advanced graduate level, you can turn programs off, but restarting them with any quality is not trivial. On the other hand, Washington has apparently caught on to the research grant overhead rate racket, which allows administrators to feather their nests and tell tall tales about general support for research.

Brownian Motion: The Talossa LARP is certainly a different idea. You mean people in the late iron age did *not* have internet?

The Jade Ring was a fine tale. You should polish it and publish it.

Esmeralda County Line: Sympathies on travel problems. As an alternative to Saint Tommy, note Willis's Arcane Detective series. Saint Tommy improves as you advance through the

series. ... bloated college industry... We have a lot of third-rate universities with very low academic standards.

Samizdat: Nice front page illo. Someplace there is a university that recently discovered that in addition to remedial math for entering students they had to add a remedial remedial math to bring the students up to the middle school math level. When last I checked, my alma mater required calculus to enter. No calculus, no entrance, and no remedial math course.

Thank you for the material on Butcher. I read his first two books, and moved over to Dan Willis. Sue Denver's werewolf detective also good.

Good to see that you have made some progress on at least one project. Early reviews of Huge finalists will be appreciated. We routinely are happy to publish several reviews of the same book.

Brandy Hall: Alternative History as currently constituted is locking itself into a very narrow trope. The Eclipse tetralogy does deal with Alternative History, except I introduce a radical new idea: Instead of diverging from a single event, historical timelines can converge, so the presents are very similar, but the distant pasts are not. Thank you for your comments on my writing.

The Pastiche, Continued

"A porter, he, is here." Pamela said. She scooped up several of Mother's suitcases and led the porter and the other suitcases up the gangplank, leaving behind Mumford and a mass of luggage.

As she walked away, Pam traced Mumford hauling his own suitcases across the deck. Surprisingly, Smythe had helped him. She had

no trouble listening to their conversation without charges she is not prone to extramarital being noticed. dalliances.)

(I see,) went Mumford, (that you've met her, too.) (Now, look, I'm supposed to escort her at the Captain's party tomorrow, and if everything goes well afterwards\ldots)

(Oh, merciful heavens, not her again!) answered Smythe.

(Those were my thoughts, too, though she is a lady, not like some people you meet in this business. I'd still rather find a Goan winged constrictor in my bed than her in the next cabin,) said Mumford

(It seems,) answered Smythe, (that we have certain tastes in common. At least, a certain distaste in common.)

(Sounds good to me. And her? I think she likes to trample people, just for fun,) said Mumford (You, of course, don't view protecting visiting dignitaries of great importance to the Confederation from the depredations of private citizens as a part of your duties?) asked Mumford half-seriously.

(You also suffered at her hands, I take it? After we get these bags moved, perhaps we can discuss this in more relaxed circumstances. The establishment has a fine bar. Shall we? After unpacking our friends?) asked Smythe. (If you commit suicide, Mumford, I have one less problem in an overcrowded life,) came Smythe's sardonic thoughts.

(Now that I can agree to. Though don't get me wrong, I'd rather trust her with...) His thoughts trailed off as the two men moved inside a psi-block. (Okay, Smythe, a hint like that I can take.) The two men leaned further back in their deck chairs, watching a pair of brightly colored bats chasing insects in the afternoon sun. (But, Smythe,) returned Mumford persistently, (what if the Senator wants to? It's not exactly unknown, after all. Or does Pam know when to stay away?)

* * * * *

Smythe and Mumford sat nursing their drinks, listening to the rhythmic throb of the ship's engines as they watched the marsh drift by. (Mumford, I am not in the habit of prying into my clients' private, ummh, affairs. Miss (Now,) commented Mumford, (the Senator, she's Morgan is assuredly that discrete. She'd better a class looking broad---and don't go lecturing me be. She knows more Confederation secrets than about what I/we do on our own time. You know half the Rectors. But I am absolutely certain that perfectly well I can't get through whatever blocks she never reads the Senator's mind,) Smythe you guys give her, no matter what her mind is focusing on.) answered. Mumford's images of the Senator's gentle curves. (What? The lady isn't resistant to probes, not without your help. And you can't stop Pam any more than I can. You've got something psionic that stops Pam-baby? I don't believe it,)

(I believe,) answered Smythe, not entirely primly in tone, (that unlike some of my other

Mumford snorted.

(Mumford, Miss Morgan is not arbitrarily powerful. A good mechanical or chemical shield---not commercial junk---will stop her in her tracks. The Senator is protected from her by something far more powerful: the Aybite of Inwit.) Smythe indulged himself with a pause. (The pangs of conscience. Pam doesn't think it would be right to read the Senator's mind, so she doesn't.)

(Her? That little---well, not so little anymore- demon? She has a conscience? Since when? No, you're right. I was with her once, never you mind when, and there was this guy about her age who she seemed to like. A lot. He didn't notice her. But he didn't have any shielding. She could have fixed him so he would have come running every time she even considered snapping her fingers. She didn't. And she would've been furious if I'd taken care of it for her,) noted Mumford.



R.A.I.L. #10

January 2026

R.A.I.L. #10

January 2026

Adrian Kresnak

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Hello everyone!

New Year, New Adventures! That is to say, my January has been surprisingly busy. So much to keep track of, but it's all good. I went to a reception at the MSU museum to open a new exhibit about AI and misinformation. And I've got a cough that won't go away...

My story is in **Eldritch Science**. As you might have already seen, my story was in the January issue. I submitted this to the 2024 contest. The story is about a superpowered detective investigating the suspicious failures of some power-dampening collars. The premise was inspired by how some villains in X-Men comics seem to have an endless supply of the things. Money means nothing in comics, but *someone* is buying the devices from *some* manufacturer. It amused me to think of the supply chain having some trouble.

And speaking of the X-Men...

The **Age of Revelation** event officially finished December 31, 2025. My opinion is that the main plotline was fine. Not good, not bad. I wasn't following the MacKay/Stegman X-Men run to begin with, so by the finale issue I just thought "They paused *all* the X-Men comics for this?"

That said, while the main plot was just fine, the setting/premise was fun. I was glad a lot of the tie-in comics went their own way and explored the kind of plots we're unlikely to get in the main continuity. (Cloak and Dagger getting married and raising a daughter, for example.)

My **New Year Resolutions** are to read more, write more, and send more postcards. I'll keep you updated on how it's going!



...Happy New Year!

Welcome to the 35th issue of *Samizdat* and Happy New Year! Here's to hoping that 2026 is a better year than 2025 for us all.

Let's sum up 2025. On April 1, 2025 I was notified that I was part of the Department of Health's reduction in force and put on paid administrative leave that extended until July 2025, when I was officially dismissed. I continue to look for a paid job. (If anyone knows of a position in the Washington D.C. area (or remote) for a writer, public relations specialist, or education policy analyst, please let me know.)



In fandom, I was elected Secretary of the Washington (DC) Science Fiction Association (for which I hold the record of the most number of years as secretary). I chaired Capclave, the WSFA convention, in September with Guests of Honor Joe and Gay Haldeman and Naomi Kritzer. For N3F I revived the *Origin* zine, changed the name slightly to *Origins*, extended the focus to the history of pre-21st century fandom, science fiction, and science, and produced three issues, so far.



News of Books

...Paperbacks Reach Last Chapter

by Samuel Lubell

The pages of the mass market paperback book may have reached “The End”.

[*Publishers Weekly*, on December 12](#), reported that U.S. sales of mass market paperbacks fell 84% in 20 years, from 131 million books in 2004 to 21 million in 2024 (with sales in 2025 through October, just 15 million). Mass market sales were down 13.7% in 2024 when just 4 percent of books sold were mass market paperbacks (according to Circa Book Scan). By contrast, ebook sales were up 3% over 2023 and Hardcover 7.4%.

Mass market paperbacks started in 1939 as books that could fit in a pocket. For just 25 cents, a reader could get a reprint with the same words as a more expensive hardcover. At their height of popularity, mass market paperbacks greatly outsold other formats with a few selling in the millions. In 1979, people bought 387 million mass market paperbacks compared to 82 million hardcovers and 59 million trade paperbacks. In 1996, mass market paperbacks sold over \$1 billion copies. Mass market books were not just sold in bookstores but at grocery stores and newsstands and wherever magazines and newspapers were sold (and using the same network of dealers).

At first, paperback publishers bought rights from the publishers of hardcovers. Then publishers began publishing both formats with the mass market paperbacks coming out around a year after the hardcover. Many genre books were mass market originals, and, unless they did very well, never came out in hardcover. It was a major milestone for many authors when their books came out in hardcover first, instead of mass market.

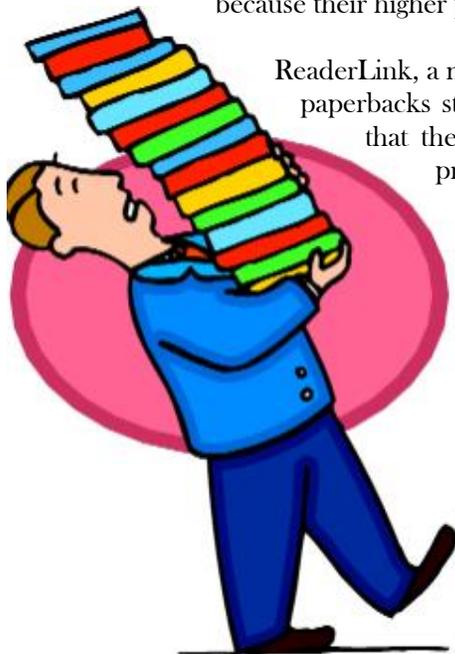
So, why the decline? *Publishers' Weekly* speculates that rising costs hurt the mass market, especially as publishers did not want to raise the price above \$9.99. The already small profit margins grew smaller with the increasing costs of paper. Also, sales declined due to competition from ebooks and other electronic entertainments. People are not reading as much, so there is no longer a mass market for paperbacks. Trade paperbacks are surviving because their higher price point means that they can sell fewer copies, yet still make a profit.



ReaderLink, a major book distributor, has announced that they will no longer handle mass market paperbacks starting in 2026. Major department stores like Walmart and Target have decided that the profit margin on books was not worth it as the space could be put to more profitable use (note that many magazines have also died and their spaces near cashiers are now mostly special editions).

This will hurt science fiction and fantasy authors in several ways.

- First, readers who might have taken a chance on a new author in an \$8.99 mass market paperback will be much more reluctant to pay twice that for a trade paperback or even more for a hardcover. While ebooks remain, it will be a lot harder for quality new writers to be recognized in the flood of unedited and AI-written ebooks.

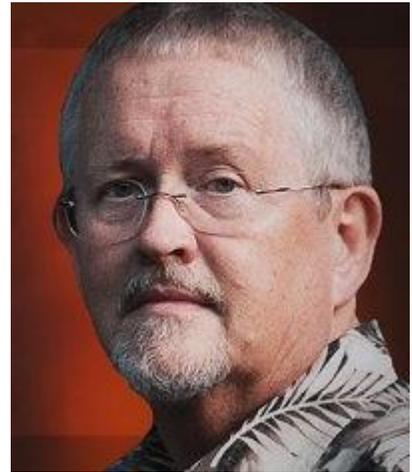


- Second, the loss of the mass market format will further hurt the backlist as publishers won't have a smaller format to keep books for years after their initial release. Most hardcovers are bought in the first few months with the unsold copies remaindered at a steep discount.
- Third, readers in their teens and 20s, just developing their adult spending habits, will see the hardcovers and trades as too expensive for them. There will also be fewer opportunities to see books at the grocery or department stores; they would have to make a special trip to the few remaining bookstores (or shop online).
- Fourth, it will shrink the number of books in print since fewer titles are available in trade PB than were, until recently, in mass market.
- Fifth, increasingly books will only be available for a brief period in hardcover with only a few going on to trade paperbacks and readers who do not pick up the book during that window will be unable to obtain a print copy.

...Author Spotlight: Orson Scott Card

by Samuel Lubell

There was a time when Orson Scott Card was my favorite author. In the 1980s he was producing hit after hit with *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead* winning back to back Hugos and the first few *Alvin Maker* books earning major attention. But then, something happened and the later books in these series lost the magic of his earlier ones. And, he went back to the *Ender* series too many times, at least in my view, producing an entire separate related series that retold the earlier books from a different viewpoint and then books on the earlier wars that were the backstory to *Ender* (meaning the readers already knew what had to happen in those books). Looking at a list of his published books, I see several that I did not know about, meaning I had stopped seeking out his books.

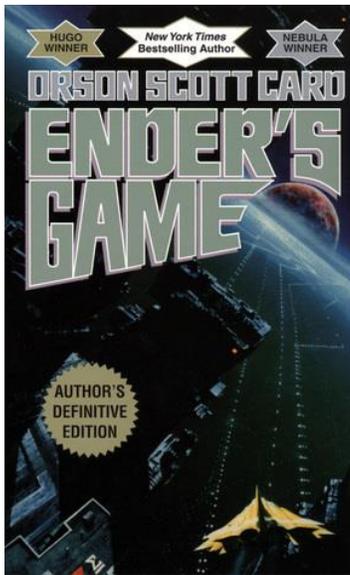


Orson Scott Card was born August 24, 1951. He wrote his first story at age 10 (he later used its idea of a smart kid confronting a bully in *Ender's Game*), but he soon gravitated to the theater, writing plays based on Mormon history (and the occasional science fiction one). His earliest plays were performed at Brigham Young University (BYU), where he studied at their laboratory school (high school/early college). He also wrote the stories that eventually became *The Worthington Chronicles/Saga* while at BYU. He graduated in 1975 (having taken a couple of years off to go on Mission in Brazil) and obtained a Master's degree in English at the University of Utah (1981).

He published his first story, "Gert Fram," in the July 1977 issue of *Ensign*, a Mormon magazine. Since he worked there, he used the pseudonym Byron Walley. While *Analog* rejected the first story Card sent them, they accepted his second "Ender's Game," for the August 1977 issue. The story became a big hit and Card had nine stories published in 1978. The next year he published 18 stories. He soon switched to the more lucrative writing of books. His first novel was *Hot Sleep* (1979), which was adapted into *The Worthington Chronicle* (1983) and then *The Worthington Saga* (1990) which added the short stories from *Capitol*. He also published *A Planet Called Treason* in 1979. He rewrote this as *Treason* in 1988. Card won the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer from the World Science Fiction Convention in 1978).

Card is best known for the *Ender's Game* series. The novel version of *Ender's Game* came out in 1985 and won the Hugo and Nebula. Its sequel, *Speaker for the Dead* (1986) also won both the Hugo and the Nebula. *Xenocide* (1991) and *Children of the Mind* (1996) completed the original Ender series. He wrote *Ender's Shadow* (1999) as a parallel novel to *Ender's Game*, telling the original novel from the perspective of Bean, a minor character in the first novel. Some critics say this diminished the impact of the original novel by showing Bean behind every good idea anyone else had. He wrote several other *Shadow* books and few more *Ender* books. He also co-wrote two *Formic Wars* trilogies about the earlier wars with the aliens mentioned in *Ender's Game*. *Ender's Game* was turned into a movie; Card wrote several drafts of the script but the producer ultimately had another person do the

shooting script. I thought the movie was great and it was reasonably faithful to the book, but it lost money and none of the sequels were filmed.



A lifelong Mormon, Card is a great-great-grandson of Brigham Young. Many of his SF works have strong Mormon influences, especially his *Tales of Alvin Maker* series (whose main character is Alvin Smith) and his *Homecoming Saga* which is basically a science fictional rewrite of *The Book of Mormon*. He also wrote many non-SF works for Mormon readers including his *Women of Genesis* series and the novel *Saints*. He wrote over 300 scripts for audiotapes produced by Living Scriptures, a religious education company.

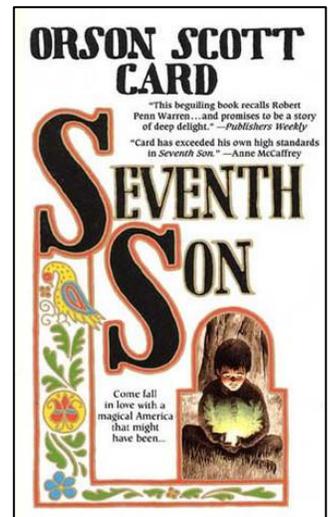
While *Ender's Game* was not originally published as Young Adult, his publisher saw the market and produced a YA package. Card has written several books that were intended as YA, including the *Mithermages* trilogy and the *Pathfinder* trilogy as well as the *Magic Street* and *Lost and Found* standalones.

Card also has written non-fiction including a few books on writing and teaches writing at Southern Virginia University. He has even written videogames, a movie novelization, poetry and comic books.

Readers of Card's work see strong themes in his work. There's the intelligent child versus bullies (which is ignored by adults). You have the rivalry between the main character and his brother(s). Mormonism is another theme as Card has adapted the Book of Mormon into both science fiction and into fantasy.

In recent years Card has become controversial and accused of racism and homophobia. He wrote an essay in which he claimed that Obama was popular because he was a black man who talked like a white man. He has spoken out in favor of criminalizing homosexuality and opposed same sex marriage (although he later said he accepts the relevant Supreme Court decisions). Note that some of this may be his acceptance of LDS doctrine. Still, critics have pointed out that these beliefs have seeped into his works, noting the times that homosexual intercourse is punished or characters become homosexual as a result of pedophilia. And he has definitely lost some fans over this.

For those of you who have not read Orson Scott Card, the logical place to start is *Ender's Game*. Read the first four in the series (the next two are not as good but still worth reading). Then decide if you want to read the Bean (*Shadow*) books and go on from there. If you like fantasy and have a high tolerance for dialect, the *Tales of Alvin Maker* are also well worth reading. Fans of short stories should read his *Maps in a Mirror* and its sequel collection *Keeper of Dreams*. If you want a good standalone, his *The Worthington Saga* combines his earlier novel with the related short stories. And his *Songmaster* has many of the same qualities that make *Ender's Game* special.



...Update on Reading in the Schools

by Samuel Lubell

I've run several articles recently on how reading is declining and schools no longer assign as many novels as in the past. Here's an update.

A December 12 article in *The New York Times*, "[Kids Rarely Read Whole Books Anymore. Even in English Class](#)" states that in 2008-9, English teachers required students to read an average of four books a year, but an upcoming survey of English teachers in 2024 found only an average of 2.7 whole books. Teachers say that schools are requiring them to use curriculum programs that focus on short passages like those on multiple choice tests rather than books. Such programs include only short excerpts from novels. Others blame the Common Core State Standards, which had a larger focus on nonfiction and shorter (but more complex) works. Teachers also blame

technology for shortening students' attention spans. As a result, many teachers do not think students will read whole novels if they were to assign them.



Even when teachers do assign books, they are mostly from lists of classics that have not changed much in the last 40 years. In 2024, the most assigned books were:

- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (1953)
- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (1953)
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (1623)
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (1623)
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel (1960 (In English))
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960)
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954)
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (1937)
- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (1597)

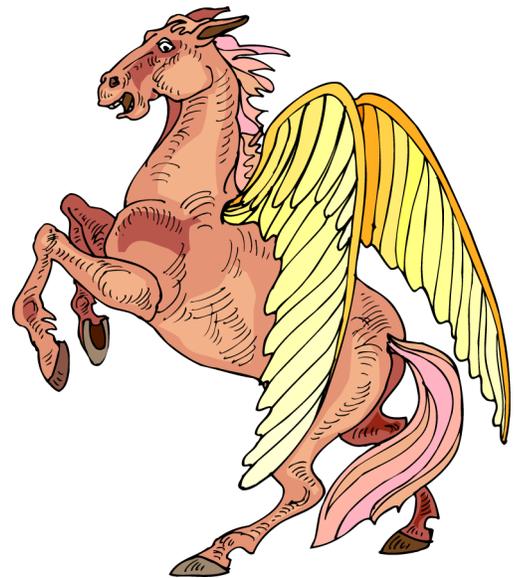
Note that for all the talk of multiculturalism, all but one of these books was written by a white male and the newest books on the list are 65 years old. Also, the novels on the list are fairly short works. By contrast, the 1963 list had much longer novels including *Tale of Two Cities*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Great Expectations*, and *Silas Mariner*.

...Problems With Series

by Samuel Lubell

The fields of science fiction and fantasy are dominated by series. It is rare for a new novel to come out without it either being part of a series or getting a sequel within a year or two. There are three main types of series:

1. The continuing adventures. This is what constitutes a series in most forms of literature. There is a main character who has a series of adventures, but each book ties up the major plot threads, although some of the minor threads and stories of other characters may continue into the next book. The next book is a new adventure. Usually, character growth and changes continue from book to book, they do not reset the way TV series so often do. So it is best to read them in order. Examples include most mystery series, the *Dresden Files*, *Murderbot*, and *The Dragon and the George* series.
2. The chopped up long story. This is essentially one long story put into multiple volumes (usually three for a trilogy). The books have to be read in order just like one wouldn't book up a single volume novel, skip the first 150 pages, and expect the rest to make sense. The best example of course is *Lord of the Rings*.
3. The universe of X. This series type relies on the same world (or sometimes universe) but may not have any common characters. Sometimes the books are not written in chronological order. But the rules of the universe have to be consistent (or a reason has to be given for why they change). Examples include Eric Flint's *1632* series, L. E. Modesitt's *Saga of Recluse*, or C. J. Cherryh's *Alliance-Union* universe.



Of course, some of these can be combined. It is not uncommon for a series to start as the continuing adventures of a central character but then the author writes a few books using the same world building but with different characters.



There are several advantages to writing a series. First, the author can reuse much of their world building and character creation. This saves time, especially for writers who create an elaborate backstory and in-depth rules. Second, it gives writers a larger canvass. Instead of cramming everything into one book, they can split their narrative into multiple volumes or devote an entire book to a side character or piece of the background. For readers, it answers the question of what comes next. Readers who like a character or world naturally want to see more. For publishers it provides a built in audience for the next book as well as some pickup for earlier books in the series.

However, a series, especially a long series, comes with some significant downsides. New readers will be reluctant to pick up a new book in a long running series, thinking they need to read 10 or more books. So, they may put down a series book that they may have picked up if it were a standalone. And,

since some readers will jump off a series, this means that past a certain point, each book will sell worse than the previous one. A long series can get to the point where it bores the reader (or worse the author) especially if it is a continuing adventures of one character (and if the author doesn't write other non-series books). It may be hard to avoid repetition or turning into self-parody. If a character does not have a job like a detective or space explorer, it gradually becomes less believable that the character keeps having adventures. Also, over time, with each book adding complexity, a series becomes harder for the author to remember all the details of the characters or of the world building. While some popular series can have fans build wikis and sometimes review drafts, not all series develop such dedicated fans.

Still, despite these problems, series remain popular. But authors and publishers need to be careful not to allow a series to wear out its welcome.

...Status of Projects By Samuel Lubell

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.

Project Video – I watched a number of movies recently, including:



- *Fantastic Four: First Steps* (2025) – This is of course based on the Marvel comic. Movies based on the FF have been mostly unsuccessful, although one did get a sequel so it couldn't have done too badly. The 2005 version earned \$333.5 million, and its sequel earned 302 million. The 2015 version earned just 169 million. By contrast the 2025 film earned \$522 million (which is less than the 2005 movie adjusted for inflation). Although this movie was made by Marvel, it is set in a separate retro-1960s universe and none of the other Marvel heroes appear. The filmmakers made a wise decision not to start with the origin story but instead have clips from a news show telling origin. However, I think they made the wrong decision in making this movie so similar to *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* which also had the Silver Surfer heralding an attack on Earth by Galactus. The new movie did have Galactus look more like his comic self, rather than the earlier movie's cloud, but they changed the Silver Surfer from male to female (prompting jokes about her being Jonny's girlfriend). In this movie Sue is pregnant when the team encounters the planet-eating Galactus who declares that he will spare the Earth if the FF will give him the baby to be his successor. Still, even though there is characterization of the four main characters and real moral dilemma of whether they should give up the baby to save the Earth (billions of lives versus one), something in the movie left me cold. It seemed more a

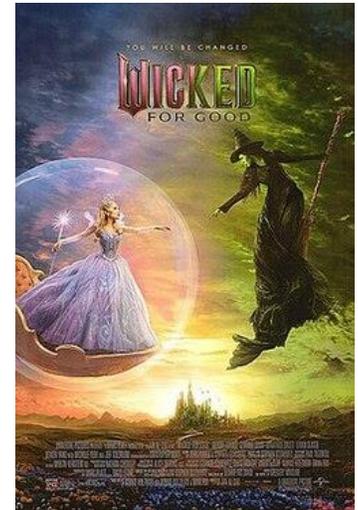
collection of scenes than a unified work. I was disappointed.



- *Thunderbolts** (2025)—By contrast, I found *Thunderbolts**, about a bunch of mostly minor characters and villains, much more interesting. The heart of the movie is Yelena Belova, sister of the deceased Black Widow, who is bored with her life and tired of going on secret agent missions. The CIA director, under investigation by Congress, sends her on one last mission, along with other covert agents to be blown up (since they were loose ends who could incriminate her). These agents are morally grey “heroes” and villains including the US Agent, Taskmaster, and Ghost. Also present at this mysterious laboratory used for the Sentry Project is an amnesiac weakling Bob who just appeared in the lab. They escape with the help of Belova’s father, the Soviet super-soldier Red Guardian, now long past his prime, and Captain

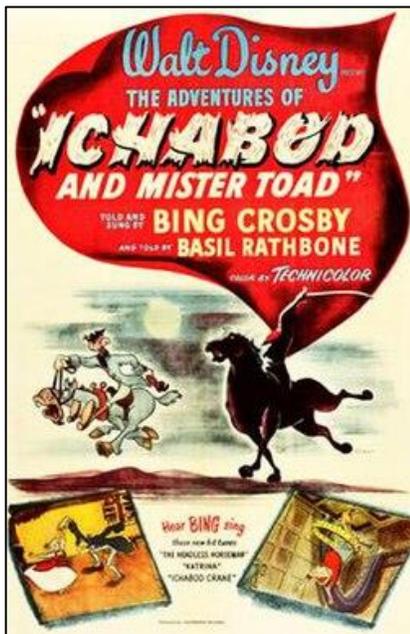
America’s former sidekick, The Winter Soldier, who somehow is now a U.S. Congressman (being an assassin for Hydra somehow didn’t come up in the campaign?). Bob turns out to be the product of the Sentry Project and the most super powered person in the world, but is easily manipulated by the power-hungry CIA director. The group resolves to rescue Bob and expose the director. Bob easily defeats them, but his dark side, the Void, emerges and traps all of New York in darkness and people’s worst nightmares. Interestingly, the team doesn’t really have a name. The name Thunderbolts is a joke after Belova mentions her pee-wee soccer team with that name. At the very end they are announced to be the New Avengers (which Marvel actually managed to keep secret until the movie was released and then said this was the movie’s real title). The film earned \$382.4 million, below the break-even point. Still, I found the flawed characters and mental problems of the Thunderbolts much more interesting than the traditional heroes of the Fantastic Four.

- *Wicked: For Good* (2025)— This is an adaptation of the second half of the Broadway musical *Wicked*, which in turn is based on *The Wizard of Oz* movie based on the Baum novel. I actually watched this in a movie theater as part of the traditional Jewish Christmas of Chinese Food and a Movie. I found this movie excellent as a movie musical, with two new songs not in the original show and the songs presented mostly intact. The film is the background for the Wicked Witch of Oz and her friendship with Glinda the Good. The witch is actually the hero as the Wizard of Oz is not only a con-man but is doing something to make Oz animals lose their ability to speak. In the process she creates the Tin Man (after her sister accidentally shrinks her sort-of boyfriend’s heart) and the Scarecrow (to save her lover when he is beaten by the Wizard’s guards). The film never shows Dorothy’s face, only her shadow. This is a wonderful movie and I greatly enjoyed it.
- *Idiocracy* (2006) - This comedy takes the premise that stupid people are greatly outbreeding smart people so that in 500 years the population of the world has become stupid. Into this future come two people of what today is average-to low intelligence, but super-geniuses by the future’s standards, who were put into hibernation by the government. An IQ test declares Joe to be the smartest person in the world and he is made Secretary of the Interior where he amazes people by suggesting that crops need water, not a heavily advertised energy drink. The film has lots of jokes and humor but in the years since it was made, the film has become a warning of what might happen if things go on (in the best SF tradition). Its portrayal of an idiot president and solving problems through televised killing arenas seems alarmingly up-to-date. We even have a Secretary of Education who got the job from being the head of the World Wrestling Federation.
- *Lego Movie 2* (2019) - This is animated film is a sequel to *The Lego Movie*. I liked this one much less than the first. It relies on some heavy misdirection and an easily misdirected Batman. After the arrival of aliens, the friendly “Everything Is Awesome” Bricksburg has become the violent Apocalypseburg. When the aliens take his friends (including his girlfriend Lucy) Emmet builds a spaceship and goes after them. He is mentored by Rex Dangervest to become tougher and more violent. But Rex has his own agenda and secrets and it turns out that the alien leader, Queen Watevra Wa’Nabi, despite all the blatant cues that she is evil, actually is trying to



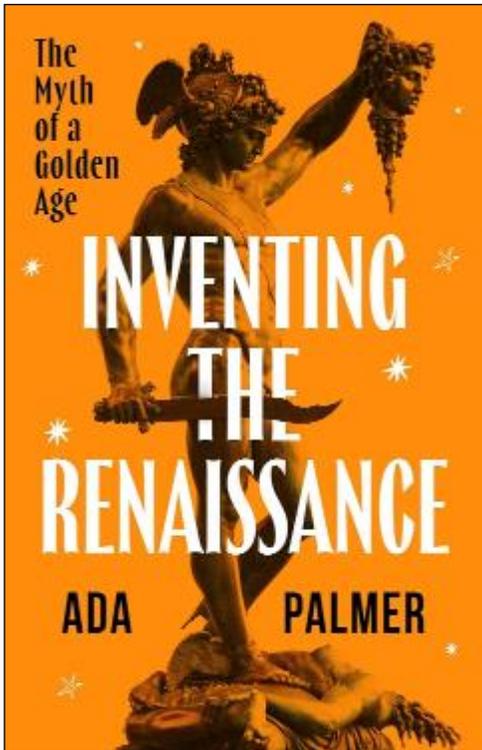
prevent Armageddon (which in live action real world is the two kids' mom taking away the Lego set over which the two kids keep fighting). This movie is skippable.

- *The Golden Child* (1986) - This action/comedy takes the premise of an American social worker being predestined to rescue the "Golden Child," a kidnapped Tibet boy with mystical powers worshipped by his followers (the name Dali Lama is never mentioned, but that's the obvious inspiration). This would seem a typical 1980s action movie, except the hero is played by Eddie Murphy, in full wisecracking mode, who refuses to take any of this seriously. The result is a fun, entertaining popcorn movie. One point of interest is that it is the Tibetan woman who becomes Eddie's love interest who is the martial arts master and does all the real fighting. People who enjoy '80s style action films will enjoy this gentle spoof that also succeeds as an action movie.
- *Melody Time* (1948) - My chronological watch of Disney films in order has reached this 1948 anthology film with seven stories set to various musical styles. "Once Upon a Wintertime" is a voiceless story of a young couple going ice-skating whose romance is imitated by a rabbit couple. There's a bit of excitement when the ice cracks and the man (and male rabbit) are knocked unconscious trying to rescue the females, who are really saved by the other animals and the sleigh horses. The music is a ballad. "Bumble Boogie" is a jazz version of Rimsky-Korsakov's Flight of the Bumblebee, so the animation shows a bee attacked by the music. "The Legend of Johnny Appleseed" is a somewhat religious version of the American legend of Johnny Appleseed planting apple trees in the West as prompted by his guardian angel. "Little Toot" is sung by the Andrews Sisters about a little tugboat who is always getting into trouble by refusing to grow up until he is needed to save a big boat. "Trees" is an adaptation of the famous poem by Joyce Kilmer with art based on the poem's original illustrations showing trees going through the four seasons. "Blame It on the Samba" seems almost like a piece from *The Three Caballeros* as the Aracuan Bird tries to cheer up Donald Duck and parrot José Carioca by playing Samba music. Like *The Three Caballeros* it features the cartoon characters interacting with a live musician. "Pecos Bill" features a live action Roy Rodgers (with Trigger_ and singing cowboys telling the animated adventures of Pecos Bill who was raised by coyotes and grew up to be a cowboy, his horse Widowmaker, and Slue-Foot Sue. Bill falls in love with Sue, much to the annoyance of a jealous Widowmaker who stops Bill from rescuing her. The film as a whole can be considered a lower budget, lower prestige version of Fantasia



- *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949). This Disney anthology film has two segments, with the first (despite being second in the title) being *The Wind in the Willows* based on the book by Kenneth Grahame. This is by far the better of the two segments as the rich but prone to mania Mr. Toad sees a motorcar and issues a deed to the weasels to swap Toad Hall for the motorcar. Toad is accused of stealing the motorcar and thrown in jail. He escapes and with his friends recovers the deed to prove his innocence. The "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" based on the Washington Irving story has schoolmaster Ichabod Crane compete with bully Brom Bones for the hand of the lovely (and rich) Katrina. Ichabod seems to have the upper hand, but is deeply superstitious so on Halloween, Brom tells the story of the Headless Horseman which scares Ichabod. Then, on his way home, Ichabod encounters the real Headless Horseman and disappears. Brom later marries Katrina. This is noteworthy in that Ichabod is not a conventional Disney hero; he is in love with Katrina as much for her riches as for her beauty, is always sneaking food, and hits children (unless their mothers are good cooks). Unlike in the original story, the Headless Horseman is completely supernatural, not Brom in disguise. Because the segments are longer and tell complete stories, I found this the best of the Disney anthology films. Note that both segments originally were supposed to become full length movies.

Project Nonfiction - *Inventing the Renaissance: The Myth of a Golden Age* by Ada Palmer - I finished massive 650 page book on the Renaissance that I mentioned last issue. Ada Palmer, of course, is the author of the very philosophical *Terra Ignota* science fiction series whose first book won the Compton Crook award. But she is also



an associate professor of early modern European history at the University of Chicago. The book sets out to prove that the Renaissance really wasn't a rebirth of art and culture or a return to the Golden Age of Antiquity after the Dark Ages. Instead, the idea of a Renaissance was a propaganda effort and an attempt to claim legitimacy by linking the present day governments and changes to the days of Ancient Greece and Rome compared to barbaric dark ages that came after them. The book's guiding light is Machiavelli who is far more than just a proponent of realistic approaches to power.

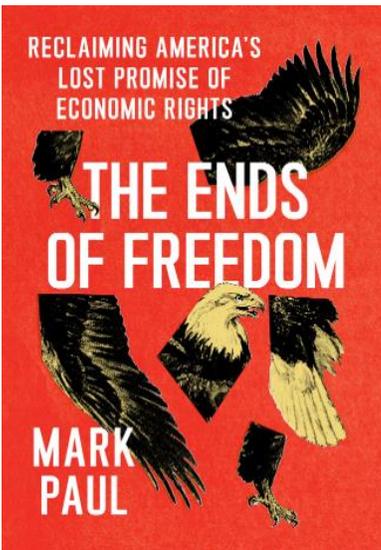
The book is written in Palmer's informal style, at times addressing the reader directly, at times giving cute nicknames to major historical figures such as "Battle Pope," and frequently flippant and mocking. As I said last issue, she makes this highly personal with part I titled "Why You Shouldn't Believe Anyone (Including Me) About the Renaissance." She also devotes 200 pages to mini-biographies of historical figures, most unknown today (except for Lucrezia Borgia and Michelangelo) talking about them as if these were friends she wants to introduce to us. She also describes the papal election simulation she runs with her students and how it produces a different outcome every time (I'm envious of her students). The book emerged from her Ex Urbe blog and if you want to get a taste of the book, she summarized her research in <https://www.exurbe.com/black-death-covid-and-why-we-keep-telling-the-myth-of-a-renaissance-golden-age-and-bad-middle-ages/>

This is the sort of book that will require multiple readings to really understand it. There are also extensive endnotes and lists of Sources and Recommended Reading to explore. Some online sources say those who like this book should read *The World at First Light: A New History of the Renaissance* by Bernd Roeck.

Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: a History by James Carroll - This book is both a history of the relationship between the Church and the Jews and the personal story of the author, a former priest turned author of fiction and non-fiction, which at times gets in the way of the history. This is another lengthy history, over 600 pages plus notes. It was adapted into a documentary of the same name. It claims that while the Church is not directly responsible for the Holocaust, one of the reasons for the Holocaust, and for why the Catholic Church to never spoke out against Hitler, is the Church's 2000 year history of anti-Semitism tracing back to blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus and the Church's failure to convert the Jews. Even after the Holocaust, the Church tried to portray itself as another one of Hitler's victims. The book starts with the story of Christian nuns appropriating the memorial at Auschwitz because one of the people killed there was a Jew who had become Carmelite nun. He covers how Christianity separated from Judaism, the treatment of Jews by Christian Roman Emperors, the middle ages and the Crusades, the Inquisition (which redefined Judaism from a religion to a race by attacking Jews who converted), the 19th century emancipation, and the Dreyfus affair. And of course Hitler and the Holocaust come up multiple times. The last section is devoted to a call for a new Vatican III to address how the Church could repair its relationship with the Jews.



The Ends of Freedom: Reclaiming America's Lost Promise of Economic Rights by Mark Paul - This book lays out a case for Progressive economics. It states that our economic system follows Milton Friedman's ideas of free markets and in defining freedom as freedom from government action rather than as government solutions providing freedom from problems. It presents an economic bill of rights that would enable all Americans to have jobs, food, housing, and an education. Saying that our problems with homelessness and health care are the result of political choices, calls for a more activist government like those in European social welfare states. The book presents the history of calls for positive freedoms (going back to Thomas Paine through Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms and Martin Luther King's economic proposals) versus the rise of neoliberalism. Unfortunately, the



book is much better at defining the problems than saying how we could afford solutions. I found his argument that we can afford more debt to be unconvincing. Still, this is an important and interesting book.

The Future of Money: How the Digital Revolution Is Transforming Currencies and Finance by Eswar S. Prasad – I did not like this one (read for a book group). It tries to cover too much ground and too many ways the computer age is affecting money and currency. It also seemed to be written for an audience with at least some economics background. The book's main thesis is that the use of cash is being replaced by various forms of electronic money (as we see has mostly already happened in Europe). But it also focuses on Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) which had not heard of before reading this, as well as cryptocurrencies. I did think it did a good job considering the ramifications of these innovations.



Project Fiction:

- *Three Short Novels* by William Faulkner – This is essentially a collection of three novellas that appeared in other collections. “Spotted Horses” deals with the aftermath of a sale of wild horses in the West that left a man dead while the horses escaped. “Old Man” is about a jailed criminal during a Mississippi flood who rescues a pregnant woman. In the end the prisoner would rather return to jail than deal with the woman. And “The Bear” using hunting as a metaphor for a boy’s coming of age. I should like Faulkner better than I do. But I’d rather read a 19th century novel than deal with Faulkner’s prose. Not every reader likes every author.
- *It Can’t Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis – This wasn’t on my list of classics to read. But this 1935 novel about the election of a fascist president seemed very current and prescient. The author, not to be confused with Upton Sinclair who authored *The Jungle*, wrote the book to show that a dictatorship could happen in the U.S. The main character, Doremus Jessup, a small town newspaper editor, sees the rise of Buzz Windrip, a politician promising to help the “forgotten man” and pay all citizens \$5,000, and at first cannot see how anyone would take him seriously. But after the election, the President assembles a private army of “Minute Men” and puts everyone who disagrees with him into concentration camps. Jessup’s lazy handyman becomes a major figure in the local Minute Men and ultimately gets to lock Jessup up when he joins the New Underground after being forced to publish pro-Buzz content in the paper. Ultimately, Jessup escapes to Canada and becomes a propagandist and spy. Meanwhile Buzz is overthrown by his chief advisor who in turn is overthrown by the military, ultimately leading to Civil War. Hopefully real life won’t imitate the novel to this degree.
- *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens – I’ve been listening to the audiobook while going on long trips, but it’s been a while since I drove much. I may need to restart the book.

Project Activities – I went to my father’s house for Thanksgiving and, being that I’m not working, was able to spend most of a week there. I did Jewish Christmas – Chinese food and a movie on Christmas with friends. I also went to a friend’s place for New Year’s Eve. And I went with friends out for Chinese food a couple of times when it wasn’t Christmas (hey, I like Chinese food). I really need to start doing more activities.

Project Fanac – I ran a few book groups. For BSFS, in November we discussed *Newton’s Wake* by Ken MacLeod. In December, we discussed *Wheel of the Infinite* by Martha Wells, an interesting book with an older protagonist. Our book for January 24 (at 6:30 PM Baltimore Time) is *How Few Remain* by Harry Turtledove (you can join us via Zoom. Details at www.bsfs.org). For the WSFA book group, we discussed *Finder* by Suzanne



Palmer and *The Dragon Waiting* by John Ford. Our book for February 12th at 7:30 PM DC time is John Scalzi's new novel *The Shattering Peace*. If you are interested in discussing that, email me samilubell@gmail.com. I put together the Sept/Oct issue of the WSFA Journal as well as the Early Winter 2025 issue of *Origins* for N3F. No conventions. My major Fanac has been running the Baltimore SF Society's Compton Crook Award. This is a contest for best debut SF/Fantasy/Horror novels. I try to read at least the beginnings of as many debut novels as I can. I probably read more first novels than anyone who isn't paid to do it.

Project Shorts - The print SF magazines continue to be delayed. I did not receive my Nov/Dec *Asimov's* until almost the last day of the year. I still haven't seen the print version of the Summer F&SF. I've read the Sept/Oct *Asimov's* & *Analog*. I've also been reading online publications *Clarksword* and *Lightspeed*. I've been making my way through Isaac Asimov's *Before the Golden Age* anthology but am reporting on that in *Origins*. I have *The Ascent of Wonder: The Evolution of Hard SF* close at hand but that will have to wait until I get through the Compton Crook books.

Project Paperback - This is mostly on hold while I go through the Compton Crook books.

Project Health - I've been walking up steps daily (mostly) but not the other items.

No progress on Projects Shakespeare (this will be a new year's resolution) or Cleanup.

Letters of Comment to N'APA #279

Nice cover pic.

Intermission #159 - I agree that each version of a Microsoft produce tends to be worse with updates adding largely unnecessary features, making the interface more complicated, and limiting the user's flexibility. I agree that Ukraine is putting up a bigger fight than anyone would have dreamed when the war started, but it is far from as one-sided as you portray. Russia has conquered a lot of Ukraine's territory and, as a dictatorship, does not have to worry about public opinion as much as a democracy like Ukraine does. I also agree that movies depend too much on computerized special effects, and yet the current wealth of SF/Fantasy/Comic book movies/TV would not have happened without it. Thanks for the list of older sf movies and other SF-related videos. I'll have to watch when I have time.



There are some advantages to audiobooks in that you can be doing other things while listening to a book since your hands and eyes are free. So, I frequently listen to audiobooks and lectures when driving and at the gym. But I certainly agree that it is a different experience from reading and takes much longer to listen to an audiobook than to read the physical book. Yes, a lot of magazine SF went out of copyright in the days of 28-year copyright renewals. Thanks for the Arthur C. Clarke story. Wikipedia is only useful for research if you look to its sources and trace things back to the original source. I frequently find the original source doesn't say what the secondary source claims it does.

Swamp Spot #1.4 - Alas, yes, the damage Trump is doing to the US is far worse than what any outside enemy could do to us. I haven't had many adventures lately either, but have tons of opinions. I'm sorry to hear about all your aggravation. I hope 2026 is better. Yes, the Epstein Files were released heavily redacted, but, at least for the first set of files, the redacted information was uncovered. Unfortunately, I was not among the federal employees who were rehired after being let go. Your article on the lost Samuel de Champlain airship completely fooled me. Ideas cannot be registered (or copyrighted), you need an actual

product. Modern superheroes do not seem to deal much with natural disasters that are not caused by a villain. I guess such stories lack the human aspect. Food prices are going up almost as fast as Trump's denials.

I had an article on fanzines in *Origins* #63. The SF pulp magazines got started during the Great Depression, which constrained everyone's reading budget (except for Isaac Asimov who read them for free at his father's candy store). I agree that female SF writers can and do write hard science fiction - Andre Norton, CJ Cherryh, Nancy Kress and many others wrote hard SF. Clubs are a type of association (along with businesses, non-profit organizations, government bodies, theater companies etc.) Motivation is a problem. You have to balance being too ambitious and not ambitious enough. States cannot just quit the US, even to join an existing other nation. If the Northeast tried to quit the US to join Canada, there would be another Civil War. I agree that it is



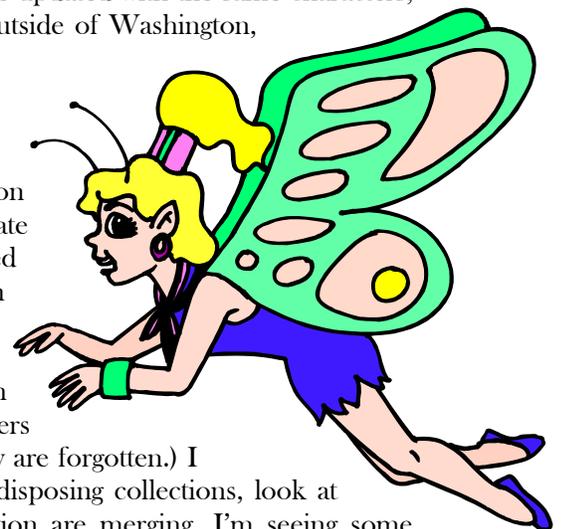
important to get members to participate in activities beyond providing them with fanzines to read, but don't know how to get people motivated to do things. But we could do more with Zoom discussions on sf issues. Many readers start with action/adventure fiction but gradually become more sophisticated in wanting great characterization and writing in addition to action/adventure and new ideas.

You ask about the cover to Samizdat #33. That was produced by one of the art generators online. I don't think the Capclave program was oriented more toward writers than readers although we have some people who do one or the other or both. I don't want to say the size of Capclave other than we have room for a lot more participants. We want to get Capclave up to the 500-600 range. It's harder for a niche con since we don't costuming or movies, but focus on the written word. However, those who came had a lot of fun. While higher income

people have more time to read, plenty of people with time spend it watching TV or doom scrolling on the web. I think the higher reading rates of higher income people have more to do with their higher education levels. Yes, there are fewer print magazines than in earlier ages but we have online magazines that didn't exist until recently. And libraries make books available for free and used bookstores sell books cheaply. If one doesn't insist on new hardbacks, reading is a fairly cheap hobby. See my article in this issue about mass market paperbacks disappearing. I think some countries and states are cutting back on young people's phone use. And some schools are stressing alternatives to the emphasis on the Ivy League and similar colleges.

I reluctantly agree with you that Putin isn't going away and isn't going to let the Russian people's views on the war influence his actions. This is one of the dangers of dictatorships. Science is a key part of science fiction, but there are plenty of good stories with suspect science like time machines and FTL drives. I agree that many find cosplay fun and just a valid expression of their love for SF media as writing fanfic or debating your favorite Star Trek captain. Tom Swift was never as popular as the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew but were edited and updated to keep up with the times. However, unlike the teen sleuth books that were updated with the same characters, the Tom Swift books shifted generations to Tom Swift Jr. I live just outside of Washington, DC. So in the event of a nuclear attack, I'm doomed too.

Archive Midwinter Oct 2025 - Not only was Asimov a liberal intellectual, he was actually born in what became the Soviet Union! I agree that the moderator should control the timing and prevent one person from dominating. But conventions are limited in who is willing to moderate and not every moderator can control some loud and opinionated panelists. When I was a kid, I was always more of a DC comics person than a Marvel one (although my mother didn't let me buy comics. She tolerated SF but comics were too much for her). I agree that we shouldn't judge some people as less equal than others, especially as such judgements often are in error (for instance, in literature, many writers dismissed in their own day are now still read while bestsellers of the day are forgotten.) I think it time I re-read *King David's Spaceship*, it's been a while. For disposing collections, look at college libraries and SF clubs. Interestingly, sf/fantasy and literary fiction are merging. I'm seeing some literary writers experimenting with sf ideas and sf writers who are doing better characters. Thanks for the kind



words about my Capclave programming. For some collectors, toys and comics lose some of their value when taken out of their original packaging and played with/read even if you still have the original boxes.

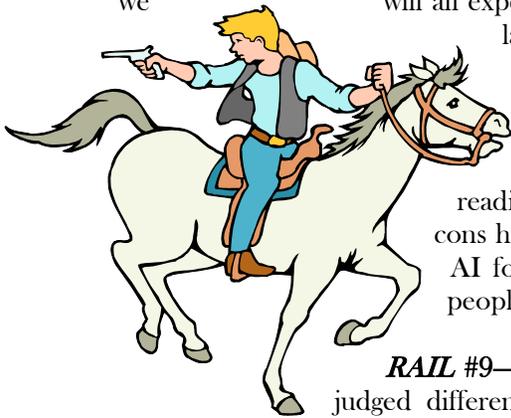
Ye Murthered Master Mage #279 - I'm a big fan of L.E. Modesitt, Jr., in fact I picked him as Balticon's GoH when I chaired it a couple of years ago. I think when people assume the politics/opinions in a novel match those of the author they are ignoring how the purpose of the novel is to tell a story, not to propagandize. The problem with the Chengdu Worldcon (which I did not attend but know people involved) Hugos was that some in fandom engaged in preemptive censorship so not to offend (or get the powers that be mad at the Chinese organizers). So, there is no reason to think that this was a problem for prior Hugos. I'd love to see scientist restore extinct animals. The dodo should be doable as it went extinct fairly recently.

From context, I am sure Matt Ruff was not talking about pornography when he addressed adult themes, but more the type of characterization and writing typically found in mainstream literature. I liked your Pam Morgan story. I'm glad you specifically say that she isn't Telzey Amberdon; otherwise I'd assumed she was another Telzey clone. You captured the feel of a Telzey story very well. I'd love to see the rest of it.

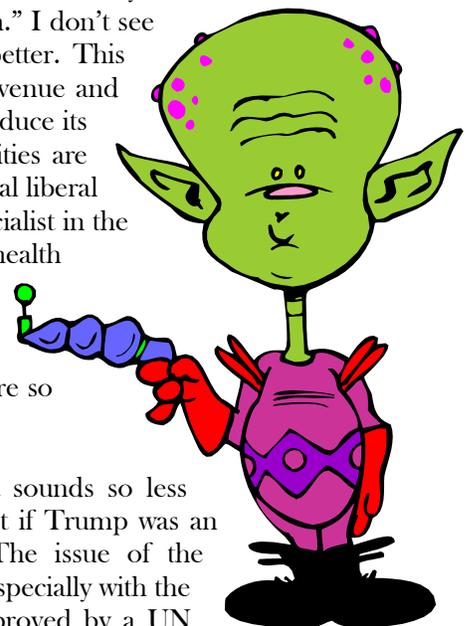
Snow Poster Township #23 - I've been meaning to read *Altered Carbon*. I'm pretty sure I have it in one of my To Be Read bookcases somewhere. You gave an interesting review of *Comic Heroes* magazine. It's a shame that it didn't last long; a quick Internet search found it had 32 issues. I don't associate Massachusetts with swamps either, although I lived there for four years and summered there for eight. As we grow more dependent on technology, we

will all experience more technological challenges. So why Portugal? Do you anticipate the language being a problem? I've met DJ Butler at conventions. He's very nice.

You say "Real men read westerns." This hasn't been true for a while. The Western is no longer a popular genre. You mention Max Bolan, The Executioner. These books seem to be ebook only these days. The data count Westerns and thrillers as books, so they are included in the drop in men's reading. I agree with your comments to Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #156 about cons having the right to screen participants. While you raise concerns about the use of AI for screening, the Worldcon was careful to say that they only used this to flag people for humans to examine and make the final decision.



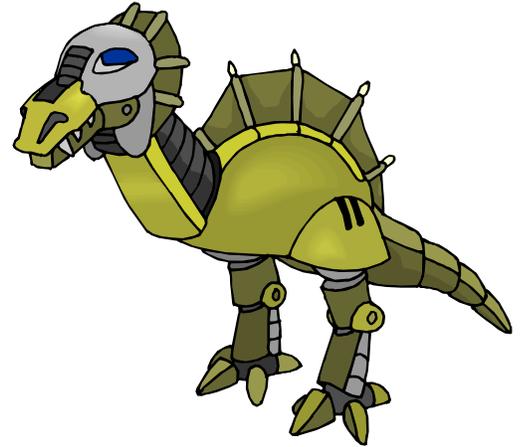
RAIL #9—Interesting about libraries acknowledging that zines are informal and must be judged differently than professional publications. Thanks for your mention of a pause in graduate admissions at Michigan State University. This is alarming especially since Masters' programs are usually cash cows for universities. MSU says that this is "supporting our community while strengthening graduate programs for long-term sustainability and innovation." I don't see how dropping the number of graduate students serves the community better. This sounds like PR doubletalk to hide frantic efforts to deal with declining revenue and state budget cuts. According to newspaper accounts, the university has to reduce its budget by 9% over the next two years. Increasingly, colleges and universities are focused on programs that prepare students for jobs rather than the traditional liberal arts and knowledge for its own sake. Still, as a former communications specialist in the Department of Health, I would have thought programs in health communications were job-related. I haven't read new X-Men comics in a long time so cannot really comment on the Age of Revelation "event" except to say that it seems like Marvel has ruined the Doug Ramsey character who was really great in the original "New Mutants" and even more so in the GoWest fanfic on GENie.



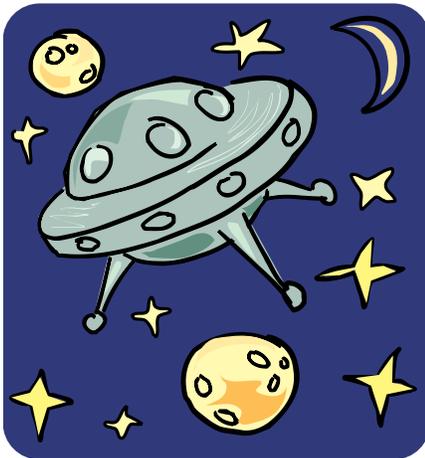
Brownian Motion #16 - I love the idea of real imaginary countries! It sounds so less depressing than does real world politics. You know, it would explain a lot if Trump was an imaginary character. The smaller the group, the fiercer its politics. The issue of the authorization of superheroes was a major plot point in the Marvel movies especially with the Sokovia Accords that required the Avengers to only go on missions approved by a UN

committee. This led to the *Captain America Civil War* movie. Tom Swift was a 20th century invention (first book 1910). Many science fiction fans become real-life scientists and, as you note, some real-world inventions were inspired by science-fictional ones. I agree that in running cons, a lot of issues will not be under your control. Also science fiction fandom, by appealing to outsiders and those of us who are socially challenged, have a lot of people who don't know/understand/care about the usual social norms. On AI training, there was a legal case with a big settlement that is paying authors for having their works used to train AIs.

I'm glad you liked the panel ideas I used for Capclave. If you want to hear panelists discuss the answers to questions like these, come join Capclave. The 2026 Capclave will be October 2-4 in Rockville, MD (right outside DC). The decline in reading means that fewer and fewer people are reading as opposed to watching TV, playing videogames, and scrolling on the Internet. This means that eventually we will have fewer bookstores, fewer new authors, and eventually fewer high-quality books (although we'll probably have more poorly written and edited books as books become less of a business and more of a hobby, like fanfic on the web). A lot of people go on to college because it is expected of them, because this is what people do after high school without ever sitting down, planning, and making decisions about their future.



Esmeralda County Line #13 - Quite a big road trip. Congrats on losing weight. The decline in Yiddish speakers probably led to the disappearance of much of Yiddish culture. My great grandparents mostly just spoke Yiddish, my grandparents were fluent but mostly spoke English (using Yiddish as their secret language when they didn't want their children to know what they were saying), my mother knew some Yiddish (enough to figure out what her parents were secretly saying), and my generation only knows a few words. I missed the Seattle Worldcon but am planning on going to the LA one this year. The Murderbot books are great yes. I liked *Star Trek TNG* but liked *Deep Space Nine* even more (and *Babylon 5* even more than that). There are plenty of science fiction role playing games. Alas, the moratorium on firing federal workers came too late for me. There are a couple of court cases that have been filed but these things take years to be resolved. I disagree with your claim that McCarthy was right all along. He never produced his list and the documentation on KGB spies shows they were never the Congresspeople and top scientists and media folk that McCarthy accused. Yes, conventions need flexibility and different rules. There is no one size fits all. I never was a big Jerry Pournelle fan although I did like his YA *Starswarm*. I'm covering the history of SF in the *Origins* bimonthly. In the U.S. sports culture dominates our schools while science fiction fans (until fairly recently) were considered nerds who could be beat up by the jocks who usually got away with everything. So naturally many sf fans have zero interest in sports (which is not to say that there aren't people who like both, especially today when SF dominates most of the big event movies.) I agree that AI says what the person wants to hear regardless of whether it is true or not. AI doesn't think, it merely predicts text.



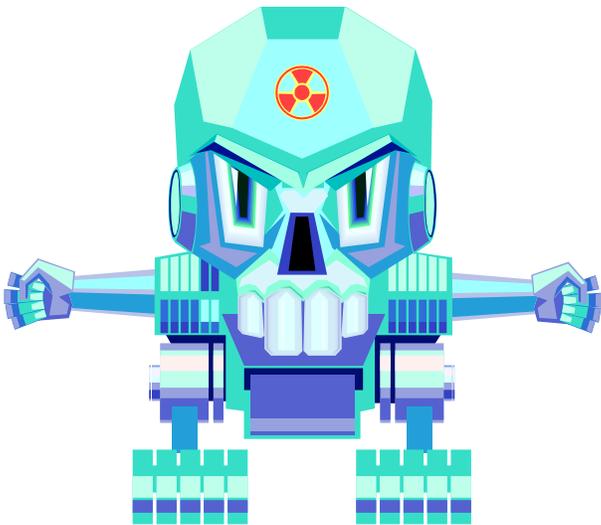
Yes. If you like urban fantasies with strong characters give Charles DeLint a chance. Yes, some high school graduates can earn a good living in the skilled trades, but, on average, students who graduate from college earn more and live longer and healthier lives than those who only graduated from high school. And in the days when high schools only prepared some students for college, these tended to be the just the white students (and mainly the middle and upper class white students) regardless of actual ability. So schools have shifted to preparing everyone for college to avoid making prejudicial decisions. *The Forever War* is a much better book than *Hammer's Slammers* and Haldeman went through the Vietnam War and put his experiences in science fictional form. And I read *The Forever War* recently, most of its officers (and the main character was an officer) were not "a collection of careerist jerks and alienated muddlers,"

but people trapped in a system that had them fighting for no real purpose. There were a lot of traditional fans who badmouthed the *Star Trek* types as media fans and thought that girls had no real interest in science fiction beyond

how cute Kirk and Spock were. You are right, when I wrote, “It is too soon to see differences in *Asimov’s* and *Analog* magazines under their new owners, especially since they kept the same owners,” I meant kept the same editors. This is the problem with editing one’s own work; you know what you meant so that’s what you see.

Brandy Hall #15- Alternate History novels are science fiction with the science being history (which counts as a social science). Also, there’s the alternate worlds hypothesis that every decision creates an alternate world where the decision went the other way. And there is even a theory than if the universe is infinite than it must contain every possible world including worlds resembling Earth with differences in history. The science writer Michio Kaku went through these theories in great detail in his book *Parallel Worlds*. I usually like Alternate History but admit that *The Years of Rice and Salt* left me cold. Thanks for the list of subgenres. I’m more flexible in my definition of Alternate History and don’t think it requires extrapolation from just a single change (think of single change AH as the equivalent of hard science fiction while more looser forms of AH exist). So, the Lady Astronaut series is Alternate History as the events are an outgrowth of the asteroid hitting Earth. I’ll have to find that article by Brenda. I’ve been meaning to re/watch all of Star Trek. Someday. Conventions usually collect the mailing addresses of members, but might not put it in a database capable of counting members by country (although Worldcons usually do). Technically film, movie, and motion picture all mean the same thing, but I agree that film is the more sophisticated term (and that used by the film industry), while movie is more casual. And “motion picture” is an older, almost outdated term. I’m currently in three book clubs, two science fiction and one non-fiction. I need a good current fiction group and maybe a classics group too. In regard to your comments about the inventory of comic book stores, I’m sure the fact that fewer people are reading has led them to expand their offerings. Bob Shaw is one of those mostly forgotten authors. He’s best known for his slow glass stories. And yes, you should read him.

Of course there is no such thing as an objective view of history. All historians have to choose what to include and what to leave out. And this judgement is made based on what they think is important. Also, for academic histories, one needs to have a thesis that your history tries to prove. The list I provided of Capclave programming was just a small selection of the many program items we ran. Come join us this year in October! The best place to read short stories are the magazines. *Asimov’s* and *Analog* are the still existing print publications. There are online magazines such as *Clarkesworld*, *Lightspeed*, and *Uncanny*. There are a couple of best of the year anthologies. Neil Clarke has *The Best Science Fiction of the Year* and John Joseph Adams has *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy*. And Jonathan Strahan has *The Best Science Fiction and Fantasy of the Year*. It is good to see Australia taking steps to keep kids off social media. I don’t know how this will be policed, however. I haven’t finished the second part of *Wednesday* Season Two, but so far it has maintained the quality of Season One and isn’t afraid to show Wednesday being wrong.



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. Views on political issues are my own and have nothing to do with any government, nonprofit organization, or for profit employment. Graphics are from clip art discs, the Internet, and AI programs.

Samizdat is produced for the Fantasy Fan Federation, a long-running science fiction fan group, and is distributed through its National Amateur Press Alliance (N’APA).

THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL



THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL Issue #1.5 is a fanzine for distribution within the sacred auspices of N'APA, and is produced by:

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JUST RECENTLY I SENT AN EMAIL

Ahrvrd Enghorn in which the subject of artificial intelligence came up. My opinion was that while A-I might be very useful in the nuts and bolts part of publishing (proofreading, layout, banners, blocking and the like) that I didn't think A-I was capable of creating really interesting fiction by itself. Sure, it could do clichéd love and action scenes, but my opinion was that turning out something likely to attract editorial or reader attention was beyond its scope.

Then, two Saturdays ago I read an article on NBC Weekend in which they discussed the rocket-like rise of a brand new country music singer-songwriter known as Breaking Rust. Nobody ever heard of this personality until his song "Walk My Walk" emerged near the top of the charts, and held that top spot for two weeks in early November.

There is a very real suspicion that Breaking Rust and several other brand new personalities with top country music hits may be A-I creations.

I'm not much of a country music fan, and it seems to me that a lot of new country music is both derivative and repetitive, but even so the news creates a whole new area of concern in the creative arts. Making music has long been an entirely individual and personal process derived by hard life experience and often by personal angst. If A-I can already diagnose and utilize its expertise to create songs that will directly appeal to the country music fans, sufficiently so that they have become hit top sellers, then I may have to drastically reverse my opinion about the ability of A-I to create readable fiction.

Here is that NBC Weekend article. Judge for yourself---

A mysterious stranger rode into town and topped a country music chart. He might not be real

By [Rob Wile](#)

Breaking Rust adds to a growing list of artists either found to be or suspected to be fueled by generative AI.

This much is known: "Walk My Walk," a song by an artist called Breaking Rust, [entered its second week](#) Wednesday as the top song on Billboard's country music digital sales chart.

After that, everything about Breaking Rust — the artist's identity, whether Breaking Rust's songs were created by artificial intelligence, and whether the songs' popularity has been artificially inflated — quickly devolves into uncertainty. Is the song entirely AI? Partially AI? Maybe even a song meant to sound like AI? And who is behind Breaking Rust?

There's few definitive answers. A request for comment sent by NBC News to the Instagram account of Breaking Rust went unanswered. The artist has virtually no other footprint outside of its Instagram, Spotify and YouTube pages.

The mystery has caused a stir in a music industry already wrestling with its future, as some artists openly embrace AI and others vehemently oppose it. Last week, Billboard [reported](#) that at least one AI artist has debuted in each of its past six chart weeks — and acknowledged the figure could be even higher since "it's become increasingly difficult to tell who or what is powered by AI — and to what extent." Although Billboard has [described](#) Breaking Rust and a similar sounding artist, Cain Walker as AI, neither of their Instagram or

Spotify pages indicate that is so. Walker did not respond to a request for comment made through the artist's Instagram account.

Still, their emergence has drawn criticism from some in the country music community.

"It feels like the ultimate shortcut to stardom: no late nights in smoky bars, no raw vulnerability poured into lyrics, just algorithms crunching data to mimic the twang of authenticity," Leslie Fram, founder of FEMco, a Nashville-based creative consulting group, said in an email.

Breaking Rust adds to a growing list of artists either found to be or suspected to be fueled by generative AI, which has evolved rapidly in recent years including in its ability to create realistic if generic music.

This year, [Masters of Prophecy](#), an AI-backed power-pop-metal artist, became one of YouTube's fastest-growing accounts, and today tallies 35.9 million subscribers. Unlike Breaking Rust or Cain Walker, its creator, James Baker, an engineer and father living in Ohio, has openly discussed his project and how it has gained a following.

"For every critic, there's 20 positive comments," Baker told NBC News. "There was definitely a wave of AI music hate that was tough psychologically to make it through. But for the most part people have started adapting to it."



Breaking Rust's most popular song on YouTube, "Livin' On Borrowed Time," now has 4.6 million [views](#). Commenters there seem unbothered — or unaware — of its AI nature.

"This guy is SOOOOOO underrated bro i love your music please release MOREEEEE," the top comment reads.

And in July, [an indie band called The Velvet Sundown](#) suddenly drew hundreds of thousands of listeners on Spotify amid similar speculation that the band was an AI creation.

Along with speculation around the origin of Breaking Rust is some skepticism over whether his music's popularity is similarly inorganic. While no concrete evidence has yet emerged showing Breaking Rust's listening totals have been artificially inflated, on Wednesday, French-owned music streaming site

Deezer [reported](#) the problem has become widespread among fully AI-generated tracks.

This summer, Michael Lewan, the head of Music Fights Fraud Alliance, a pro-artist group, [called](#) artificial streaming — that is, "fake" or bot-powered listens, which often tend to accompany AI-generated music — a bigger threat to music's integrity than AI itself.

"It's imperative for the industry to take a more serious approach to addressing some of the incentives that go behind music consumption, and shoring up vulnerabilities," Lewan told NBC News. He added: "A system that is not protecting organic engagement and authentic listenership will be more prone to attacks by people making a quick buck off of the royalty pool."

The success of Breaking Rust and Cain Walker does have its limitations. According to Luminate, which compiles sales data for Billboard, it only took about 2,500 digital downloads for "Walk My Walk" to debut at the top country digital sales chart. The broader Billboard Hot Country [chart](#) remains dominated by human artists, namely superstar Morgan Wallen, who occupies the top four slots.

On his blog [SavingCountryMusic.com](#), Kyle Coroneos wrote that however they ended up on Billboard's sales charts, the ability of artists like Breaking Rust to land on a Billboard chart represents a harbinger not only for country music but an entire industry that seems to increasingly struggle to break new artists — and may be leaning into AI to resolve the issue.

"Why are no artists breaking out? One reason is likely because many record labels are heavily investing in AI themselves as opposed to spending that effort and capital to break actual, human artists," Coroneos said.

[Rob Wile](#)

Rob Wile is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist covering breaking business stories for NBCNews.com.

According to Wikipedia, Xania Monet, a gospel and R&B singer is also an A-I generated personality.

AND---this recent headline---

AI music company Suno valued at \$2.45 billion in latest funding round

(Reuters) -Suno said on Wednesday it has raised \$250 million in a funding round led by Menlo Ventures, valuing the [artificial intelligence](#) music company at \$2.45 billion, as it aims to develop more sophisticated tools for song creation.

The Massachusetts-based company allows users to generate songs via AI prompts, but has been caught in a copyright dispute with record labels such as Warner Music Group, Universal Music Group and Sony Music Group.

Suno's series C funding round also saw participation from [Nvidia](#)'s venture capital arm NVentures, Hallwood Media, Lightspeed, and Matrix.

The music industry is seeing an increase in AI-generated songs which are hard to distinguish from human-made music. The trend was highlighted earlier this year when the AI band "The Velvet Sundown" had attracted one million Spotify listeners monthly.

The trend could reshape how platforms monetize songs and pay artists, while raising ethical and copyright concerns.

"In just two years, we've seen millions of people make their ideas a reality through Suno, from first-time creators to top songwriters and producers integrating the tool into their daily workflows," Suno co-founder and CEO Mikey Shulman said.

Rising popularity of AI tools is drawing investor attention toward startups that can generate new content and revenue lines.

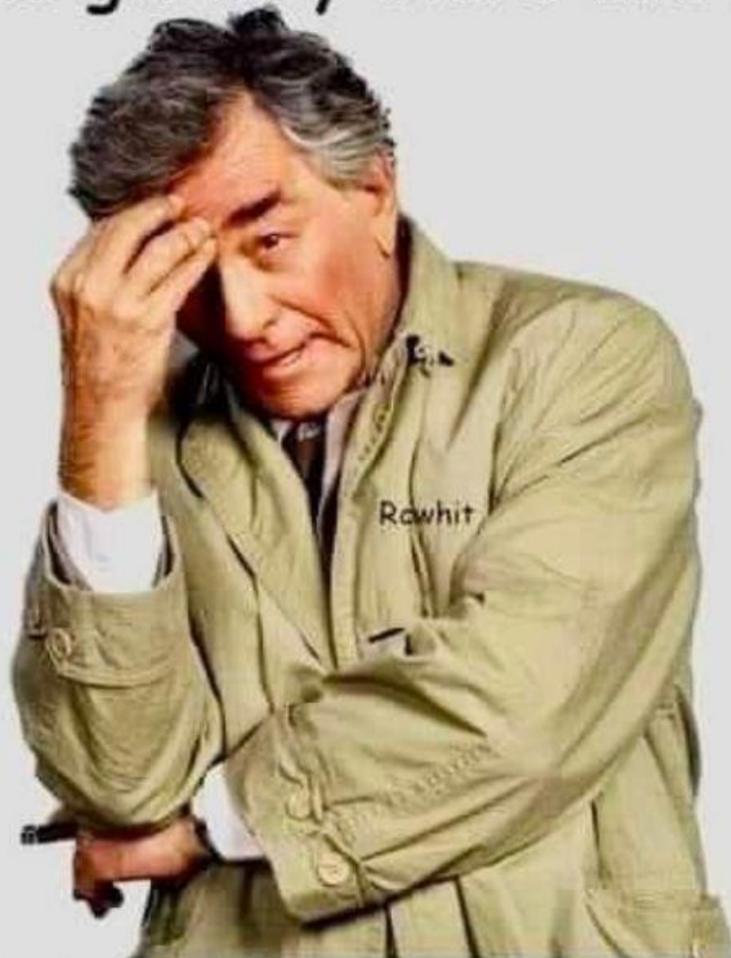
Last month, Universal Music Group settled a copyright case with another AI music company Udio. The two companies plan to launch an AI-powered music creation platform in 2026, using licensed music to train the tool.

(Reporting by Jaspreet Singh in Bengaluru; Editing by Leroy Leo)

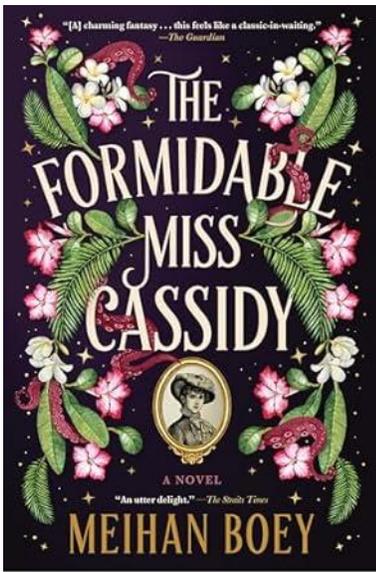
I GUESS I WILL HAVE TO REVISE MY OPINION about artificial intelligence creating interesting fiction. If it can already create music with mass audience appeal, then it can probably already create original works of fiction that can rival the best that humans can write. The robot/humanoid future has already arrived.



So let me get this straight, I go to the grocery store and buy:



A pound of sliced ham in a plastic bag, a loaf of bread in a plastic bag, a gallon of milk in a plastic jug, a pack of napkins in plastic wrap, a store-made salad in a plastic tub, a plastic bottle of mustard and ketchup, but they won't give me a plastic bag to carry it home because the plastic bag is bad for the environment?



THE FORMIDABLE MISS CASSIDY; Meihan Boey; Epigram Books; hardcover, trade paperback, kindle, ebook formats available

Meihan Boey is a Chinese author who primary writes comic books and occasionally, manga animation. This is her first novel, composed primarily of one long story and several shorter ones about the same character linked together to form this book.

The story is set in colonial Singapore during the middle 1890s. Miss Leda Cassidy is a thirty-eight year old Scottish woman with flaming red hair who is hired to be the governess and teacher for Sarah Jane Bendemeer, a girl on the cusp of puberty. The Bendemeer family has suffered tragedy. The wife, his son, and another of two of his daughters have died of a lingering illness in their home, an estate widely believed by the natives to be haunted. Captain Bendemeer works for the English East India Company, and when Miss Cassidy arrives it is obvious that her employer is himself dying.

As the story unfolds we learn that Miss Cassidy is not what she seems to be. She has unusual powers, which are gradually revealed over the course of the adventure. She is determined to somehow save Captain Bendemeer and his daughter Sarah, who is morose, listless, and lacks any real interest in life. Miss Cassidy is determined to change all that. Her efforts redouble when she casts a minor magic spell and sees the grotesque ghostly figure of a woman descend in the nighttime and latch onto the neck of Captain Bendemeer, seemingly drinking his blood.

The story unfolds with an engrossing panorama of period history and much local color laced with omens, legends, and the supernatural mythology of the region, which Miss Cassidy must navigate in order to deal with the problem facing Captain Bendemeer and Sarah.

The story then links into her continued employment in the colony working for Mr. Kay Wing Tong, a wealthy Chinese merchant with a large extended family living under his roof, who wants Miss Cassidy to educate his young twin daughters in English and proper social manners. There are also supernatural doings in his large and luxurious home. Mr. Kay and the girls can see ghosts, and there are rumors, supported by more than a few hints that Mr. Kay is the bearer of a curse, plus a malignant demon may be among the household's residents.

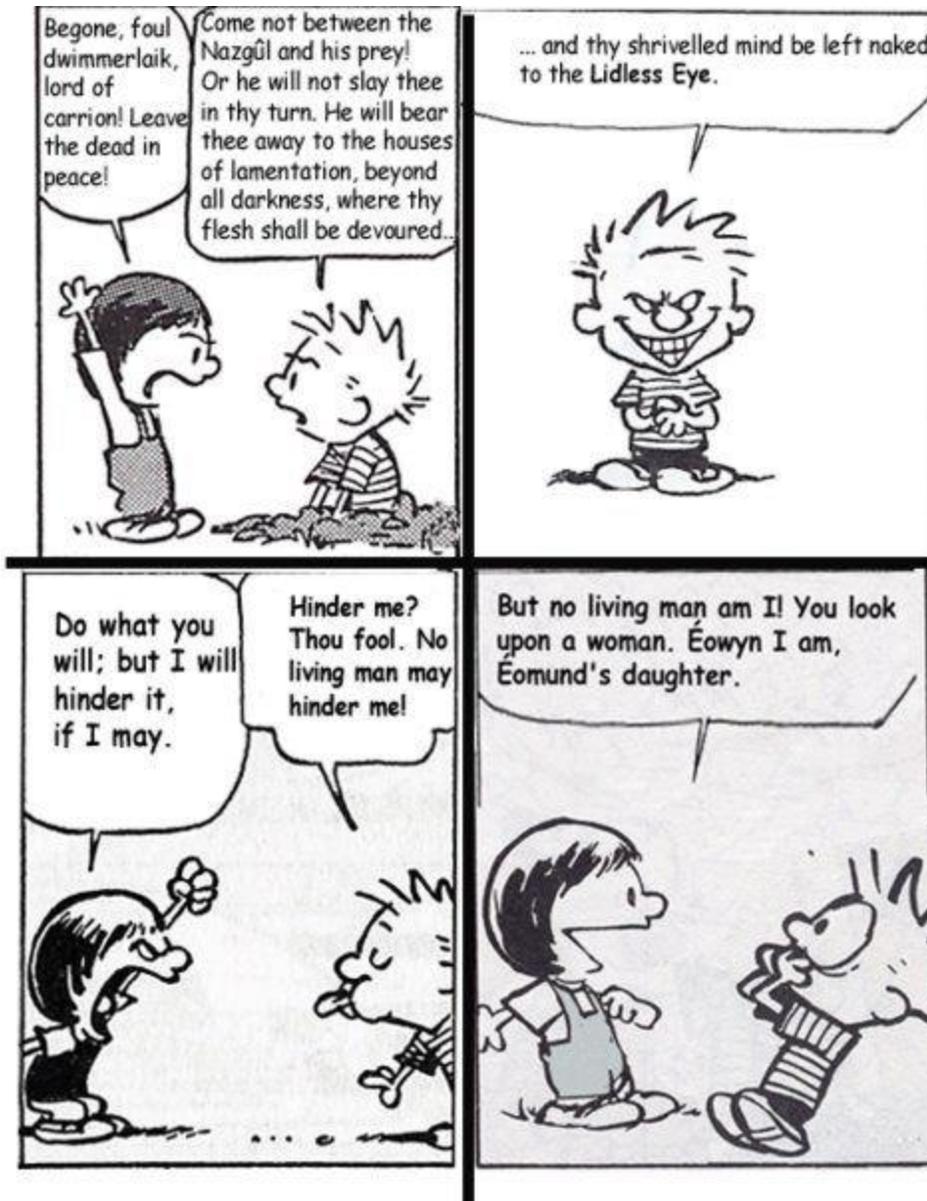
Richly written with a wealth of historic detail and color, this is an interesting, even enchanting visit to a foreign world of long ago featuring a mysterious woman who possess unusual powers and is determined to use them against the supernatural forces that seek to bring tragedy to the people who employ her, people she comes to deeply care for.

The book concludes in a way that makes it obvious that this is the end of the adventures of Miss Cassidy, but most of the people who have read this book are demanding that Ms Boey come up with some new stories about the character. Add my voice to that number.

This is a very well written, interesting book filled with exotic history and legend lore, peopled by fascinating characters. It was just an easy, fun read. Highly recommended. And really, Ms Boey, please give us more adventures about the Formidable Miss Cassidy.



MAILING COMMENTS



INTERMISSION #159

While I am somewhat more optimistic about the chances of Ukraine's survival now, the fact that Trump is threatening to withdraw all US aid unless Ukraine gives in to the Russian peace proposals is a major stumbling block. Ukraine is running out of people to fight the war, and Russia isn't. Events are moving too fast for any kind of predictions at this point in time.

I think there are some good movies and TV shows being turned out these days, however I agree that there is far too much reliance on explosions, mindless action, and spiffy visual effects when the producers would be better off turning in stronger story plots. Unfortunately, like it or not, the audience most willing to spend money for theater tickets or spend time plopped in front of a TV set are young people who are impressed by

explosions, violence, action, and special effects. The other main audience for TV shows are people over the age of 55, which most sponsors and TV execs will not normally program for.

I like many old SF/fantasy films myself, and I have seen most of the movies you list. I have to say that altho they are all concerned with futuristic concepts, a lot of them have ridiculous plots and are not interesting. Have you actually tried to watch “Queen of Outer Space”, or “The Day the Sky Exploded”? NOT good cinema by any stretch of the imagination.

There is plenty of high adventure science fiction still being published today. In fact there is so much stf being published today that it is impossible for anyone to keep up, and even book review sites are hopelessly behind. A glance at the recent issue of the *N3F Fan Activity Gazette* lists 45 new books due to appear in the month of December alone, and often the total is even higher for other months.

Is the history of SF fandom worth being preserved in digitized format housed in cloud storage blocks? I dunno. As I have undoubtedly mentioned before, so damn much of the stuff has been produced over the years that trying to collect and semi-organize even a fraction of the efforts fans have created will take decades of work and involve considerable expense, and to what purpose?

I’m sure that people who emerged from stf fandom to become significant authors, or movers and shakers in the entertainment business would be referenced and their fannish efforts examined in light of their more mature achievements, but for the rest of the pile? I don’t think so. There are zillions of fanzines and commentary by fans, some of it boring, badly written, sometimes erratic to the point of near incoherency, and so dated that it would difficult for anybody today to make sense of it. Fans have a great sense of self importance, but the world at large really cares little about us or what we do. The egotistical whining of some professional athlete or movie personality past or present attracts far more attention and discussion than even profound writings turned out by science fiction fans.

Startling news about Donald Wollheim being a cross dresser. My understanding is that cross dressing usually involves some sort of low level sexual thrill, plus the thrill of crossing a cultural taboo. I would suspect it is more common for males trying to cross dress, since culturally males have traditionally been seen as stronger, more mature, and the dominant sex in most human societies. Women wear men’s clothing all the time and most people don’t seem to mind much.

The other problem so far as I can determine with male cross dressers is the simple fact that adult male and female bodies are very much different. Trying to get female clothing that would actually fit a male body has to be challenging. I noted you mentioned that Wollheim purchased clothing from a NYCity store that specifically catered to male transvestites. I think it is also interesting that most male cross-dressers want to wear traditional female clothing: dresses and skirts. Women have been wearing pants as normal everyday clothing for well over fifty years, but I suspect that would not meet the fantasies of the male transvestite.

According to an article on the internet I just glanced at, most cross-dressers grow out of it the older they get. I dunno if that was the case with Donald Wollheim. It is remarkable that he had an understanding wife willing to put up with that behavior.

Fairly obscure discussion about quotation and punctuation marks for written materials. I think in the English language full quotation marks “ and “ are used for most quotes the writer is citing. The single quotation mark ‘ and ‘ is most often use for internal digressions and thot processes. I am not sure that the single quotation mark: ‘ is even “official” to the language, altho English, like ever working language, changes all the time whether the traditionalists like it or not.

Only a century ago use of contracted words like don’t, wouldn’t, can’t and the like was considered vulgar and unacceptable. Literate writers were expected to spell the whole words out, which seems odd to modern readers, but common spoken vernacular became part of the written process sometime in the early 1900s and contracted words are completely acceptable now. I wish realistic spelling changes such as thru, tho, that and enuf would become more widely acceptable. Oh well, I’ll continue championing their use.

There are indeed lots of people using audio books these days, and the sales of audio books continue to increase. Audio books sell lots better than ebooks, but I personally believe the real reason is that many people have never really gotten into the habit of reading much, so audio books are their first choice rather than a text book in any format. This isn’t always true, of course. I know people who take along audio books when they are going on long car trips, for example, but the reality is that thout history reading for pleasure has been as pursuit enjoyed by a relatively small percentage of the population. Most people today are literate in that they know how to read, but they are functionally illiterate, since they only read what is necessary to maintain a normal life.

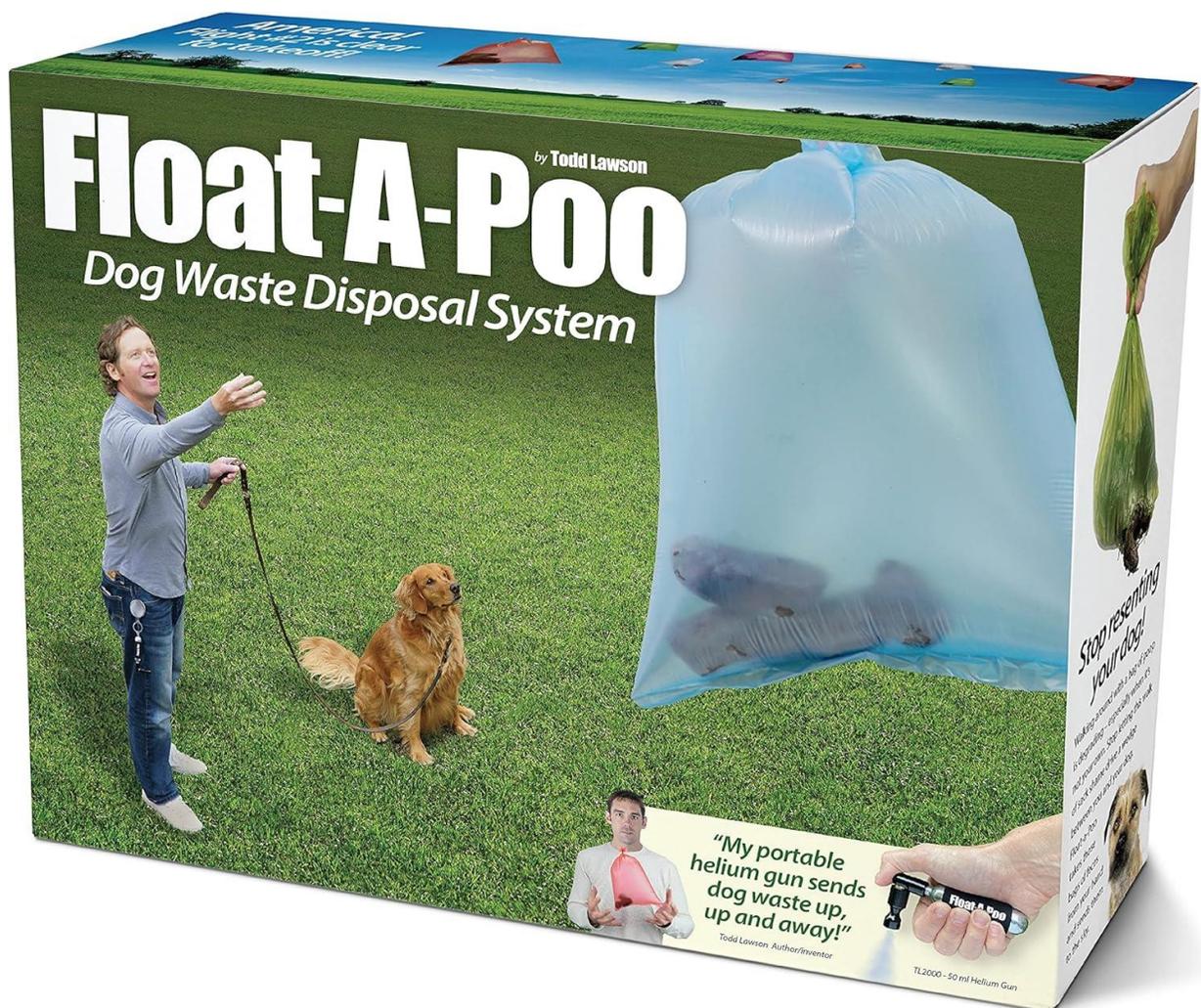
They read things like traffic signs, store signs, package labels, bills, and important documents, but nothing else. Perhaps a third or less of the general population actually reads for pleasure or information, despite the prevalence of the internet.

I'm sure George and Mark will have more to say about this, but high jumps on the moon or on any world with lesser gravity than Terra would probably be dangerous, since the human body would still have the same total mass. You might be able to jump farther, but you might also land just as hard, which would make those higher jumps much more dangerous than on Earth.

Really enjoyed your reprinting of "History Lesson" by Arthur C. Clarke. Remarkable that the original publisher let the story go into public domain, but as you note, it happened all the time in the last century. I was intrigued by your mention of doing your own version of Clarke's White Hart stories. I checked out Spacetime on the internet with no result, then Spacetime, also with no result. I checked your presence in the SFCyclopedia, and the listings of your writings on the Internet Speculative Fiction data base, and no book by that name or anything close is mentioned. Lots of your essays and other writings are mentioned tho. Is this a book that has not been translated into English yet?

I sent you a direct LOC on issue #160, so I'll pass additional comments here.

Unique Christmas gifts you may have overlooked...



ARCHIVE MIDWINTER

In my part of the world, heat in the wintertime is extremely important, and very expensive. I've never bothered with air conditioning the house during the summer. Yeah, it gets warm, but we only have maybe a dozen days per year where the temps hit ninety degrees or more. My home is at a higher elevation, and for whatever reason there are usually gentle breezes (sometimes

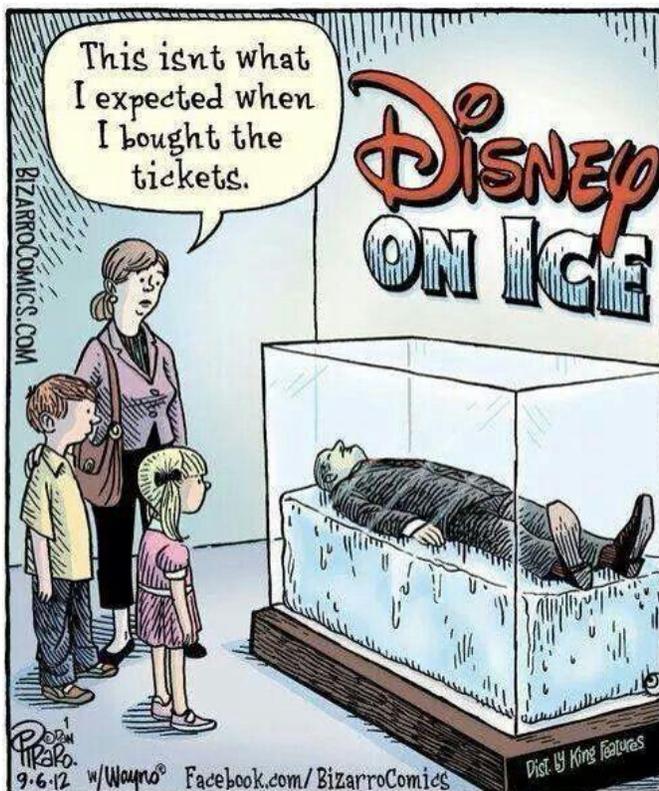
high winds!) blowing most of the time. This is a very nice feature in the summer time, but not so wonderful during the winter months. My main winter worry is ice on the roadways which is an invitation to disaster. I try not to drive or move out of the house when there is ice out there, but sometimes it becomes necessary despite the danger.

Getting rid of your personal collection of stuff before you drop dead is indeed a worry for a lot of fans. Planning ahead can be useful. Getting your books and mags and comics into the hands of a single collector is unlikely; you will have more luck selling the stuff to a dealer like myself who will at least get the material into the hands of other collectors. Unfortunately you have indicated that you don't want to pack and mail/ship out stuff which severely limits your potential sales base. Talking to dealers at local conventions would be useful, as well as giving notice in fanzines that you are clearing out your collection. The N3F used to have a Swap & Sell column in their fanzines from which I used to buy a lot of stuff back in ye olden days, and which a friend used to sell his pulp accumulation when he got married. The club might consider revising that column.

There are also community shopping newspapers in every city mailed out free to people living there. I'm sure there are several in your area. You can buy a classified ad for fifteen bucks or less, slightly more for a display ad in color, letting people know you are selling your collections.

How do you know what to sell now rather than later? Go thru some of your stuff and make realistic decisions. Are you ever going to reread, rewatch, relisten, replay the items? If the answer is yes, then you keep it. If no, then it's time to move it out. You also need to be realistic about the prices you are willing to take to clear the material out. Talking to dealers at conventions will give you some info, but remember, the idea is to get the stuff into the hands of people who will appreciate the material as much as you do, not to make a lot of money. If you want to make a lot of money, speculate on the stock market or buy lottery tickets. Don't delude yourself thinking you are going to make a bundle selling your old books and LPs.

You can also run ads on craigslist. The cost is low, also results may vary. One big advantage is that buyers come to you to pick the stuff up. Craigslist would be a good place to clear out your classical music record collection. If worse comes to worse you can donate your record collection to your local community public radio station for their annual record sale. You can also, as a last resort, give your books and mags and comics to your local library for their library sale. It's better than waiting to drop dead and have your near relatives call for a dumpster service to clean out your apartment.



Whatever you decide to do, you need to start thinking about it right now.

I don't necessarily agree that there are rules of Literary Fiction that automatically exclude most science fiction. Most Literary Fiction tends to focus on human characterization: how the problem or theme of the story affects the protagonists and the cadre of supporting players. Literary Fiction can, and sometimes does end in unexpected or even depressing ways, but the emphasis is the effect on the human beings in the story. Science fiction places the emphasis on the plot itself; what is happening, sometimes why it is happening, and what will happen after the action and adventure winds up. The human beings are often mere character players in the unfolding drama. The focus is almost always on the concept and how the concept develops in the setting the author has created.

Sometimes well written science fiction includes good characterization and covers how the Concept has affected them personally, but that is not the primary crux of science fiction, and this is why most mainstream writers and critics tend to dismiss science fiction as juvenile literature that emphasis

the adventure and the events rather than being focused on human emotions and reactions, which they snobbishly consider the only qualities of Real Literature.

Unique Christmas gifts you may have overlooked...



YE MUTHERERED MASTER MAGE #279

The Marxist don't claim that communism is based on scientific laws governing human history. What they do propose is dialectic materialism as a rational explanation of the economic development of western civilization and the inevitable stages that it has and will go thru to eventually lead to a communist society.

I was going to go into an explanation of dialectic materialism when I discovered this excellent article by Curry Malott, that explains and summarizes the pertinent points much better than I could, so it is reprinted here. Those interested, please read on. I'll have some observations afterwards.

What is dialectical materialism? An introduction

by [Curry Malott](#)

Apr 4, 2018

After the deaths of Marx and Engels, socialists began taking up the important task of summarizing their work for popularization. In 1919, for example, Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist, argued that the essence of Marx's project is not the correctness or incorrectness of his many theses, but rather, his dialectical *method*.

Stressing the significance of Marx's method Lukács notes that it is a "weapon" of the proletariat and "an instrument of war" (1919/1971, 224). Marx never wrote a text on dialectics or even used the term "dialectical materialism," and so articulating Marx's dialectic was left to Engels and those who followed. There are, as a result, a great many debates about what exactly dialectical materialism is. There has also been a tendency to oversimplify dialectical materialism into a mechanical and deterministic dogma.

This article outlines Marx's method, dialectical materialism, a theory and manner of understanding change. It is a theory that grasps how many of the competing social forces driving the movement of society are often hidden or mystified, and that gives us a way of uncovering them. It is a method that understands that unveiling social forces must be done in such a way as to foster class-for-self-consciousness within the working class as a revolutionary force. Toward these ends this article introduces the major components of dialectical materialism, including the negation of the negation, sublation, the unity of opposites, and the transformation of quantity into quality.

What is Marx's method?

In developing his method, Marx challenged what he considered to be vulgar materialism for its tendency to ignore the totality and the relationship between consciousness and material reality. A philosophical term, the "totality" refers to the total of existence in any given moment. At the same time, Marx rejected pure idealism for substituting material reality with the idea of reality (i.e. with abstract thought). Idealism therefore leads to the false assumption that alienation or estrangement can be overcome in the realm of thought alone, as if we could change our material reality by changing our ideas and beliefs.

Rather, Marx's dialectical method is based on "the unifying truth of both" (1844/1988, 154). What this means is that "it is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive toward thought." In other words, Marx's method entails the examination of the relationship between ideas and material reality, specifically as it pertains to class struggle and the emancipation of the proletariat. Marx's dialectics are called "dialectical materialism" in contrast with Hegel's dialectics. Marx wrote that he "discover[ed] the rational kernel within the mystical shell" (1867/1967, 29) of Hegel's dialectics.

To realize this revolution the working-class must not only understand the interaction of forces behind the development of society, but it must understand itself as one of those forces. The dialectic is a powerful weapon because it breaks through the capitalist illusion of individualism and atomism and disrupts the idea that isolated facts speak for themselves. Only by situating facts or ideas in the historical totality of society do they begin to make real sense. To comprehend this revolutionary

movement we must conceive the interaction of forces as much more than the interaction of static and independent entities.

When the parts of the totality change, their relationship to the totality changes, and they themselves change. Dialectics presents reality as an ongoing social process; nothing is ever static or fixed.

Dialectics is both a method—or a way of investigating and understanding phenomena—and a fact of existence. For Engels, what is most central to dialectics is the tendency toward perpetual “motion and development” (1894/1987, 131). What follows is a summary of the dialectical theory of movement and change. The concept around which the dialectical understanding of development revolves is the negation of the negation, which will be taken up first, before turning to the concept of sublation. The unity of opposites or the interpenetration of opposites, a central driving force of the dialectic is then explored. Finally, we look at the tendency toward the transformation of quantity into quality, which in turn allows us to understand the negation of the negation more deeply.

The negation of the negation

The tendency toward *the negation of the negation* is arguably at the heart of dialectical development. Engels, for example, notes that the negation of the negation is “extremely general—and for this reason extremely far-reaching and important” (1894/1987, 131). The negation of the negation refers specifically to the way that phenomena and structures produce their opposites.

For example, in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx (1867/1967) writes that capitalist private property is the negation of individual private property, or property held by the proprietor or individual laborer. Peasant proprietors, as small-scale industrial producers, tended to own private property and produced their own means of subsistence. This small-scale, scattered, petty industry of the peasants was limited in terms of its ability to foster economic growth. The advent of the capitalist era included the expropriation of the peasants from their means of production. The logic of the feudal system and exchange created the agencies of its own annihilation.

While feudalism was overcome in capitalism, aspects of it were preserved but reconfigured in a way to facilitate economic growth. For example, the private property of peasants was abolished, but private property itself was not.

Capitalism concentrates and centralizes property, tending towards monopoly. Bigger capitalists buy out or otherwise out maneuver smaller capitalists. At the same time, capitalism creates its antagonist: the working class. As capital grows so too does the working class. These contradictions provide the basis for the second negation: the expropriation of the expropriators, or the transformation of capitalism into socialism.

Under socialism the means of production that existed under capitalism are preserved. Instead of being held in private they are held in common. In place of exploitation the means of production are put in the service of meeting the many needs of the producers. This process is called sublation. When something is sublated it is both overcome yet preserved. We can also see sublation at work in Marx’s theory of

monopoly. Monopolies create the material basis for socialism as they aggregate and concentrate productive forces. Socialist revolution expropriates these from the capitalists, but instead of breaking them up into smaller enterprises, the working class takes control of them as they are. If this is still a bit confusing at this point, it should be clearer after we go through the other components of dialectics.

Of course, capitalism is not going to automatically transform into socialism, even though its own internal logic orients its development in that general direction. Capitalist crises and contradictions are necessary for socialist revolutions but they are not sufficient. If they were sufficient, then we would already be living under socialism!

The interpenetration of opposites

What compels entities to be in a constant state of motion are their internal contradictions, or the forces generated by the unity of opposites. The most central or essential contradiction within capitalism is between labor and capital.

Labor and capital are opposites because they have contradictory drives. For example, historically, labor has spontaneously sought to decrease the rate of exploitation by collectively bargaining for higher wages, better conditions, benefits, and so on. When successful, these decrease profit margins. Capital, on the other hand, seeks to always increase the rate of exploitation. Labor and capital are therefore compelled by opposite and antagonistic drives. This antagonism can be managed and mediated by unions and state regulation, but it can only be overcome through the negation of the negation.

Labor and capital, as such, do not have an independent existence apart from each other. To be a worker is *by definition* to be exploited by capital, and to be a capitalist is *by definition* to exploit workers. The relationship between labor and capital is therefore *internal* and constitutes the totality. As a relation of exploitation, capital is a unity of contradictions. The dialectical development of this relationship over time is the movement of the balances of forces within capitalism.

A common mistake is to conceptualize the movement generated from antagonistically-related social classes as the interaction of separate forces external to each other. This leads to the false belief that the role of the working-class revolution today is to *destroy* capitalism and *replace* it with socialism. Socialism can only be created out of what already exists.

Marx and Engels believed that socialism would first emerge out of the most developed capitalist countries. This did not turn out to be true, as socialism emerged first in Russia, an underdeveloped, predominantly feudal-based country. Socialism, nevertheless, was ushered in by the producers and created out of an old society, not separate from it.

Quantity into quality

The tendency toward the transformation of quantity into quality offers deeper insight into the negation of the negation. So far, we have seen how the essential

contradiction within capitalism is the labor/capital relationship, which is an example of the unity of opposites. We also saw the sublation of private property from one negated mode of production to the next. Investigating the interrelationship of these two issues will provide the basis for our example of the transformation of quantity into quality. The inherently unequal relationship between labor and capital was established, in part, through the violence of expropriating peasants from their means of production. Without direct access to the means of production, former peasants were forced to sell their ability to work for a wage, thereby becoming part of the working class. Although beyond the scope of this short introduction, it's crucial to note that the violence of slavery, colonialism, and settler colonialism were equally important in establishing capitalism.

The competition between capitalists drives technological development. Because the price of any given commodity tends to center around the average amount of time its production requires, devising new technologies that can reduce the number of labor hours it takes to produce whatever commodity is a tendency internal to capitalism. In the short term this gives the capitalist at the technological forefront a competitive advantage because they can sell the commodity below its social value. But as soon as the new technology gets integrated into the entire branch or branches of industry, the average amount of time that it takes to produce whatever commodity lowers, and the competition begins anew.

While new labor-saving technologies can be super profitable for individual capitalists in the short term, in the long term it reduces the number of labor hours simultaneously set into motion. It also means that more capital is invested into machinery rather than workers. And since workers produce value and machines do not, this contributes to the tendency of the falling rate of profit.

When the amount of labor hours it takes to transform a given quantity of raw materials into whatever commodity is reduced, the composition of capital shifts quantitatively, by degree. Historically, individual capitalists have countered the falling rate of their profit margins in many ways such as devising schemes to reduce the price they pay for labor even while its value remains the same thereby pushing the laborer into depravity and impoverishment. The capitalist, driven to counter the falling rate of profit by extracting more and more value from the laborer, thereby deepens capital's crisis.

The internal drive of capital to forever expand the accumulation of surplus value brings the unity of opposites, labor and capital, into growing conflict with each other. This movement is the developmental process at the heart of the dialectics of capitalism. While the capitalist has an interest in maintaining the contradiction and creating the illusion of capital's permanence, the objective interest of labor is to resolve the contradiction, thereby changing the quality of production relations. This is quantity into quality and the center of struggle between labor and capital. The quantitative changes *provide the basis or possibility* of qualitative change.

Conclusion

One of the reasons why dialectical materialism is so important is because it embodies a deep revolutionary optimism. Drawing attention to the fact that the future already exists as an unrealized potential within the present demystifies the seeming permanence of capitalism. In other words, it reveals the defeat of imperialism as a real potential and not a fantasy. For example, it is a fact that the most advanced means of production, labor saving technologies, as they currently exist, are able to meet the basic needs of every person in the world. In this way, the future liberation of humanity from exploitation and material oppression already exists.

The practicality of the aforementioned optimism resides in the fact that Marx's method correctly locates the agent of revolutionary transformation within the working class, the many.

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AND I'm back---All of this is not necessarily a hard line of logic to follow. Note the cultural context. Each economic form used by western civilization has automatically included the seeds of its own destruction. Chattel slavery and city states gave way to feudalism. Feudalism was superseded by capitalism, capitalism automatically creates class warfare while automatically creating technological innovation as a means of increasing both productivity and profit. The class conflict will automatically result in socialism. When new socio-economic systems emerge they do not destroy the old system; they incorporate it into the new development. The ultimate economic system will inevitably be communism as the natural outgrowth of socialism.

The problem as most Marxist see it, is that the process, while perfectly logical and natural, takes way too long to work itself out. Most Marxists are not willing to wait centuries for socialism to replace capitalism.

To be fair, during the 18th and particularly the 19th century, the plight of laboring people was so demeaning and miserable that many political factions, not just Marxists, felt that a violent revolution was necessary to end the suffering and vicious exploitation of the working class. During this period unions were brutally suppressed, and it was a long time before any governments were willing to enact any kind of legislation that addressed the suffering and degrading condition of the working class, or address the damage that unbridled capitalism could do to a national economy and the environment.

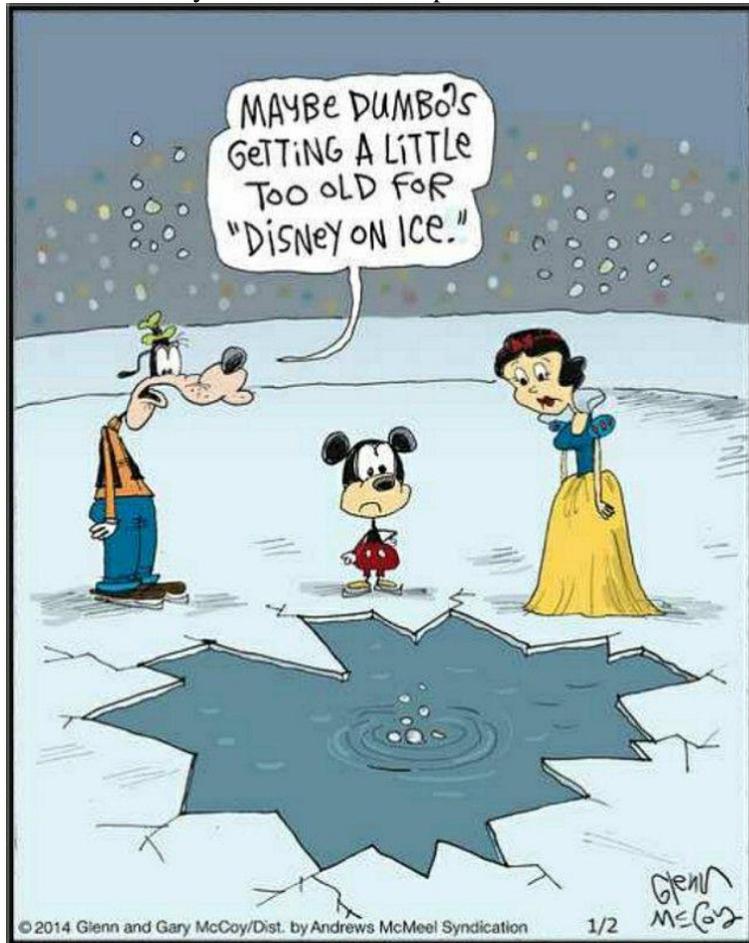
A strong faction of Marxists believe capitalism will never willingly give way to socialism, therefore revolution is a necessity to relieve the suffering of the working class and to hasten the inevitable process of economic and social evolution.

Unfortunately for socialists and Marxists, when social change comes, either by revolution or by a more benign shift to political change, it often brings dictatorships along with it.

Capitalism seizes on this as an excuse to condemn socialism as an inherently fractured economic system intended to support worthless loafers at the expense of society's most productive citizens, a system that invariably creates fascist style dictatorships that are worse than any of the problems created by capitalism. The French Revolution and the horrors of the Reign of Terror are often cited as prime examples.

There is also the problem that while the new leaders who take over may believe in socialism and the betterment of the working class, they often come with bitter personal baggage that they work out in their new position of near absolute power. Stalin was determined to exterminate any vestige of the Russian autocracy using any methods, arguing that the aristos had brutalized the people of Russia for centuries and thus deserved to die. His five-year programs turned Russia into a modern industrialized nation, but at the same time created a vicious dictatorship that relied on fear and repression to maintain his power.

There is an interesting interview with Adolph Hitler from 1938 (recently reprinted), in which he explains exactly what he expects National Socialism to do for the average citizen, especially the undereducated workers and how National Socialism will transform Germany into a national power while ending poverty and the social caste system that had been part of the German social order for decades.



Unfortunately Hitler was more concerned with exterminating the Jews, whom he bitterly hated, and making Germany a world class military power so it could crush its neighbors and avenge the German defeat in the Great War. To that end he was willing to force German citizens to work long hours for short pay, create a chain of internal concentration camps, empower the Gestapo and create a social order founded on fear and repression.

It doesn't always work out that way, but usually it does. The social change generates ruthless dictators who have their own agenda to settle before they turn to anything else.

The possible exception may have been Juan Peron, who became a fascist dictator specifically to enact what he regarded as necessary social and economy reform in Argentina. Whereas most fascist regimes use 90% brute force and repression to control the population, Peron relied on legislation, popular influence, and discussions with his political opponents to enact his agenda. *Time Magazine* in an article about Peron in 1951 noted that the voice of the people was his guide, and he only used police force when his opponents

were unwilling to make any kind of compromise.

An inherent defect of free enterprise capitalism is the fact that it automatically creates a roller-coaster effect with periods of intense growth and prosperity followed by a swift and sharp down cycle leading to recession or even depression when the economy implodes, leading to massive unemployment and suffering. These cycles make the appeal of socialism a much easier sell to the population at large.

In order to equalize the cycles in some way and to make capitalism more productive, capitalist employers using the governments as a tool are increasingly willing to make concessions to worker welfare including recognizing unions, better pay, shorter working hours, better and safer working conditions, health insurance and more. Not only does this generally create a somewhat more favorable mental outlook on the part of their workers, but such benefits often increase productivity and will lead to fewer people quitting their jobs. Replacing and training good workers is much more expensive than doling out benefits in order to keep the best workers producing for your company and pushing up the profit margins.

What the socialists also never anticipated was the ruthless and savage propaganda effort capitalism has created to maintain its economic hold on western society. Painting socialism as unreliable, inefficient,

demeaning and destructive to the most productive members of society, capitalist politicians have managed to convince a considerable part of the population across the world that as bad as capitalism might be, adopting socialism will invariably be worse.

off the mark.com

by Mark Parisi



to the ongoing series. Be forewarned--once Marvel discovered that they had a gold mine in the *Uncanny X-Men* they immediately created and spun off numerous (as in A HELL OF A LOT!!!) of other series directly related to the X team. Some of these are interesting, but going along those by-ways will cost you a lot of time (and money).

I never had a Space Patrol Rocket Cockpit, but I had a ton of Space Patrol radio premiums. As I have mentioned before, Space Patrol was my favorite program as a youngster, and was the direct inspiration for my becoming a science fiction reader and fan. I still remember with great bitterness wearing the Space Patrol rocket ship belt buckle clasp glow in the dark belt in the fifth grade when somewhere going to recess one day, it broke, and the metal rocket belt buckle disappeared into the 4th dimension. That had to be the answer because I searched every inch of that pathway multiple times when it got lost and I never found it. I do have a few of the other premiums that I managed to hang on to, including the official Space Patrol badge, some coins, and a decoder. And, of course, I have audio copies of every Space Patrol radio show that somehow managed to survive, which I still listen to from time to time.

In my opinion Harry Warner Jr. wrote the best books on stf fan history. He was going to do another one dealing with fandom in the 1960s but never got around to it. Or maybe he was just too overwhelmed by the expansion and fracturing that happened to stf fandom during that ten year period. Both of his books are easily available from a variety of sources, and may be posted on some internet sites for free (altho both are still under copyright).

When an author dies, if there are relatives or an estate to defend it, the book can be protected against reprinting anywhere, especially on the web. Sometimes publishers will defend copyright if they think they can still sell print copies of the volume(s) after the writer has passed on, but increasingly there are vast numbers of books and stories and articles that nobody really cares about that are reprinted and cached on websites without paying a penny to the copyright holders.

Sometimes the authors themselves don't care. If their book(s) are out of print, and there are no printed copies out there bringing in royalty money, they sometimes regard the posting of their material on the internet as

The process of social change always continues despite setbacks. Unexpected events such as wide ranging plagues, or barbarian invasions that crush existing governments, stupidity on the part of government leaders that results in natural or economic disasters beyond their ability to remedy are only a few of the factors that can cause major setbacks in the process of what most Marxists and Socialists regard as inevitable change.

Most social reformers want to see their personal agendas enacted swiftly and with immediate visible results on the social order. However, the key words here are that progressive social and political change are inevitable. Time and basic human nature are the ultimate arbitrators in the remolding of human civilization.

Good luck investigating the X-Men comic franchise. If you really care I would suggest looking into the *X-Men* graphic novels that reprint from issue 99 thru 141, then when the name officially changed to *The Uncanny X-Men* issue #142 thru about number 300. In my opinion those are the best issues.

The graphic novels can be checked in either physical or e-book format from the library. If you get hooked (as many do) you can work your way on thru

at least one way their work can be remembered and enjoyed in the coming years. The Internet Archive makes a specialty of harvesting little known and largely forgotten published works and posting them on their site for anybody to read or download for free. I think they provide a worthwhile service, but I am ambivalent about posting works that the publishers or authors themselves want to protect.

Unique Christmas Gifts that you may have overlooked...



SNOW POSTER TOWNSHIP #23

I enjoyed your reviews. I've placed "Altered Carbon" by Richard K. Morgan on my upcoming inter-library checkout list.

The new century has seen a whole bunch of excellent semi-pro comic book fanzines hit the scene. Unfortunately the market for this type of mag seems limited. Most of them, except for *Alter-Ego* and the other TwoMorrow publications have pretty much vanished. To be fair, many of the same people have turned to the internet and are using websites instead of print to post their comments and observations about the world of comic books. It seems to me that they primary appealed to the older comics collector, people who often already know comic history and/or have more than enuf stuff to read already without adding in more magazines. Or maybe the internet sites just wiped them out.

Uh, you must be having some short term memory loss or something. Adrian clearly noted previously that the "Jap Herron" novel claimed to have been written by Mark Twain from beyond the grave. Mr. Clemens's daughter promptly sued the instigators of his scam and forced them to withdraw the book and burn all the remaining unsold copies.

I think most stf fans have piles of as-yet-unread books and magazines that they fully intend to get around to, real soon now. There is so much new interesting stuff coming out that it's hard to resist the temptation to add more material to the pile. A dozen or so years ago I decided to do something about that. I had a double deep, three book wide stack of volumes running along the back hallway wall almost to the ceiling. I decided to start reading and either keep and file, or cull and sell, and to check out new books from the library instead of buying them. This house still has way too much stuff in it, but I've made very good progress getting things read and sorted (or removed, as the case might be). I think most stf fans are instinctive hoarders, and it takes a conscious effort to face the situation and make the necessary hard decisions.

Unique Christmas Gifts you may have overlooked...



R.A.I.L. #9

Interesting to read your experience as a dealer at your local print zine fest. While print fanzines are rapidly disappearing from the world of science fiction and comics fandom, the world of amateur zine publishing, on paper, is doing very well everywhere across the country. Several SF people have discussed the phenomena over the past year or so. I suppose I should not be amazed, but almost none of the zinesters discussed had any interest at all in science fiction or fantasy (except for some movie and TV titles). Most zinesters charge money for their pubs, but are willing to trade. According to the articles I have read, zine fests are about raising money for the publishers, and making swaps with potentially interested fellow writers. Did you sell copies of your own publication at the zine-con you attended?

I dunno, I wonder if doing probing research into why people continue to do unhealthy things when they know better is massive overkill. People obviously do things that they know might be bad for them because they

enjoy doing them. Eating candy, drinking booze, vegging out in front of the TV, avoiding strenuous exercise, overeating fatty meats and fried foods; all these things and more make people feel good. Even making minimal changes involves changing habits and giving up some small pleasures, which is difficult for most people to do since many parts of daily life are not particularly pleasurable or even enjoyable. After a hard day dealing with work and reality it is very difficult to give up any of the things that help ease those cares.

It sure looks like Trump has declared war on the academic world with his law suits and cutting off of appropriate funds for research and operations. The spread of knowledge and the development of research into the assorted fields of knowledge have (up to now anyway), always been one of the basic services democracies provided for their citizens. A well educated citizenship makes for a happier and more productive social and economic system. Trump's decisions to cripple the education of the people living in this country make no sense. Unless, of course, those rumors about Trump being KGB Agent Krasnov are correct.

Wow! You still have an actual real brick-and-mortar game store in your area? Lucky, lucky you. They are almost extinct in my part of the world, altho we do have a big game convention in Worcester every February, which hosts lots of dealers. But that's not the same as having a real live game store within easy driving distance.

Unique Christmas Gifts you may have overlooked...



BROWNIAN MOVEMENT #16

Getting involved in imaginary kingdoms is certainly one way of escaping the increasing surreal and depressing news happening these days. You didn't mention if your citizenship and involvement in the fantasy kingdom costs money or not. I am vaguely familiar with the concept(s) but most of the ones I have encountered rely on a series of dues to keep things going, with dues increasing the more involved you get with the operation. In this respect they are not unlike some on-line game sites that offer free enticements but then charge as players decide to become more involved.

The fact that comic book super heroes are basically costumed vigilantes taking the law into their own hands has been a point of contention since they were originally introduced. Nowadays the national government or the elected official of the local metropolis where they operate have given these unique individuals special deputy powers to continue their activities, but originally, (and in some recent story lines as well), the super heroes were not regarded kindly by the authorities, even if they supposedly worked to catch bad people and support law and order. The introduction of costumed super villains (particularly in the Marvel Universe) has complicated matters even more.



If super heroes existed in real life and were dedicated to fighting crime, I suspect they would not wear any kind of garish costume, or make themselves very visible at all. It would be easier for them to use whatever special powers they had to secretly ferret out criminals and then arrange for the evidence needed to jail the bad guys to conveniently fall into the hands of the police. That's if doing good works were the primary purpose. But of course comic books were originally aimed at youngsters, so characters dressed in outrageous costumes having exciting action filled adventures with battles and confrontations were what powered the genre. It's hard to argue with success or apply logic to that kind of fantasy world.

You are right about SF conventions. People want to run *their* kind of event, and they want to run it *their* way. Why listen to advice from people who have run cons before, people who might know what problems to anticipate, and who want to help you avoid those same problems? Obviously those people are incompetent fuddy-duddies who just couldn't handle things. We, on the other hand, can take care of ourselves, and will. All we need from the fuddy-duddies is to buy some admission tickets; then they can attend and see how a great science fiction convention is supposed to be run.

With the implosion of the SF/Fantasy magazine market it may very well be that short stories are no longer the heart of the genre. If there is no place for short stories to be read by the interested public, then their function and influence has already diminished considerably. Readers seem to have always preferred novel length fiction. Books comprising collections of short stories invariably sell noticeably fewer copies than novels, even when the author is well known and established.

I got into the hobby when the magazines were everything. If you didn't read the stf mags then you just weren't a fan. Many of the long tales that ended up in hard covers or paperback publication were first serialized in the magazines. Those days are gone now, and I'm not sure they will ever come back. I do keep reading *Eldritch Science*, and I keep meaning to write LOCs but I've been pretty lax in that regard as of late.

ESMERALDA COUNTY LINE #13

Congratulations on losing fifteen pounds after your road trip. Now the trick is to keep them off. I was planning on losing ten more pounds between Halloween and the end of the year, but it's been slow. I've lost about seven pounds and seem to be stuck there. Still a week or more to go as I write this, so there is still some hope.

We will never know if the deaths of Astor and Futrelle in the Titanic disaster was a great loss to the world of science fiction literature, but it could have been. The death of Futrelle, creator of the Thinking Machine detective stories was a serious blow to the word of detective fiction, and he was already branching out to science fiction. I have mentioned "The Diamond Master" before, but there are other published stories by him that straddled the world of science fantasy.

I read Serviss' "Edison's Conquest of Mars", in fact I still have my trade paperback here. It's definitely not good science fiction, but in his defense, Serviss was contracted by the editors of the *New York Journal* newspaper to write a sequel to "War of the Worlds", and to write it fast, so they could publish it as a serial while the public's attention was still on the Wells' novel. His other science fiction stories are much better, and the Edison's Conquest book did introduce some new and enduring concepts to the genre.

I believe that if the planet's population continues to grow we will inevitably have to return to nuclear power to supply the electricity that human civilization needs to keep functioning. The Japanese nuclear disaster was a major bad publicity moment for the potential of atomic power, but I suspect that simple necessity will force world governments to search for better safety stops so that they can tap into nuclear power again. Wind, solar, tidal, geothermic and other forms of alternative power are all good, but I don't think they will be able to meet the demands of the human race if the population keeps growing and we run out of easily accessible fossil fuels.

I disagree that the D&D players of the past primarily read fantasy literature. As a guy who ran a science fiction/games/comic store for over twenty years, and who was heavily involved in gaming during the 1980s and 90s, I can assure you that D&D players were always interested in science fiction as well as fantasy. Unfortunately there were some individuals who didn't read anything except game magazines and D&D supplements, but they were a minority.

I can't get into the tea drinking habit. I enjoy the tea served at Chinese restaurants (Oolong I guess it is), but that's the only kind I like. When I was growing up down south everybody drank iced tea all the time, and I drank gallons of the stuff, but once I got into college I stopped, and I've never been able to acquire a taste for tea since then. I also don't drink coffee. It smells good when it's brewing, but it tastes terrible.

Unique Christmas gifts that you might have overlooked...



Another great cover illo this time round. Where are you getting those great pics?
More disturbing news about the lower reading and comprehension scores for 12th

graders, and other students in lower grades. This is indeed a serious problem but I don't think the recommended solutions that the assorted experts you quote from will work. These solutions involve making major adjustments to the behavior patterns of young people that they are certainly not going to willingly adopt.

I think it would be almost impossible to get young people to dramatically cut back on their involvement with social media or to significantly cut back on the time they spend with their smart phones, or spend less time involved with popular entertainment.

I think banning smart phones in schools, and increasing the range of non-internet related activities that could interest students might be useful. Adding more sports and school sponsored clubs might divert some students into using social media less. So might offering book clubs focusing on books that students might

actually find entertaining. Young people would be much more likely to read, say, a Tarzan book, than Ethan Frome, or the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes instead of The Old Man and the Sea. If you want young people to read you have to give them stories that they will find interesting, something that most adult educators find difficult to do.

Nice write-up about Jim Butcher. I have to admit I was only vaguely aware of his material, except I knew he wrote a lot of different books. On your recommendation I will try out "Grave Peril". I'll let you know my opinion next mailing.

I have supported the science fiction magazines in this new century on an irregular basis. Mainly, when I could find them I would buy copies. Increasingly I don't find them on display anywhere anymore, and even my last (courtesy) visit to a book store in the next town over to see an old friend working there didn't turn up any current copies. I am considering subscribing but I am reluctant due to the recent turnover in ownership. *Analog* seems to be coming out on a somewhat regular schedule (at least I notice ads on Amazon for current issues now and again), but not anything else.



I have the radio on and playing music almost all the time. It is only a distraction when one of my special favorite songs happens to come on, songs of such personal interest that I immediately stop whatever I'm doing to listen to the song all the way thru.

On the other hand there are two, maybe three songs that grate on my nerves so badly that I will immediately stop whatever I'm doing and either change the station or turn the radio off rather than listen to the thing. The number one song I absolutely loathe is "Maggie May" by Rod Stewart. It's not bad music, and I didn't mind listening to it the first thousand or so times I heard it. But then I got really tired of hearing it, to the point that I now absolutely hate the song and never want to hear it ever again. So I make sure I don't/won't by turning the radio off or changing the station immediately whenever "Maggie May" starts to play. Another tune I always leap to cancel is "Kung Fu Fighting" by Carl Davis. Yuck!!

Hmm, I see you do mention you get some of your art from A-I sources. I'm not familiar with artificial intelligence artwork generators. Maybe you could fill in some details.

Enjoyed your reviews and commentary but no special thots come to mind.

Unique Christmas Gifts you may have overlooked...



BRANDY HALL #15

Going away for four weeks? That leaves open a ton O'Questions and speculations. Being summer in Oz this was probably your vacation time, but where did you go for four weeks? Who looked after the home place while you and the family were far, far away for a whole month?

I appreciated you using my comment to kick off a discussion about different types of alternate history stories that might or might not be considered science fiction. I think my main objection to many of these books is that the focus is on the political and cultural ramifications and not much else, and sometimes the changes are not very much.

A while back I read a collection of alternate history short stories mostly written by historians. I found the stories generally entertaining, but the proposals were what would happen if such and such an event had not happened and how it would affect the course of history. It did not seem to be science fiction, at least not to me. These were more of 'what if John had met Mary at the high school prom instead of Jennifer' type situations, where the outcomes are relative to the personalities involved, but don't constitute a science fiction tale.

Again, I am clearly in a minority here, since there are plenty of alternative history novels out there with many more being published every year, so there is clearly a market for the format.

I have a small tablet computer I use for ebooks but generally I don't read many of them. Mostly I use that device to download old, rare, out of print books that would be prohibitively expensive to buy in print form, or titles that simply aren't there to buy at all. I have a lot of dime novels, shilling shockers and obscure fantasy books loaded, plus some jumbo collections Amazon offered from time to time at bargain prices.

The contents of science fiction and comic book stores has, and continues to change over the years. I was always pretty much determined to stick to my basics, science fiction/fantasy books, comics, and games,

particularly stf role playing games. My personal opinion has always been that the further you get away from what you know best, the easier it is for things to go wrong.

Toward that end I got involved in becoming a video rental store in addition to everything else. My excuse was that the video biz had great profit potential, plus the video rental section was at the back of my large store, so customers had to walk thru all the books, comics and games to get to the video section. Even if the video renters did not buy any of the other things I was selling, they were likely to mention the mix when they discussed movies with their friends, so I considered it good advertising.

Unfortunately the video club mostly lost money because at that time new VHS movies cost eighty, ninety or a hundred five bucks each, sometimes more. It takes a hell of a lot of rentals to get those things to even pay for themselves, let alone turn a profit; plus there were tons of problems with the club, including some people who thot nothing of stealing the movies.

On another occasion, I turned my brains into the off position and briefly got into the collectible card business. I know nothing about gum cards---oops, sorry, *Collectible* cards, but that didn't stop me from buying into any number of the beautifully illustrated cards spun off from comics and fantasy artists. I never got involved with sports cards, thank heaven. A couple of friends in the retail business made that mistake and almost went bankrupt trying to figure out how to make money (or sense) out of the constant flood of assorted sports cards being issued. Very few of the collectible card sets sold well, mostly some people bought a few packs, and then the boxes sat there, collecting dust. Another costly investment flushed right down the drain.

Along that same line when Magic The Gathering was beginning to become popular I bought into lots of the other competing collectible card games, including TSR's Spellfire. Magic sold, the rest of the brands didn't. Magic cards were always on an allocation system, so stores never got the quantities they could sell, which led to extraordinary customer demand for the cards. Other stores started trying to stock and sell individual cards. Thank heavens I never made that mistake.

Then Wizards of the Coast issued Magic: Fallen Empires, and printed to the full pre-order demand, which led to a horrendous glut of that particular set. Stores, including mine, had multiple boxes of unsold Fallen Empire cards sitting around in their back rooms, not selling because everybody that wanted the things already had all they needed. To add the final coffin nail, a couple of years later Wizards declared that Fallen Empire cards were no longer valid in the Magic universe.

I also tried to sell comic character related T-shirts, yet another money pit. Comic and fantasy related posters spruced up the store walls, and they did sell, but veerrrrryyyyy slowly, so a lot of money was tied up for a vvvvveerrrrryyyy long time.

After I closed my retail store and went all mail order I had a ton of left over stuff from my merchandising blunders. I'm happy to say that T-shirts became highly collectible in this new century and I sold almost all of them (still got a couple of boxes left tho). Magic card collectors finally got around to remembering Fallen Empires so I sold those at a modest profit, finally. Unfortunately most of the other "collectible" card system stuff still sits in my warehouse. My friends will probably shove it into my grave as packing when I drop dead. My left over stock of Posters remain mostly unsold as well. My left over VHS movies have become steady sellers, altho at very low prices. I have managed to sell thru most of those, but it has taken many years to manage it.

Thank heaven (again!) that I never really got into action figures, or toys, or movie collectibles like many other store owners did. I always tried to stay with the three things I knew something about—comics, SF/fantasy books, and games. Whenever I got away from what I knew, things went wrong; an expensive lesson in life that I wish I had paid attention to much sooner than I finally did.



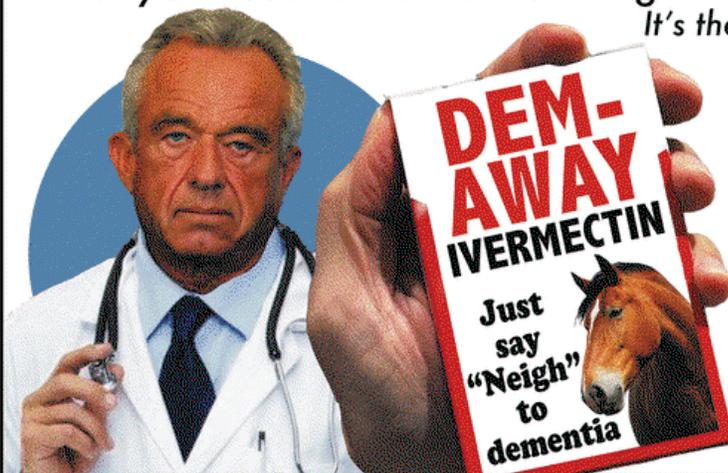
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Wahflestopper

#7 | Jan. 15, 2026

Shortly after we moved to Portugal at the end of October, a streaming series titled *Lua Vermelha: Nova Geração* launched on Prime Video. It's a sequel to a very popular Portuguese series, *Lua Vermelha*, which aired on SIC from Jan. 31, 2010, to May 27, 2012—225 episodes! Perhaps inspired by programs such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Dark Shadows*, and movies such as the Twilight series (based, of course, on novels), both series are young adult supernatural soap operas—teenage vampires at a boarding school. Telenovelas are quite popular in Portugal.

Lua Vermelha: Nova Geração, the new series, takes place 16 years after its precursor. So far, 10 episodes of *Lua Vermelha: Nova Geração* are available; 10 more are planned for mid-February. I haven't watched any of the new series yet, but I have watched six episodes of the original series (eps. 85-90 were the earliest I've found so far), and I ordered a T-shirt, which I wore earlier this week. Other than the 2017 series *Ministério do Tempo*—an adaptation of the Spanish series *El Ministerio del Tiempo*—*Lua Vermelha* is the most important Portuguese genre show that I'm aware of from the last couple of decades.

The history of sf TV in Portugal is somewhat interesting given its recent experience with an oppressive government and the censorship that brings. The first sf TV program to reach Portugal in a meaningful way after its authoritarian regime might have been *The Tomorrow People*, which aired as *A Gente do Amanhã* on RTP1 and RTP2 in 1976-1978. Occasional episodes of shows from the 1950s and 1960s, as well as Gerry Anderson series, had sometimes aired, but *The Tomorrow People* might have been the first long-running sf series aired in the country. *Star Trek*, for example, wasn't available until 1978. Even more popular than *The Tomorrow People*, however, was *Space: 1999*, which aired 1976-1979 as *Espaço: 1999*. It was rerun in 1983, 1990, and even more recently—I've recorded and watched it during previous visits to Portugal. For many sf fen in Portugal, *Espaço: 1999* is where media fandom begins—not *Star Trek*, and not *Doctor Who*.

In fact, *Espaço: 1999* was first shown during RTP's prime time on Saturday nights—which led to most people in the country being aware of the series (even if they weren't sf fen). The program was so popular that a replica of the Eagle was built in a public playground near a town hall close to Lisbon. That playground equipment was located at the Parque Infantil de Sines from the late 1970s until 2005, when it was reportedly moved to Zona de Indústria Ligeira (ZIL 2), also in Sines. It's supposedly almost life sized, and I hope to find photographs of it, if not the more recent industrial location itself. If I can still climb on it, I will.

Other early series aired in Portugal include the German show *Die Phantastischen Abenteuer des Raumschiffes Orion* (*As Fantásticas Aventuras da Nave Orion* in 1977), *Star Maidens* (*As Mulheres do Espaço* in 1977), *Planet of the Apes* (*O Planeta dos Macacos*, 1978-1979), *Project UFO* (*Projecto OVNI*,

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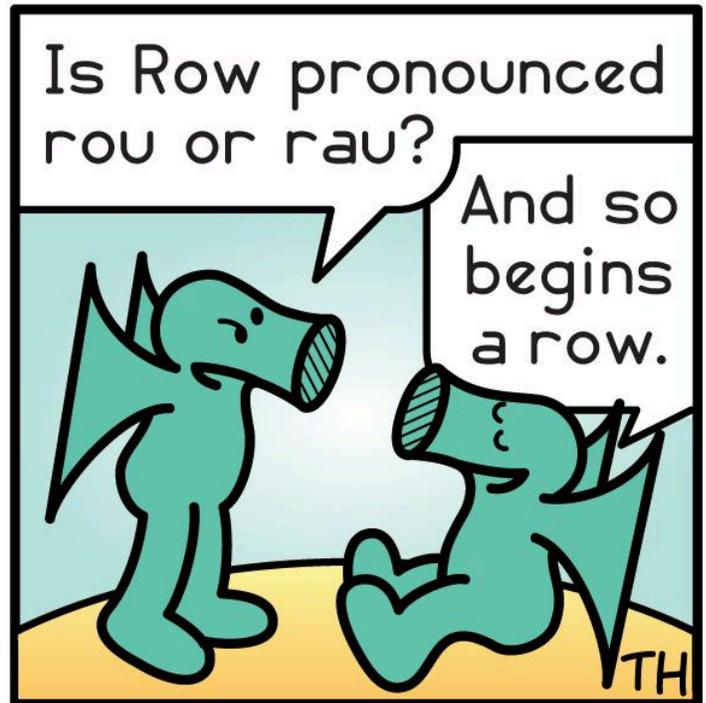
1979-1980), *Blake's 7* (1980-1981), *Man from Atlantis* (*O Homem da Atlântida*, 1981), and *Battlestar Galactica* and *Galactica 1980* (*Galactica*, 1982-1983).

Not long ago, I sought out even older examples of sf TV, exploring episodes of *Captain Video and His Video Rangers*. Of the more than 1,500 episodes that aired 1949-1955, only five have been made available via home video. Beyond that, only another 19 actually exist. All 24 are held by the UCLA Film and Television Archive, the only surviving episodes, and can be accessed for viewing via private appointment. I'll have to return to Los Angeles just to watch the rest of what remains! The more widely available episodes are on YouTube, and I created a definitive playlist of what I consider the best digital transfers of those episodes, along with additional material. You can check that out at <https://tinyurl.com/CaptainVideoPlaylist>.

As we waited for our belongings to arrive—we boxed our stuff up for shipment in mid-April 2025 before selling the house and moving to Madison, Wis., and it... was delivered yesterday!—I've been doing my best to read the comics, magazines, and books I brought with me; listen to whatever CDs are in the house; and watch TV and movies on live TV, as well as whatever streaming services work in Portugal. (We've yet to set up a virtual private network.) Luckily, YouTube, Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video, Crunchyroll, Night Flight, Full Moon, and Creature Features all work in Portugal—though the material available might vary when compared to the United States. I've been able to continue my Tuesday night movies (Wednesday morning for me, given the time zones) with a friend primarily using Netflix and YouTube. Unfortunately, Paramount+, Peacock, Pluto TV, Eternal Family, Klassiki, and Kanopy don't work here. Earlier this week, I realized that the Criterion Channel actually works as an app, as well as on the Web. Our Roku stick broke after our arrival here, so we've replaced it with a Xiaomi TV stick. The biggest loss felt since moving has been *Star Trek*, which I haven't been able to watch actively. Now that my video tapes and DVDs have arrived, I just need to find our region-free DVD player! Caitlin found the DVD binders this afternoon.)

Not long ago, I read the July 1968 issue of *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact*. In addition to the third installation of a four-part serial by Poul Anderson and a nonfiction piece, the issue features several short stories and a short novel. Joe Poyer's short story "Null Zone" is a solid piece of sf set during the Vietnam War—but isn't what I'd consider military sf. Instead of concentrating on the chain of command and the military community as a subculture, the story considers how troop and material movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail could be disrupted by the strategic placement of radioactive waste.

"To Sleep, Perchance to Dream..." by W.C. Francis explores what might happen if spaceflight speeds improve and increase shortly after a craft is launched with its crew in suspended animation. And R.C. Fitzpatrick's "Winkin, Blinkin and πR²" reminded me a little of the ideas behind Philip K. Dick's "The Minority Report" in terms of detecting crime that hasn't yet occurred. But instead of featuring a technology



successfully detecting variances in human skin temperature and heart rate as indicators of crimes about to be committed, the story's characters detect patterns in the data—patterns the technology missed.

The short novel, Dean McLaughlin's "Hawk Among the Sparrows" is another example of what might be considered wartime sf but not military sf. The pilot of an aircraft in 1975 gets thrown back in time to World War I. A reader might be tempted to think that the protagonist's fighter jet might readily trounce any aircraft of the time, but using modern technology in the past brings its own challenges. For one thing, fuel of the past might not suffice as a replacement for fuel of the future. In the end, the hero is able to use his plane as a weapon—but not in the way he expected.

P. Schuyler Miller's book review column, "The Reference Library," offers insights on books of the time, occasionally adopting a tone that is deliciously catty. Artwork by Kelly Freas dominates the issue. Not only did Freas contribute the cover, but his illustrations adorn every single story in the volume.

My recent reading also includes materials from the United Fanzine Organization. (<https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com>) Tom Fellrath's *Dispatches from the Hudson's Bay Company and the Early Fur Trade* is a 28-page mini-zine that combines a brief trip report with drawings, descriptions, and photographic depictions of animals such as deer, foxes, and moose. Fellrath also offers information about Hudson's Bay Company facilities and the use of beaver pelts as currency. Inquiry via Tom Fellrath, Phoenix Productions, 8031 Griswold Drive, New Albany, OH 43054; tdfellrath@yahoo.com.

Doc Hoff's self-published 40-page comic, *Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart*, might be of particular interest to fellow Neffers. Not only does Hoff adapt Poe's short story in comics form, he utilizes some noteworthy innovations—such as the judicious application of spot color and an alternative ending that provides a bit of a "twist." The piece reads well as an adaptation, as well as a work that builds on the original. (It is, after all, a small twist.) Inquiry via Doc Hoff Comics, 1224 Westwood, Waco, TX 76710; dochoffcomics@gmail.com; <http://www.dochoffcomics.com>.

Unfortunately, I haven't read all of N'APA #279 yet, but I'll comment on what I have read while I'm not moving to Portugal, hosting friends and family, buying a car, and working our newly arrived belongings into our new home. (I'm listening to a compact disc of Black Sabbath's 2013 album *13* as I write; it went through the Panama Canal!) I commented on Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #159 in *The Explosion Containment Umbrella* #35 for eAPA (included in *The Stf Amateur* #26—<https://efanzines.com/HR/The%20Stf%20Amateur%20-%202025-11.pdf>), so I'll reprint that here:

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #159 reported on his Microsoft woes and the Russo-Ukrainian war. Now that we live in Portugal, I've been reading *Jornal de Notícias* (<https://www.jn.pt>) and *Correio da Manhã* (<https://www.cmjornal.pt>) almost daily. We recently discovered that in addition to where I've been buying the papers, there's a gas station nearby that also sells them. So I'll be able to get the papers on Sunday, as well. Last night at dinner, a friend recommended *Expresso* (<https://expresso.pt>), so I'll start reading that more often, too. And I picked up last week's edition of *Visão* (<https://visao.pt>) because Asterix was on the cover. I later read that the publisher of the news magazine, Trust in News, has gone bankrupt—even selling its office furniture. (<https://www.publico.pt/2025/10/26/sociedade/noticia/empresario-barcelos-compra-recheio-redacao-revista-visao-19-mil-euros-2152214>)

As I switched laundry loads this evening, I remembered that I planned to participate in Writing Month (<https://writingmonth.org>), the replacement of sorts for the now-defunct National Novel Writing

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Month. And here I am hacking out a fanzine! With more than 1,900 words since I started typing~~writing~~ this afternoon, we'll see if I can hack out a Perry Rhodan-like novel this month. I foresee a future that includes serialization in *Pablo Lennis* and other such accomplishments. (I'll start tomorrow.)

Alas, I did not participate in Novel Writing Month. I didn't write Word One along those lines!

I appreciated your descriptions—and URLs!—for *Just Imagine*, *Cosmic Voyage*, *Another Wild Idea*, *The Invisible Woman*, *The Atomic Kid*, and other movies. I'll add them to my YouTube watch list. The other YouTube resources you detail also look worthwhile. I also enjoyed "The Alternate Way to Quote." I'll get used to putting the Euro symbol after prices eventually now that I live here. It's not quite the same thing, but I'm also learning how to type characters such as á, ã, ó, and others that are common in Portuguese words. I've occasionally seen "—" used to introduce dialogue in fiction, but primarily in Roddy Doyle novels such as *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

Blixt-Grodon continues to delight me. Indeed, Renaissance fairs or festivals recreate the English Renaissance for entertainment. Part of my approach to learning Portuguese will include reading Enid Blyton books in that language. I've never read her otherwise. The Lindqvist Pocket series (<https://enlitenbloggomrymden.wordpress.com/2015/05/28/lindqvist-pocket-lp-science-fiction-1969-1971>) looks delightful! You were so totally correct: "[T]hish's 'History Corner' has something to [my] liking"!

Robert Jennings's *The Swamp Spot Sentinel* #1.4 expressed his interest in minimizing the amount of adventure in his life. Now that the holidays are behind us, I look forward to being able to settle into more of a day-to-day existence now that we live in Portugal. Working our belongings into our home will take time and effort, but I'm not really used to living here yet, much less no longer working professionally. That'll take some getting used to. I'm also glad that the liminal state we've been in—not really living anywhere, being in transit, our belongings also in transit—is coming to an end. Once we pick up the car we bought (we expect to do so tomorrow now that our belongings have arrived!), we won't have as much going on. Being here itself might be enough adventure for a while!

I value my morning walks up the hill to buy newspapers at Cidade N'Aldeia, returning through the park and past the chapels to skirt Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Porto de Ave before heading home. I look forward to our sunset walks toward the Igreja de Taíde—we'll leave for one soon—along a country lane beside sheep, goats, and pigs, looking for bats as we return toward the main road home. The air temperature drops as we approach a hollow where the creek passes under the road. And I prefer hanging our laundry on the lines outside rather than using our drying machine. After several decades working as a journalist and media and technology researcher in large cities (Chicago, Boston, New York City, and Los Angeles), who knew that I'd rather go on country walks and hang laundry in the sun? I like the shape of our days here so far.

While we didn't experience fall foliage similar to that of New England—on a good year—or upstate New York... even the Midwest... it was nice to see more seasonal foliage change than I've seen since moving to California in 2009. We saw some color change in northern Portugal; the biggest difference we noted was that we can now see the Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Porto de Ave from across the Rio Ave—normally, fully leafed trees block that view.

The Laws for Paws flier made my wife and I laugh out loud. We've been giving Spooner, our cat, various medications recently, and we have to hide them in various ways so he'll eat them. He might be entitled to compensation! I'll do my best to keep the flier from his attention. I especially appreciated and enjoyed your

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comments on serials. Now that I have my magazine collection back, I can return to reading *Filmfax* back issues (among other things). Brief reading of *Filmfax* #15 last night included an advertisement for *Jungle Girl*, the 1941 serial based on the novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Having recently watched several episodes of *Captain Video and His Video Rangers*, I might be more likely to watch the 1951 Columbia serial *Captain Video: Master of the Stratosphere*. Recent YouTube viewing of a collection of trailers offered by Something Weird Video in the early 1990s reminded me of the 1943 *Batman* serial, as well as the 1949 *Batman and Robin*. Given the campiness of the trailer, it might have been from the mid-1960s revival *An Evening with Batman and Robin*. What are your favorite serials?

I also appreciated your retirement advice for Garth Spencer: “Loss of motivation often comes with being retired and not having to worry about a lot of work-a-day problems that go with earning a regular paycheck. Pick some things that interest you and start doing them. Motivation will return. Just don’t decide to do too many things all at once, otherwise you will probably be overwhelmed.” I also enjoyed the reproductions of story papers in your comments to Ahrvid Engholm.

Well, Captain America comic books—and my evening walk—call.

Putting it on a tight beam,
Blasted Heath Row

CC: Teddy Harvia