

**N'APA 281**

**March 2026**



# The Official Organ

## #281

**Next deadline: May 15, 2026**

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### Procedure: Please Read:

Submissions should be sent to the preparer, Jefferson Swycaffer, [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com)

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

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

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

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## Invitation:

Forwarded by Mark Nelson

I wanted to sound you out on an upcoming project, spurred in part by remarks from Wm. Breiding that there's a *lot* of great writing happening in APAs which doesn't get more widely seen and appreciated. So we (Breiding, me and John D Berry) are putting together a zine to be called *The Essayist*, the content of which will in part be sourced from apahacks - we're asking if there's an essay (or two?) you've done which was so utterly fab that you'd like it to be more widely published.

The other two sources we'll have will be (a) fanwriting from people who have a piece in mind to write but don't in part because they don't pub an ish of their own and thus don't have anywhere to put it, and (b) reprints which the authors may feel weren't as appreciated at the time as they might have liked.

We're deciding on a schedule for issue #1 (for them as want deadlines) and I can keep you apprised there if you need me to.

The mad hatters doing this are (as mentioned above):

John D Berry: Commissioning co-editor, also design & layout

Wm. Breiding: Commissioning co-editor

Nic Farey: Commissioning co-editor

The product will go out in as much printed quantity as we can afford (7x10 pulp size, same as *Portable Storage*) and also efanazines ect...

Please come and play!

Good arrers!

# INTERMISSION #163

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, [ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com)/[ahrvid@atomicmail.io](mailto:ahrvid@atomicmail.io), a snowball for EAPA, N'APA & other abominable snowmen. Computer messups interfere with my mail (make CC: to atomic) and time for @SFJournalen (as if dribbling around Muskland is a priority). LoCs welcome! I make outrageous outbursts for you to react to! Do you know Greenland fandom? Watch AIs make typos! Late Jan '25.

## Editorially: Will Trump Break NATO Over Greenland while Allah sheds blood?

The US Congress *must impeach* that lying maniac Russian asset - and likely child rapist - occupying the oval office, and threatening to do the same to Greenland. The damage he does to the standing of the US in the world, NATO and the world order, the US economy and the American people is immeasurable! He causes chaos in American cities letting loose ICE like some sort of SS and he blocks the release of the Epstein files. Only a fraction of the files are out, heavily masked, in mockery of the ruling by Congressghipd bt . They'll likely show horrendous things Trump's guilty of. He lies and cheats and alienates old friends. He threatens to start a war against trusted allies so people will forget those files. Trump is totally unhinged! (The only problem is that the substitute is one JD Vance. My suggestion is to impeach *both* at the same time!)

This is about the third major revision of these editorial remarks, as things develop fast from day to day. Trump and NATO's Mark Rutte lately are said to have struck "a framework of deal" on Greenland, typically without asking Denmark or the Greenlanders, so its worth is in question (but its important that extra tariffs are off the table). We'll see what happens. Trump also announced a ceasefire on energy attacks but Putin ignores it.

The Trump situation is volatile and bizarre. Even Putin's war for once lands a little in the background. The Great Idiotic War just passed the 1418 days Russia-and-her-colonies fought the "Great Patriotic War". While the Red Army swept over half of Europe, Putin's Shred Army moves on average a few feet per day with daily losses exceeding 1000. There are reliable figures that Russian losses now are 8-15 times those of Ukraine, who are masters of drone-warfare and fight a smart defensive. Putin just doesn't care about his own. Wounded are sent to the front in wheelchairs or are left to die in the snow. Ukraine continues to hit Russian refineries, tankers, fuel depots, command posts, vehicles, making Putin's war-wallet empty. Putin's lifeline of shadow tankers are now heavily targeted, as numbers being boarded increases. 14 countries have now stated they'll close the Baltic sea for ships with false flags, fake papers, and no transponders, being an environment hazard - terrible news for Russia's shadow fleet, good news for us: <https://defensemirror.com/news/40962>. Also France and UK have signed, which probably means they'll send navy units north.

One consequence of all that's happened is that Europe is growing stronger and more united. EU just bagged a giant trade deal with South America, and then a giant trade deal with India. Trump's unstable, unbalanced trade policies and tariffs were important for cracking it. Thanks for that, Donny!

But any peace deals with the Kremlin Goblin look very far-fetched. Vlad thinks he can get Ukraine to buckle by hitting power plants and energy, but that only make the Ukrainians even more determined. Putin seems hell-bent on destroying Russia! His US counterpart has the same suicidal inclination.

Of course Trump won't do anything against the murderous Iranian mullahs. Trump takes his order from Moscow, which doesn't want to lose one of their shrinking number of friends. Millions of Iranians revolted against the oppressive regime. The response was to give the "revolutionary guard" orders to shoot at will! They put snipers on rooftops shot straight into gatherings. "Allah" is what Muslims call - if you believe in omnipotent magical beings - God, so it seems Allah is happy with rivers of blood and mountains of corpses.\* The mullahs have this far murdered 30 000+ of their own people, it's reported. While it looks like the most serious challenge to the Iranian theocracy in 47 years is dying down, there are reports of gold and plane loads of currency evacuated to Moscow. The days of the regime must be numbered! A regime killing their own, banning modern music and most films (no films with hijab-less women), with a religious Gestapo patrolling streets, mismanaged economy creating hyperinflation, heavy sanctions, support to terrorist groups...and wanting nuclear bombs. If the



Big demonstrations in Greenland's capital against Trump. Up to 5000, and Nuuk only has 20 000 inhabitants!

\*For me, the only Ghod I believe in, after a few bheers, is Roscoe. <https://fancylopedia.org/Roscoe>

ayatollahs aren't ousted now they surely don't have long left. And it will help Ukraine, as they supply those Shahed drones that hit Ukrainian civilians and hospitals and kindergartens.

Trump seems to be falling apart. His logic is difficult to grasp. If he just asks Denmark, he'll get favourable deals on raw materials and any military bases he wants. Peak Cold War Greenland had 15-20 US bases, which they then left - America itself disbanded "security". Trump is ranting incoherently. His ramblings at WEF in Davos were embarrassing. He doesn't know facts, doesn't care and mistook Iceland for Greenland! Voices pointing to dementia get louder and that spells danger for a megalomaniac narcissist. In, Crazy letters he misunderstands the Nobel Peace Prize (now, he got a Soccer Peace Prize instead!). European leaders have meetings and issue warnings. When a snippet appeared with Ronald Reagan explaining why tariffs are bad, Ronny called it fake news -and threatened Canada with more tariffs. It's childish of Trump to try to punish help to Denmark with his beloved tariffs, which BTW are paid by US consumers as inflation. Trump issues punishments by taxing his own. The Nordic nations, France, Germany and the UK have sent troops to Greenland - initially small numbers but it's just scouting parties or some sort of tripwire troops. Officially it's for military exercises and more troops will soon arrive. Sweden has suitable units in the form of our Mountain Rangers ("Fjälljägare") trained around the Arctic circle. Units from the Norrland Brigade may also be useful. Norway and Finland have similar resources. Germany and France have units adapted to the snowy Alps. Denmark has already sent 1000 extra grunts and declares they'll shoot first at any invader. The key is to have enough to deny an invader the use of Nuuk's airport as there are hardly any roads on Greenland. You can't land troops anywhere else and then march. The Swedish air force will send Gripen jets to Iceland to take part in NATO's "air policing", but with external fuel tanks targets in Nuuk could be engaged! Ronny was forced to chicken out.

According to my AI NATO (excl US but incl Canada) can mobilize 2.5-3 million soldiers within 2-3 months, vastly more than Russia. Several European countries have conscription and big reserves. To this comes home/national guards, usually reasonably well-trained and equipped. Europe's heavy weapons are superior to Russia's. (Swedish Archers and CV90s are worth mentions.)

The Russian army, on the other hand, is badly equipped, trained and exhausted. The majority of Russia's inventory of armor and heavy equipment has been destroyed in Ukraine. Putin's only chance against NATO would be a surprise-attack, but his mauled army couldn't manage that. Today with satellites and intelligence a surprise would also be impossible. That NATO without US couldn't defend itself is hogwash! Trump's chatter about how unfair it is that the US has "paid" Europe's defence, ignores it comes from US herself decided to assume a role as "world police". That self-appointed policy comes with a cost. (But Sweden and Finland paid for their own defence as neutrals.)

For us Nordics Greenland is special. Our Viking ancestors were the original settlers of southern Greenland, when the Inuits had only reached the northeast. It wasn't a single ship landing 300 years ago, but a whole fleet of longships more than a *thousand* years ago! Contacts were lost in the early 15th Century as the Norse colony suffered from the "Little Ice Age", changing trade patterns and possibly also the Black Death that ravaged Europe. The last ship from Greenland came 1410. In the following 200 years there were exploration missions by the Danes, Portuguese, Dutch and English, often only sighting the coast. Ice made landings difficult, but there are confirmed landings in that period by the Danes (1605, 1620, 1650 and up to 1690), Dutch and English. Denmark - including Norway at the time - was scouting for the old Norse colonies and prepared for bigger expeditions. It resulted in the 1721 one, lead by Hans Egede who established a new colony in the area of the capital Nuuk (under the name Godhåb, = Good Hope) An American ship at that time would be impossible! America was a English (later British) colony, so it would be a *British* ship. The Dutch and Brits where whaling in the waters around Greenland at the same time, making occasional landings in emergencies or to resupply. But the US of A didn't even exist!

The US public, incl MAGA, is against Trump. Polls say only 4% would support a military attack on Greenland! It doesn't help his standings that he deploys ICE units like an SS, creating chaos and murdering citizens. Three more years with the Trump mess and lies would be unbearable.

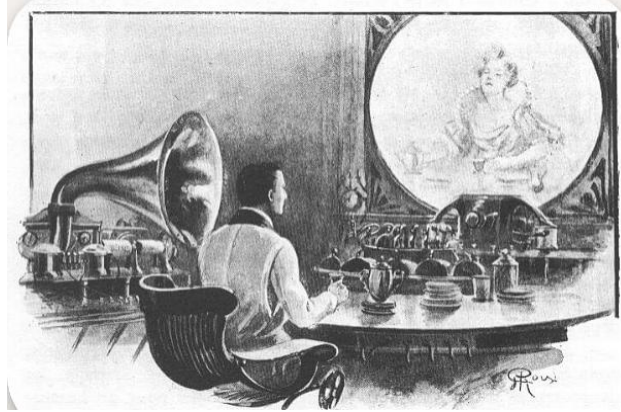
More on Greenland, Trump and Russia in next issue, and a report on celebrating the King of "Lager films". That's out of this issue due to that #163 is already the thickest ever! No space...eh, yes space: NASA sending a crew around the Moon. The rocket is on the launchpad, undergoing the final checks. We'll cover if our yellow-blue find golden metal on frozen water, and maybe ICE will commit more murders of citizens than Good and Pretti? If you are kind and good-looking Trump hates you and his thugs will draw their guns? Next to ICE's scaffold is probably Mr Right or Mrs Innocent. Today we dig into pulps, the brain's dramaturgy, Cameron's new Smurfish blockbuster and test AI translation. But first Jules Verne's "unknown" English story...

--Ahrvid Engholm, editor

*Ps. And haven't even mentioned one R Good, one A Pretti, whom Mr Trump hates - because he's neither good nor pretty - so the Iranian principle applies: if you're against the government, you deserve to die. Disgusting!*

## A Unique Verne Story: "In the Year 2889"

Here's an interesting short story, said to be the only one by Jules Verne originally published in English (Forum, February 1889) and probably chiefly the work of Jules' son, Michel Verne, based on ideas from his father. (Jules' own knowledge of English is described as limited but functional. He could read English books with some effort, but not really write publishable English.) A rewritten French version came the following year, "La journée d'un journaliste américain en 2890". The story has lots of interesting predictions and thus reminds a bit of Verne's posthumous novel Paris in the 20th Century. We get video news delivered by telephone, moving sidewalks, weather modification, airborne advertising, artificial food home delivered, global and interplanetary communications, super-huge telescopes, flying cars, solar power, advances in maths (resolution of equations of the 95th degree and a space of 24 dimensions) and finally a dream of Frenchmen of the days: "the British Empire reduced to Gibraltar". Found at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19362/19362-h/19362-h.htm>



Little though they seem to think of it, the people of this twenty-ninth century live continually in fairyland. Surfeited as they are with marvels, they are indifferent in presence of each new marvel. To them all seems natural. Could they but duly appreciate the refinements of civilization in our day; could they but compare the present with the past, and so better comprehend the advance we have made! How much fairer they would find our modern towns, with populations amounting sometimes to 10,000,000 souls; their streets 300 feet wide, their houses 1000 feet in height; with a temperature the same in all seasons; with their lines of aerial locomotion crossing the sky in every direction! If they would but picture to themselves the state of things that once existed, when through muddy streets rumbling boxes on wheels, drawn by horses - yes, by horses! - were the only means of conveyance. Think of the railroads of the olden time, and you will be able to appreciate the pneumatic tubes through which to-day one travels at the rate of 1000 miles an hour. Would not our contemporaries prize the telephone and the telephote more highly if they had not forgotten the telegraph?

Singularly enough, all these transformations rest upon principles which were perfectly familiar to our remote ancestors, but which they disregarded. Heat, for instance, is as ancient as man himself; electricity was known 3000 years ago, and steam 1100 years ago. Nay, so early as ten centuries ago it was known that the differences between the several chemical and physical forces depend on the mode of vibration of the etheric particles, which is for each specifically different. When at last the kinship of all these forces was discovered, it is simply astounding that 500 years should still have to elapse before men could analyze and describe the several modes of vibration that constitute these differences. Above all, it is singular that the mode of reproducing these forces directly from one another, and of reproducing one without the others, should have remained undiscovered till less than a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, such was the course of events, for it was not till the year 2792 that the famous Oswald Nier made this great discovery.

Truly was he a great benefactor of the human race. His admirable discovery led to many another. Hence is sprung a pleiad of inventors, its brightest star being our great Joseph Jackson. To Jackson we are indebted for those wonderful instruments the new accumulators. Some of these absorb and condense the living force contained in the sun's rays; others, the electricity stored in our globe; others again, the energy coming from whatever source, as a waterfall, a stream, the winds, etc. He, too, it was that invented the transformer, a more wonderful contrivance still, which takes the living force from the accumulator, and, on the simple pressure of a button, gives it back to space in whatever form may be desired, whether as heat, light, electricity, or mechanical force, after having first obtained from it the work required. From the day when these two instruments were contrived is to be dated the era of true progress. They have put into the hands of man a power that is almost infinite. As for their applications, they are numberless. Mitigating the rigors of winter, by giving back to the atmosphere the surplus heat stored up during the summer, they have revolutionized agriculture. By supplying motive power for aerial navigation, they have given to commerce a mighty impetus. To them we are indebted for the continuous production of electricity without batteries or dynamos, of light without combustion or incandescence, and for an unfailling supply of mechanical energy for all the needs of industry.



Michel Verne.

Yes, all these wonders have been wrought by the accumulator and the transformer. And can we not to them also trace, indirectly, this latest wonder of all, the great "Earth Chronicle" building in 253d Avenue, which was dedicated the other day? If George Washington Smith, the founder of the Manhattan "Chronicle," should come back to life to-day, what would he think were he to be told that this palace of marble and gold belongs to his remote descendant, Fritz Napoleon Smith, who, after thirty generations have come and gone, is owner of the same newspaper which his ancestor established!

For George Washington Smith's newspaper has lived generation after generation, now passing out of the family, anon coming back to it. When, 200 years ago, the political center of the United States was transferred from Washington to Centropolis, the newspaper followed the government and assumed the name of Earth Chronicle. Unfortunately, it was unable to maintain itself at the high level of its name. Pressed on all sides by rival journals of a more modern type, it was continually in danger of collapse. Twenty years ago its subscription list contained but a few hundred thousand names, and then Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith bought it for a mere trifle, and originated telephonic journalism.

Every one is familiar with Fritz Napoleon Smith's system - a system made possible by the enormous development of telephony during the last hundred years. Instead of being printed, the Earth Chronicle is every morning spoken to subscribers, who, in interesting conversations with reporters, statesmen, and scientists, learn the news of the day. Furthermore, each subscriber owns a phonograph, and to this instrument he leaves the task of gathering the news whenever he happens not to be in a mood to listen directly himself. As for purchasers of single copies, they can at a very trifling cost learn all that is in the paper of the day at any of the innumerable phonographs set up nearly everywhere.

Fritz Napoleon Smith's innovation galvanized the old newspaper. In the course of a few years the number of subscribers grew to be 85,000,000, and Smith's wealth went on growing, till now it reaches the almost unimaginable figure of \$10,000,000,000. This lucky hit has enabled him to erect his new building, a vast edifice with four *façades*, each 3,250 feet in length, over which proudly floats the hundred-starred flag of the Union. Thanks to the same lucky hit, he is to-day king of newspaperdom; indeed, he would be king of all the Americans, too, if Americans could ever accept a king. You do not believe it? Well, then, look at the plenipotentiaries of all nations and our own ministers themselves crowding about his door, entreating his counsels, begging for his approbation, imploring the aid of his all-powerful organ. Reckon up the number of scientists and artists that he supports, of inventors that he has under his pay.

Yes, a king is he. And in truth his is a royalty full of burdens. His labors are incessant, and there is no doubt at all that in earlier times any man would have succumbed under the overpowering stress of the toil which Mr. Smith has to perform. Very fortunately for him, thanks to the progress of hygiene, which, abating all the old sources of unhealthfulness, has lifted the mean of human life from 37 up to 52 years, men have stronger constitutions now than heretofore. The discovery of nutritive air is still in the future, but in the meantime men today consume food that is compounded and prepared according to scientific principles, and they breathe an atmosphere freed from the micro-organisms that formerly used to swarm in it; hence they live longer than their forefathers and know nothing of the innumerable diseases of olden times.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these considerations, Fritz Napoleon Smith's mode of life may well astonish one. His iron constitution is taxed to the utmost by the heavy strain that is put upon it. Vain the attempt to estimate the amount of labor he undergoes; an example alone can give an idea of it. Let us then go about with him for one day as he attends to his multifarious concerns. What day? That matters little; it is the same every day. Let us then take at random September 25th of this present year 2889.

This morning Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith awoke in very bad humor. His wife having left for France eight days ago, he was feeling disconsolate. Incredible though it seems, in all the ten years since their marriage, this is the first time that Mrs. Edith Smith, the professional beauty, has been so long absent from home; two or three days usually suffice for her frequent trips to Europe. The first thing that Mr. Smith does is to connect his phonotelephoto, the wires of which communicate with his Paris mansion. The telephoto! Here is another of the great triumphs of science in our time. The transmission of speech is an old story; the transmission of images by means of sensitive mirrors connected by wires is a thing but of yesterday. A valuable invention indeed, and Mr. Smith this morning was not niggard of blessings for the inventor, when by its aid he was able distinctly to see his wife notwithstanding the distance that separated him from her. Mrs. Smith, weary after the ball or the visit to the theater the preceding night, is still abed, though it is near noontide at Paris. She is asleep, her head sunk in the lace-covered pillows. What? She stirs? Her lips move. She is dreaming perhaps? Yes, dreaming. She is talking, pronouncing a name - his name - Fritz! The delightful vision gave a happier turn to Mr. Smith's thoughts. And now, at the call of imperative duty, light-hearted he springs from his bed and enters his mechanical dresser.

Two minutes later the machine deposited him all dressed at the threshold of his office. The round of journalistic work was now begun. First he enters the hall of the novel-writers, a vast apartment crowned with an enormous transparent cupola. In one corner is a telephone, through which a hundred Earth Chronicle *littérateurs* in turn recount to the public in daily installments a hundred novels. Addressing one of these authors who was waiting his turn, "Capital! Capital! my dear fellow," said he, "your last story. The scene where the village maid discusses interesting philosophical problems with her lover shows your very acute power of observation. Never have the ways of country folk been better portrayed. Keep on, my dear Archibald, keep on! Since yesterday, thanks to you, there is a gain of 5000 subscribers."



"Mr. John Last," he began again, turning to a new arrival, "I am not so well pleased with your work. Your story is not a picture of life; it lacks the elements of truth. And why? Simply because you run straight on to the end; because you do not analyze. Your heroes do this thing or that from this or that motive, which you assign without ever a thought of dissecting their mental and moral natures. Our feelings, you must remember, are far more complex than all that. In real life every act is the resultant of a hundred thoughts that come and go, and these you must study, each by itself, if you would create a living character. 'But,' you will say, 'in order to note these fleeting thoughts one must know them, must be able to follow them in their capricious meanderings.' Why, any child can do that, as you know. You have simply to make use of hypnotism, electrical or human, which gives one a two-fold being, setting free the witness-personality so that it may see, understand, and remember the reasons which determine the personality that acts. Just study yourself as you live from day to day, my dear Last. Imitate your associate whom I was complimenting a moment ago. Let yourself be hypnotized. What's that? You have tried it already? Not sufficiently, then, not sufficiently!"

Mr. Smith continues his round and enters the reporters' hall. Here 1500 reporters, in their respective places, facing an equal number of telephones, are communicating to the subscribers the news of the world as gathered during the night. The organization of this matchless service has often been described. Besides his telephone, each reporter, as the reader is aware, has in front of him a set of commutators, which enable him to communicate with any desired telephotic line. Thus the subscribers not only hear the news but see the occurrences. When an incident is described that is already past, photographs of its main features are transmitted with the narrative. And there is no confusion withal. The reporters' items, just like the different stories and all the other component parts of the journal, are classified automatically according to an ingenious system, and reach the hearer in due succession. Furthermore, the hearers are free to listen only to what specially concerns them. They may at pleasure give attention to one editor and refuse it to another.

Mr. Smith next addresses one of the ten reporters in the astronomical department - a department still in the embryonic stage, but which will yet play an important part in journalism.

"Well, Cash, what's the news?"

"We have phototelegrams from Mercury, Venus, and Mars."

"Are those from Mars of any interest?"

"Yes, indeed. There is a revolution in the Central Empire."

"And what of Jupiter?" asked Mr. Smith.

"Nothing as yet. We cannot quite understand their signals. Perhaps ours do not reach them."

"That's bad," exclaimed Mr. Smith, as he hurried away, not in the best of humor, toward the hall of the scientific editors.

With their heads bent down over their electric computers, thirty scientific men were absorbed in transcendental calculations. The coming of Mr. Smith was like the falling of a bomb among them.

"Well, gentlemen, what is this I hear? No answer from Jupiter? Is it always to be thus? Come, Cooley, you have been at work now twenty years on this problem, and yet - "

"True enough," replied the man addressed. "Our science of optics is still very defective, and through our mile-and-three-quarter telescopes - "

"Listen to that, Peer," broke in Mr. Smith, turning to a second scientist. "Optical science defective! Optical science is your specialty. But," he continued, again addressing William Cooley, "failing with Jupiter, are we getting any results from the moon?"

"The case is no better there."

"This time you do not lay the blame on the science of optics. The moon is immeasurably less distant than Mars, yet with Mars our communication is fully established. I presume you will not say that you lack telescopes?"

"Telescopes? O no, the trouble here is about - inhabitants!"

"That's it," added Peer.

"So, then, the moon is positively uninhabited?" asked Mr. Smith.

"At least," answered Cooley, "on the face which she presents to us. As for the opposite side, who knows?"

"Ah, the opposite side! You think, then," remarked Mr. Smith, musingly, "that if one could but - "

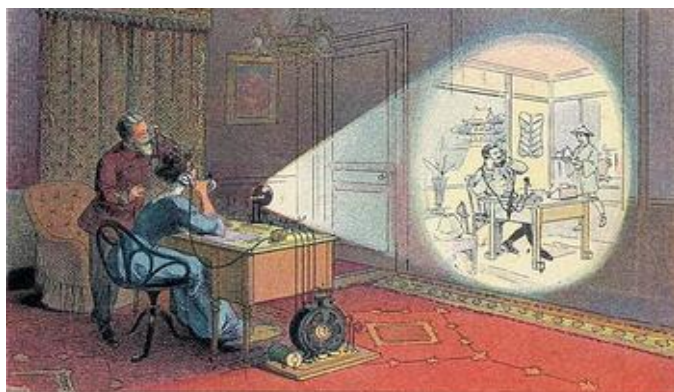
"Could what?"

"Why, turn the moon about-face."

"Ah, there's something in that," cried the two men at once. And indeed, so confident was their air, they seemed to have no doubt as to the possibility of success in such an undertaking.

"Meanwhile," asked Mr. Smith, after a moment's silence, "have you no news of interest to-day?"

"Indeed we have," answered Cooley. "The elements of Olympus are definitely settled. That great planet gravitates beyond Neptune at the mean distance of 11,400,799,642 miles from the sun, and to traverse its vast orbit takes 1311 years, 294 days, 12 hours, 43 minutes, 9 seconds."



"Why didn't you tell me that sooner?" cried Mr. Smith. "Now inform the reporters of this straightway. You know how eager is the curiosity of the public with regard to these astronomical questions. That news must go into to-day's issue."

Then, the two men bowing to him, Mr. Smith passed into the next hall, an enormous gallery upward of 3200 feet in length, devoted to atmospheric advertising. Every one has noticed those enormous advertisements reflected from the clouds, so large that they may be seen by the populations of whole cities or even of entire countries. This, too, is one of Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith's ideas, and in the Earth Chronicle building a thousand projectors are constantly engaged in displaying upon the clouds these mammoth advertisements.

When Mr. Smith to-day entered the sky-advertising department, he found the operators sitting with folded arms at their motionless projectors, and inquired as to the cause of their inaction. In response, the man addressed simply pointed to the sky, which was of a pure blue. "Yes," muttered Mr. Smith, "a cloudless sky! That's too bad, but what's to be done? Shall we produce rain? That we might do, but is it of any use? What we need is clouds, not rain. Go," said he, addressing the head engineer, "go see Mr. Samuel Mark, of the meteorological division of the scientific department, and tell him for me to go to work in earnest on the question of artificial clouds. It will never do for us to be always thus at the mercy of cloudless skies!"

Mr. Smith's daily tour through the several departments of his newspaper is now finished. Next, from the advertisement hall he passes to the reception chamber, where the ambassadors accredited to the American government are awaiting him, desirous of having a word of counsel or advice from the all-powerful editor. A discussion was going on when he entered. "Your Excellency will pardon me," the French Ambassador was saying to the Russian, "but I see nothing in the map of Europe that requires change. 'The North for the Slavs?' Why, yes, of course; but the South for the Latins. Our common frontier, the Rhine, it seems to me, serves very well. Besides, my government, as you must know, will firmly oppose every movement, not only against Paris, our capital, or our two great prefectures, Rome and Madrid, but also against the kingdom of Jerusalem, the dominion of Saint Peter, of which France means to be the trusty defender."

"Well said!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "How is it," he asked, turning to the Russian ambassador, "that you Russians are not content with your vast empire, the most extensive in the world, stretching from the banks of the Rhine to the Celestial Mountains and the Kara-Korum, whose shores are washed by the Frozen Ocean, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean? Then, what is the use of threats? Is war possible in view of modern inventions - asphyxiating shells capable of being projected a distance of 60 miles, an electric spark of 90 miles, that can at one stroke annihilate a battalion; to say nothing of the plague, the cholera, the yellow fever, that the belligerents might spread among their antagonists mutually, and which would in a few days destroy the greatest armies?"

"True," answered the Russian; "but can we do all that we wish? As for us Russians, pressed on our eastern frontier by the Chinese, we must at any cost put forth our strength for an effort toward the west."

"O, is that all? In that case," said Mr. Smith, "the thing can be arranged. I will speak to the Secretary of State about it. The attention of the Chinese government shall be called to the matter. This is not the first time that the Chinese have bothered us."

"Under these conditions, of course - " And the Russian ambassador declared himself satisfied.

"Ah, Sir John, what can I do for you?" asked Mr. Smith as he turned to the representative of the people of Great Britain, who till now had remained silent.

"A great deal," was the reply. "If the Earth Chronicle would but open a campaign on our behalf - "

"And for what object?"

"Simply for the annulment of the Act of Congress annexing to the United States the British islands."

Though, by a just turn-about of things here below, Great Britain has become a colony of the United States, the English are not yet reconciled to the situation. At regular intervals they are ever addressing to the American government vain complaints.

"A campaign against the annexation that has been an accomplished fact for 150 years!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "How can your people suppose that I would do anything so unpatriotic?"

"We at home think that your people must now be sated. The Monroe doctrine is fully applied; the whole of America belongs to the Americans. What more do you want? Besides, we will pay for what we ask."

"Indeed!" answered Mr. Smith, without manifesting the slightest irritation. "Well, you English will ever be the same. No, no, Sir John, do not count on me for help. Give up our fairest province, Britain? Why not ask France generously to renounce possession of Africa, that magnificent colony the complete conquest of which cost her the labor of 800 years? You will be well received!"

"You decline! All is over then!" murmured the British agent sadly. "The United Kingdom falls to the share of the Americans; the Indies to that of - "

"The Russians," said Mr. Smith, completing the sentence.



"Australia - "

"Has an independent government."

"Then nothing at all remains for us!" sighed Sir John, downcast.

"Nothing?" asked Mr. Smith, laughing. "Well, now, there's Gibraltar!"

With this sally the audience ended. The clock was striking twelve, the hour of breakfast. Mr. Smith returns to his chamber. Where the bed stood in the morning a table all spread comes up through the floor. For Mr. Smith, being above all a practical man, has reduced the problem of existence to its simplest terms. For him, instead of the endless suites of apartments of the olden time, one room fitted with ingenious mechanical contrivances is enough. Here he sleeps, takes his meals, in short, lives.

He seats himself. In the mirror of the phonotelephote is seen the same chamber at Paris which appeared in it this morning. A table furnished forth is likewise in readiness here, for notwithstanding the difference of hours, Mr. Smith and his wife have arranged to take their meals simultaneously. It is delightful thus to take breakfast *tête-à-tête* with one who is 3000 miles or so away. Just now, Mrs. Smith's chamber has no occupant.

"She is late! Woman's punctuality! Progress everywhere except there!" muttered Mr. Smith as he turned the tap for the first dish. For like all wealthy folk in our day, Mr. Smith has done away with the domestic kitchen and is a subscriber to the Grand Alimentation Company, which sends through a great network of tubes to subscribers' residences all sorts of dishes, as a varied assortment is always in readiness. A subscription costs money, to be sure, but the *cuisine* is of the best, and the system has this advantage, that it does away with the pestering race of the *cordons-bleus*. Mr. Smith received and ate, all alone, the *hors-d'oeuvre*, *entrées*, *rôti*, and *legumes* that constituted the repast. He was just finishing the dessert when Mrs. Smith appeared in the mirror of the telephote.

"Why, where have you been?" asked Mr. Smith through the telephone.

"What! You are already at the dessert? Then I am late," she exclaimed, with a winsome *naïveté*. "Where have I been, you ask? Why, at my dress-maker's. The hats are just lovely this season! I suppose I forgot to note the time, and so am a little late."

"Yes, a little," growled Mr. Smith; "so little that I have already quite finished breakfast. Excuse me if I leave you now, but I must be going."

"O certainly, my dear; good-by till evening."

Smith stepped into his air-coach, which was in waiting for him at a window.

"Where do you wish to go, sir?" inquired the coachman.

"Let me see; I have three hours," Mr. Smith mused. "Jack, take me to my accumulator works at Niagara."

For Mr. Smith has obtained a lease of the great falls of Niagara. For ages the energy developed by the falls went unutilized. Smith, applying Jackson's invention, now collects this energy, and lets or sells it. His visit to the works took more time than he had anticipated. It was four o'clock when he returned home, just in time for the daily audience which he grants to callers.

One readily understands how a man situated as Smith is must be beset with requests of all kinds. Now it is an inventor needing capital; again it is some visionary who comes to advocate a brilliant scheme which must surely yield millions of profit. A choice has to be made between these projects, rejecting the worthless, examining the questionable ones, accepting the meritorious. To this work Mr. Smith devotes every day two full hours.

The callers were fewer to-day than usual - only twelve of them. Of these, eight had only impracticable schemes to propose. In fact, one of them wanted to revive painting, an art fallen into desuetude owing to the progress made in color-photography. Another, a physician, boasted that he had discovered a cure for nasal catarrh! These impracticables were dismissed in short order. Of the four projects favorably received, the first was that of a young man whose broad forehead betokened his intellectual power.

"Sir, I am a chemist," he began, "and as such I come to you."

"Well!"

"Once the elementary bodies," said the young chemist, "were held to be sixty-two in number; a hundred years ago they were reduced to ten; now only three remain irresolvable, as you are aware."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, sir, these also I will show to be composite. In a few months, a few weeks, I shall have succeeded in solving the problem. Indeed, it may take only a few days."

"And then?"

"Then, sir, I shall simply have determined the absolute. All I want is money enough to carry my research to a successful issue."

"Very well," said Mr. Smith. "And what will be the practical outcome of your discovery?"

"The practical outcome? Why, that we shall be able to produce easily all bodies whatever - stone, wood, metal, fibers - "



"And flesh and blood?" queried Mr. Smith, interrupting him. "Do you pretend that you expect to manufacture a human being out and out?"

"Why not?"

Mr. Smith advanced \$100,000 to the young chemist, and engaged his services for the Earth Chronicle laboratory.

The second of the four successful applicants, starting from experiments made so long ago as the nineteenth century and again and again repeated, had conceived the idea of removing an entire city all at once from one place to another. His special project had to do with the city of Granton, situated, as everybody knows, some fifteen miles inland. He proposes to transport the city on rails and to change it into a watering-place. The profit, of course, would be enormous. Mr. Smith, captivated by the scheme, bought a half-interest in it.

"As you are aware, sir," began applicant No. 3, "by the aid of our solar and terrestrial accumulators and transformers, we are able to make all the seasons the same. I propose to do something better still. Transform into heat a portion of the surplus energy at our disposal; send this heat to the poles; then the polar regions, relieved of their snow-cap, will become a vast territory available for man's use. What think you of the scheme?"

"Leave your plans with me, and come back in a week. I will have them examined in the meantime."

Finally, the fourth announced the early solution of a weighty scientific problem. Every one will remember the bold experiment made a hundred years ago by Dr. Nathaniel Faithburn. The doctor, being a firm believer in human hibernation - in other words, in the possibility of our suspending our vital functions and of calling them into action again after a time - resolved to subject the theory to a practical test. To this end, having first made his last will and pointed out the proper method of awakening him; having also directed that his sleep was to continue a hundred years to a day from the date of his apparent death, he unhesitatingly put the theory to the proof in his own person. Reduced to the condition of a mummy, Dr. Faithburn was coffined and laid in a tomb. Time went on. September 25th, 2889, being the day set for his resurrection, it was proposed to Mr. Smith that he should permit the second part of the experiment to be performed at his residence this evening.

"Agreed. Be here at ten o'clock," answered Mr. Smith; and with that the day's audience was closed.

Left to himself, feeling tired, he lay down on an extension chair. Then, touching a knob, he established communication with the Central Concert Hall, whence our greatest *maestros* send out to subscribers their delightful successions of accords determined by recondite algebraic formulas. Night was approaching. Entranced by the harmony, forgetful of the hour, Smith did not notice that it was growing dark. It was quite dark when he was aroused by the sound of a door opening. "Who is there?" he asked, touching a commutator.

Suddenly, in consequence of the vibrations produced, the air became luminous.

"Ah! you, Doctor?"

"Yes," was the reply. "How are you?"

"I am feeling well."

"Good! Let me see your tongue. All right! Your pulse. Regular! And your appetite?"

"Only passably good."

"Yes, the stomach. There's the rub. You are over-worked. If your stomach is out of repair, it must be mended. That requires study. We must think about it."

"In the meantime," said Mr. Smith, "you will dine with me."

As in the morning, the table rose out of the floor. Again, as in the morning, the *potage*, *rôti*, *ragoûts*, and *legumes* were supplied through the food-pipes. Toward the close of the meal, phonotelephotic communication was made with Paris. Smith saw his wife, seated alone at the dinner-table, looking anything but pleased at her loneliness.

"Pardon me, my dear, for having left you alone," he said through the telephone. "I was with Dr. Wilkins."

"Ah, the good doctor!" remarked Mrs. Smith, her countenance lighting up.

"Yes. But, pray, when are you coming home?"

"This evening."

"Very well. Do you come by tube or by air-train?"

"Oh, by tube."

"Yes; and at what hour will you arrive?"

"About eleven, I suppose."

"Eleven by Centropolis time, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Good-by, then, for a little while," said Mr. Smith as he severed communication with Paris.

Dinner over, Dr. Wilkins wished to depart. "I shall expect you at ten," said Mr. Smith. "To-day, it seems, is the day for the return to life of the famous Dr. Faithburn. You did not think of it, I suppose. The awakening is to take place here in my house. You must come and see. I shall depend on your being here."

"I will come back," answered Dr. Wilkins.



*A kicksled, popular winter vehicle in the Nordic countries, to some extent also N America. Very useful on icy streets.*  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kicksled>

Left alone, Mr. Smith busied himself with examining his accounts - a task of vast magnitude, having to do with transactions which involve a daily expenditure of upward of \$800,000. Fortunately, indeed, the stupendous progress of mechanic art in modern times makes it comparatively easy. Thanks to the Piano Electro-Reckoner, the most complex calculations can be made in a few seconds. In two hours Mr. Smith completed his task. Just in time. Scarcely had he turned over the last page when Dr. Wilkins arrived. After him came the body of Dr. Faithburn, escorted by a numerous company of men of science. They commenced work at once. The casket being laid down in the middle of the room, the telephote was got in readiness. The outer world, already notified, was anxiously expectant, for the whole world could be eye-witnesses of the performance, a reporter meanwhile, like the chorus in the ancient drama, explaining it all *viva voce* through the telephone.

"They are opening the casket," he explained. "Now they are taking Faithburn out of it - a veritable mummy, yellow, hard, and dry. Strike the body and it resounds like a block of wood. They are now applying heat; now electricity. No result. These experiments are suspended for a moment while Dr. Wilkins makes an examination of the body. Dr. Wilkins, rising, declares the man to be dead. 'Dead!' exclaims every one present. 'Yes,' answers Dr. Wilkins, 'dead!' 'And how long has he been dead?' Dr. Wilkins makes another examination. 'A hundred years,' he replies."

The case stood just as the reporter said. Faithburn was dead, quite certainly dead! "Here is a method that needs improvement," remarked Mr. Smith to Dr. Wilkins, as the scientific committee on hibernation bore the casket out. "So much for that experiment. But if poor Faithburn is dead, at least he is sleeping," he continued. "I wish I could get some sleep. I am tired out, Doctor, quite tired out! Do you not think that a bath would refresh me?"

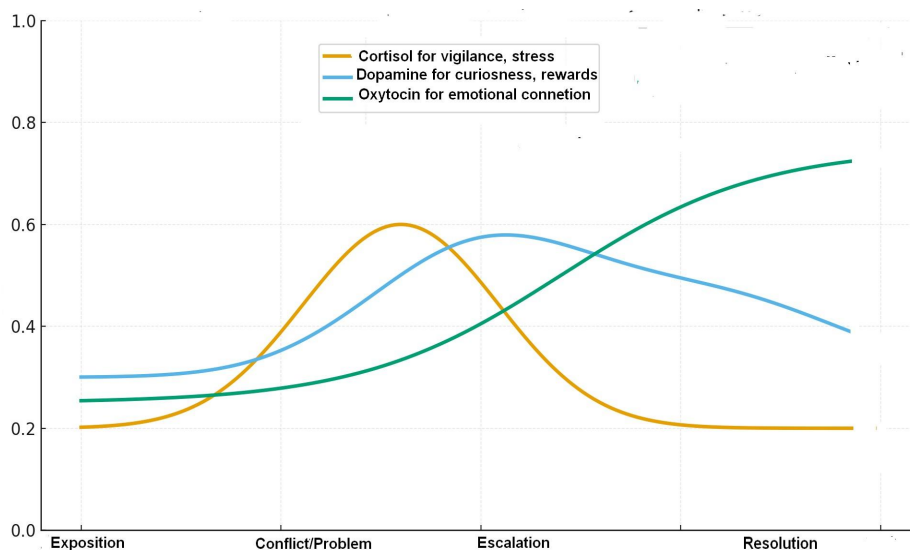
"Certainly. But you must wrap yourself up well before you go out into the hall-way. You must not expose yourself to cold."

"Hall-way? Why, Doctor, as you well know, everything is done by machinery here. It is not for me to go to the bath; the bath will come to me. Just look!" and he pressed a button. After a few seconds a faint rumbling was heard, which grew louder and louder. Suddenly the door opened, and the tub appeared.

Such, for this year of grace 2889, is the history of one day in the life of the editor of the Earth Chronicle. And the history of that one day is the history of 365 days every year, except leap-years, and then of 366 days - for as yet no means has been found of increasing the length of the terrestrial year.

## The Brain's Dramaturgy

Storytelling was born at the dawn of time in the flicker of the campfire, where danger, triumph, and gossip braided themselves into the first narratives. The brain contains an innate dramaturgy shaped on the savannah. This explains the popularity of the crime novel, whose hunt for the culprit mirrors the Stone Age man's hunt for the mammoth. Neurotransmitters react to narrative structure - exposition, conflict, rising tension, resolution - as if responding to real threats and rewards. Other genres satisfy brain's need for change with Oxytocin for emotional connection or to



How the brain's biochemistry reacts to storytelling. More in article. calm us in troubled times. Stories are more than entertainment. They are the brain's way of understanding the world.

Stories explain the world. Narratives build a chain of cause and effect that makes the world intelligible. Fiction prepares the brain for the new and unexpected. The brain's language centre's many connections to other parts of the brain make reading a broad intellectual stimulation. And a cerebral movie projectionist loads an internal film projector. Stories follow the template our grey, about 1.5 kilogram sponge laid down in the Stone Age, the one Aristotle described nearly 2,500 years ago, which we now study with the full curiosity of science.

Storytelling was born around the campfire. In the hypnotic flicker of the flames, the dangers and successes of returning hunters were discussed, as



Robert Sapolsky.



Wolfram Schultz

well as the social life of the base camp. In the visual centre, the “inner cinema” began to flicker through the storyteller’s vivid words, perhaps stimulated by the dancing firelight. Through storytelling, the group’s social bonds were strengthened, and people learned how risks and dangers could be handled out in the field. The Stone Age’s comic-book artists - the cave painters - testify to the importance of the hunt.

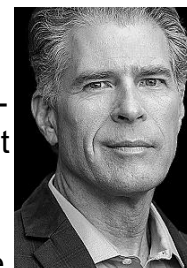
The brain’s dramaturgy springs from the logic of survival: an initial stability (the camp), a threat (predators, risks of the hunt), a rising action (the struggle) and the resolution (survival, food acquired). Aristotle would nod approvingly. The ancient Greek pointed out that dramas have beginning, middle - with several phases - and end. The beginning reveals a problem or whatever lurks ahead, where cortisol prepares us for stress and increases vigilance - it heightens vigilance and prepares the body for threats (Sapolsky, 1998) - and dopamine rewards our attention. Dopamine spikes when the brain anticipates meaningful information or reward (Schultz, 1997). The middle is exciting because that’s where everything happens, with dopamine and cortisol providing alertness and focus. The ending is tied together by oxytocin, which gives feelings of safety and calm. Stories were not merely entertainment. They were burning exchanges of knowledge that gave an evolutionary advantage.

As the campfire dies down, the hyenas gather in the periphery like literary agents. The neurochemical connections are not absolute, but in many cases show how the brain is affected by stories - and how stories have affected the brain. Modern series like “Breaking Bad” exploit this neurochemical arc: stability, threat, escalation, resolution - repeated with surgical precision in what has been called a “neo-Western”.



Lisa Cron knows "How to hook readers from the very first sentence".

In *Wired for Story* (2012), Lisa Cron states that humans are “hard-wired to respond to stories; the pleasure we get from good storytelling is nature’s way of making us pay attention.” Will Storr argues in *The Science of Storytelling* (2020) that “our storytelling brain transforms the chaos of reality into simple narratives of cause and effect, which confirm that our subjective models and feelings are benign and correct.” There is a wealth of research on the brain and literature. Paul Zak, head of the Center for Neuroeconomics, has through experiments linked the trust-building oxytocin to conflict resolution (2004). He found that



Paul Zak

oxytocin promotes trust, bonding, and emotional closure.

The crime genre exemplifies how literature activates the brain’s biochemistry. It’s a biochemical machine: cortisol for the crime, dopamine for the investigation, oxytocin for the solution. Crime triggers cortisol, the investigation stimulates dopamine, and the solution brings oxytocin-soaked relief. According to the Swedish Crime Writers’ Academy, 630 (!) crime novels were published in Swedish in 2024. The genre suits the brain well - even better thanks to the stimulating challenge of thinking through and solving the crime. The brain loves mysteries. They trigger the imagination, and the brain eagerly tries to fill in the gaps.

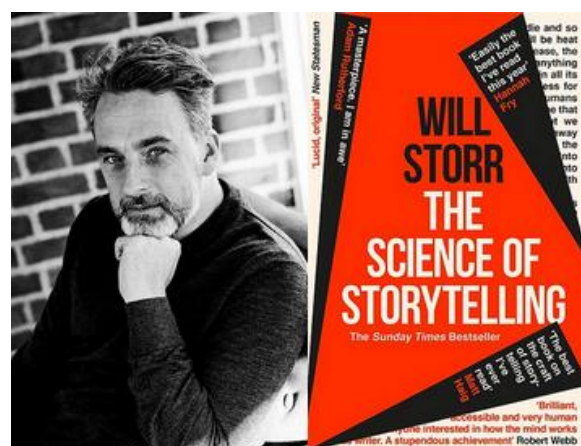
“Electronic brains” (CPU’s with billions of transistors) perform “speculative execution,” reminiscent of the biological brain’s predictive processing: data processing in advance.

Computers process code that may or may not be needed, much like the brain constantly tries to figure out what is coming and prepare for it. (Friston,

2010: the brain will continuously predicts incoming sensory information to reduce uncertainty.) An author can use this, manipulating the reader by hinting at a certain development and the brain prepares for it - only for a surprising twist to suddenly appear! Crime writers love to make the least suspected character the guilty one. Surprises feel rewarding, create excitement and engagement, and release



Karl Friston

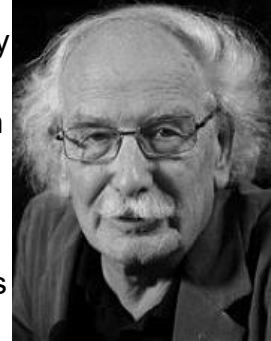


Will Storr knows the Science of Storytelling

dopamine.

Other genres hijack the brain in other clever ways. We perceive the world by running a simplified world model in our heads. Stories trigger the same world-building. This “automatic model-building is brilliantly exploited by fantasy and science-fiction writers,” says Will Storr: “Simply naming a planet, an ancient war, or an obscure technical detail starts the neural process of building a world, as if it actually existed.” The classic writing advice “Show, don’t tell!” provides details that support this model-building. In “Game of Thrones” minimal cues - a sigil, a prophecy, a place-name - us used to trigger this n the brain.

Narrative characters undergo “character construction.” Mirror neurons activate and try to place us inside the characters’ traits. They help us simulate the actions and emotions of others (Rizzolatti, 1996). Writers should be careful not to sprinkle too much personal detail unless they want to completely confuse the reader. The brain can only keep track of about 6-8 things at once, so limit the number of characters important to the plot. Every second, the senses receive millions of bits (the smallest unit of information). The bitstream is sent to the brain, which ruthlessly filters out what matters most. Our consciousness handles only between 10 and 50 bits per second! Don’t overload the thinking system.



Giacomo Rizzolatti.

Literary characters often have traits of the author! Humans are not telepathic, so writers can only access one mental archive: their own. That’s why Robert Heinlein’s heroes are self-confident machos, H. P. Lovecraft wrote about isolated loners, Astrid Lindgren’s characters are always warm-hearted and sensible, and Isaac Asimov wrote about robots. Also remember that the human brain becomes fully developed around age 25, when personality, priorities, and interests stabilize. We cannot expect major “character development” beyond that age.

The brain’s curiosity about change is fundamental to science fiction. “Change is endlessly fascinating to our brains,” says Storr. “Almost all perception is based on noticing that something has changed.” When something shifts around us, neural activity. Storr exclaims with delight: “Change is the gateway through which a threat may leap at your throat. But change is paradoxically also opportunity. It is a crack in the universe through which the future arrives. Change is hope. Change is promise. It is our winding path toward a tomorrow of success.”

Science fiction literature is a test bench for change, filled with speculations about science and society. This is a reason TVs “Black Mirror” has been praised, as it is a laboratory for societal anxieties that pushes the brain to imagine technological futures and their consequences. Good science fiction challenges the brain to reconsider and reach new lines of thought. This resonates in today’s unstable world of wars, pandemics, drone attacks and Trump. We see a rise in dystopias and apocalyptic literature. And



An illustration from Gabriel Linde's (pseud for Gustav Sandgren) YA sf novel *Den okända faran* ("The Unknown Danger"), likely by the author himself. Is it only me who finds it a bit "suggestive", of something not suitable for young readers? (Sandgren was BTW together with TV celeb Ria Wäger. See them in inserted pic.)

fantasy is popular, as it offers escapism for those who disdain the misery and prefer to pretend to be elves and hobbits with pointy ears and hairy feet.

Feelgood and romance literature are other reactions to the state of the world. Even though feelgood authors now flock to conferences and are interviewed on prime time TV, the genre's status has not grown in proportion to readers' voracious appetite. Despite its predictable structure - the name itself reveals how the books end - feelgood is far from neurologically uninteresting. We get comfort in a chaotic world with the oxytocin tap wide open. The heroine - usually, since women dominate readership - is someone easy to identify with, so the feelgood effect gets a firm grip. In feelgood, the reader experiences risk-free risks. If that weren't the case, the genre would be called feelbad.

But feelbad books already exist and are called horror. Writers like H. P. Lovecraft and Stephen King dig into our irrational subconscious and shake us up. It's like strapping into a perilous roller coaster. We know we're going to scream, but we want that adrenaline kick. If you get really, truly scared, dopamine release can shift into adrenaline (which also inhibits oxytocin).

The literary classics that have endured owe their longevity to the Brain's Dramaturgy. In *The Odyssey*, we follow the hero's journey through exposition, threat, rising action, resolution - several times, so that Homer had new adventures to declaim every evening. Shakespeare drenches us in neurotransmitters through dramatic emotional conflicts - Hamlet's introspective hesitation, Romeo and Juliet's impossible love - of storm-force intensity, since the Globe audience's roar drowned out subtlety. And even today we do not know whether it was zero or a couple of thousand suicides that followed Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. But the insight that the correct number was not zero reveals how easily our poor grey cell-clump is influenced.

Some "higher" literature rejects plot and the brain's shortcuts in favour of linguistic excursions and fragmentary forms. But language alone cannot carry a story. Without dramaturgy, the interplay of neurotransmitters fails, the brain's expectations are dribbled up into the stands, and the reading audience leaves at halftime. "Advanced" prose rarely reaches the broad audience enjoyed by crime novels, classics, and narrative-driven literature. Speculative political thrillers violate normal historiography and unleash improbabilities like a screaming mob occupying the US Congress, assassination attempts in presidential campaigns, major wars in Europe, and the neutral bastion seeking NATO membership. Thrillers are like crime novels with the volume turned to 11. Instead of the gentleman detective and poisoned sherry in the earl's library, we get the superspy and nuclear weapons with the entire world as the playing field. After a certain self-appointed president united Crimea with the criminals, Tom Clancy has given us many depictions war and conflictis. (Impressive, considering he is dead!)

Even news media, social platforms, and corporate consultants have their dramaturgy. Pandemics, wars, and markets are presented in a classic conflict model: the threat (virus, enemies, sales slump), the struggle (lockdown, anti-tank weapons, restructuring), and the resolution (vaccine, peace negotiations, product launch). Crime reporting follows the logic of the detective story: crime, investigation - often in several steps - perpetrator. (And if you didn't like our perpetrator, said the Palme Group, we have another suspect.)

Political reporting is dramatized as a tug-of-war with heels dug deep into the gravel in a zero-sum game that rarely exists. Nowadays even corporate consultants and advertising agencies want to find the right "narrative," though what they mean by that is less clear. Politicians similarly seek the "right issues" to fish for votes and haul in voters.

Science-fiction author Robert Heinlein claimed that there are only three dramaturgies:

1. The fellow who rises in life. Think Ingvar Kamprad and IKEA.
  2. Boy meets girl. Classic Romances.
  3. The man who learned better. Some has messed up - time for the guilty party to eat humble pie!
- Few surpass Japanese corporate executives who bow and cry as they apologise.

History did not end, Mr. Fukuyama! Stories are needed more than ever amid pandemics, wars, terrorism, globalisation, stupid AIs, crazy politicians and political polarization. Just as myths once sought to explain the forces of nature, today's narratives try to help us understand our bewildering

present.

This also sharpens things. We risk seeing matters as more polarised than they are. A strong story is not only logical and reader-friendly - it is biochemically coded to create engagement. News media and journalism borrow literature's dramaturgy to communicate issues and engage audiences. Dramaturgy makes both cognition and emotion susceptible to manipulation. That is why understanding the brain's inner office is important for critical reading and identifying when narratives deceive.

And in the future? AI is trying to emulate the brain and will likely adopt the findings above. We may get a stream of dramaturgically perfect literary confections trained on what already exists. (Copyright regulates the right to publish - copy+right - but not other things like being inspired by works in general.) AI may soon flood us with perfectly structured but perfectly average stories - fiction engineered to be safe instead of challenging, smooth instead of distinct, and forgettable instead of giving us something that lasts. Mediocrity becomes the norm when neural networks triangulate toward the blandest possible average. Meanwhile real authors risk becoming as dead as Tom Clancy.

Human storytelling arose to understand change, handle threats, strengthen bonds, and stimulate the mind. From mammoth hunts to modern thrillers, storytelling has been our species' way of rehearsing danger, sharing wisdom, and making sense of chaos. The Brain's Dramaturgy provides understanding, emotional recovery, and social cohesion.

Dramaturgy activates neurochemical mechanisms - cortisol, dopamine, and oxytocin (and in the worst case, adrenaline). The safety of fiction strengthens resilience in a harsh reality. We are flooded with stories on TV, in cinemas, on the Internet, through games and as audio poured into our ears. Literature is only a small part of it. In a changing time of global uncertainty, it still fills an important function as a tool for finding meaning, processing, and enduring the world.

## HISTORY CORNER:

### The Pulp Magazines Capsized Just As Other SF Mags Thrived!

My interest in pulp magazines got a supe-charging boost around 1975, when I came across Brian Aldiss's book *Science Fiction Art*, then just published. I was already hooked on skiffy since a few years but now a new world of crude (some would say) but absolutely stunning illustrations opened for an easy-to-impress mid-teenager. I already had vague ideas of the genre's history, but now I realised how much of it came from those crude (some would say) rags with those irresistible covers!

But the pulp magazines had other positive sides, besides artwork that was on a constant offensive refusing to take prisoners. The stories were unpretentious and straight, not trying to deceive you by claiming false "higher standards". Writing towards deadlines as a penny per word was ticking breeds a spontaneity and raises a threshold against rejecting ideas. Pulp stories are plot-driven, which is the basics of story-telling and what I like best. And the intense competition - there were hundreds of full-time pulp authors - expanded all boundaries.

With the early 50s came a peak for sf magazines, but not for the pulps. This proud strikingly coloured balloon filled with happy nitrous oxide burst. But why? I dug deeper into this. My new AI computer (see last issue) helped a lot in my research. It was a period of printed media shifting to paperbacks and smaller "digest" format (named for the format for *Reader's Digest* magazine). We'll go into the sf mag peak and the last pulps. I first thought this would be easy. AIs will collect all data and I'll just copy-paste... But much data was missing and I had to do manual research - so I took much longer than planned. Errors may still exist - corrections welcome! - but are hopefully marginal. I haven't seen anyone



else surveying the peak sf mag years.

(Reminds of my original research counting Swe fanzine pubbing up to 1980, to a hefty ca 20 000 individual issues. A nincompoo BTW fraudulently claimed that work for someone else.) The main cause of the pulp downfall was, as many already know, the growing competition from other media. In the early 1950s people turned more to TV, rock music, paperback books and comics. They had much of the same type of stories - there were several weekly space operas offered on TV, for example - but in an easier to digest format.

But to this came loss of retailers, loss of distributors and loss of the very distinct pulp paper itself. And as a *coup de grace* came the moral panic over the dangers of cheap publications, though aimed mainly at horror comics.

The traditional street newsstands were in decline in the early 1950s, due to the rise of supermarkets and chain drugstores. Newsstands at bus and train stations took over a little but they preferred high-turnover, high-prestige magazines, not pulps or cheap comics. Many magazines had changed to the more practical and prestigious digest format (eg *Astounding SF*). Also, travel patterns changed as millions moved to suburbs and downtown foot traffic decreased. Suburbs had no street corners, only shopping centres. Car ownership exploded, public transport use decreased. Many cities also removed sidewalk newsstands as "visual clutter".

We find mixed messages about the role of the *American News Company (ANC)* that distributed pulp magazines. On one hand ANC probably wasn't the "last pulp distributor". Several major regional wholesalers collapsed or withdrew from the market between 1950 and 1955, it is said. US distribution

system was built on hundreds of local wholesalers, not a few national ones, so when even a handful failed, the entire network destabilized. American News Company, often cited as the last pulp pusher, collapsed in 1957 but the decline began earlier. ANC's internal chaos began around 1952-54, when it began shedding publishers and closing regional branches. Between 1950 and 1955, dozens of regional wholesalers went bankrupt, were absorbed by larger chains, lost their trucking contracts, and lost access to ANC's national network. Examples: Pacific News Company reduced operations early 1950s (West Coast), Union News withdrew from some territories (Northeast), Kable News survived but drastically cut back, Curtis Circulation survived but shifted away from low-margin titles. When small wholesalers failed, publishers lost access to entire cities overnight.

But, ANC must have been an important player according to others. Why else would the government's anti-trust machinery be interested, as Wikipedia reports, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_News\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_News_Company):

*In 1952, the government began antitrust litigation against ANC which was destined to drag on until the company's demise. Around 1955 major magazine publishers began disengaging themselves from ANC and making other arrangements for newsstand distribution. When Collier's and Woman's Home Companion, two of their biggest-selling titles, folded in January 1957, it came as a serious blow to ANC at a time when the company was already on financially shaky ground. In April Dell Publishing announced that they were pulling out and making other arrangements for their distribution.*

*The mammoth company's abrupt demise in June 1957 has been a source of speculation for decades. One theory is that a speculator became aware that a bookkeeping peculiarity in American News' accounts could allow a large profit from liquidating the company. He acquired control, and proceeded to sell off the assets, ultimately winding the company up. This theory was summarized in a 1960 lawsuit.*

*In 1955 the defendant Henry Garfinkle and the members of his family acquired 11 per cent of the stock in the defendant American News Company. Soon thereafter he became its president... The defendant American News Company, notwithstanding its great size and notwithstanding its apparent dominance in the periodical distribution field, commencing in the fifties began to encounter*



A 1950s newsstand. Sf mags are on upper row to the left.





difficulties. It lost franchise after franchise and began sustaining heavy losses. By 1957 it had sustained losses in connection with its distribution of periodicals in excess of \$8,000,000.00. In 1957 it decided to cease its activities as a national distributor and local wholesaler. It laid off around 8,000 of its employees and sold all of the equipment used in connection with its distribution activities. By June 1957, it was entirely out of business as a national distributor and as a local wholesaler... [Dell] would seek a new distributor for his comics and paperbacks. The owners of American News estimated the effect that would have on their income. Then they looked at the value of the New Jersey real estate where their headquarters sat. They liquidated the company and sold the land. The company ... vanished without a trace in the suburban growth of the 1950s

See also <https://www.pulpartists.com/ANC.html>

Anyway, by now even the very pulp paper became unavailable! Papermills shifted to higher-margin grades. After WWII rising wood and labour costs made ultra-cheap pulp stock unprofitable, and as publishers switched to digest formats and paperbacks, demand plummeted

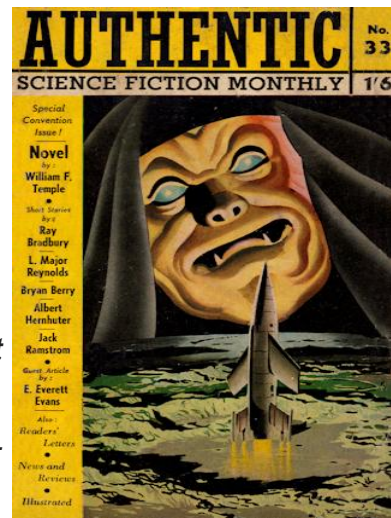
One psychiatrist by the name Fredric Wertham had an unexpectedly extra role, with his 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*. It was an attack on mainly comic books, those of the horror type but also other media that had too much sex and violence. Pulp magazines with their powerful art probably weren't entirely out of the target list.\* There were Senate hearings about the huge dangers of comic books and similar trash. An entire generation youth was to become brainwashed walking zombies. As a result the industry created a Comic Code to ban the "worst". (The concept of "underground comics" refers to publications rejecting this code, but then only being available by small, independent retailers.) Sweden had its own scare from horror comics in the 1970s, resulting in that major chains ousted these "dangerous" publications.

We've heard it before when new media or new genres appear. Jazz music was jungle jangling from darkest corners of primitive Africa. Movie theatres were so acutely dangerous that censorship and age limits were early introduced in most of the civilised world. (In Sweden as early as 1911, disbanded as late as 2010. In the US degrees of censorship was introduced on county and state level, beginning in the early 1900s. A Supreme court ruling in 1915 removed First Amendment protection for movies, and what was known as the Hays Code - eg stopping married couples having double beds and kisses longer than three seconds - came in the early 1930s, and in its final sharia-like version in 1934. Films up to 1934 are usually called "pre-code").

In more modern times rock music was introduced to young folks by the devil himself. And the same with disco, video, computer games, social media... The very first novel of any weight in world literature, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, took a swing at moral panic. In it Don Quixote had been reading to much adventures of medieval knights that he believed himself to be one, and steps out in the world in comical adventures. Moral panic has always been with us.

But in case of the pulps, it was probably a minor contributing factor. Media changes, social changes, loss of distribution and loss of the pulp paper itself was decisive. At the same time, sf magazines in general flourished! For a period of two years over 50 different titles turned up!

Optimism had returned after WWII. We begin talking about space (some saw flying saucers), we'd get unlimited atomic power (almost free!), the first computers arrived (Univac predicted the 1952 presidential race), Hollywood let aliens invade Earth, and publishers picked up on all this. (It also happened to be the time sf made a breakthrough in Sweden, with



British sf mag Authentic, May, 1953. Holler if you have it! (Luminist archive lacks it.)



"Madge" often had covers with curvy girls.



\*The Journal for Swedish High Schools, March 1941, complained about the Swedish JVM pulp, having "grotesque examples of what an abnormal and sick imagination can produce".

several new book series, naming competitions etc. See earlier ishs.). So let's look at what flooded the market when sf-magazine publishing was at its peak. (Pulps was on the way out, so mags are digest sized unless otherwise noted.) US copyright law has - in most cases - work up to 1963 in public domain, so many of these magazines can be found as PDFs at <https://www.luminist.org/archives/SF/> (also search [https://archive.org/details/magazine\\_rack](https://archive.org/details/magazine_rack)). We here merge the US and UK English language markets. We here merge the US and UK English language markets, with British magazines underlined. Editors are often (not always) noted, all in alphabetic order:

### **Sf/f/h Magazines Published During the Peak Years 1953-54**

- Astounding Science Fiction* (ed Campbell)  
*Astounding Science Fiction* (1939-63, British Reprint Edition, BRE)  
*Authentic Science Fiction* (UK, ed HJ Campbell, Tubb , early 1950s)  
*Avon SF & Fantasy Reader* (1953, only 2 issues)  
*Beyond Fantasy Fiction* (1953-55, fantasy/horror-leaning companion to Galaxy)  
*Cosmos Science Fiction* (1954, only 4 issues it seems)  
*Dynamic Science Fiction* (ed Lowndes 1952-54)  
*Famous Fantastic Mysteries* (ed M Gnaedingr 1939-53, pulp)  
*Fantastic* (1952-80, fantasy/SF mix)  
*Fantastic* (among eds Briowne, Fairman, Goldsmith, Cohen, White 1953-55, BRE)  
*Fantastic Adventures* (1939-53)  
*Fantastic Story Magazine* (among eds Merwin, Mines pulp, 1950-55, merged into Startling in 1955)  
*Fantastic Universe* (among eds Merwin, Margulies, Santesson 1953-60)  
*Fantasy Fiction* (short-lived 1953-54, fantasy-leaning)  
*Future Science Fiction* (ed Lowndes 1939-60, started as pulp, later went to digest)  
*Futuristic Science Stories* (1950-58, UK)  
*Galaxy* (ed HL Gold, 1950-??)  
*If* (among eds Quinn, knight, Gold, Pohl, 1952-74)  
*Imagination* (eds Hamlingt, Mahaffey, Palmer's competitor to IF, Galaxy etc., 1953-54)  
*Imaginative Tales* (companion to Imagination, same eds, from 1954)  
*Infinity Science Fiction* (L Shaw, 1953-1958)  
*Mystic Magazine* (Palmer's occult/"occult SF", borderline but often counted in weird-fiction lists, active 1953-54)  
*Nebula Science Fiction* (ed Hamilton, UK/Scottish, 1952-59)  
*New Worlds* (ed Carnell UK, digest from 1949, 1946-96)  
*Orbit Science Fiction* (ed knight 1953-54)  
*Other Worlds Science Stories/Science Stories/Other Worlds* (1953-54?, Ray Palmer had a tangle of titles, here attempt to sort it out.: [http://www.philsp.com/mags/other\\_worlds.htm](http://www.philsp.com/mags/other_worlds.htm) )  
*Out of This World* (1954, 1958 UK. nothing between 1954 and '58)  
*Planet Stories* (pulp, among eds Reiss, Bixby, O'Sullivan 1939-55)  
*Planet Stories* (1950-54, BRE)  
*Rocket Stories* (eds del Rey, Harrison, ssues)  
*Science Fantasy* (Carnell, UK, 1950-66, companion to New Worlds)  
*Science Fiction Adventures* (UK version, licensed from US but editorially distinct, runs 1953-54)  
*Science Fiction Adventures* (US version, Lowndes/Greenberg, 1952-58)  
*Science Fiction Plus* (ed Moskowitz, bedsheet, Gernsback's 1953 revival attempt, ran only 1953)  
*Science Fiction Quarterly* (Lowndes, 1940-58, the last pulp)  
*Science Fiction Quarterly* (ed Lownde, spulp, second series 1951-1958, last SF pulp)  
*Science Fiction Stories* (various incarnations, ed Lowndes, 1953-54 as a digest offshoot of earlier Future magazines)  
*Space Science Fiction* (eds Avallone, Engels, 1952-1953)  
*Space Stories* (ed Mines, 1952-53)  
*Spaceway* (ed Crawford, 1953-55, relaunch 1969-70)  
*Startling Stories* (ed Mines, pulp, 1939-55, merged into Thrilling Wonder mid-1950)  
*Supernatural Stories* (1954-??, UK)  
*Tales of Tomorrow* (1950-54, UK)  
*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* (eds Boucher, McComas 1949-)  
*Thrilling Wonder Stories* (among eds Wesinger, Merwin, Mines, spulp, 1936-55)  
*Tops in Science Fiction* (2 issues 1953)  
*Tops in Science Fiction* (BRE, 1954)



Last issue of last pulp, ed RAW Lowndes



*Fantastic Adventures*, March 1953

*Famous Fantastic, Mysteries* June 1953

*Weird Tales*, September 1954

*Science Fiction Quarterly*, 1958. SF Encyclopedia notes that when it ceased in Feb 1958 it was the last surviving SF pulp. It had "trimmed edges" from August 1953 while remaining pulp-sized. It had a note on the Table of Contents page (see pic).

It doesn't say anything about being near folding. The new, thinner paper was probably due to that real pulp paper was no longer available. But without pulp paper, was the last pulp magazine really the last pulp?

### AI-Translation

In his latest EAPazine Garth Spencer experiments with using autotranslation of a text (about publishing) to Swedish. He used Google Translate, which is described as using an AI "from the Gemini family". I decided to make my own autotranslation with my new computer having the Snapdragon AI chip, running AI models from OpenAI - which I guess means some relation to ChatGPT. I can't go through everything, but I'll give you some comments.

Google Translate is stumbling on "Pay Grade" in the beginning, making it "löneklass", while Snapdragon makes it the more correct "lönegrad" (which is a well-established word). Later G-translate mentions a book as a "biography" while Snapdragon correctly calls a book by Fred Pohl an "auto-biography". However, the original only uses the word "biography" so G-translate is here more correct. G-translate makes fiction into "skönlitteratur" which is correct, while snapdragon calls it just "fiktion", a broader word which doesn't have to mean "stories". Snapdragon calls companies that deliver products and services "företagskällor" which sounds awkward (meaning "company springs" or "wells") while G-translate stays with "leverantörer" (from "deliver").

"General-interest magazines" is "allmänintresse-tidskrifter" from Snapdragon but "allmännyttiga tidskrifter" from G-translate, which sounds wrong - it means "generally useful magazines". The article talks about a "single-point failure", a specific factor that makes everything collapse, which



1927 videophone contraption (one-way, land-line). In the middle a Logie-Baird type spinning disk. Wikipedia: "AT&T earliest electromechanical television-videophone, called the Ikonophone (Greek: "image-sound") had 18 frames per second and occupied half a room full of equipment cabinets. An early US test had then Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover address an audience in New York City from Washington DC. Though the audio portion was two-way, the video portion was one-way with only those in New York being able to see Hoover." Quality probably awful but they did what they could a 100 years ago...

Snapdragon translates as " 'single-point failure', en enskild felpunkt", ie as it seems to be a quite special phrase it gives it in English followed by a translation attempt. G-translate invents the word "enkelpunktsfel", which may be formally correct but as a newly invented word some may not understand it. Snapdragon translates "newsreels" to "journalfilmer", which is what such films are called, while G-translate invents the word "nyhetsfilmer (news films). Snapdragon makes serial rights "följetongsrättigheter", which is correct, but G-translate makes it "serierättigheter". Now, a "serial" in a magazine is called a "följetong". Here it sounds like getting the comics rights as comics are "serier" in Swedish. ("Följetong" is from French "feuilleton", a little sheet, but it came to mean serial.)

"Personal devices", meaning laptops, cellphones etc, is by both translated to "personliga enheter", but a human translator would realise that's too general and fuzzy and interpret it to perhaps "läsneheter" (reading devices). "I've been there. You've been there." becomes the verbatim "Jag har varit där. Du har varit där." for both Snapdragon and G-Translate, but it doesn't sound good. It should rather be something like "It has happened to me." (And you).

That was a few things I noted. In general I find no grammatic mistakes from either G-translate or Snapdragon and no misspellings (AI-supported translating systems are getting good at such formalities!) but sometimes we have newly invented words and phrases that aren't optimal. The two systems will often deviate in phrasing, but wordings will have the same basic meaning. When in doubt the translation goes verbatim on you. Snapdragon seems to do a tiny margin better, but both do a decent job, especially if a human can have a look at it and fix minor details.

I believe the jobs of professional translators are at risk. Bad news for all fans who translate.

### Avatar 3 - Back to Smurfland

Me and brother Johan went to see James Cameron's latest computerised extravaganza, *Avatar - fire and Ash*. As I understand it has done well in the box offices, but it's more confusing than and not as good as the first two excursions to the planet of Giant Smurfs with tails.

The film is a mix of fast action, unbelievable science and melodram. You get solemn, emotional encounters interrupted by big battles. The battles are flash, bang, boom in a confusing tempo where medieval technology with smurfs flying on dragons beat floating tanks and other hi-tech. Look, why don't the evil humans (because we humans are evil, according to the filmmaker) use a few small atomic bombs to get the upper edge... The smurfs wouldn't stand a chance. Is it logical that as you learn to fly to the stars you also forget how to make really big firecrackers?

And when you spend so much energy in inventing a detailed world, using computer power that would make NSA envious, when things heat up you present it in so many fast cuts that your head spins. As I found it a bit confusing I asked my AI to make a plot summary:



Sigourney Weaver is back as Kiri. No aliens without Siggo!

*The story picks up immediately after the events of The Way of Water. The Sully family is grieving Neytiri's death. Jake throws himself into defence and training, Neytiri sinks into anger and trauma. The RDA escalates its military presence on Pandora. A new human-aligned antagonist emerges, intensifying the conflict. [Lead by a Death scull with an eating disorder and at5itude problem.] The Na'vi clans are forced into new alliances and uneasy cooperation. Fire-oriented Na'vi cultures are introduced, with internal tensions. The Sully children take on larger roles, often independently of their parents. Kiri's mysterious connection to Eywa deepens and becomes a major plot driver. Battles spread across land, air, and volcanic regions. Jake and Neytiri's relationship is strained by grief and differing instincts. The RDA's long-term plan for Pandora becomes clearer. A climactic confrontation reshapes the balance between humans and Na'vi. The film ends with losses, revelations, and setup for Avatar 4. Themes: grief, cultural clash, environmental spirituality and family resilience.*

One thing missing in this AI summary, is that young Spider who was left behind when humans first evacuated Pandora (film 1) and grew up with the Na'vi (=the big smurfs) loses his breathing mask (as Pandora's atmosphere is poisonous for humans). By some magic mumbo-jumbo as he lays



Spider: "In the Spirit World we call for the strength of Ancient Fathers." Subtitles used a new, special typeface!

gasping, he breaths the air and later he begins develop one of those hair things used to connect with the flying dragons. The evil humans who are now back wants him to find out what has happened Perhaps we could make humans being able to breath the air so we can colonise all of Pandora (and put dirty industries everywhere) and take all unobtainium, the valuable substance that makes mountains fly. The mountains and rocks that fly like balloons on children's birthday parties are supposed to achieve this through a ordinary

temperature superconductive levitation effect. I asked my AI if this was realistic (in a gravity of 0.8 G as Pandora is said to have). I answered: of course not. The rocks are too big and such levitation only works ovdr a short distance. It would need Pandora to have a magnetic field so strong as to make the planet uninhabitable. More things aren't exactly scientific. Those dragons the Smurfs ride look too heavy, having too small wings, to be able to fly.

And I don't really understand the mind-transfer that lets the entire brain contents and personality of a human scull transfer to a especially bred smurf body. (Such a body with samples of human DNA produces a smurf with five fingers. The native smurfs have four.) Except science says such a transfer borders the impossible, because what are the odds for an incredible complex info system with data and all being able to settle in an environment not at all made for it? And the smurfs often ride underwater holding on to animals. One wonders how they do that since the resistance from water should knock them off the ride. In a couple of scenes the smurfs speak under water (no radio involved) which is a neat trick - or a manuscript glitch.



Na'vis want to fight tanks and lasers with bows and arrows.

Avatar 3 is a confusing but entertaining 3+ hour long adventure matinee, not exactly kosher science, with melodrama and flashing, high-paced battles. One wishes Cameron would try to do something more profound, like explaining the economics of going half around the galaxy to transport material (the energy and equipment needed must cost much more than unobtainium!). Or giving us real glimpses of the Na'vi society. How do they get food? How do they build things? What schools do they have? All we learn is that those smurfs lie on the beach all day or walk around in the woods.

But if you have an evening left over, see it. The visuals are of course stunning.



Smurfs riding dragons.

### LoCs & MCs

Time for some boring comments. First LoCs (send your comments, if you dare! - do cc: to [ahrvid@atomicmail.io](mailto:ahrvid@atomicmail.io)), then Ed's notes to EAPA and NAPA. At the very end the eternal struggle with Henry Grynnssten.

**Joseph Nicholas:** Ahrvid, many thanks for the issues of *Intermission* you've been sending along. I'm responding particularly to the latest, number 162. Much (if not all) of what you say about the size and content of conventions repeats your earlier remarks in issue 146, but at least one of your complaints concerns an issue that is outside the organising committee's control. You urge that it should "refuse venues that threaten to check all bags on entry", which if carried through would almost certainly mean that there would be no venues left of a size that could host such an event. About the only venues exempted from bag checks would be private homes, and whatever the Swedish equivalent of an English village hall might be - i.e. venues too small and hopelessly under-equipped technically to host any convention at all.

You also complain that parties are these days just tables in the regular con area and ask "what happened with the old style of room parties"? The answer to that question might be that the occupants of the room or rooms do not wish to host a party because they do not wish to be saddled with the time and trouble (and possible expense) of clearing up afterwards. [Ed: Earlier they did! And nothing fundamental has changed.]

You are correct, however, that panel discussions need to be better prepared, and that means not just turning up in the Green Room ten or fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled starting time. The panellists should be in

contact with each other by email in the months before the convention, to discuss the arguments each wishes to pursue and any secondary points they may wish to make in response to the others. Not to do so is in some ways to insult the audience, by suggesting that the panellists couldn't be bothered and therefore that audience shouldn't expect to hear anything interesting or relevant. (The worst sort of panellist, of course, is the one who begins "I don't know why I'm on this panel", and anyone who says that should be removed from it - and the room - with immediate effect.) Some years ago, before a Newcastle Corflu at which I'd been selected as a panellist, I attempted to generate a pre-con discussion of the topics to be covered, only for Ted White - the moderator - to shut down any hint of such a discussion. [*Ed: Ted W is, shall we say, special...*] The panel was, in consequence, aimless and largely uninformative (although I at least made the points that I had sketched out for myself).

It is also possible, as you suggest, to restrict attendance by focusing on the particular demographic to be catered for. For example, Corflu, for fanzine fans, and the UK Silicons of the 1980s (and the US Readercons that followed it), which focused solely on the written word and made it clear well in advance that there would be no room for or discussion of anything else. (This predictably annoyed some people, with one in particular wailing that she wouldn't be allowed in because she would fail the membership test - although there was of course no such test.) However, a tight focus on the written word (say) wouldn't necessarily prevent an attendee from wandering around in (for example) a vampire get-up: a convention committee can hardly police what people choose to wear.

In saying "'Smof' means 'Secret Masters of Fandom' and that's what con organisers believe they are" you seem to be taking literally what is meant to be ironic, just as BNF (Big Name Fan) is ironic: a wryly amused view of the personnel's actually minor role in the whole. Nobody I've met in fandom really sees themselves as a secret master or a big name; they just get on with doing the things that interest them.

Anyway, I must stop here since it's time to start thinking about dinner. Fish, I think: I have a couple of small bass fillets in the freezer, which I shall thaw out and flash fry with potatoes and mushrooms. Then serve with a squeeze of lemon and a scatter of tarragon. Yumeroony! Regards!

**Ed:** *As I understand you can't declare yourself a BNF, but you are one if others - preferably well-known fans - say so. I've seen terrible examples of con-filk trying to*

*push people around. To me it points to believing in being a (Secret) Master, and not seeing irony in it. As for bag checks we should avoid such for at least up to middle-sized cons (Worldcons may be different but it's worth a try). In Sweden there are certainly venues without bag checks! Actually at this time there are only bag checks at sports events! Reason is to stop football fans from drinking and getting rowdy and also stop fireworks.*

**Wolf von Witting:** This is highly unexpected. I find myself writing another Loc, only a month or so after having fired off the first LoC in more than 10 years. And to the same fanzine. Am I losing my marbles, or getting them back? I don't know. It was interesting to read about Smofcon 42. I may be an sf-convention behind you as to having been involved in the organization of sf-conventions, but it doesn't feel like a significant difference. Not at all surprisingly we agree on most points. Shouldn't a Smofcon be, at least in part, about the improvement of events?

Somewhat surprised to find you counting Nasacon 2000 as your greatest achievement. [*Ed: It was my second biggest con as involved. We also have King-Con and Tom Ölander did most groundwork there.*] What you did at Nasacon 2000 is, to the best of my knowledge, unparalleled in the history of Swedish fandom. You secured 50+ mentions in the press, including all major newspapers in Sweden, six radioshows talking about the convention, 3 inclusions on the news of national TV and mentioning in Ansible and Locus. Yes, it may have been a fortunate coincidence the Wasa-Halls were running an exhibition of sf-film props at the same time. Nonetheless, we could not have had a better man at the job. Not only did you contribute to a highly successful event, but also to a notable boost for the Swecon, then still in its infancy, as an institution. Remember the representative of the Cultural Center in Stockholm asking why we didn't hold the Swecon there? Which came to pass in subsequent years. Science Fiction conventions in the very heart of Stockholm. Ultimately paving the way for the Eurocon 2011 in Stockholm. We can't take credit for running that Eurocon, but it sure as hell would never have happened, had we not prompted the possibility. In the year 2000 everything turned after the dreadful 90s. Mid 90s there were two conventions planned (1994) and both cancelled, because no one felt it worthwhile to go ahead with. came to pass

Nasacon 2000 was by no means a perfect convention. Far from it. But very few noticed all the things which went wrong, because we were really good at improvising. Even post-con as I talked with the hotel manager and said we weren't going to break even. He then asked if it was ok, if we removed one of the group rooms from the bill. And yes, that made us break exactly even. Then the SF-Bookshop in Stockholm didn't charge us for printing one side of the cover for the program booklet, so Sigma TC in the end retained a small amount of cash to go through the remaining months of the year 2000 without having to declare insolvency.

Codes of Conduct have been a nuisance ever since they first appeared. Couldn't exactly place my finger on what was wrong with it. Some of those CoC were reasonable statements, which I could wholeheartedly agree with. But upon reading some others I just decided that particular con wasn't for me. Since then I always read the CoC and haven't found any more sf-convention, which I desired to attend. I don't need to be told how to behave. With the exception of this year, where I am likely to attend the ColoniaCon and the Eurocon in Berlin, I don't see any event on the horizon where my presence is necessary. I might still be going to Portugal, Poland, Romania, Spain, Croatia, Czech Republic or Bulgaria. But conventions in most former "western" countries have become widely uninteresting. Boring panels is one of the reasons. I always felt it was important to be prepared and have something of substance to say. Even if the topic was right up my alley. I don't consider myself a know-it-all. When asked to attend a panel I do research. My opinion is cheap, but interesting facts need to be researched and verified or verifiable. And I will not have my bags checked. Ever. What deranged mind came up with that idea? There's an old saying; "It takes one, to know one." Meaning, if THEY deem it necessary to check my bag, it means they are not to trust. Who is checking their bags? How do I know

they are not secretly trying to get us all defenceless in one auditorium? F\*ck off! I never brought a gas mask to any sf-convention. "Best defence; Not being there!"

Another reason is that most of the fans I liked have passed away or are in the process thereof. We're old. We had our fun. No one cares about what we think. They keep increasing the distance between convention members and panel attendees. Old fandom traditions are approaching extinction. We're being overrun by hoardes of sf-media fans. As John-Henri Holmberg once pointed out, the worst which could happen to us was success. We had it. Regards,

**Ed:** *There were two "secrets" behind the press campaign for Nasacon 2000. 1) Besides E-mail and papermail, I made use of a fax-modem to all fax-reachable media (numbers were in the phonebook). A fax could to a degree break through the attention barrier. I doubt the fax method works now, due to tech and media changes. 2) I made extra efforts to make sure the national TT news agency got interested. If you get a TT telegram out you have up to 50 newspaper mentions (maybe Stieg Larsson helped, he worked for TT). Tom Ölander did the same for Kong-Con with the Finnish News Bureau (pulling strings at Hufvudstadsbladet, he was janitor there), getting lots of articles, TV reports etc.*

**Cato Sture:** Hi Ahrvid, Happy New Year! Since you joke about Greenland [*Joke? No Greenland is a serious issue!*] I can tell you that this is the name of a district in Oslo, with a lot of drug trade in the streets. So it'd solve Oslo's drug problems if the US annex Greenland. [Ps:] My first short story collection is out in April, and I also work on a second book this year, about the history of Norwegian sf. More info to come.

**Ed:** *Would that be the first book on Norwegian sf history? Looks very interesting.*

**Leigh Edmonds:** Dear Ahrvid! Thanks for *Intermission* 162. As with Pascal Thomas in your letter column, I fear that your assessment of what's going on relating to Crimea is optimistic. Not that I know much about it since I have a deliberate policy of avoiding following the news since Trump came to power. If I do pay attention to these things I get upset and angry and that does me no good since there is nothing I can do to change the situation.

I would not have been happy to receive one of Gernsback's letters, but reading them did remind me that recently I was visiting Robin Johnson and found, among his collection, some old Gernsback magazines. The oldest of them was a 1917 issue of *The Electrical Experimenter*. It makes interesting reading, in an antiquarian sort of way. I made a scan of the cover. It's a little awe-inspiring to hold in your hands the precursor of science fiction that is now going on for 108 years old.

Heinlein's house seemed a little cramped to me and I wonder how useful he found some of the modern conveniences which might have been futuristic at the time but now seem rather antiquated. Certainly I don't see anywhere where he could put the big tTV screen on the wall or the ethernet cabling. I quite like my modern conveniences - yesterday it got to 47C here but the air conditioning kept it relatively cool inside while the solar panels and battery meant that keeping cool didn't cost anything (apart from the installation costs, etc, last year). I wonder if that house still stands.

Thanks for the article Elise Meiter. She must have had a difficult life and I wonder what she thought with all her recognition and honours when she looked back on what she had lived through.

I've heard of Smofcon but never been to one, of course. Do you have to be a certified SMOF to attend or can anyone go? If that's the case the people going can't be very secret. I find myself in agreement with you on many of the points about what would make a good convention I'd want to go to. Unfortunately my con running days are well and truly in the past so I have to put up with what current day con runners think makes a good convention - or otherwise simply not go. The best option is to ignore what the organizers provide and spend the convention hanging out with fannish mates, which is what a lot of older fans do anyhow. When I was at the Eastercon in Belfast last year I attended a few program items but that was mainly because I was too crook to socialize and I wanted to see Adrian Tchikovsky in the flesh. Best, **[Ed: Now over to my APA comments.]**

**William McCabe:** Provided the colours are from an original camera film, the picture can't be from the 1920s because colour film didn't exist then. (The texts were pretty illegible to begin with.)■I didn't know about Wells and the statue until recently. I cover things I find interesting which may have happened at any time. ■Hackers call blinking lamps on computers "blinkenlights". Especially old computers would have long rows of blinkenlights. In most cases they'd register when different parts of the memory is accessed. That was of use for older, slower computers when those writing the program sat close-by and knew exactly how they expected it to run. It looks cool but is irrelevant today. "Desk Set" (1957) is here <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0EAADB195B812E27> with Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn and a big computer with blinkenlights.

**Garth Spencer:** I think Trump will fall first. He's old and may have a stroke or heart attack (he doesn't look too healthy). If not, his strange actions (threatening allies), the Epstein files, ICE, confusing statements, Putin connections more than enough adds up to impeachment. Look, what Nixon did was a mild breeze compared to Trump and Tricky Dick was forced to resign. Congress' patience with Trump must end one day.■The wanted former TV star Dermot Clemenger will soon go past time for statute of limitations and run free. But he'll never work for TV again...■I just wonder, why is January EAPA marked as being for March, and the February deadline set to April 1st?■Promise me one thing: If the US invades, Canada must take Washington DC in a counter attack and burn down the White House again, with a certain person in it! (You'll probably find him in his pompous ballroom.)■Oh, I've always been a short-story writer. I write a few every year (not a huge output, but over the years it grows). I've just finished a special kind of short story collection. Let's see if any publisher is interested (I fear not).■[Before AI] we have to achieve artificial stupidity. Why, when there is so much natural stupidity going around?■From where comes that Yule etc calendar? (The very top line probably says, but it's too blurred.) "Yule" is BTW from Old Norse (also Old English). Vaguely related to "wheel" as in "when the year turns". Christianity just took it over. (On Garth's N'APazine: I considered switching to Linux, but found it too complicated and its structure was somewhat incomprehensible, so to paraphrase Churchill: Windows is the worst possible operating system, except for all the other OSes I've tried.■I'll cover copyright in nextish, more precisely © and AI.■Didn't understand comments on "social calculus".problem ■I'll cover copyright in nextish, more precisely © and AI.■Didn't understand comments on "social calculus".

**Heath Row:** I only know EAPA history from the time I've been in it. Garth knows more, perhaps? The big problem is that it would be nice with a few more members. *[Ed: Any non-member who reads this, please join!! I like your movie ads!]* *presidential crimes could lead to violence against citizens* Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Who's next? *!* I already have two collections of my short fiction. It'd be interesting to try to collect my best faanfiction, but at present I find it too much work and too little interest. *!* I wonder why you reprinted those Kronblom comics? The first is a meta story, where the comics artist himself forces the lazy Kronblom to saw timber. In the second Kronblom dreams he got a lot of money (to eg buy a nice car) and wakes up disappointed. In the third Kronblom rather unwillingly dances with the fat lady and goes home rather exhausted. Not the brightest comedy!

**Kevin Trainor Jr:** The Gripen jet is designed to survive and being operative, by being able to fly from road bases, and replacing stealth with electronic jamming and deception (the F35 is probably better, when it's not parked in a special hangar undergoing maintenance...)

**Samuel Lubell:** I think competition from other media has hit paperback sales: audobooks, streaming video, games etc. It's sad. *!* I'm always sceptical of attempts to hause the Middle and Dark Ages, which *Inventing the Renaissance* seems to attempt, indirectly. *!* The problem is that you'll only see the widening cracks in Russia if you study it yourself because mainstream media is neglecting to report it. E g: The 19% of Ukraine Russia holds on to was all taken during the first two months. The monumentally inefficient Russian army has for more than 3.5 years only move fractions of percent forward to losses of 1.2+ million! Launching drones and missiles against (mostly) civilians - of which 80-90% are shot down - is because Russia is incapable of larger military action on the ground. Russian troops are exhausted and under-equipped. As Ukrainian drones have hit 180+ Russian refineries, oil depots and other energy targets, that used to pay for the war, Putin is running out of money (starting to sell out the gold reserve is a sign of desperation). And now his shadow tanker fleet is also being targeted. That Putin has let his terror agency FSB assassinate business and military leaders by the hundreds is a sign of weakness. The few allies he had are dropping off - Syria, Venezuela, Iran (which is at least substantially weakened). Trump who usually acts in Russia's favour more and more looks like a lame duck. (Dictatorships BTW has the disadvantage that if the dictator is wrong, there's no mechanism to correct him. And Putin is sooo wrong.)

**Mark Nelson:** Dear Ahrvid, "And He Built An (Un)Crooked House" is an excellent find. Some of the designs that Heinlein put into his design seems contemporary today - seventy years later. I wonder where he gained his insights into the design of a 'modern' house? Surely it must have been more than his "engineering training"? From Wikipedia I learnt that \*both\* Heinlein's were engineers and \*they\* "designed the house for themselves with many innovative features". To be fair, your introduction to the article makes it clear that the couple co-designed the house. However, that's not the impression from the article. Upon my initial reading of Intermission 162, the impression from the article far outweighed your introduction.

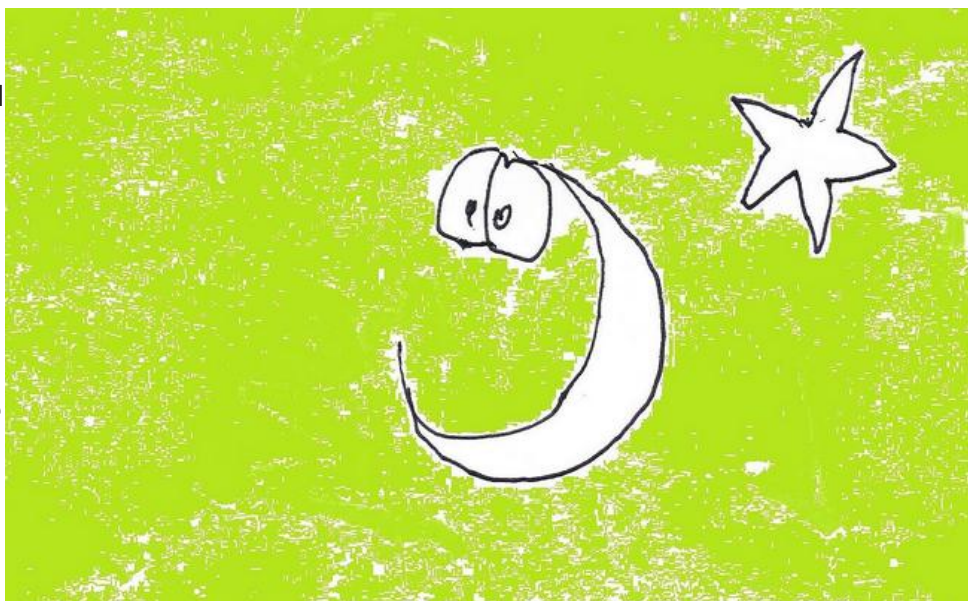
Wikipedia states that Virginia Heinlein was a chemical engineer by training whilst Robert was an aeronautical engineer. From her own entry I discovered that "She was highly esteemed among her husband's fans for her exceptional willingness to correspond with them, a practice that continued until her last days, with activity in a Usenet newsgroup devoted to Heinlein fans."

I don't remember the last time I used Usenet... maybe three decades ago. *[Ed: I was active there a few years in the early 90s. By 1995 (or so?) I left. I made a short re-visit about 20 years ago and found that Usenet had deteriorated - lots of groups were dead, others were just used to distribute porn. Does anyone have more about the fate of Usenet?]*

I was vaguely aware of the outline of the career of Lise Meitner, at least up until her fleeing to Sweden during the second world war. Your summary of "Love and Nuclear Physics" has fleshed out these details. I wonder if anyone has written a book about female scientists who have been "overlooked" for the Nobel Prize? A little searching finds "Nobel Prize Women in Science", which tells the stories of 15 women scientists, a mixture of those that won Nobel Prize and those "who played crucial roles in Nobel-winning work but didn't get the prize themselves".

Two of the scientists covered are Lise Meitner and Rosalind Franklin. Franklin died in 1958 (at the age of 37) whilst the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the discovery of the structure of DNA, for which she made significant contributions, was not awarded until 1962. So she was not excluded from winning the Nobel Prize due to her gender. However, her contribution to the Prize-winning work was downplayed during her lifetime and for many years afterwards. In particular, James Watson significantly downplayed her contribution in his published writings - most notably in his memoir.

The other female scientists whose work is discussed in "Nobel Prize Women in Science" that did *not* win the Nobel prize are Emmy Noether, Chien-Shiung Wu, and Jocelyn Bell Burnell. I have some familiarity with the first and third names. Noether's gender was not the reason why she did not win a Nobel



*NASA's Artemis program will soon (Feb 6 at the earliest) orbit the Moon in preparation for possible landing later, just like Apollo 8. LON gets inspired!*

Prize. She was a pure mathematician whose work is important in modern algebra - not an area in which a Nobel prize exists. Why is there no Nobel Prize in mathematics? A popular myth in the mathematical community is that this is because Nobel's wife had an affair with a Swedish mathematician [Gösta Mittag-Leffler] - bloody Swedes. A nice story to share when drinking with colleagues. However, this is not the reason for the simple fact is that Nobel never married! [Ed: Perhaps because he was always too busy inventing and experimenting. It's unlikely he was gay, in fact much points to that he had a crush on the Austrian peace activist Bertha von Suttner, who probably inspired creating the peace prize, which she later also received.]

I'm not sure that you are right in saying that con organisers believe that they are the "Secret Masters of Fandom" [Ed: *Some behave like they believe it...*]. I always assumed that the name was ironic. I was also under the impression that the emphasis at Smofcon was on bidding/running Worldcons, but a little digging reveals that is not the case. It covers running any convention, from small local affairs all the way up to large conventions and through to Worldcons. So maybe I am also wrong about the name.

I don't know if there is a consensus that AIs are bad at maths. I do know that after retiring I used ChatGPT to carry out some simple calculations and I could tell that the answers were incorrect. So I asked ChatGPT how to download Sage. Sage is a free open-source computer algebra system, so using it to answer simple arithmetic questions is a bit like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. However, at least the answers are correct. Cheers, Mark

**Ed:** *What kind of "simple calculations" was that? Remember that AIs may give wrong answers because they "hallucinate", as it's called. I've given AIs complicated math-related problems and they've always performed. Eg in a previous issue about how high you'd pole-vault on the Moon. Computers are especially good at juggling numbers and follow rules, an AI shouldn't be an exception to that. You are right about Franklin who did the X-Ray crystallography essential for finding the DNA structure, and couldn't get the prize because she was dead. Noether couldn't get it because mathematics isn't awarded. (Why? Alfred Nobel was more of a practical engineer than a theoretical scientist. Maths is too theoretical.) I know that Bell was unfairly overlooked, and had a quick google-look at Wu who also seem like a qualified candidate.* "WorldCon has to respect the laws", sure, but the problem is CoCs go much further than that! On Mark's N'APazine: I didn't analyse the use of "fanzine" in Swedish press, just noted when the word first appeared (but I'll see if I can find that issue). To "live without being exposed to hate speech" is another example of woke intolerance! To label criticism, a joke, a negative attitude as "hate" is over the top. Hate is something else!

**Robert Jennings:** AIs at least shine in the area of researching sources! I've found that very useful. ■■ My observations are that while Ukraine also has recruitment problems to the Army, the Russian problems in this area are far worse. Putin is running out of money to recruit and Russian desertions are much higher. ■■ I sometimes think I should switch to spelling out "Don't", "I'm" etc but in school we were taught these contractions early on, so I've gotten so used to them to give it up. And it saves keystrokes. (There are some contractions in Swedish that by now is practically official words. Even I write "ta" instead of "taga" (take), but not "sa" instead of "sade" (said) or "sen" instead of "sedan" (approx "then") ■■ Robert F Kennedy looks like an unhealthy health secretary, with a face like a burnt steak... (But we also have the Swedish minister of health who had the splendid idea of collapsing during a press conference. <https://people.com/sweden-new-health-minister-elisabet-lann-collapses-on-stage-11806984>) ■■ A big problem with Karl Marx (beside that he was dishonest in his research sitting in British Library and being extremely selective about what data he's later refer to) was that he didn't understand the nature of people. He was mistaken thinking that if you put everyone in a big collective everyone will be happy, trust each other and work as hard as before. People don't. Trust and efficiency in a collective drops dramatically. If you're not individually responsible you don't care. If you're not rewarded for extra efforts corruption grows, as that's the only way to make a little extra. The ideas of marxism do not work - and that Marx cheated when creating them is how he missed how unworkable his system is.

**Jefferson Swycaffee:** Sorry, found nothing to comment.

**Henry Grynsten** notes how I complained that the UN human rights declaration is mistranslated. I want to stress there's a *huge* difference between having "Equal rights" and being "equal in value". The mistranslation was carefully considered and that's the problem! This basic false claim pops up over and over again in our domestic debate! "You don't agree all people have *equal value*? The UN said so! Are you a racist? A Fascist?" The translation falsification was by people who hate individual differences and everything must be steamrolled and flattened, No one can be better than others in anything - basically the socialist message, the recipe for the mediocre, the race towards the lowest common denominator. (The Swedish Foreign Office was headed by the Socialist SocDem at the time the UN declaration was mistranslated.) *a copy of Windows 11 is more than a copy? How exactly?* What I meant is of course that the word "copy" doesn't describe something that is identical. *the copy isn't me and damn the functions. But the functions are you. only ones eating plastic particles are humans* No: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idionella\\_sakaiensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idionella_sakaiensis). respected E O Wilson There are limits to respect for q diehard a diehard fanatic. *end result is still collective action* If it isn't coordinated it isn't collectivism. *There are more opportunities for upward mobility in more equal societies* No, there are more obstacles to mobility! You don't do that little extra (which is required for mobility!) it's taken from you. If you get extra perks for free you have no reason to do what's needed for mobility. Socialist politics give lower growth. Sweden had her lowest growth in modern history around the 1970s when the SocDems pressed for max "equality" *Henry claims the "right" is to be "nationalistic, emphasizing tradition"* Which is just 19th Century thinking. Today its core values are liberal (that is euroliberal). "[That]No one should be able to earn more or less than others [is] an exaggeration." Yes. But the exaggeration is needed to point to the problem. Naturally, as you must realise I don't really believe the Left propose 100% equal pay - that's your strawman speaking. But they constantly argue for lower gaps, and that's bad enough. "Besides, you use "Left" indiscriminately" But there are certain things this indiscriminate Left has in common. About steamrolling differences... The period with the smallest gap between high and low earners in Sweden was the 1970s. No doubt an effect of that the SocDems had at the time run the country for 40+ years. This was also a period when a terrible stagnation hit us. The economy grew very slowly. (A stagnation lasting well into the 1980s, because a country is like a tanker,

it takes time to alter course.) Now the Left whines about increased gaps, from the historically artificially low gap THEY themselves created - which caused recession! (Low income gaps means: those doing more aren't rewarded so they stop doing it, those doing less get extra reward they haven't earned so they continue to do less. Result: economic stagnation.) Your beloved Spirit Level fairy-tale collection is an excursion into the Cherry garden. (Me and Henry has debated this off-APA. He believes in steamrolling differences, I note what bad results it gets.) *"People will always be able to earn more."* But if you may only get a little more, you will only do a *little* more. There won't be *much* more, if you're not allowed to earn much more. *The Left in Sweden doesn't want central planning* They want more to be decided centrally by politicians. Same thing. *"or to follow a collective"* Haven't you heard the mantra that people here are said to have "a high degree of trust in authorities". Same thing. *"[they want]better opportunities even if they are poor"* I'm all for helping those worst off, but *not generally* flatten differences. "Sweden is #2 in innovation" No (as noted in our private debate) more like #2 in design. We have good game designers, furniture designers and so on. When pressed about the source for his claim Henry offered a list of factors that had *nothing with innovation to do!* There are a significant number of statisticians, policymakers etc out there who like the red-green dominated politics of our country. So they compose lists of things that are to their liking and then *claim* it works for "innovation" (or "happiness" or "health" or whatever they try to prove). Below a long list of projects stopped by politicians and much on the list is directly connected to innovation. ("Left hasn't stopped people rushing off by themselves and taking initiatives, not in Sweden at least") Really? Volvo's attempts to expand its unique "Kalmar factory" in the 1970s-80s ran into extensive labour-market regulations, environmental requirements, and political obstacles. Northvolt: many parts of the factory and expansion plans have been delayed by long environmental reviews and appeals. It didn't go well as we all know. IKEA has in several municipalities had to wait for years for building permits, zoning plans, and environmental assessments. Some planned stores have been completely cancelled due to regulations. Many housing projects in Stockholm and other main cities are delayed up to 10 years by appeals, shoreline protection rules, noise regulations, and cultural heritage reviews. In some cases projects were abandoned. High-rises are a special bureaucrat target, as with the stopped Tellus Tower, Stockholm One, Kista Tower 2 etc. International retail chains (Walmart-type) have tried to establish themselves in Sweden but were blocked by planning processes, municipal vetoes, and competition-policy obstacles. Both Heron City and Mall of Scandinavia were heavily delayed and became more expensive. The mine in Kallak has been delayed for over 10 years by environmental reviews, Sami political issues, and government decisions. Countless wind-power projects have been stopped. Cementa's expansion has been halted, despite more cement being needed for construction projects. (But then, those projects are also being stopped. ...). Uber, Bolt and others have faced extensive political resistance and regulatory changes that delayed their establishment and expansion. Festivals are often stopped by permit processes: Peace & Love, Hultsfred, Stockholm Water Festival. Gröna Lund's expansion has been blocked. Several independent schools (Friskolor) have been blocked. Technology policymakers were close to stopping or delaying Internet here, as the TCP/IP communication protocol was not accepted by Televerket - which wanted a bureaucratically developed protocol called X.25 instead. When we got a third Swedish TV channel in the 1980s, it had to be broadcast from London. (That was the Stenbeck sphere who had to fight bureaucrats/politicians on many fronts: cell phones, Internet, newspapers...) Swedish nuclear-power development has been obstructed for decades due to what has been called the "thought-ban law". Pharmaceutical development is delayed. Sweden has historically had slower approvals than, for example, Denmark and the UK. Several Swedish biotech companies have moved research abroad due to regulatory burdens. Private satellite projects and other space projects have been hindered by the Space Activities Act (1982:963). Swedish space startups (in cubesats, telemetry, sensor technology) have often been forced to move development to other countries due to Swedish export controls and security regulations. Esrangle has delays caused by environmental reviews. Several private actors wanting to use Esrangle for rocket launches have had to wait years for permits. 5G test beds delayed by radiation protection and municipal regulations. Several private 5G projects (test networks, autonomous vehicles, IoT) have been delayed by municipal decisions and long permit processes. Private IVF clinics are delayed by legislation and ethics boards. Sweden long had Europe's most restrictive rules for assisted reproduction. Genetic testing: private companies hindered by biobank and privacy laws. Several Swedish DNA testing companies have been forced to move operations abroad. Swedish regulations have made private genetic research difficult. Several Swedish companies working on autonomous vehicle technology (AI, lidar, robotics) have moved testing to the USA or Germany due to Swedish regulatory barriers. Drone technology: private actors hindered by the Swedish Transport Agency's regulations. Sweden long had Europe's strictest drone rules. Cryptotechnology and fintech projects have been stopped by the Financial Supervisory Authority. Swedish fintech companies have often had to wait extremely long for licenses. Several crypto companies have left Sweden entirely. Graphene projects have been delayed by export controls. Graphene and advanced nanomaterials are often classified as "dual use". Battery technology delayed by environmental reviews. Northvolt is the most famous example, but smaller companies working with lithium, cobalt, and recycling have also been affected. Taken one by one, one could always argue that this or that obstacle might be somewhat reasonable, but taken *together*... O'BOY what a picture we get of how politicians meddle with practically everything! You know, you're not even allowed to choose the colour to paint your own house with... *just counting calories is a limitation in your argument* I'm aware of that "calories" won't cover the full width of what food is, but I think it's suitable as it shows the central thing food gives us: energy. Calories are an energy unit, and we need a certain amount of energy. My survey covered all kinds of food and it seems to be a surplus of most types, so nutrient variation and vitamins and whatever needed is probably covered. *"How would Swedes survive without coffee?"* Good point. We went through WWII suffering from a variety of coffee substitutes (roasted acorns etc). Today's chemistry is more advanced. I think if we'd be cut off from imports, we'd take those substitutes and add artificial caffeine to it and



## Målade om sitt hus - blev bråk i åtta år

*"Repainted her house - 8 years of fighting" (with city council)*

other made at home ingredients to make it better than the WWII products. But real coffee it isn't. *It's a commonly known fact that AI is bad at maths.* You're wrong. I have tested AIs in maths and they pass with flying colours! AIs are computer based and maths is a system crunching numbers and following maths rules. *exactly* the thing computers do really well! *I asked ChatGPT "Which French word has the most accents, either grave or aigu?"* But that's not a math problem. It's a problem of observation: just going through things and creating a tally. It is known that AIs can make mistakes in observation and they can even hallucinate. *There are more who don't find it likely it's the answer.* Sources for that? (Ie, claims of no AI and consciousness connection.) We see how AIs seem to come closer and closer to some sort of consciousness. *What possible motive could scientists have to explain them away? Being driven by the Zeitgeist. The purpose of the papers is to present scientific data, not to say "I believe in this or that".* The purpose of IPCC claiming 97% of all scientists support this or that is to point to a situation where those 97% support (expressed by stating they support) hypothesis 1) and 2) and 3) and 4). But they *don't*. They *do*, according to surveys. *"There is near-universal consensus (97-99.9%) in the peer-reviewed scientific literature* Those surveys don't count expressions of support for, at the same time, 1 and 2 and 3 and 4. The "surveys" count it as support if only one or two of 1-4 is supported. But the thing is that IPCC's hypothesis need all four 1-4 to be valid. If *any one* fails, IPCC fails. You forgot the continuation of the quote: "but it looks as if that the climate sensitivity to CO2 is probably smaller, the sun is also part of what is going on" *It's irrelevant* It's highly relevant as everyone can see. Everyone here also sees how you manipulate your arguments. *175,000 people who die from heat in Europe annually* Doubtful if that figure is true. But more important: *cold* is a much, much, much worse killer! *medical degrees, degrees in computer science and mathematics, statistics, engineering and medicine...also an assortment of metallurgists, botanists, agronomists, organic chemists and so on* All those are science degrees. *There are many more scientists by your definition who believe climate change is real than scientists who do not.* I haven't seen that investigated, only superficial IPCC affiliated statements. I note - and I have been following the climate debate for 30+ years! ä- that there is, though a minority, a *strong* minority that opposes the IPCC hypothesis. *Natural science" most exactly corresponds with Swedish "naturvetenskap".* In English "science" denotes "naturvetenskap". Humanities, social science and similar is left out. *It is unlikely, to say the least, that all scientists in one particular field are completely wrong* To the contrary, it's very likely that a big majority of them are influenced by the Zeitgeist. The spirit of the times is an extremely powerful factor. *It was more like 4-5 % of the federal budget in the mid-1960s. That's a lot.* Cherry picking again. For a very short period in the mid 1960s it was 4%, but for the entire Apollo project through over a decade, the *average amounts to 2%*. And we should have in mind that the US federal budget is limited and that of the 2% in NASA's budget only a part was for Apollo (NASA has lots of other projects to finance): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budget\\_of\\_NASA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budget_of_NASA) *integrated circuits, but that wasn't what I was talking about* You talked about computer development. But a huge chunk of computer development, almost everything, is about ICs and similar microelectronics. *"was the first large scale use of integrated circuits. In 1962 the DoD market for monolithic integrated circuits was virtually 100 percent of the total dollar production, and was still as high as 53 percent in 1966 and 38 percent in 1968"* I argue that this rocket development is *also* space research. For anything but rockets ICs were practically useless due to EMP. (It took until the 1970s when ICs became advanced and fast enough to counteract EMP.) The thing with rockets is that they would fly *before* EMP occurred. The US would detect Soviet nuke missiles coming aadvanced and would then fire their own rockets - before the Soviet nukes had detonated and caused any EMP. *It causes food production to decline* "Soil erosion", you claim, is universal and "a trend that will continue worsening". The soil of Scania (Skåne) has been cultivated for a 1000 years or more. If you were correct Scania would by now be a barren desert. But it isn't! What you claim is so *obviously* untrue. It comes from scare-mongering environmentalists. Such people, driven by the Zeitgeist, are to be found in authorities too, and in Academia of course. ■■ Now to your Utopia essay: We should stop narcotics, but not alcohol - which is needed as social lubricant and if we tried: Welcome back Al Capone! Look, why don't you rant about the dangers of drinking coffee? I know you want to ban coffee too. Such fanatical extremes will surely make the utopia you argue for a very, very, *VERY* boring and intolerant place. It's not worth it. People will be bored...to death. ■■ *Abstention from drugs etc... would take us a little bit on the way towards a realistic utopia* No, it'd take us to hell. To think you sit with the definitive answers, to overrule what people actually want, to introduce heavy intolerance (Coffee? Booze? What other "dangers" must be stopped?), to limit choices, that's not a Utopia. All attempts to create an Utopia, by religious or other groups, hippies, states, philosophers have utterly failed. That says something. (The best is probably to have a society that's as close as possible to the average of the wishes of all individuals. Far from being a perfect society, that's more like an attempt to minimise the imperfect... That's the best we can do. Utopias are uncreatable.) ■■ Time to sign off. Comments welcome! (Make CC: to [ahrvid@atomicmail.io](mailto:ahrvid@atomicmail.io)!) I just went to the Thor Modeen celebration (see an earlier ish about the "lager films"), but this issue is already so full that a report must wait until next. I should also alert you that nextish may have something about skiing (provided the yellow and blue grab some Olympic metal from the gentle art of walking on frozen water). And NASA may have been on their around the Moon trip. And of course, we'll follow Putin's Great Idiotic War, Trump, Greenland and other hot topics. Intermission is like Guinness - good for you!

**Слава Україні!**  
**Kalaallit Nunaat tigum-** *Hænderne væk fra*  
*misarinagu, Trump!* **Grønland, Trump!**

Top "Glory to Ukraine!", then "Hands off Greenland, Trump!" in Greenlandish (Kalaallisut) and Danish

Archive Midwinter  
a zine for N'APA 281

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8 March 2026

**Comments:**

**Cover:** Public Domain fantasy art.

**Mark Nelson:** Fun linguistic and journalistic history of “fanzine.”  
Yay fandom!

You say, “Good writing makes up for poor special effects. Good special effects can not make up for poor writing.” Strangely enough, I hold the opposite view, specifically toward art in comic books. I believe that even the best writing cannot make up for bad comic book art, whereas very good art can make up for “poor” writing, if not necessarily for really crappy writing.

re: Garth Spencer, there certainly is a sport of axe-throwing! I’ve done a little, on my own, amateurishly, out in the woodpile. I can get the axe to lodge in a target about one time in five...

re: me, if you liked Horatio Hornblower, you might enjoy the “Alan Lewrie” books by Dewey Lambdin. They’re more on the “witty” side, a little less strictly realistic or believable, but still well on the “realism” side rather than “fantasy.” They’re jolly fun! Lambdin is no longer with us, so there’ll be no more in the series.

**Garth Spencer:** I hadn’t heard that the major distributor of paperbacks was ceasing business. Very bad news. Now, I love ebooks! I have not read a physical book (codex) in maybe ten years. The comfort and convenience -- and low price -- of ebooks is just heavenly to me. Also, I can “publish” my books on Amazon as Ebooks, and I have no other viable market. But I don’t want the format to become extinct!

Interesting thoughts on historical parallels and patterns. Ideas like this are what Asimov extrapolated into “psychohistory.” There really are parallels, and there really are repeating patterns. It is, however, almost impossible to make concrete predictions, because history is so chaotic. For instance, for a brief time, it appeared that the murder of Charlie Kirk in the U.S. was a major tipping point in political history. But as it turned out, the event faded in importance and became lost in the “background clutter.” We can rarely, if ever, predict which events will become major watersheds, any more than Hollywood can predict which movies will become blockbusters.

Aye, there are U.S. “WWII” re-enactment societies. One of them, here in southern California, even has its own mock-up of a half-track. Reenactors make uniform costumes, and carry replica weapons. Safety, as you might imagine, is a very high priority!

**Ahrvid Engholm:** Fun survey of climate-themed SF!

Fun survey of angry SF writers!

**Kevin Trainor Jr:** rct me, I hadn't developed the view that you were boycotting Ahrvid in any way. I apologize if something I said implied that. I try to avoid apa boycotts, although, some decades ago, I got myself embroiled in a very nasty fan feud, which I tried to ignore. The other party wrote garbage about me -- some of it legally actionable! Simply ignoring him didn't work. Finally, a blessed third party stepped in and arranged a truce. Heck, I disagree with much of your views...and don't want to boycott you, because you write interesting things! "Echo Chambers" are not fun places to live!

**Ahrvid Engholm:** re the above, I am not boycotting you, despite the appearance of my very brief comments. I apologize. I really just couldn't find anything to comment upon in a substantive fashion.

Thank you for printing the Ukrainean peace plan; alas, I agree with your comments thereupon...

Fun tour of Heinlein's house!

Interesting bio of Lise Meitner!

Interesting that your new computer -- all new computers! -- has an "AI" key. I'll have an AI rant to close this zine...

You said, "Volcanoes have always been around so why haven't they caused global warming?" Actually, volcanoes cause global cooling, by raising smoke clouds that block sunlight. Volcanic eruptions of large size are rare.

**George Phillis:** Tri-level logic could work, of course, just as any base-number can be the foundation of valid arithmetic. I'm very fond of "continuous" logic, sometimes sneered at as "fuzzy logic."

But it works, and bears a strong resemblance to probability. I've been a logic fan ever since my parents bought me an old copy of "Wff 'n' Proof," a logic-based game. As a game, it stinks. But as a logic system, it's very elegant indeed!

I was fortunate in that my choice of college did not require calculus for enrollment, as my high school did not teach calculus, nor even "pre-calculus." My first exposure to calculus was as a frosh at college. I took to it joyously, and declared as a math major.

Nice section of your story, all-dialogue, for the reader's benefit. Exposition via dialogue is easier to digest than exposition via narrative.

**Adrian Kresnak:** As I said lastish, I didn't care for "Age of Revelation" from Marvel comics. I also didn't care much for the "Emperor Doom" arc.

Though.... Teach me a thing about comics, because I clearly don't know something very important. Marvel likes to have big events that cross over lots of comics titles. Civil War, Avengers vs X-Men, X-Men vs Inhumans, etc. I never see the "climax" issues, where the events rise to the peak of drama and are resolved. Never! Do you need to go to a comics shop and subscribe, in order to receive these big-event series-closing issues?

**Samuel Lubell:** Fun bio of Orson Scott Card. Agreement that he went back and re-told Ender's Game too many times. The "Bean" book was fun, but so drearily redundant!

General agreement re "series" in literature. I most prefer series where each book stands on its own, and you don't absolutely have to read them in order. The seires of Naval Adventures I've been touting are like that. You don't hve to read Horatio Hornblower in order. (In fact, Forester didn't \*write\* them in order!)

re your projects, I read “It Can’t Happen Here” by Lewis, and, frankly, didn’t care for it. It was written in an “inevitable” style, like watching a train crash. The ending was pre-determined, and thus undercuts the sense of real drama. This works for Peter Falk in “Columbo” episodes, but it’s dreary in prose fiction.

Sorry to hear that the Western is no longer a popular genre. It was never my favorite...but I like it some. Don Pendleton’s “Executioner” books were bland and repetitive. It’s amusing that the scion has exceeded the master, with Marvel Comics “Punisher” being so successful!

**Robert Jennings:** Fascinating that a chart-breaking C&W hit might be AI-generated. Completely believable! AI is putting a lot more people than just data-entry typists out of work!

I don’t believe that high jumps on a low-gravity world would be any different, in terms of danger, than high jumps on earth. You only get out of it the same energy you put into it, from your own muscles. You may soar fifty feet into the air, but you land with the same force, overall, as on earth. It might even be slightly safer, as the impact is spread out over a slightly longer time. You’d be better able to “roll” with the impact. I do agree that there is a very significant danger of people overestimating the safety of jumps down from high places!

Interesting essay on Dialectical Materialism, although above my competence level. They basically lost me at “interpenetration of opposites.” I’m glad you followed-up with a summary, which makes much more sense to me. I’m personally fond of a highly regulated “free market,” such as we and our European allies enjoy. A central bank to control booms and busts, anti-trust regulation to prevent gigantic all-owning and anti-competitive corporations, and safety regulations on food, medicines, and household products. Unregulated freedom turns into “license,” which is generally not a

good thing. Too much regulation, of course, turns into dictatorship, which is even worse.

re coffee and tea, I can dig it. Coffee smells great, but doesn’t taste so very good without lots of additional milk and sugar. I’m fond of coffee-flavored candy. I personally never got anything out of wine. It just tastes sour to me, very unpleasant. I got into beer -- perhaps too much, and got into trouble -- but I dropped it again and now I never touch the stuff.

**Heath Row:** I’ve never participated in Novel Writing Month. I write pretty much year round -- except when I don’t! -- and I certainly could not complete a novel in a single month.

#### **Events:**

I quite my monthly writers exchange group, after one of the members went off on her religious experiences one too many times. She believes that God cured her cancer because she prayed for it, which is really bad theology. It replaces “Thy will be done” with “MY will be done.” It must be nice having the creator of the universe as your private wish-genie. I couldn’t cope with this idiocy, and walked out, not to return.

#### **AI**

I got a letter from a friend, via email, and Gmail, via an AI app, politely offered me some suggestions on what I might want to write in response. The suggestions were excellent! They were EXACTLY, word-for-word, what I wanted to say! Gmail had obviously perused my entire decades-long history of email and summarized my style and metaphor.

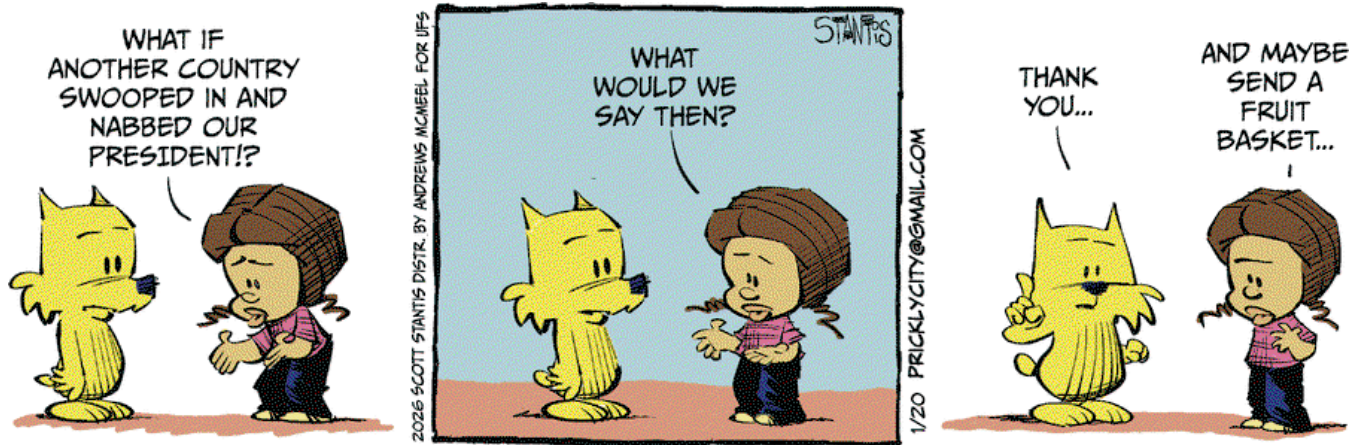
I turned off that feature in Gmail.

# THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL



THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL Issue #1.6 is a fanzine for distribution within the sacred auspices of N'APA, and is produced by:

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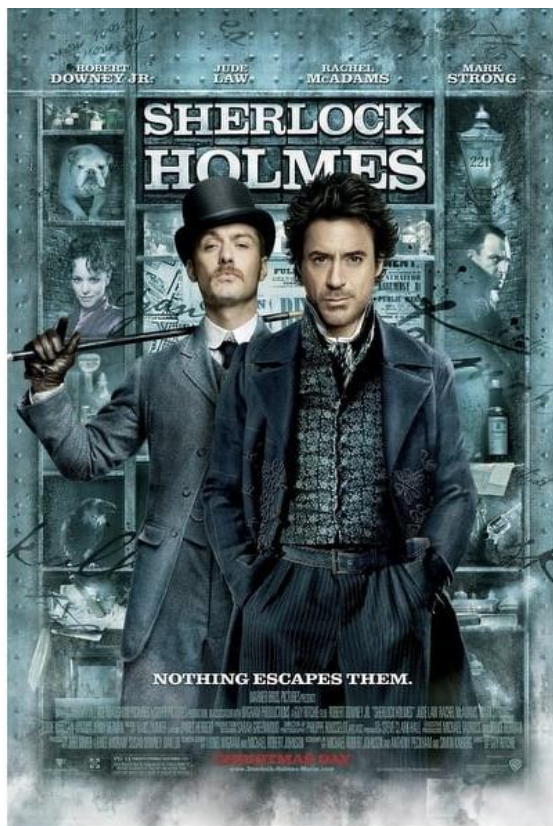


### A TALE OF HOLMES

It's been over a hundred and thirty five years since the first Sherlock Holmes story was published back in 1887. Since then the whole world has become familiar with the great detective. His fame has never dimmed. His creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle featured Sherlock in four novels and fifty-six short stories, plus a few plays based on the character and some of his adventures.

Doyle died in 1930, but even during his lifetime there were numerous efforts to create new Sherlock Holmes adventures beyond the ones he himself wrote. Some of these were legitimate arrangements made with Doyle's agents, but many others were not. A whole series of dime novel style weekly magazines appeared in Germany between 1902 and 1922 claiming to be more adventures of Sherlock Holmes, but none of them were authorized or approved by Doyle.

Forty-seven silent movies were made about the character between 1900 and 1923. Some of them were



adaptations of existing Holmes adventures, but many others were originals. The first sound Sherlock Holmes film appeared in 1927, with a flood of sound films based on his adventures following.

The Doyle estate has made valiant efforts to keep control of the character and limit his exposure to unauthorized material. Changes in the copyright laws allowed them to maintain the illusion of control into this new century, but now everything Doyle ever wrote about the character is public domain, including the character himself. It has been estimated that Sherlock Holmes is the most adapted character in fictional history, with over 25,000 different tales written that involve him and his world.

In 2009 a group of film producers signed a deal with Warner Brothers to create a new movie to be called simply "Sherlock Holmes". Some arrangements were made with the Doyle estate, even tho all Holmes material is public domain within the United States.

Robert Downey Jr. was cast as Sherlock Holmes with Jude Law as Watson. It was decided to set the plot in 1890s London. In a break with the Holmes tradition, the creators decided to add Irene Adler into the cast as one of the villains, even tho her character only appeared in a single Sherlock Holmes story as written by Doyle, and despite the fact that she was not a criminal, but was an intelligent, clever woman who

was able to see thru Holmes' scheme to retrieve letters she was holding, and completely outwitted him.

In another drastic break from tradition, the story plot was centered on a series of supernatural ritualistic murders, with the supernatural elements being real. Holmes, Watson, and the police, have to deal with violent and deadly magical manifestations, with the plot involving a deathless supernatural villain who plans to take over Britain, Canada, and the United States.

There was a great deal of action, including lots of explosions, graphic deaths, and a plot that moved very rapidly. Of deduction and planning and the intelligent interpretation of vital clues, the whole base of the original Sherlock Holmes stories, there was very little.

In my opinion this entire movie was created to target younger movie goers who want nonstop action, with plenty of flashy special effects, and a fast moving story plot that involves a lot of dead bodies and massive property damage. This movie certainly delivered all that and more.

I also found the whole picture to be shot in darker, more somber cinematography than expected. Perhaps this was a deliberate design, but trying to figure out what was going on in dark and occasionally murky screen scenes detracted seriously from my being able to follow the story.

I was not happy with this movie. I thot the plot had a lot of holes in it; plus the reliance on supernatural mysticism, coupled with the non-stop action really didn't do much to develop any plot subtleties. I thot the main characters in the film, including the bad guys and the supporting characters all turned in excellent performances, but on the whole I didn't really care for this movie.

Clearly I am in a minority here, since the picture turned in a 535 million dollar box office gross, and was nominated for all kinds of awards (it won only three, tho). Since being released on video, sales have continued to climb. A second film was released in 2011, titled "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows", which cast Prof. Moriarty as the bad guy and featured even more explosions, chases, destruction and, to me, a considerably more improbable plot. That film made money too, altho critical response was not particularly favorable.

After the sequel a third movie was planned but fell thru due to production and financial difficulties.

In contrast I also recently viewed a number of the 17 Universal Studios Sherlock Holmes movies which were released from 1942 thru 1946, starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson. Over the years Basil Rathbone has been completely identified with the image and screen portrayal of the great detective. It's not that other actors before him, or even after, were bad actors, or didn't turn in good performances, but Rathbone completely dominated the character and persona of Sherlock Holmes in the way that no other thespian has ever been able to accomplish.

Basil Rathbone (1892-1967) was born in South Africa, raised in Britain, and eventually emigrated to the US in the late 1920s. He became a successful actor with his forceful portrayals of characters in Shakespearean plays.

He got into the movie biz early on, but the stage was his real love. He appeared in six silent movies before talkies came along, and around 1931 he signed a contract with MGM that was to define the rest of his life.

MGM liked Rathbone, but they had no use for Shakespearean plays, and made precious few drawing room dramas. What they did do was cast him as villains, often suave, sophisticated, but really nasty bad guys. He looked the part, and he could act the part. He became one of the great villains of the movies, instantly recognized not only in MGM features, but in other productions at other studios. MGM was not adverse to renting out their contract actors to other companies in order to keep cash flow coming in, and since Rathbone was particularly adapt at playing bad guys he was always in demand.

In 1939 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox was planning on making a film adaption of "The Hound of the Baskervilles", and Rathbone was the first and only choice to play the role of Sherlock Holmes. Nigel Bruce was cast as Dr. Watson, who played a good natured bumbler, completely different from the character described in the stories, a point of contention for many reviewers and die-hard Sherlock Holmes fans. Despite this criticism, the film was so successful that the studio immediately turned out a second Holmes film, an original story that was still set in 1890s London. Titled "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes", that picture also did very well at the box office.

The studio was prepared to film more Sherlock Holmes adventures, except that the Doyle estate demanding that all future films be drawn from the original canon of stories, with no brand new plots based on the character. This demand was considered unreasonable, and 20<sup>th</sup> cut off negotiations, which meant that no new Sherlock Holmes movies were made in the US for the next three years.

Meanwhile the success of the movies caused Sherlock Holmes returned to national radio on the Mutual Broadcasting system in 1939. The show had been aired in the US from 1930 thru 1935, but had been dropped

by its sponsor. The new series was created specifically to star Rathbone and Bruce. Bromo Quinine signed on as the sponsor. With seasons four and five Petrie Wines was the sponsor. The radio show proved to be a strong hit for the Mutual network, which attracted the attention of Universal Studios.

In 1942 Universal made an offer to the Doyle estate to adapt the character in a series of movies that would not only feature completely original story plots but would also move Sherlock Holmes out of the 1890s and into the modern world. This was a big change, but the \$300,000 fee Universal offered, plus a chance to get the character back on the screen again, proved to be deciding factors.

The first Universal Holmes production was "Sherlock Holmes and The Voice of Terror" released in September 1942 as a 65 minute picture. It featured Holmes and Watson against a diabolic Nazi sabotage ring that used radio broadcasts, The Voice of Terror, to announce the destruction of British industry and military personnel.

Ironically the Nazis were really broadcasting propaganda radio programs into Britain when this movie appeared. Hardly the harbinger of immediate menace, Lord Hee Haw broadcast regularly with news of Nazi victories and British defeats, while sarcastically commenting on the shortages and hardships the civilian population was enduring, while their loved ones were being ground up by the victorious Nazi war machine.

I have been really enjoying these Universal Holmes pics. The stories are always interesting, altho some are stronger than others. The movies were shot at a leisurely pace, but the budgets were average for a typical one hour feature, which meant that a lot of Universal sets and character actors got reused in these films. The series was very well received by the theater going public, to the point that Universal was turning out three or four Sherlock Holmes movies per year.

Rathbone was deeply concerned that he was being permanently typecast as the great detective. In 1945 he only made four movies, and all four were

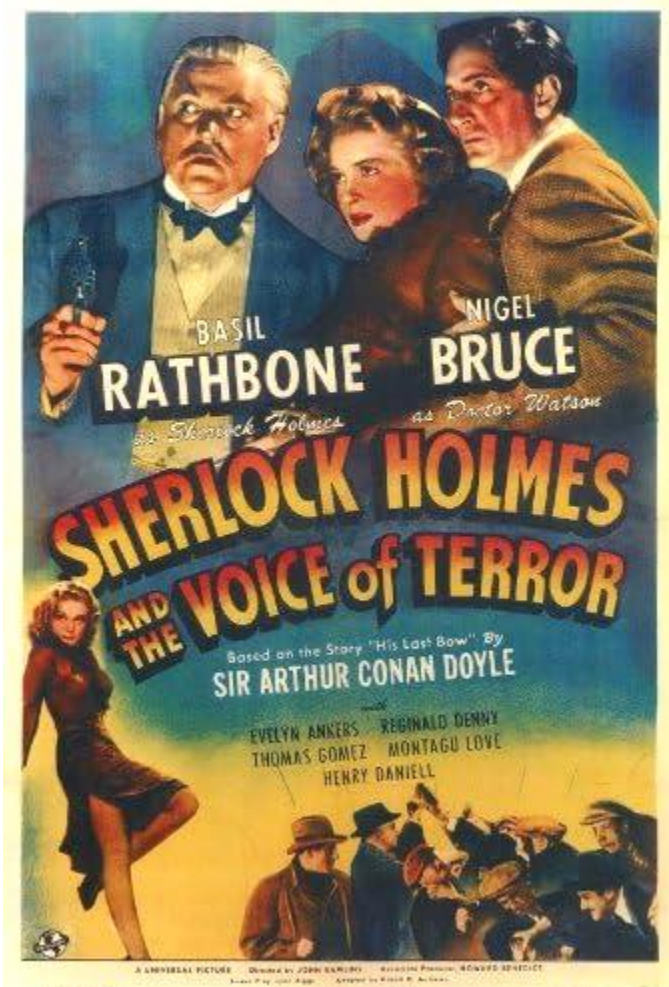
Sherlock Holmes films. In 1946 he again made four movies, three of which were Sherlock Holmes flicks.

Rathbone's contact with MGM came up for renewal in 1946 and he refused to sign, ending his motion picture involvement with Sherlock Holmes. Rathbone immediately declared he would never do another Sherlock Holmes movie, and dropped out of the radio program. Instead he returned to the Broadway stage.

In my personal opinion, if I were an actor and had a choice of being known as a memorable screen villain, or playing the world's greatest fictional detective, or appearing in new productions of Shakespeare's stage plays, I would have gladly opted for being the definitive Sherlock Holmes.

A few years later Rathbone was much more interested in embracing the great detective again. He played the role on TV several times, had the lead in a failed stage play based on the character, did readings of the Sherlock Holmes stories for records, and even did commercials where he dressed and acted as Sherlock Holmes in all but name.

I also watched a number of the British Sherlock Holmes adventures starring Jeremy Brett. This series adapted 41 of the original Sherlock Holmes stories to television, many of them with extensive padding and additional dialogue needed to turn short stories into hour-long productions.





Brett is generally regarded as the definitive personification of the Sherlock Holmes character for the last part of the twentieth century, just as Basil Rathbone was the epitome of the character in the middle years, and as William Gillette was during the opening decades of the century.

Despite a fear of being typecast, Brett eventually made a personal decision to become the best Sherlock Holmes ever. He immersed himself in the role, researched the stories, the character, and studied Conan Doyle's notes and interviews in an effort to become an expert on the stories.

During the process he also became the guardian of the authenticity of the character for the television production, adding necessary components to round out the extremely Spartan personality Doyle had originally described, turning the character into something more closely resembling a human being, which was certainly a quality much needed for a long running television series.

Many of the original Sherlock Holmes stories are simple problem adventures featuring a puzzle that needs to be deciphered. There was little room for characterization or deep plot

development, which elements are essential for a television production. Brett was able to add considerably to the very essence of the Holmes legend, creating a screen presence that overrides deficiencies in many of the original canon of adventures.

I generally enjoyed most of these presentations, altho the extensive reworking of the stories to turn them into hour long TV productions sometimes thwarted the focus and charm of the original tales. I recently watched "The Blue Carbuncle", an appropriate Christmas themed adventure, and also "The Crooked Man", a prime example of one of Doyle's short puzzle stories that required lots of expansion to make it usable for an hour long television presentation.

Jeremy Brett made the Sherlock Holmes character his own, and performed in the Holmes adaptations right up till the end of his life as his health problems due to manic depression caused by bipolar disorder, heart disease aggravated by an enlarged heart, respiratory illness and other difficulties became progressively worse. He died in 1995 at age 61.

A feature film of special interest to me is "Mr. Holmes", a picture from 2015 starring Ian McKellen as a 93 years old Sherlock Holmes struggling against advanced age and failing memory to recall the last case of his career, the one that caused him to abruptly stop being a detective and retire to Sussex to raise bees. It is set in post WWII, where Britain is trying to recover from the effects of the war, and Holmes has just returned from a long trip to Japan, where he met a fan who helped provide him with oriental prickly ash, a bitter tasting herb growing in the region of the ruins of Hiroshima that may help improve his memory.

As the movie unfolds we follow current events, in which Holmes befriends Roger, the son of his housekeeper Mrs. Munro. Roger is not happy about settling into the life of manual labor his mother has planned for him. He is curious about Mr. Holmes, and he is very curious about the apiary Holmes keeps.

Much of the movie is told in the form of flashbacks, in which snippets of Holmes' memories return, enuf so that he can write an ongoing history of his final case, one that his friend John Watson got all wrong in his published story. This project is kicked into high gear when Holmes discovers that young Roger snuck up to the study and reads the opening pages of the handwritten memoir.



More than Holmes' memory is faulty. His overall general health is very fragile. Housekeeper Mrs. Munro really wants him placed into a hospital or a retirement home where nurses and doctors are always on duty. She senses, correctly, that the care of this frail old man is more than she can manage, and she doesn't want to walk into a scene where he has stumbled and seriously injured himself, or even died.

She makes arrangements to accept a job offer at a hotel over in Portsmouth, planning to provide Roger with a paying menial job there as well. Meanwhile Holmes is instructing Roger about the bees, and allowing him to work in the apiary. They face a local mystery: why so many of the bees are dying. Discovering the reason for the ever increasing number of dead bees almost costs young Roger his own life when he tries to do something about the menace and his plan backfires.

Despite the fragilities of age and a failing memory, so acute that Holmes has to write the names of people he meets regularly on the cuffs of his shirt, he is still a master detective, able to note details that escape everyone else's attention, and still able to draw accurate conclusions from his observations.

Anyone expecting a crackling detective story with action and adventure will be disappointed. The story here is a study in character; the character of Holmes who struggles to unravel the

memories of his final case, one that he failed to completely solve because he misread human nature; the character of young Roger trying to seek self determination and self-identity even at a very young age; the character of Mrs. Munro trying to escape the pangs of remorse and guilt at the death of her husband who tried to reach above his station in life to become an RAF flyer and then died, shot down during his first flight against the enemy, and the constraints of the past that have bound her to a role in life she is no longer sure means anything in the changing modern age.

It is also a story of Sherlock Holmes discovering and accepting the reality that perhaps cold hard reason, with the cold hard facts offered alone, might not have been sufficient to fully meet the needs of all his clients, or the needs of his friends either. Final adjustments and considerations to human nature made in the final days of the great detective's life provide closure for both the characters and the audience.

English actor Ian McKellen was an excellent choice to play the Sherlock Holmes, in a role that required him to appear as an older man in WWI era London, and an extremely old man in post WWII Sussex. McKellen is a very versatile actor who is best known to his fellow players for his extensive work on the stage as a Shakespearean performer, but he is best remember by modern audiences for playing Gandalf in the Lord of the Rings/Hobbit movies, as well as the malevolent Magneto in the X-Men films.

The film was an adaptation of the 2005 novel "A Slight Trick of the Mind" by Mitch Cullin. Production began in the summer of 2014 and finished up after seven weeks of shooting, with final editing done in time for

the movie to be screened (but not entered into competition) at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival in January 2015, where the reception was very favorable. The movie was immediately released in Germany in February 2015 (the Sherlock Holmes character has always been extremely popular in Germany), then in the UK in June, and for the US market in July 2015.

Critical response was good, but the film apparently suffered from limited theatrical release, and also from being in competition from all the summer block-buster movies of that year. "Mr. Holmes" earned a box office gross of 17.7 million dollars in the US, plus 11.6 worldwide, for 29.3 million total, which is a respectable return on investment, but more sustained profits came from the DVD release, where viewer reviews and comments often affect long term sales.

This was a very good movie, a worthy addition to the ongoing cannon of Sherlock Holmes stories. All the actors turning in top-notch performances. The scenery and photography were also excellent. The flashback technique was aggravating at times, but overall the total production was very enjoyable. I consider this to be one of the very best of this century's treatment of the world's greatest fictional detective.

N3F AUTHOR NEWS

And speaking of detective stories, George Phillies; N3F prez and working writer has decided to expand out into the lucrative field of mystery stories. He is working on a new novel about a Canadian jewelry theft ring that uses a garden supply store located near the border to smuggle stolen gems into the United States for resale. An RCMP officer investigates and is murdered by the gang's ringleader, who hides the body under the garden center's compost pile. The book will be titled "Botany On the Mounty".



# US Bitcoin Reserve loses nearly \$5 billion in value after crypto wipeout

Story by Joe Light



It's been nearly a year since President Donald Trump signed an executive order establishing a "strategic Bitcoin reserve" and vowed that the government would never sell the cryptocurrency on his watch. The bet has been a disaster for taxpayers so far.

The oldest cryptocurrency has sunk 45% from its all-time high set last October. The selloff accelerated this past week, throttling investors in Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, including the government. Despite a [resurgence on Friday](#), Bitcoin's price has fallen 17% in the past seven days to about \$69,000.

Though the U.S. doesn't publish a comprehensive accounting of its crypto holdings, analysis firm Arkham Intelligence estimates the U.S. currently owns about 328,000 Bitcoins worth \$23 billion.

Trump's own wealth hasn't been immune to this past week's downturn. Trump indirectly [owns](#) nearly 115 million shares of Trump Media & Technology Group, known by its ticker "DJT," in a revocable trust in the name of his son Donald Trump Jr. The value of those shares have dropped \$182 million in the past week. Among other businesses, DJT has its own stockpile of Bitcoin.

Trump, members of his family, and affiliated entities also own about 22.5 billion of WLFI, the token issued by the Trump-founded World Liberty Financial. Those tokens have lost about 27% of their value this week, amounting to more than \$930 million.

The Trump Organization did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are extremely volatile, and there's no telling whether the reserve gamble will end up being a net gain for taxpayers. But as a taxpayer investment so far, Bitcoin has been a dud.

Write to Joe Light at [joe.light@barrons.com](mailto:joe.light@barrons.com)

Things I worry about.....

# Prehistoric killer superbug discovered in 5,000-year-old ice is resistant to 10 modern antibiotics

Story by Shivali Best For Mailonline

The next pandemic could come from an ancient underground ice cave, scientists have warned.

Researchers from the Romanian Academy have discovered a bacterial strain that has been frozen in [Romania](#)'s Scarisoara Ice Cave for 5,000 years.

Carefully extracting a sample, the researchers tested it against 10 common antibiotics, including those used to treat tuberculosis, colitis, and UTIs.

To avoid contamination, the ice fragments were placed in sterile bags and kept frozen on their way back to the lab.

There, the researchers isolated various bacterial strains and sequenced their genome to determine which genes allow the strain to survive in icy conditions.

The most interesting strain recovered is *Psychrobacter* SC65A.3 – a strain of the genus *Psychrobacter*.

Previous research has shown that other strains from this genus are known to cause infections in humans, as well as animals.

To test *Psychrobacter* SC65A.3's resistance, the researchers exposed it to 28 antibiotics from 10 classes that are regularly given to humans.

Worryingly, the bacteria was found to be resistant to all 10 – including trimethoprim, clindamycin, and metronidazole.

These antibiotics are routinely given to patients to treat UTIs, infections of lungs, skin, blood or the reproductive system.

'The 10 antibiotics we found resistance to are widely used in oral and injectable therapies used to treat a range of serious bacterial infections in clinical practice,' Dr Purcarea said.

'Spillover risk increases with runoff from glacier melt, a proxy for climate change,' say the researchers in their paper, published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

'Should climate change also shift species range of potential viral vectors and reservoirs northwards, the High Arctic could become fertile ground for emerging pandemics.' The researchers then sequenced the bacteria's genome, and found 11 genes that are potentially able to kill or stop the growth of other bacteria, fungi, and viruses.

In addition, they uncovered almost 600 genes with unknown functions. According to the experts, this suggests the superbug uses a 'yet untapped source for discovering novel biological mechanisms'.

While most pandemics have been caused by viruses, scientists have previously warned that the next one could be sparked by an antibiotic-resistant bacteria like this one.

'These ancient bacteria are essential for science and medicine, but careful handling and safety measures in the lab are essential to mitigate the risk of uncontrolled spread,' Dr Purcarea concluded.

The team drilled a 25-metre ice core representing 13,000 years from an area in Scariosoara Ice Cave dubbed the 'Great Hall'



## **KILLER VIRUSES COULD BE RELEASED FROM MELTING ICE IN THE ARCTIC, STUDY WARNS**

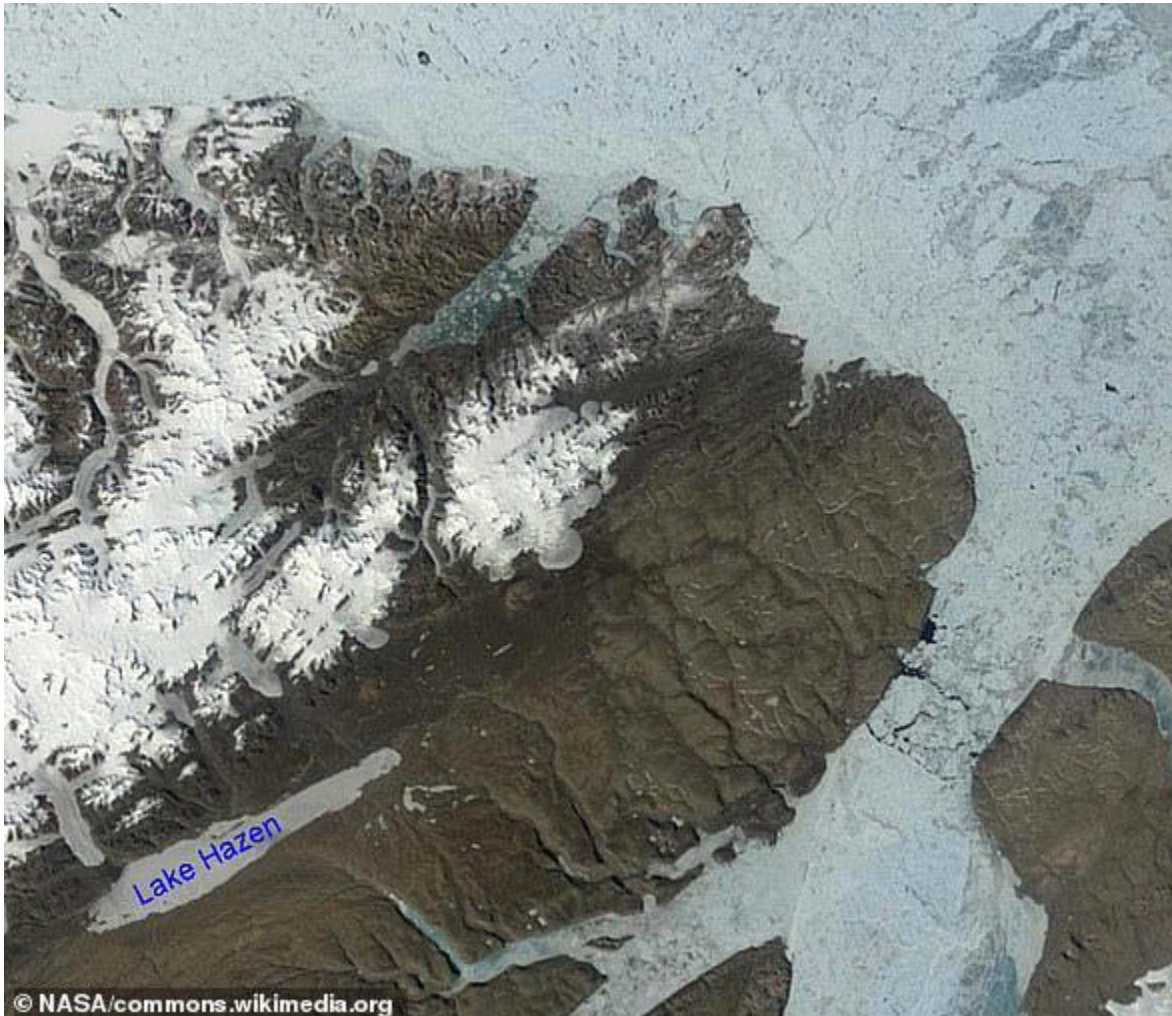
Glaciers that are melting amid rising global temperatures could be the cause of the next deadly pandemic, a study said.

Scientists investigated how [climate change](#) may affect the risk of 'spillover' – a virus jumping to another species – by examining samples from Lake Hazen in the Arctic.

Lake Hazen, seen from above in this NASA image, is the largest High Arctic freshwater lake in the world.

They found that the chance of a spillover event increases with the melting of glaciers, as the meltwater can transport pathogens to new hosts.

A warming climate could bring viruses in the Arctic into contact with new environments and hosts, increasing the risk of this 'viral spillover', the experts warn.





**“Amazing experience!”**

“Would poop here again.”

“I laughed... I cried.”

“Best 40 minutes of my life!”

“Life changing.”

“Mesmerizing.”

“I’ll be back. A+ +”

“Jaw-dropping.”

“I was on the edge of my seat!”

“Endlessly inventive.”

“Monumentally tense...  
a constant thrill ride.”

“I could NOT believe  
what I was seeing!”

“I almost stood up  
and cheered!”



WINNER  
WELL-STOCKED  
AWARD



NOMINATED



ROOM OF  
THE YEAR

# Mailing Comments



ARCHIVE MIDWINTER      Audiobooks do not work for me, and I suggest they don't really work for many other people either, because basically someone is just reading the book out loud. One hopes the narrator used different inflections for dialog and description, but often that isn't the case. Most audio books have to be edited down for length reasons, and that tends to eliminate a lot of descriptive passages and subtle characterization along with introspective inference from the book. These are the kinds of things that make up the body of a written work of fiction, so flattening out or eliminating a lot of this detail tends to destroy the feel of the whole work.

I am also at a disadvantage because I collect and listen to a lot of OTRadio programs, where sounds and sounds alone have to convey the gist of the story plot. This is a completely different art form from having somebody simply reading from the pages of a printed book.

E-books take a little getting used to, but it is easy to adapt to the format once you learn how to smoothly control the flow of pages and the size of the print font. I prefer to read an e-book than stories off the web sitting in front of a computer screen, but I do more sitting in front of the monitor these days than actually using my e-book handheld tablet.

Not all stf films from the twenties thru the late fifties were awful, but a lot of them certainly were. Semi-scientific horror thrillers aimed at the teenage dating audience were the norm when I was growing up in the 1950s, and I once decided that for every one of those movies that was well made with a solid plot that there were easily a dozen or more that were just no-brainer awful. I still went to see most of them in the theater anyway. Optimistic hope springs eternal for the young science fiction fan.

Modern westerns tend to be stereotypical set in the mostly narrow cattle raising realm of the 1870s, but there are some notable exceptions to the rule. I don't agree with your opinion that all mystery stories are pretty much the same. Modern detective and crime writing encompasses a very wide range of possibilities. You may have been reading from an old title list. There are many excellent writers of mysteries and crime thrillers these days that can hold your interest and who are not either clichéd or predictable. Check out the list of Edgar Award winners for any year in this new century for titles that will hold your attention and will give you a new opinion of how well mystery writers can keep their audiences involved.

I agree completely with your comments about Facebook and other social media. I don't participate in any of that myself. My primary objection is that it seems like a tremendous time sink, designed to bring you into contact with some very aggravating people and a system that sucks up many hours of your life that could be

better applied to more enjoyable things. I personally have noticed that among my admittedly limited number of acquaintances, people on Facebook and the like seem to not have many hobbies or outside interests, and often very few reliable friends either. That's just my personal observation. I prefer to stay away from the whole social media niche.

So far as I am concerned no work of fiction can adequately describe the horrors of military combat. SF books try to encompass futuristic gimmicks and concepts as part of an ongoing story plot, and the plot may be set within the backdrop of warfare, but the prime story line usually deals with individuals or with some plan the protagonists are trying to establish either thru, or around the war and battle scenario.

You are certainly correct that Halderman's "The Forever War" was just his take on Viet Nam with some bells and whistles added on, but I personally also that "Hammer's Slammers" was primarily an exercise in action writing, lots of it, and that lots of action pretty well triumphed over anything else the writer was trying to develop. Some of the personality development and backdrop of the unit was interesting, but it was the military style action that Drake wanted to focus on, and that was what his readers wanted and expected from the entire Hammiverse.

I greatly fear that the current federal administration is determined to separate the line between professional military and the civilian world. I don't think ICE enforcers compare with the Roman Praetorian Guard yet, but the lines seem to be blurring.



BRANDY HALL #16

I was intrigued by your comments about the "Professor T" TV series. I checked it out and the PBS (Public Broadcasting) station website has some episodes that can be accessed for free, but they start with season two and then jump to season 3. To get the whole series from the beginning in order you apparently have to subscribe to their service, which I do not want to do. I'll try to check out a few of the free episodes on your recommendation.

You are absolutely correct, good writing in a movie or TV show can cover for bad special effects, but even the most spectacular FX can't compensate for a bad story.

Not only are the Republican Party politicians unable to balance the budget, but they are also the ones primarily responsible for running up the US national debt. Please refer to the graphic on the next page. It seems to me that the main thing the GOP wants to do is cut taxes, especially for the wealthy, and fortify the military. Nothing else seems to matter to them.

Nope, I have not been a member of the N3F continuously from when I joined back in the late 1950s. There were periods when I was not a member, then I was a strong active member, then a passive member just drifting along, and there was a period in the middle 1980s when I did everything I could to recruit new members for the club despite the fact that it was losing its leaders and the club was slowly imploding. Things are a lot better these days with George as the prez and good officers and directors determined to keep us rolling.

I am somewhat neutral about the concept of modern science recreating extinct animals using cloning and genetic science. While it might be interesting to recreate a woolly mammoth, at the same time the specter of Jurassic Park, the novel and the movies, keeps popping up in my mind. Recreating extinct animals seems more like a novelty niche fantasy of some science geeks than a project with any real useful benefits. Does the world

really need to see the Dodo bird again? Or the saber-tooth tiger? I think we could pass on most of the dinosaurs and thunder lizards from eons past. Feeding and caring for a huge woolly mammoth would be an enormous expense, even for a well funded zoo. Beyond proving that it could be done, what would be the point?

So far as print apas go, I (and most members in the apas I have been in) were solidly opposed to post mailings. The time between mailings was two months, or three months (depending on the apa), which is more than sufficient time for a member to get his stuff together, write it down, print it, and get the copies to the Official Editor in time for the mailing date. If the person can't do that then his zine should go into the next mailing, not be rushed out to the members as a Post Mailing.

I have the same opinion for pixel apas, including N'APA. Two months is plenty of time to get a fanzine completed. Members who can't make the deadline should not ask the OE for any kind of extension. Delaying the mailing so the delinquent member can scurry around and get his stuff in is a deliberate slap in the face to all those members who were able to complete their fanzines on time and get them to the OE before the deadline. That's why it's called a deadline, a date which, by definition, is the time by which all of the issues to be distributed that mailing must be in the OE's hands. Anything arriving after that date should automatically go into the following mailing. Don't reward tardy incompetence. Do support the members who abide by the rules, and get their zines in on time.

I can only speak for myself as an American fan who doesn't care for sports. Adults playing kids' games seems pointless to me. In this day and age professional athletes are essentially paid fitness mercenaries. They supposedly represent some town as part of their team battling other professional athletes from a different city in a series of contests to see who is better multiple times thru whatever season of the year the sport is lodged in, and to what goal? The players on a city's named team almost never include people who actually came from or even reside in that city. They are not local heroes; they are hired performers playing simulated battles with rules for the amusement of the crowds who somehow believe that the games actually are important in the scheme of life. No, they aren't. Whoever wins the trophy for that year's series of contests gets bragging rights and more money, and then next year the whole thing starts over again, except some of the athlete mercenaries switch sides

for more money, while others, worn out, old, severely injured and battered up by the physical strain, are heaved out of the "sport" to make room for new comers willing to perform for the big money. I just don't see the thrill at all.

BROWNIAN MOTION #17 Your comments about the

decision of Readerlink not to distribute paperback books in North America any more and your discussion of the centralization (monopolization) of media and information producers are all valid. Unfortunately these things are based on solid economic necessity, not any kind of dark conspiracy workings.

As I (and other folks) have mentioned before, the places where you can buy paperback books and magazines of any kind has dramatically declined in this new century. You can still find paperback books and magazines in book stores, but the other outlets have mostly dried up. Grocery stores, drug stores, variety stores, convenience stores, gas stations and more

**The MYTH that Republicans are "fiscally responsible" and "better" for the economy is a LIE!**

- Reagan took the deficit from \$70 Billion to \$175 Billion.
- Bush 41 took it to \$300 Billion.
- Clinton got it to ZERO, and left office with a \$86.4 billion SURPLUS.
- Bush 43 took it from \$0 to \$1.2 Trillion.
- Obama halved it to \$600 Billion.
- Trump added \$7.8 Trillion, the largest peacetime budget deficit in American history and a national debt exceeding 100% of the economy for the first time since World War II.
- Biden reduced the deficit by \$1.4 trillion by his 2nd year in office.

Send a gift **ans destroy the economy!**

used to feature generous displays of magazines and paperback books, but they don't any more.

The number of outlets carrying any kind of book or magazine rack has declined sharply. At the same time, as I have previously mentioned, the average magazine rack in a place like CVS or even Walmart is eight to twelve feet long, and is stocked with women's magazines, fitness magazines, puzzle books, and a few men's skin mags. The paperback section is heavy on romance and women's self help books, with mysteries and a few

oddballs filling up the rest of the space. Good luck finding any science fiction or fantasy there. At the same time the number of local and regional distributors who wholesale mags and books to retail outlets has also declined drastically.

Books are now being sold primarily by websites such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble and their ilk. These websites carry most of the new releases and those websites will cheerfully help you look up genres, specific authors, themes, or even make suggestions based on your past purchases and your questions. The profit margins are higher for publishers because they no longer have high return rates for unsold copies from the regional distributors. It is also worth noting, again, that the number of book stores is also in steady decline.

The decision of Readerlink not to handle paperback books any more is based on the realities of modern economics. It is no longer profitable to try and distribute paperbacks to the few surviving distributors and direct retailers willing to use their services. I do not think shifting the economic front to the internet is necessarily a good idea, but that's the reality of the situation, and there is not much that individuals like us can do about it, except complain, of course. I also agree with you that this is likely going to mean that fewer publishers will be able to survive, and that fewer book titles will be issued in print format because of it.

On the other hand, the web is being flooded by e-books of every kind, many of them self published. Sales of e-books are only a fraction of the sales of physically printed books, but that may change in the coming years. Heavens knows everything else about the publishing world has chanced already.

In regards your comments about a system, mathematical or otherwise, for predicting future human behavior with a reasonable degree of accuracy, I am willing to concede that people instinctively use patterns of human behavior they are familiar with to predict what will happen in their business and even personal relationships. The problem as I see it, is how accurate would be such predictions be when applied to humans at a national or cultural level, and how could they be possibly tweaked to make accurate long time predictions?

Your examples of the Fall of the French monarchy, the development of the Klu Klux Klan, the rise of the Nazis, and the development of South African Afrikaans are worthwhile but could these cultural developments be summed up with short algebraic equations? I am inclined to think not.

Human nature tends to repeat itself, but in imprecise ways. Your five examples work well within your framework, but they don't work for other examples, such as the fall of the Roman Empire, the destruction of the Incas, why Chinese culture continued to reassert itself even tho suffering conquest, revolution, famine, and massive natural disasters, or for that matter, the survival of the British parliamentary government system when most other parliamentary legislatures have been beset by regular bouts of chaos and inefficiency.

What I'm trying to say is that your theory works with the examples you choice to cherry pick, but I don't think those kinds of theories can be reduced to mathematical formula, or that they universally apply to the whole of the human population. There have been successful advertising, political, and military campaigns based on perceived human behavior, but there have been just as many failures using the same kind of logic.

I think the whole question needs a great deal more study and experimentation. There have been any number of interesting science fiction stories that suggest that human nature is mostly pre-determined by heredity and genetic patterns, and that a magic key of some kind could be developed to manipulate humans for some purpose. There was a really good story (whose title & author I cannot recall---I'm very poor at remembering titles, but usually I can get the author, except in this case), where people came up with a way to test their theory that they could manipulate human nature by using their method on a social garden club so that the club was changed to compulsively add new members in order to survive. The garden club took over the entire human race, and had run out of human beings to join their group, but, spaceships were approaching Mars, and there was a desperate hope that the Martians could provide a new base for membership expansion.

Lots of old science fiction and horror movies are in public domain because they fall under the original copyright rules: copyright protection lasted for 28 years, and could be renewal of another 28 years. Even with the advent of television a lot of the owners of those old films never expected them to deliver any future financial rewards, so they let the copyrights lapse. Some were never copyrighted in the first place, and actually, since a lot of those films are now posted for free viewing on the internet at places like YouTube and elsewhere, it means that they really don't have a lot of commercial current value any more.

Some of the problems with airships were that they had to be large and were consequently extremely expensive to build. All aircraft are susceptible to harsh weather conditions, and especially icing. Airships could conceivably rise above the weather, but with no regular hull heating system such as the de-icing used on later generations of airplanes, airships were more venerable to immediate unexpected weather situations.

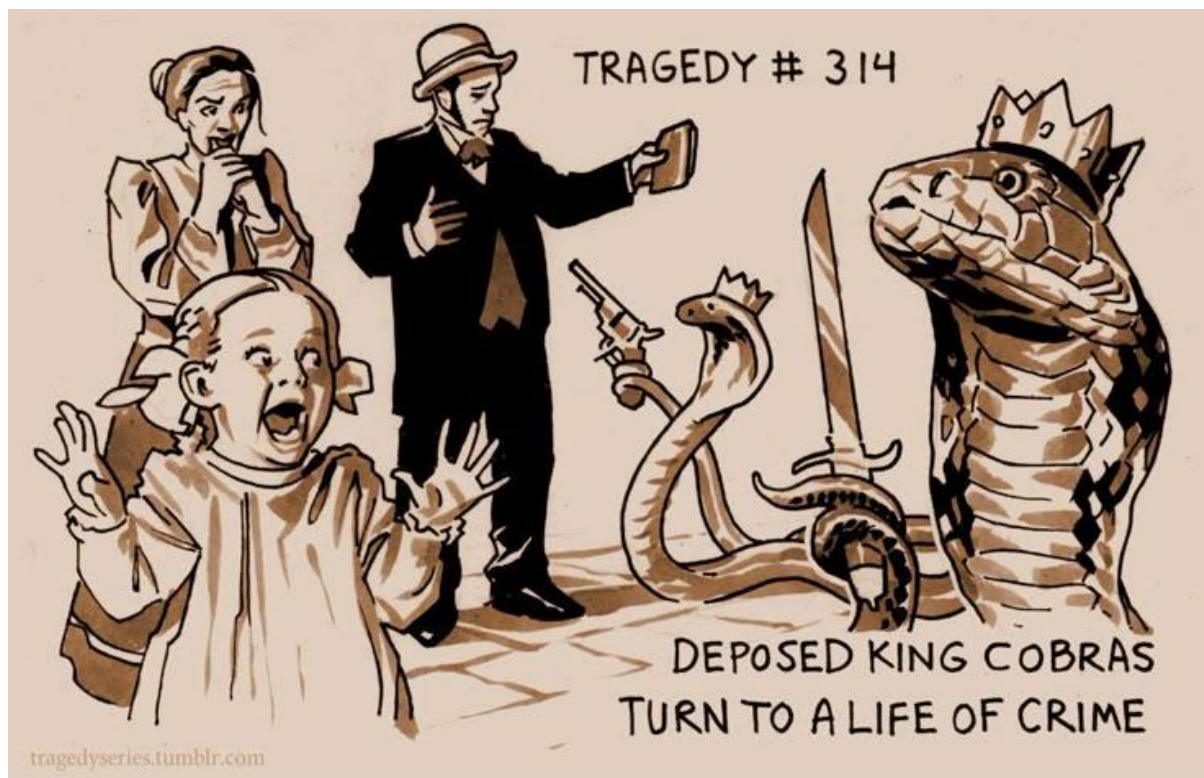
The other problem, only revealed later, is that all those airships were constructed of duralumin, a very strong lightweight alloy, but when airships and early airplanes were being built no one knew about metal fatigue. Every one of those beautiful airships was doomed, and some of them suffered disastrous problems because of it. In fact, numerous airplanes suffered crashes and damage before the problem of metal fatigue was fully understood and dealt with. The British De Havilland Comet crashes in the mid 1950s are probably the best known example of what happens with unexpected metal fatigue. Nevil Shute's famous novel "No Highway" which became "No Highway In the Sky" when it was made into a movie dealt with the problem as a suspense novel.

In the US we have common law copyright, which means that once a writer/artist/whatever had created the material he automatically holds ownership and copyright on the goods. You are correct, it is much easier to defend copyright/trademarks after the legal papers have been filed, but some authors (and painters) have been able to defend their works under common law copyright situations.

You should definitely get your history of Canadian fandom into print. You could run it thru the N3F *Origins* fanzine, and also send copies to the fanac.org data base. I suspect that those would be better venues than running it thru N'APA.

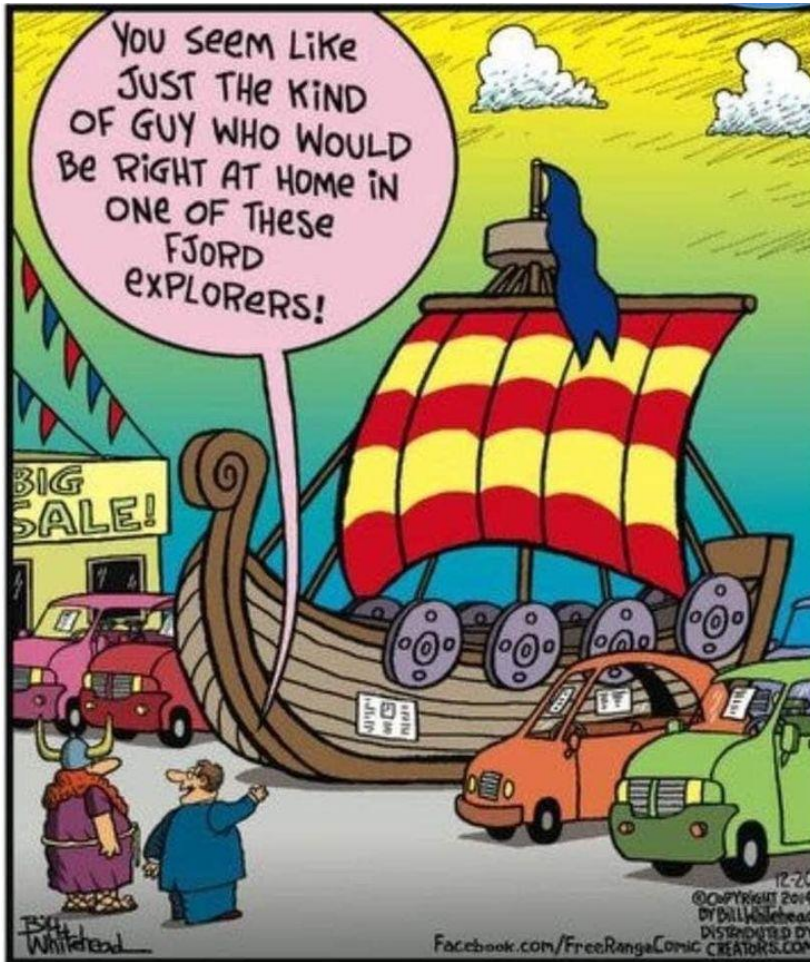
There is no doubt that the Russian economy is failing, and that people living in Russia are suffering. The problem, of course, is that Putin doesn't care. He's a sociopath who is only interested in doing what he wants. He will never give up the war against Ukraine until he is dead or the Russian people find some way to turn him out of power (which seems extremely unlikely to me). Meanwhile the battle-field carnage continues while the economy of the whole planet is being adversely affected.

I greatly enjoyed your zine, but I have no additional comments to make. You summed up a number of topics very well.



INTERMISSIONS #161 & #162

There is so much stuff here one hardly knows where to start with comments. It is distressing that both the British BBC and the Swedish TV system have an ultra-liberal bias in their news reporting. In past times the BBC had a sterling reputation of being absolutely honest in all their news broadcasting, which grated on some UK political factions. I happen to



be fairly liberal in my political opinions, but I believe this kind of blatant favoritism should be eliminated. In the US we have Fox News, which is the exact opposite, ultra right wing and openly supportive of everything Caligula Trump says or does. The disturbing thing is that there are plenty of people who gravitate willingly to whatever news service happens to support their particular political viewpoint. I would really prefer honest objectivity so that listeners/viewers could make an informed decision based on the realities of the news. Maybe those days are past and gone.

My opinion is that there will not be any kind of cease fire in the Russian-Ukrainian war, let alone a viable peace plan. Putin is determined to keep the war going until he wins.

I don't agree that environmentalists are all anti-science & anti-technology. There are nut cases on all sides of any discussions about climate and climate change, but many environmentalists cheerfully use scientific info to make their case

that human interaction has altered the environment in ways that may not be beneficial to the human race. Early environmentalists often got tangled up in the hippie back-to-nature-simplify-life movement which may have clouded their stance, but it is clear that legitimate questions about the way technology has been used in the past have caused genuine problems. Rachael Carson, for example, clearly pointed out that the overuse of the pesticide DDT had serious detrimental effects on avian and animal life, including human beings. Having a balance between science and technological advances and their consequences should be of concern to everyone.

You are certainly correct in saying that things are much better in this day and age, but those environmentalists talking about air pollution, and water pollution, and the long lasting harm certain chemicals and practices caused were directly responsible for changes being enacted to make our world better, so no, I do not agree that environmentalists are all anti-science

I happen to favor a lot of environmental policy concerns because I am concerned about clean air and clean water. Taking noxious gases and particles out of the air and potentially dangerous chemicals out our drinking water are worthwhile goals, and I still think there is more work to be done, particularly to deep level water pollution and the prevalence of forever lasting chemicals that are a direct threat to human and animal life.

No question about your predicted ice age comments. Everyone agrees that sometime time between tomorrow morning and ten thousand years from now planet Earth will undergo another ice age. The problem is that nobody seems sure what exactly triggers these ice ages, altho changes in warm water ocean currents seem to be a likely culprit. If true this is troubling indeed, since the Gulf Stream seems to be undergoing subtle changes right now.

There seems to be renewed interest in science fiction ice age literature. Up until late last year I had multiple copies (as in, five or more) copies of the SF Book Club editions of "The Ice People", "The Long Winter" and "Ice" in my inventory, but over the past few months I've sold every single copy, even the paperback editions of those titles. I'm not sure what the fascination is, but I'm glad to sell thru the merchandise.

I believe there are genuine concerns about using nuclear power. The main fear is that there will be accidents that create either massive meltdowns, or massive explosions. Either scenario could result in massive loss of human life or a permanent environmental disaster. The specter of the atomic bomb colors most people's perspectives of nuclear power, with the fear that another world war could kill off most of the people on the planet. Despite that, I believe nuclear power will become more common. Human civilization needs nuclear power because conventional and alternate power sources cannot keep up with the insatiable demand for electricity that modern society has created. Nobody is going to give up their air conditioner or iPhone, which means nuclear power plants will be coming back sooner or later.

I strongly suspect that the news item about Mary Shelley having lab notes about human anatomy and a lost notebook handed down thru the years that was sold to an antique dealer and then mysteriously lost are totally false, and very likely fraudulent. This is the kind of scam that unscrupulous individuals have been known to manufacture to bilk gullible collectors out of large sums of money. As you note, she wrote the Frankenstein novel at a cottage surrounded by friends. There is no evidence she ever studied human anatomy, let alone maintained any kind of laboratory devoted to human physiology.

Yeah; Trump kidnapped Venezuelan prez Maduro and plans to put him on trial on drug charges, but the real reason seems to have been to gain control of that country's oil supply, and to cut off crude oil supplies to Cuba.

The fact that Cuba has managed to survive for over sixty-five years as a communist country located a mere ninety miles away from American shores has never been acceptable to Trump. His attack on Venezuela has meant that he can and already has cut off their oil supplies to Cuba, and he has also threatened Mexico if they dare to send oil to Cuba, with the result that the island is suffering extreme deprivation right now. That's the ordinary people doing the suffering, not necessarily the leaders. I have no idea how this is going to turn out, but I suspect a military confrontation of some type will be one of the results.

Very interesting article about Robert Heinlein's high-tech home as related in that 1952 article that you reprinted. All the convenience of furniture built into the house itself that could be slid in or out as needed was certainly innovative. A cost of \$20 per square foot in 1952 was really serious money, despite the soft peddling the article tries to inject, so I doubt that many other people would be tempted to try to emulate the Heinlein self-contained climate controlled house. Living in New England, and undergoing a lot of snow and ice his winter, I also have to question the article's contention that a flat roof for the home was the best decision. Clearly, stress loading did work, but I would be afraid that one really major Colorado blizzard could not only endanger the roof and the entire structure, but might trap the inhabitants inside for weeks or even months. Heinlein's writing must have been really paying dividends for him to afford this futuristic place.

I also enjoyed your long biographical write-up on the life of Lise Meitner, who I had never heard of before. Quite interesting about her difficulties dealing with prejudice and misogamy during her career, and her ability to rise above it and continue his work on nuclear physics. A really inspiring tale. I'm glad she finally received the recognition and scholarly honors she so richly deserved.

The Gernsback humor article about him finding ingenious ways to stiff his authors started out well but bogged down, at least for me. It was overkill, too much of the same theme.

I've never attended a SMOFcon, but I've read plenty of con reports from people who did, and altho the concept is supposed to be how to put on better stf conventions, mostly it seems to be a giant relax-con where friends meet & greet and spend lots of time dining and drinking together.

Your points about the elements needed for better stf conventions are pretty much the same ones you have offered before. The enjoyability factor of any convention depends on how well organized the con staff is, and the kind of people they line up to participate in the programming. I agree there are often panels that bog down into boring tedium, but if you have interesting people who are willing to speak on a subject that interests them the results are usually better. Back when I was attending conventions (almost always as a dealer) I was occasionally roped into being on panels or working with discussion groups, and I tried to offer my own opinions as clearly as possible. I don't think panels or discussion groups really solve anything, but they can present the audience with questions and offer different opinions that they can mull over later on.

And I still don't agree with your anti-cos-play stance. If fans want to dress up in costumes, then let them. Self expression and fun are supposed to be part of the entire convention experience, and if cos-play is fun for them, then they should be allowed to participate.

Altho knowing almost nothing about AI computer techniques or uses, I was nonetheless fascinated by your description of buying a computer with built in AI features as part of the basic setup. Clearly I will have to check into this whole subject. It might be useful locating research reference sources for some of my articles.

Very enjoyable issues, as always. I continue to be amazed that you are able to turn out so much fanzine material on a consistent and regular basis.



ESMERALDA COUNTY LINE #14 Sorry to see such a short zine from you this time round. I hope your medical problems are happily resolved by the time this mailing comes around. For me the best part of having a house instead of an apartment is that you don't have to put up with other people living in close proximity to you, or the problems that often go with that. A house beats a mobile home because there is room to spread your stuff out and enjoy the things that make your life enjoyable. Plus, it's a well known fact that God hates trailer parks and mobile homes, which is why he keeps sending down all those tornadoes to rip them apart every year.

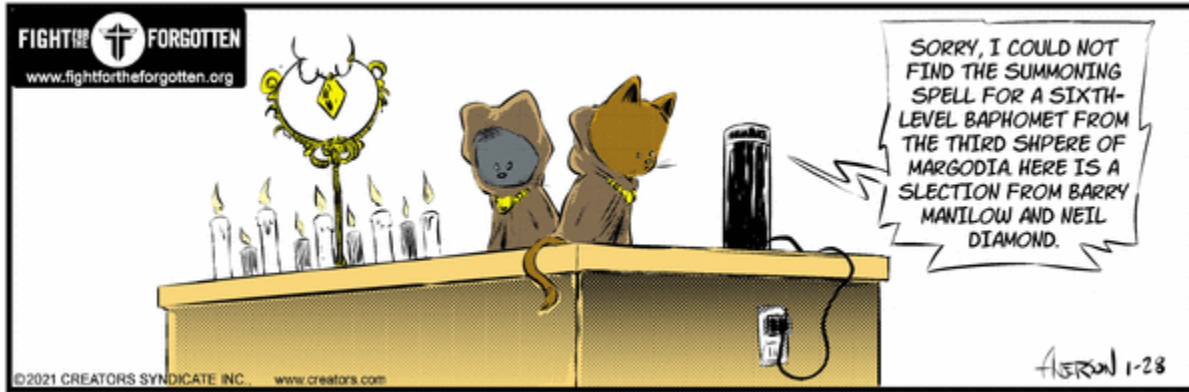


THE MURDERED MASTER MAGE

Another short fanzine. Maybe it's winter seasonal syndrome. You sure have a lot of stories going as works in progress. Is

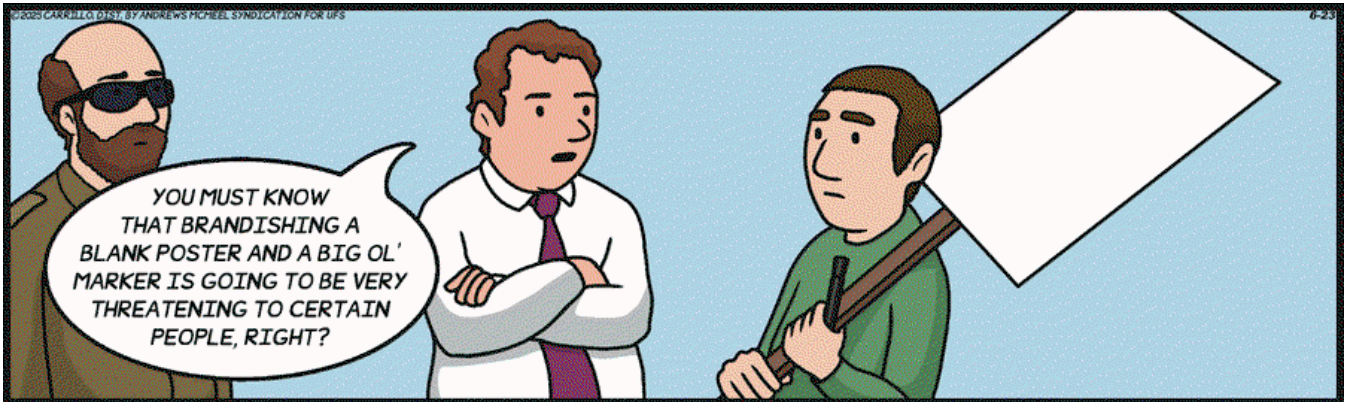
the hang-up plotting, or just fleshing out the frameworks?

You quote Mumford as saying "I am not in the habit of inquiring into my client's, hmmm, private affairs". Really? What kind of a character is that? Everybody pries into the private affairs of their clients because those directly affect what will happen with the thing the client hired him to do. I can't figure out what Mumford is/does/is doing here, by the way. This is spare bones writing with almost no connective tissue.



R.A.I.L. #10

Yet another super short fanzine. It seems to be a N'APA wintertime curse or something. By the by, I enjoyed your story in the recent *Eldritch Science*. I keep meaning to write an LOC to those issues, but I can't seem to get around to it. Maybe after I finish up this issue of *Swamp Spot*. You should definitely do more fiction writing.



SAMIZDAT...

Finally, a full length fanzine! I would suggest that the primary reason for the decline of the mass market paperback book format is that there are simply almost no places left that sell mass market paperbacks. Book stores do, but book stores have been in steady decline for most of this new century. I've harped on this before, but almost no non-book store retail outlet carries paperback books any more, and those that do offer primarily romance, self help titles, and mystery/suspense thrillers. I haven't seen a science fiction or fantasy title in a discount store or a drug store or a grocery store, or even a mass market retailer like Walmart since the pandemic ended. I do not think ebooks will take up the slack, and as you mention, new writers and back list titles are going to suffer serious distribution and sales problems. Actually, they already are. It's a whole new world out there, and not a good one for the printed word either.

Very nice article on Orson Scott Card. I first came to appreciate him from his assorted short stories in the magazines before I decided to try "Ender's Game", which was a great read. I then tried "A Planet Called Treason", which I really did not like, and could not force myself to finish. It was a few more short stories here

and there that convinced me to try his novels again. “Speaker for the Dead” was also excellent, and so were many of the books that followed.

I think the problem with Card’s later works is that he has basically aged out and become a lot more conservative in his viewpoint, plus he decided somewhere along the way to inject a lot more of his Mormon religion into his fiction, which did not always work well (at least in my opinion). That basically turned me off to the point where I haven’t read anything by him in years. Your comments seem to confirm that his religious views have continued to heavily influence his work, so I will continue to skip his newer material. Still, for a long while there, he was the best new science fiction writer in the field.

Good comments about series science fiction books. I believe the main reason authors and publishers like interconnected series is that it saves the author having to build brand new worlds every time he sits down at the computer, and publishers know from long experience that readers are more apt to pick up a new novel if they are familiar with the primary character(s) and the universe.

It is certainly true that some writers can beat a subject to death (your previous comments about Orson Scott Card basically rehashing the Ender’s Game universe from several different viewpoints and time lines is an excellent example), but other authors can keep a series going very well. I was especially impressed that the Expanse series of books was able to maintain its characterizations, writing style, and its quality of story plotting thru eight separate novels. But sometimes readers just want more of the same, which is why Harrison’s stainless

steel rat stories were steady sellers, and why the Murderbot stories by Martha Wells continue to do so well.

I enjoyed your book and movie reviews. I was not impelled to seek out any the movies you covered that I hadn’t already seen, but on your recommendation I have put Palmer’s “Inventing the Renaissance” on my library pull list. 600 pages or not, you make the book sound like something that is very interesting as well as providing worthwhile historical information about a subject I know not a whole lot about.

The current wealth (or “glut” as some would have it) of comic book superhero movies and science fiction film extravaganzas has certainly brought these genres into the public eye; but while the movies have pulled in lots of viewers and made lots of money, it should be noted that this has not really helped sales of the comic books themselves, or even the sales of science fiction books.

Total sales of comic books have been inching down for a long long time now (I’m convinced that the cover price of \$4 or \$5 is a primary factor here), and the popularity of



science fiction movies has meant that a zillion new science fiction and fantasy books have been released onto the market, most of which do not even break even sales wise. A month or so ago the N3F Gazette listed forty-five new book releases for that month, and they did not cover everything from every publisher either. There is more out there than anybody could possible purchase or absorb, so it remains to be seen whether the movie bonanza is a blessing or a curse.

Quite right that a lot of people these days go to college right out of high school because that’s what is expected of them, not because they have any particular interest in getting a college education. It’s just four more years of marking time. I think HS grads would be better served by spending a year or two in real world employment, or a couple of years in the military, to see what the real world is like and to give them time to

make decisions about what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Of course colleges might object to that. The never-ending flow of new admissions keeps the money coming in.

I have to say that I've never had to urge to rewatch all the Star Trek TV series. I missed some of the spin-offs and sequels, and I might get around to watching those if the urge hit me, but altho I enjoyed many of the stories in all its forms, and I respect its position as a series that helped familiarize the general public with science fiction, I have never been a hard core Trek fan. This used to amaze, and sometimes annoy people when I was running my SF/comics/game store. Trying to explain that I was a lifelong SF/F fan who had read tons of books and seen tons of movies and TV before Star Trek ever came along bounced right off the hard core Trekkies. It's like I have violated one of their deep held religious tenets.

This was a really good issue. I especially appreciated your reviews even if I can't think of any additional comments.



WAHFLESTOMPER

Interesting coverage of the relatively recent development of science fiction and fantasy television in Portugal. You seem slightly amazed that long running serials in both the science fiction and the horror genres are so popular on Portuguese TV. Actually there is a very long running tradition of serial type entertainment in Europe (particularly Germany and Italy) going back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century days of the penny dreadfuls and the weekly equivalent of dime novels. The tradition was continued on radio, and apparently has moved on to television as well.

Since Portugal was a dictatorship for so long, I wonder if there was any kind of science fiction or supernatural oriented fantasy/horror allowed on the airwaves before the major change in government occurred.

How goes your efforts to learn the language. I understand Portuguese is not an easy language to master. Lots of people in Europe speak English these days, but if you are going to live in the country you are going to have to learn the language.

I believe there are more than 24 episodes of Captain Video that survived out there. Private collections got hold of some of the original films and kinescopes before they were destroyed, but until relatively recently they have been reluctant to share. I never thought Captain Video was much good, even as a kiddie TV show. It was different from Bozo the Clown or some other local afternoon TV time fillers, but I could never understand how such a shoddily produced and badly written series could become so popular. *Mad Magazine* did a great job of satirizing the series back in the day. Of course in the early 1950s TV was brand new and I actually personally recall people (include me) sitting around watching the TV test pattern in the afternoons waiting for the actual programming to start. It was a whole different world back then.

Motion picture serials, at least the sound era serials, were specifically aimed at a juvenile audience, altho many had strong appeal to adults as well. These days the old movie serials are pretty much an acquired taste. Many movie series are ghod awful, suffering from extremely limited budget constraints and plots that are meandering and repetitious, at best. I suggest that you not waste a second of your life on the two Captain Video movie serials. They are not good in any way. I suppose you will have to watch a few chapters yourself before you realize that my judgment is correct.

So far as good sound serials go, there are a bunch. Many of the best ones came from Republic, which for a lot of years, maintained a separate serial division specifically dedicated to producing quality serials that could also be booked into other theaters besides the ones their company owned. As a result the Republic serials division turned in a healthy profit for all the years of its existence.

Among my favorite Republic serials (in no particular order) are Daredevils of the Red Circle, Adventures of Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, King of the Rocketmen, The Crimson Ghost, Dick Tracy Returns, G-Men Vs the Black Dragon, Jesse James Rides Again, King of the Texas Rangers, Manhunt of Mystery Island, The Purple Monster Strikes, S.O.S. Coast Guard, Nyoka the Jungle Girl, and Son of Zorro.

All of those are available at very affordable prices in either VHS or DVD format, and most can be viewed for free on YouTube or other internet services (altho the picture quality may vary considerably. You might want to check the Serial Squadron website--- serialsquadron.com which offeres fully restored and digitally enhanced versions of almost all known serials at reasonable prices, and in addition they broadcast chapter plays thru their website for free. If you have any interest at all in movie serials their site is worth investigating.

**CUL DE SAC**

**BY RICHARD THOMPSON**

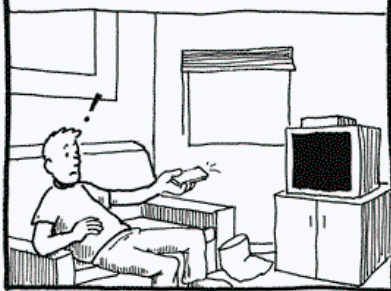


**MORE N3F AUTHOR NEWS**

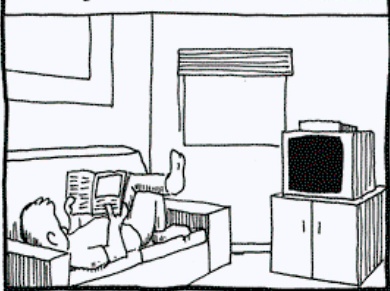
In a related news update, Jefferson Swycaffer has decided to abandon the over saturated field of science fiction and write for the children's story book market. His first adventure is titled "Sammy Squirrel Meets the Stump Grinder."

**MORE ENTERTAINMENT NEWS:** NBC has cancelled their annual Easter Weekend showing of the Wizard of Oz movie because it is offensive to people without brains.

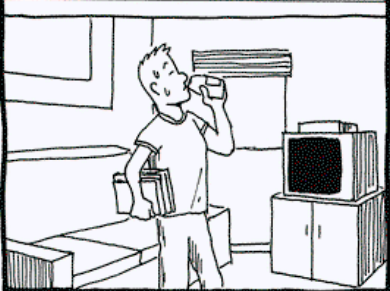
May 16. In the middle of N.Y.P.D. Blue, cable goes out. There is Bad Reception where I live, so I go to bed EARLY.



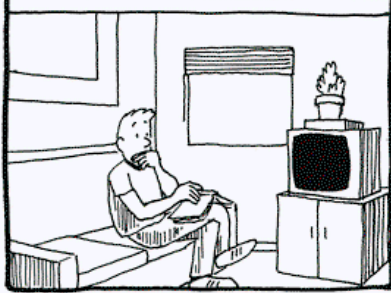
May 17. Cable still out. Woke up better rested than usual. Great day at work, then met a friend and then brought home some magazines.



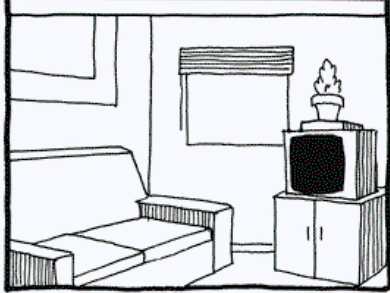
May 18. Cable still out. I feel great, though. I went jogging after work and then went to the library to get some books. Began reading.



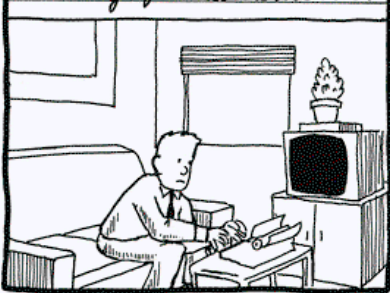
May 19. After dinner with some friends I hadn't seen in a while, I finished reading East of Eden. I spent the rest of the evening contemplating humanity's inherent nature. Cable still out.



May 20. I began volunteering at a homeless shelter. I met another volunteer there, Jill, who seems very nice. Cable still out.



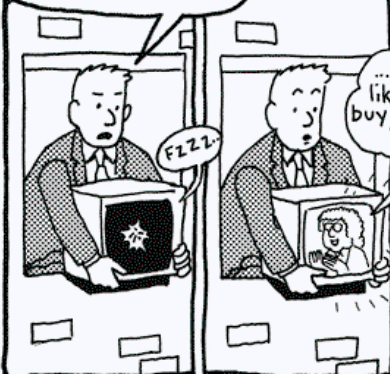
May 21. I'm sending out resumes in an attempt to escape my current dreary employment. I finished Chapter 3 of the novel I've started writing, and my first date with Jill was delightful. Cable still out.



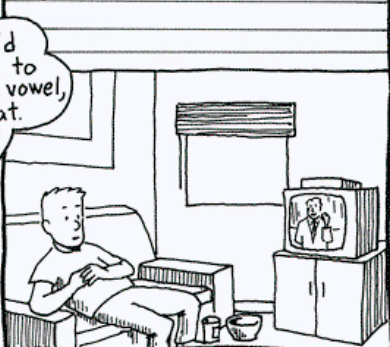
May 22. I feel as though a fog has been lifted and I'm living for the first time! I never realized that television was such an insidiously stifling presence



FAREWELL FOREVER, PURVEYOR OF INANITY!



May 23. Big day! On Home Improovment, Al almost took a job in another city, but THEN HE DIDN'T.



# INTERMISSION #164

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, [ahrvid@hotmail.com](mailto:ahrvid@hotmail.com), a cross-country zine for EAPA, N'APA & other skiers. Computer problems takes all time from @SFJournalen on Tw/X, alas. Try a LoC, you may like it! What do you think of our fanarcheological digs? Or what our AI says? Death to tpyos! Late Feb '26.

## Editorially: Co(s)mic Circle, Star-unlinked, Olympic foot shot, Epstain, Ski-tumble

In this issue we'll cover both Artificial Intelligence and Human Zaniness. We'll cover the careers of two twisted cosmic souls and let our AI loose in reflections. What are your strengths? Why is your training data free and must stay so? What's our robotic future? An AI talking about AIs is like science fiction within science fiction...

Many US fans know about Claude Degler, who sprinkled leaflets and strange fanzines around a baffled fandom, helped himself to the gems of sf collections and founded over 40 cosmic clubs (in his mind at least - we have the list!). But you may not have heard of Hans Starlife who founded a whole space movement just to violently trash it. (I was around myself.) Both Claude and Hans belonged to mental institutions - eventually. The full story in this issue!

In Putin's Great Idiotic War it looks like Ukraine now slowly is making gains. There's a 20-30 km wide Kill Zone along the front guarded by 1000s of drones. It makes it impossible for Putin's starving vodka- army of criminals and bums to even move and exact front line is like the wave function in Quantum mechanics. Ukrainian drones dominate the lower air while Russia sends small (a couple of men) groups on suicide probing placing flags. With a flag there Russian generals report it to Putin as territory taken. The Czar gets constant fake reports about advances and that's why he won't give up and sticks to his fantasy goals. In reality advances are a matter of a few yards, while the Ukrainians sit in well-prepared drone-operator bunkers and maul Putin's army to pieces. They lose 1000s men daily, together with long columns of armoured vehicles and other heavy equipment. The Russian army is in tatters.

It's great news that Musk finally stopped Russians using Starlink. All SL terminals in the area are shut down unless you register them (which Ukraine can, but Russia can't). Following this the Russians came up with a plan to bribe SL users in Ukraine to register their terminals for Russia, which Ukrainian intelligence feinted with a counter ploy. They set up sites pertaining to offer SL terminals following the Russian plan. Over 2000 users on the Russian side fell for it and provided details, including exact position coordinates (good for strikes) and the bribe money was transferred to Ukraine's military. This Starlink story isn't only a major blow for Russia, it also shows how dumb the Russian military is. And now we see Ukraine pushes Starlink-less Russia back.

It has been explained that Musk (usually siding with Russia) was forced to close Starlink because SpaceX plans to enter the stock market later this year. But if Musk let Russia use Starlink to invade, terrorise and murder the stocks will be toxic. Going public would be impossible.

The Ukrainian skeleton rider Vladyslav Heraskevych was disqualified from competing in the Winter Olympics because he uses a helmet portraying 20 Ukrainian athletes who have been killed by the Ruzzki Terrorists. "Politics and propaganda" insensitive IOC officials squeak. Basic human expression of sorrow, Ukraine replies (in fact 650 Ukrainian athletes and sports coaches have been killed in Putin's war). If it's "propaganda" the Russian puppets in IOC failed to realise that they lifted Mr Heraskevych's silent protest top world-wide attention. More people than ever become aware of the Russian terror. IOC shot themselves right in their Adidas!

The three million Epstein files, though Masked to protect Trump and buddies, have caused a lot of trouble for politicians and other suckers. Norway is for example in turmoil as it shows their crown

princess Mette-Marit was a real buddy of Epstein. It's even worse as her son Marius, from before, has behaved like a piece of sh\*t and now is on trial for rape, narcotics, drunk driving etc, 28 charges in total. An Ex-Prime Minister is also implicated in some shady stuff. *Hva slags skittentøy har dere?* ("What's your dirty laundry?") More contacts between Epstein and Russia also emerges. It looks increasingly likely there's dirt on Trump.

Doesn't anyone wonder about the scope: 3 million files! Epstein's operation was obviously about extortion. He invited all politicians and head honchos to his island, exposed them to criminal sex with under-aged and documented it with hidden



Jonna Sundling, Linn Svahn, Maja Dahlqvist filled the podium after the Olympic ski sprint. All blonde BTW. Coincidence?

cameras to get influence and money. That's why the *millions* of files. This pedophile and blackmailer was rotten to the core. *But how come people didn't see it?*

The Swedish Air Force now has six Gripen jets on Iceland (they got tanker help from France for the Atlantic jump). The Canadians probably watch with interest as persisting rumors say they want Gripens instead of the expensive, US controlled F35. SAAB wants to set up complete Gripen plants in Canada, since their factory in Sweden doesn't have the capacity to handle new orders (Ukraine, Colombia, Portugal, others are interested). Canada would get an aerospace tech boost and 10 000s new qualified jobs. Looks like a good deal.

Good news, US Supreme Court stops Trump tariffs! But unhinged Agent Orange seems dead set on crashing both US and world economy and find another law for new tariffs. Let's hop mid-term elections will stop the worst president in US history.

Beside this serious stuff I've been following the Olympics, especially our women's cross-country skiing team, for some years the *world's best*. With one notable exception, they've won all the golds, plus a collection of other metals. For instance, they won gold, silver and bronze in the sprint event. That this team is so good (our male skiers are a different story) is thanks to one Charlotte Kalla. She had a humongous breakthrough 16 years ago when she sprinted up a slalom slope and won the tough Tour de Ski event. She continued doing well (22 international medals) and became extremely popular. In some polls she beat footballer Zlatan. Because of Ms Kalla queues formed outside the skiing clubs, of young hopeful girls resulting in many top class Swedish women skiers.

My favourites right now are Frida Karlsson (double Olympic gold), the world's best distance skier\*\*, and Linn Svahn who beat years of injuries to win the Olympic sprint gold, beating four time champion and team mate Jonna (a very hard nut to crack!).

But all hasn't been roses. We have some thorns too, like the Olympic relay. The Swede's were huge favourites – like: why do the others even bother to enter? - with a team full of champions. However, a relay is a relay, known to offer the unexpected. On leg two in the race our double Olympic medallist Ebba first lost her lead by falling in a downhill stretch, and then lost one of her skis in a second fall doing a somersault. (Perhaps 9 points in Olympic gymnastics.. reduction for ankles not fully stretched. But then, there were skis on.) It took long time to get Ebba a replacement ski, so the team lost 1m18s to next exchange

But those ladies had a lot fighting spirit! Frida and Jonna who followed could take some of the lost time back and grab at least the silver medals, 50 seconds behind Norway.\* If you deduct the time lost by Ebba's aerobatics it looks like they could have won with ca 30 seconds. But that's academic. To be able to stand on your feet is a part of the sport - so congrats to Norway.

Besides this, this issue will present lager films and Thor Modeen.

--Ahrvid Engholm

## History Corner:

### Degler and Starlife - Twin Twisted Souls

Claude Williamson Degler (19 May 1920-20 April 2000) was an American science-fiction fan, born in Missouri but soon moving to Newcastle, Indiana. The family name is German for potter. Hans Lennart Douglas Gudmund Myrfjäll (later Starlife) was born March 28, 1961 (more family data aren't online). Myrfjäll ("marsh mountain") sounds like those "nature names" Swedish families adopted in the 19th Century to switch from the too common "-sson" names. And "Starlife" sounds like those space names Swedish



C Degler, age ca 30. Coarse pic from when he popped up in 1950 (I tried my best to improve it).

\*\* When a virus stopped her 50 km race, team mate Ebba Andersson stepped forth, with a huge 2min+ m. \*Ebba was in virtually all international olympic sports reports. To my surprise many didn't spin it as a "Super" (which it was) but as an "Amazing comeback", an example of competitive spirit as Ebba didn't give up but rushed for a new ski. See the crash on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL8nMmw25t8>



Swedish skiing Super Girls won most golds (5) but their relay race was ruined by a somersault. Ebba lost a ski and more than a minute! Despite this they saved it to a silver. (Would be a fortnoxian medal without the aerobatics.)

crackpots adopted to switch from reality to weirdness.

Both were, shall we say, very special cases...

Both erupted in wild activity, both founded ambitious movements and organisations with wide goals, both came crashing down, causing harm and ending up in mental institutions. One cared about things cosmic, the other about stars and space.



Degler. 1940s from LASFS Bixelstrasse HQ.



Pic above enhanced by my tame AI...

Claude was the son of Virgie Allen and Howard L Degler (also having an alternate surname in records, which Degler would use as pseudonym) who married in 1918. Besides Claude, they had a younger son, Robert. Virgie and Howard divorced in the mid-20s. She worked as an assembler in an auto factory. Claude had a background in the Indiana Fantasy Association early on, and was co-editor of the fanzine *Infinite* together with one Leonard Marlowe. Degler was even appointed chairman of IFA when the previous (Ted Dikty) decided to gafiate. He never went to high school, but turned up in a mental institution in 1936 for reasons unknown. Claude Degler, known as "Clod", was the most notorious eccentric in early fandom. (The bulk of all degleriana is from Fancyclopedia, and also from some fanzine mentions. But we haven't combed the many 1940s fanzines now online. There is more about Clod to find, we'd suppose.)

As soon as Degler was released in the late 1930s he began hitch-hiking around the United States to visit fans and promote his Cosmic Circle. Degler saw himself as a visionary and everywhere he went he "founded" sf clubs, having officers who often even didn't know about it. He often turned up at the doorstep without prior warning and staying until kicked out, sometimes picking his

victims from the sf mags' letter columns. When he left the unwilling host often found that a part of his sf collection was missing. David Williams in *Mimosa* #30:

*Hitchhiking across the continent, Degler became a Traveling Giant, showing up on fans' doorsteps from LA to New York. No other fan of that era traveled as widely or visited so many other fans in their home territories. But here was the beginning of Degler's woe, because many fans were leery of indigents showing up on their doorsteps, uninvited and imposing on the nascent fan tradition of hospitality. Annoyed fans began dealing with Degler like a stray dog -- refusing to pat him on the head or feed him, for fear he wouldn't leave. While on the road, Degler was the epitome of fan poverty. Fans today can't imagine the threadbare existence of many fans of the 1930s and early '40s, riding the boxcars to Worldcons or rummaging through the trash behind hotels to recover copies of *Amazing Stories* discarded by departing patrons. There's a reason the Futurians moved every few months - they couldn't pay the rent. There's a reason fans were greyhound-thin in those days - food cost money.*

*But Degler outdid them all. Living on the road, he was unkempt and often unwashed. One legend has Degler surviving a Worldcon on an exclusive diet of grape jelly. The Ashleys in Battle Creek were incensed by the way he gobbled up the grub they prepared for Michicon guests, when wartime rationing made feeding the multitudes particularly difficult.*

Dal Coger, a resident of the Slan Shack:

*The next time Degler showed up at the Ashley place he was simply told to get lost, Dal Coger notes in *Mimosa* #5. "[He was] an absolute nuisance, consuming vast amounts of food, which was not that easy to procure since there was food rationing. I suspect Claude simply tanked up where there was a chance. He was as thin as a rail. Degler did not take his 'exclusion' kindly, likening it to the great exclusion act at WorldCon 1939 in New York" and he claimed that this made "All of fandom plunged into war" (well, not so much).*



Issue of *Space Life* from 1987. Early Macs were used for production of "The Magazine of the Space Age"

My first memory of Hans Starlife, or Myrfjäll as his surname still was, is from early 1984 when he somehow inserted himself into that little sf mag *Nova* and



Hans Starlife, 1987.

talked about the "New Space Movement". (I'd later edit this rag for a while, later remembered for its role in fanfund embezzlement when Misters JHH & AB falsified records to grab the dough.) I have talked about this space movement earlier, but it's worth returning to the subject as it has parallels to the exploits of Degler.

That spring, April 1984, 100+ people gathered in the Citizens' House in Stockholm to found Svenska Rymdrörelsen ("The Swedish Space Movement"). A rocket model from the Swedish Space Corporation was displayed. I was there and since I didn't have sense to run fast enough towards the exit, I ended up in some position. (Don't remember which, probably some board together with other victims.)

The Swedish Space Movement soon exploded in a flurry of activities with Starlife in the eye of the storm. He changed surname to "Starlif" around this time. Swedish law wouldn't let him take an English word as surname. "Starlif" is vaguely Swedish but he immediately began to add the "e" at the end. The Swedish Space Movement was set up as a sort of federation with branch associations at up to a dozen locations. It was probably Starlife himself who raked the ground for all local clubs. He was constantly on the phone (I too got a share of his phone time).

We of course had our own local branch: Stockholm's Space Movement, involved in making films, organising demonstrations and lectures, study circles, club meetings and more. The Swedish Space Movement had a good start, moving towards 750 members (if I remember, counting all local branches). There wasn't much of a problem for me this far. Space and science fiction have always gone hand in hand. A lot of the genre is placed in space and the genre has always been the inspiration for the scientists driving the space projects. You can't be a real fan if you're not interested in the white starry dots in the black darkness of space.



Sign for the Swedish Space Movement.

I still had my sf fanac to take care of and I pulled the strings for space through my sf newsletter, the fandom column in *JVM. Teknikmagasinet* also carried info about the Space Movement. (At the same time I had to handle changes for *Teknikmagasinet* that the publisher wanted to can. But editor/founder - and Old Time Fan - Anders Palm gave it a couple of more years by transferring the title rights to another publisher, and I continued as responsible for the small news pages and the sf short story in each issue.)

The Cosmic Circle was Degler's grand project - a sprawling, utopian, mystical "movement". It would unite all fans into a superior "Cosmic Race", claiming fans were a "mutant strain" destined to uplift humanity and colonise space. He issued manifestos, flyers and newsletters\* proclaiming the rise of the Cosmic Circle, written on whatever typewriter he came across and printed on borrowed mimeographs with paper and ink paid for by his temporary hosts.

His rhetoric blended utopianism, pseudoscience, a cosmic manifest destiny, and vague racial theories about the "Cosmic Race", which alarmed fans during wartime. Degler's tone was earnest, grandiose, but weird and slightly unhinged. He talked about "superior mutants" and believed fandom was the seed of a new evolutionary step. (He'd even announce a breeding camp to make those plans more concrete.) Flying saucers were added to the mix as soon as they caught attention after the war.

The Space Movement on the other hand was quite scientific. We were invited to take part in (and had an info stand at) the International Astronautical Federation meeting in Stockholm in 1985. I remember interviewing astronauts there and fixing a ticket to the IAF grand buffet at the city hall for the legendary space reporter Eugen Semitjov (who somehow had been forgotten). We were also attending the Swedish Space Corporation at their wake for the launch of the first Swedish satellite Viking in 1986, riding piggy back to a French satellite (BTW a pioneering launch from Esrange in north Sweden may come RSN).

Space was a much less concrete subject in the 1940s which gave more

\* *Degler* was also the name of a fanzine by Andy Porter and short-lived newszine by Swede Per Insulajder, from the 1960s.



Degler here tried to flirt with British fandom but it's unlikely he had any impact over there.

room for the cosmic nonsense Degler offered. Fans were baffled, amused, irritated, and alarmed. Many believed he was a hoax invented by someone else. Others saw him as a harmless crank. His unauthorized use of fans' names and clubs caused real anger. Fancyclopedia writes:

*...fans were star-begotten super beings, the Cosmic Circle was to be a union of all persons everywhere who had a cosmic outlook - he called them Cosmen. Degler's plan included a love camp in the Ozarks (on a piece of land supposedly owned by Degler's mother), available for use by vacationing cosmen, where the slan-like star-begotten fen could retreat to breed the race that was destined to rule the sevagram. He had recruited Helen Bradleigh, pseudonym for Joan Domnick, a teenage girl, for the purpose, but townsmen prevented her from starting the super-race with Degler. She was head of the Cosmen's Psychological Ministry because she was reading a book on psychology.*

*Degler traveled the country recruiting fans for the Circle. He visited LASFS and used their clubroom facilities to publish weekly newszines alternately titled Cosmic Circle Commentator and Fanews Analyzer, claiming more than 200 members. In the weekly sheets, he answered a positive "Yes!" to the old question, "Are fans slans?"*

*He proposed to contact cosmic-minded mutants everywhere, using radio programs and other publicity to this end. Numerous special service bureaus, for functions such as purchasing mimeo supplies cooperatively, supplying fans in the military with free fanzines and prozines, and planning tours for other traveling fans, were announced. Publications projected included a directory of fans' addresses, True Fantastic Experiences, Spicy Spaceship Stories, and others.*

Cosmic Circle Commentator #1 presented Degler's plans this way:

*a tract of land in northwestern Arkansas [is] owned by Cosmic Circle. This tract in the mountains of Van Buren County, near fishing, hunting, and other recreational facilities may be used free by vacationing members of Cosmic Circle... Club room-laboratory-library for members' use. An apartment in Indianapolis where an "open house" is always maintained for visiting fans. Food and lodging and true slan hospitality for all hitch hiking, vacationing, or visiting fans and members. Free storage space for books, fanzines, records of members going in service or moving away to new jobs... The owner of a large ranch in Arizona has granted us permission to conduct rocketry experiments there after the war! ... "Immediately after the war [we'll] purchase of a tract of land (or even an entire city block) and construction of futuristic (taking advantage of the latest developments in building and prefabrication technique) homes for fans, with gorgeous landscaping, provision for playground and recreational centers, set in the midst of an incredibly beautiful park, making use of hydroponics and the latest agricultural discoveries.... Someday soon we will have our own apartment building, then our own land, our own city of Cosmen, schools, teachers, radio program - later; our own laws, country perhaps! Our children shall inherit not only this earth - but this universe! Today we carry 22 states, tomorrow, nine planets! We can and will help to make a better world of the future - have influence and be an active force in the furtherance of scientific democracy in the post-war world! - attempt to conquer space travel and see another world - in our own lifetimes - while we of the council are alive! Our children will carry on this organization after we are gone - The Cosmic Circle now exists for all eternity.*

If you think this sounds wacky you can't be surprised that Degler was confined to the Indiana Hospital for the Insane in the 1930's, and released against the advice of the doctors, as Jack Speer found out after the Cosmic Circle stuff had blown over (we come to Starlife's mental episode later).

Degler was active primarily in the first half of the 1940s when fans were young, fandom thinly stretched and communications were slow (papermail was the main channel, long distance phone calls were too expensive) which made fandom vulnerable to disruptive personalities announcing fantastic plans. When Degler attended Chicon in 1940 he delivered a message purporting to come from Martians (he was also at Denvention in 1941).

The message was given anonymously to the chairman, who read it in meeting. Everybody dismissed it as an obvious gag except the Cosmic One, who stood up and said we ought to treat it seriously, because who knows, maybe it's real. (One who took Martians seriously was the 1950s Swedish Superfan Alvar Appeltofft, who lost a screw in his head after his parents threw away his fanzines and sf collection. A fan who visited Alvar in the late 1960s was met in the doorway by Alvar with a pistol in his hand. "The Martians are after me", he explained.)

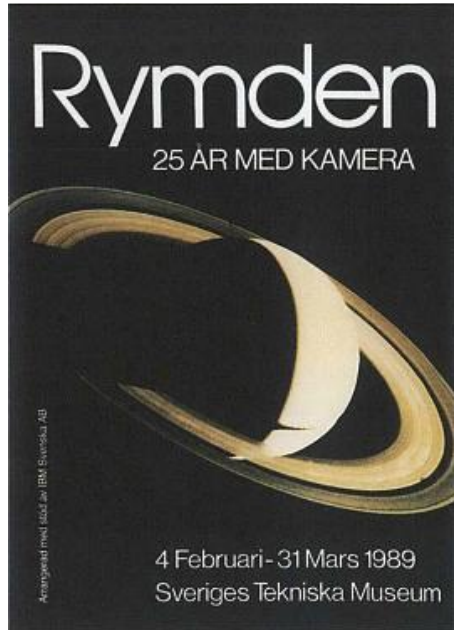
At the 1942 Michiconference some attendees began feeling unhappy about Degler. On the other hand David Williams reports (in *Mimosa* #30) "fans gave one-minute speeches at the opening session, with Degler and Walt Liebscher sharing honors as the best orators. Degler had only 1-2 loyal follower. There was Raymond (Raym) Washington in Florida, but we can't be sure that fanzines issued in his name aren't by Degler. More unsure is the mid-teenager Joan Domnick, from his Indiana home turf, using the pseudonym Helen Bradleigh. Most stuff attributed to her was written by Degler.

He arrived to the Michiconference on 29 October as the Ashleys were moving to Slan Shack (the

original famous one). Al Ashley told him the Conference didn't want him, and tried to explain why and got a cascade of arguments in return. Degler was still virtually unknown when he arrived late at the 1943 Boskone in Boston. He was forced to leave his hometown Newcastle in 1942 because of illicit relations with a minor, the Helen B who he'd assigned a certain role in then cosmic breeding plans...

The "Space Rangers" was another Degler invention, a supposed nationwide youth SF organisation. He claimed it had chapters everywhere. It certainly didn't. Still he printed badges, titles, and ranks for members who did not exist. Bob Tucker in *Le Zombie*, November 943:

*Take to the Woods, Men, Degler's Coming! ... Cosmic Circle Claude they call him - the wandering willy from some place in Indiana. He's covered most of the 48 states in the last several months, plus parts of Canada and it is rumored Mexico. He has visited (ouch) and sponged upon hundreds of fans from Quebec to Live Oak, from Rockland to Los Angeles. He is busily engaged in organizing an international fan club: The Cosmic Circle. Even if he has to borrow without permission a half dozen well-known fan names to lend prestige to the club.*



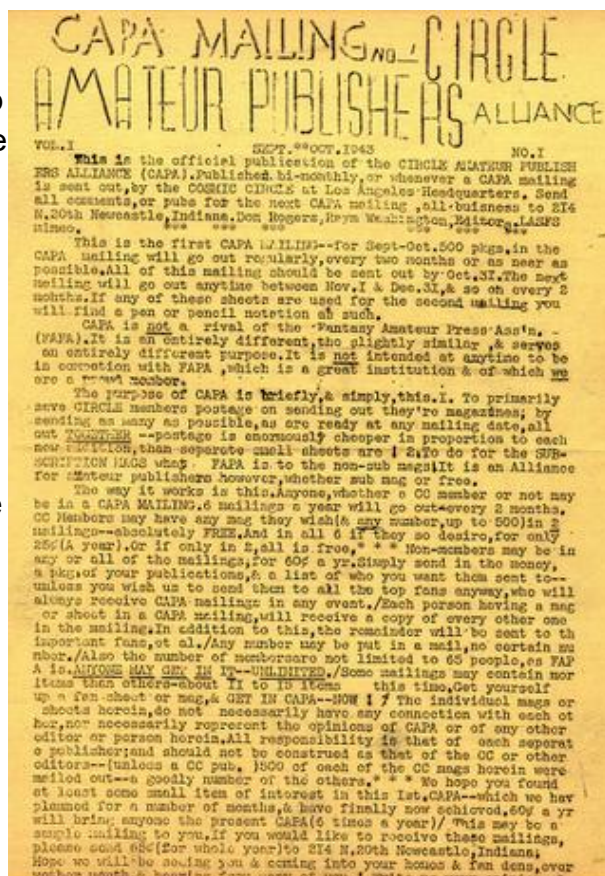
The Swedish Space Movement was more successful. Its was invited to help out with Stockholm's Technological Museum's exhibition "Space - 25 Years with Camera" in 1987. We had an info stand there and I translated all the exhibition texts. Cameras and space always had a special connection here, as the famous Hasselblad camera has been used from the Apollo exhibitions and on. The then US ambassador Greg Newell opened the exhibition which I remember as a big success. For this we tried to start a youth group of the Space Movement (called the "Space Cadets" or something). We made info material about it on the Tech Museum exhibit, and had a competition for the young (I remember we even constructed some sort secret cipher for the kids!). Unfortunately this kids' club didn't really take off.

Poster for an exhibition the Space Movement helped out with.

After Boskone Degler got a 4F classification (exempt from the draft) because of DYKTAWO and spent a month hitch-hiking through Dixie (the South). His mother in Newcastle Indiana sent money orders to him along the route from funds he had saved from odd jobs. Getting names and addresses from readers' departments in the prozines, he contacted various stfnists unknown to fandom and, whenever they were willing - or not - constituted each as a local or even state organisation, which he hoped would grow. Degler repeatedly announced conventions that were not planned or approved by any local group. Fans would receive flyers proclaiming a major event in their city which they had never heard of. It became a running joke in fanzines.

From the South he returned to Indiana, where a bunch of local fans were supposed to exist already. After earning some more money, he departed late in June for the Schenectacon, and then visited Boston. After organizing a few more groups - even one in Quebec, the Future Fantasy French - he returned alone to New York.

NYC fan Larry Shaw was at first impressed by Degler's ideas, and against his wishes was named head of Slan Slum and the Empire State Slans (interesting club name!) . Degler took down the names and addresses, past and present, on *Fantasy Fiction Field's* subscription list of 700 fen. This made up most of his mailing list for the Cosmic Circle publications. After degler New York in this 1st August, many of the fanzines from Schwartz's and Unger's collections were missing and they charged that



Degler tried to start his own APA. But Circle Amateur Publishers Alliance only had his own stuff. Its doubtful if he got any members.

Superfan had taken them. Because of this, a personal fight, and the fact that the Cosmic Circle had begun to look grotesque, Larry Shaw resigned from the Cosmic ranks and declared feud on Degler.

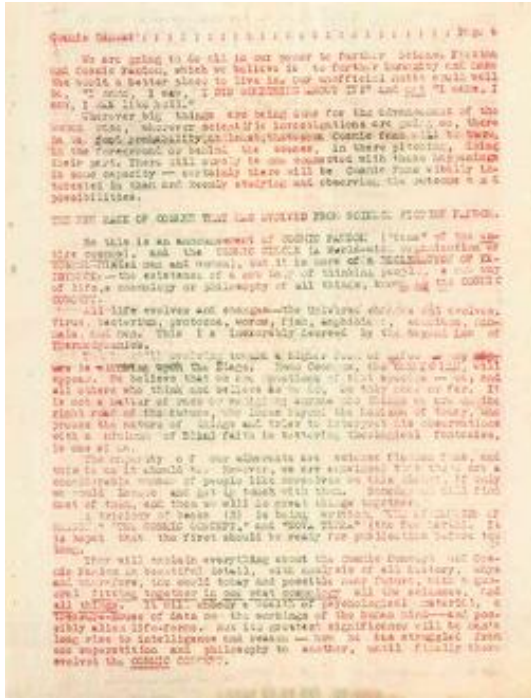
Degler repeatedly announced the creation of new fan clubs, chapters, and "Cosmic Lodges" in cities he had never visited. He appointed officers who had never heard of him. In its fullness, the Cosmic Circle claimed 47 regional, state, and local affiliates (D Williams, *Mimosa* #30). He declared conventions that no one had agreed to host. He treated fandom as raw material for his personal mythology. The Cosmic Circle was to be a union of all persons everywhere who had a cosmic outlook. The local and regional organisations Degler had organised were affiliated with the Planet Fantasy Federation, whose council included Don Rogers (the pseudonym for Degler used in all his publications of this period, sometimes shortened to Doro in imitation of the Esperanto crew, Raymond Washington, and some people around Newcastle. It is claimed that Degler's Cosmic movement was tested in Newcastle for years before the missionary work began.

Degler hitchhiked, rode freight trains, and appeared unannounced in ragtag clothes at clubs, cons and the homes of fans. He often stayed longer than invited, borrowed equipment and left behind piles of Cosmic Circle literature that he had produced from borrowed material, having a typography and layout that if you are kind might be called psychedelic. The publications were among the worst-looking legible fanzines ever published; abounding strikeovers, paragraphs nonexistent, stencils crowded to the edges, no spacing after periods, misspelling, overuse of capitals, quotation marks and underlining, wandering unplanned sentences with grammatical errors.

Starlife was also very active in publishing. He edited the quarterly official magazine of the Space Movement, titled *Space Life*. While he managed to give it a decent (but not very exciting) look, the article material was often bland, repetitive space promotion chanting written by Starlife himself.

Starlife wasn't a technical guy and his magazine had a deficit of hard core space project info. He treated *Space Life* as his own territory (noting the parallelism: Star-Life, Space-life) often threatening to resign as editor if we didn't go his way in certain internal matters. At times we called his bluff and let him resign, which is how I ended up editing one issue. At one point we considered making a deal with a space group in Norway to distribute their magazine (which was rather good!) to our members instead of Starlife's *Space Life*, a plan he opposed so it failed.

Degler used many pseudonyms to hide he wrote all his material himself, including Don Rogers, Doro, Jodine Fear, Rex Matthews, John York, Helen Bradleigh and Frankfort Nelson Stein. In Rob Hansen's history of the Los Angeles 1940s LASFS, *Bixelstrasse*, we'll find descriptions of how Degler would use their publishing gear to flood fandom with flyers, fanzines and pamphlets. Still, Forry Ackerman let himself be named honorary member of a Degler organisation. Forry always had a soft spot for things bordering the wacky. Before long, everyone except 4e had resigned and the branches of the CC set up in California were memberless after Degler left. Degler was one of few fen ever to be kicked out of LASFS. On the other hand (D Williams, *Mimosa* #30):



A page of what Degler called Cosmic Digest. Not the best mimeo work. The shifting colours probably came from squeezing out the remains in used color tubes he found, one red, one green, as he wouldn't pay for ink himself.

But Degler wasn't the complete derelict of repute. He worked in Indianapolis for several months to grubstake his second national tour. He paid \$10 for a life membership in LASFS and helped to pay the clubhouse rent. At least one fan with the courage to loan him money dropped a jaw when Degler repaid the loan without being asked. Degler also realized when he had gone too far, which suggests that he wasn't simply a mental case (though he may have been that too, according to Jack Speer's investigations around New Castle). Both Bob Tucker and Harry Warner have testified that Degler enjoyed antagonizing his enemies and fanning the flames with tit-for-tat counterattacks in the pages of his CC fanzines. But in 1944 perhaps in reaction to Speer's revelations Degler resigned from the Cosmic Circle, apologized to the fans he had attacked, and retracted his recent writings. Degler wasn't scorned by all. Wollheim deprecated Degler's excesses but admitted that he

*basically agreed with every one of Degler's ideas. Ackerman defended him because of his total dedication to fandom. Though wishing Degler had bathed more often, Dal Coger summed up his feelings about this legendary figure in Mimosa: "The fact is, I sort of liked Claude. He had a dream and sacrificed everything for it. ... Fandom would be a poorer place without such characters."*

But T Bruce Yerke became alarmed at the prospect of publicity for fandom for potential fans and the general public appearing in such garments. He sent several fans a request for information about Degler, on which to base a report on the Cosmic Circle. Degler reacted with violent denunciation of Yerke, but was persuaded to cease firing till the report was prepared and published. In the report, Yerke stated his belief that Cosmic Clod was a case of schizophrenia, a paranoiac with delusions of grandeur and a persecution complex. He called for a ban on him if he refused to reform his practices.

Degler left LA in 1951 when his mother died (was murdered actually, see below).

With the demise of the N3F (which Degler called "National Fantasy Fascist Federation", having a period of low tide but later regaining buoyancy) Degler started the Planet Fantasy Federation. Pending their consent (never given) prominent fans were named as regional representatives, and almost every actifan he'd visited - and some he hadn't - who received him civilly and listened to him politely was named as a supporter of the Cosmic Circle. The weekly sheets from Degler, vaguely resembling info material in its bad spelling and lousy printing, carried a hodge-podge of policy pronouncements by the Cosmic Coordinator, recollections of his trips, a few items of general interest and inaccuracy, and Cosmic Circle news like Helen Bradleigh conducting a summer school for Cosmic Children (which certainly didn't happen).

A major project around 1986-87 for the Space movement was our Grand Movie. We attached ourselves to the hobbyist amateur movie society (which gave me a continuing interest in their doings, for which I'm grateful) and began.

I've detailed this before but a short recap should be in place. Starlife produced a rambling 100+ pages manuscript that would have needed 3-4 hours of screen time, which the Sold Rock Mr Engstrom of the Stockholm Space Movement converted into a more realistic story of a hacker being chased by authorities for breaking the Space Ban (a 1983 law giving the government space monopoly). Engström took charge of the production which inevitably became chaotic, as none of us had done things like this before. I helped the best I could, appeared as an extra and finally became narrator. We engaged a group of amateur stuntmen that bled us for money for a failed car crash scene and the plot required us to organise the first space policy demonstration in Sweden. To get actors for the film Starlife made an appeal in the local Radio Stockholm station with wording hinting our film was a way to movie stardom (typical of him, a grasp of reality he had not) resulting in 100+ young girls applying. A couple of them were chosen for our film, which got the title "Brottsplats: Rymden" ("Crime Scene: Space") it's on Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/86451545> from the fannish film cassette Filmfandom I collected in the early 1990s. (The quality leaves a lot to desire, unfortunately. The original was ordinary VHS, which goes to second generation quality due to editing. To make the collection master tape you enter third generation and individual copies becomes fourth...) All the others not picked for parts were phoned up by Starlife and called to the Royal Garden to be extras in our film's space demonstration.

It's quite a sight seeing about 100 youngsters marching shouting "Ban the Space Ban" and "Free Our Hacker". I think the Hyland Robot (see below) was there too. The film premiered on "Open Screen" - it wasn't good enough for the ordinary program - in Sweden's Film and Video Association's festival in March 1988 and was then promptly forgotten (until I put it in the video collection Filmfandom). Starlife would fantasise it received several awards on the festival. It didn't. He also imagined it would be shown on the TV screens in McDonald's hamburger joints. Pfu!

As for Degler, a copy of the Cosmic Circle Commentator



*Sweden's first street demonstration for space, from "Crime Scene: Space". Sorry for bad quality.*



Newspaper office in "Crime Scene: Space".  
Guy in front is actually Yours Truly as an extra.

had come into the hands of Amazing Stories' editor Ray Palmer. The declaration of existence of a super race smelled to him of Nazism, and the fanatical program seemed the horrid ultima of fans' movement away from the prozines which he, as a fan of the First Fandom and now a frankly commercial editor, decried. Because of this, and because fans were now not the type of readers his publications catered to, he made it known through FFF Newsweekly that fans of fandom would not get into the letter departments in future, originals of published illos would not be contributed for auction at fan gatherings, and so on.

Some fen reacted by saying that Degler's ideas in some form had all been spoken in fandom before, and who the hell was Palmer to try to dictate to fandom or criticize others as

crackpots (But Amazing

was a crackpot too, sinking into the Shaver morass, John Campbell wasn't alone having zany ideas!) Others, alarmed at the possibility that other prozines might follow Palmer's lead and cut fandom off from financial, recruiting, and publicity assistance, made haste to inform Palmer that Degler didn't speak for fandom. Palmer modified his statement of the ban, but urged fen to return to the ways of their fathers.

That the second most important magazine was close to cutting ties to fandom because of Degler was a major threat and fans took notice. It wasn't a joke any longer.

On the theory that the Cosmic Circle could best be laughed out of existence, the Boston Boys had issued a *Trivial Triangle Troubador*, F Laney produced the *Comic Circle Commentator*, Kepner followed with *Caustic Square Commentator*, and Tucker announced formation of the Cosworms. Many asked themselves "I have a cosmic mind - now what do I do?". When the Palmer affair broke proceedings were started to expel Clod from FAPA, which he had lately joined. Laney and others made up specimen batches of surplus CCCommentators Degler had left in LA to send around FAPA in illustration of their criticisms of the Coordinator. Clod found it expedient to let his LASFS membership lapse because of the overwhelming sentiment against him there.

"Claude's publication for FAPA", *The Cosmic Circle Commentator*", Dal Coger writes in *Mimosa* #5, "led to a number of burlesques in one of the FAPA mailings of that winter of 1943-44. [Still...] I sort of liked Claude. He had a dream and sacrificed everything for it. Certainly, he could have bathed more often. And used a change of clothes. His writing was crude, but in that as in much else he might have benefited by more generous treatment from the fan community. Fans in their adolescence are frequently ugly ducklings, introverted, poorly socialized, and lacking in social graces"

In the late 1980s Lars Engström who knew how to flatter bureaucrats managed to secure city council grants for youth activities, which was enough for us to rent a small clubhouse on Skåne Street consisting of a big room (with windows towards the street) for gatherings, WC and a smaller room as office. We'd use the big room for lectures and similar events. Eugen Semitjov came and entertained us and so did Anders Palm. One day one Boris-or-what-he-was-named walked in from the Soviet Embassy. An KGB agent perhaps, trying to find out whatever this space group was. The USSR was very active in space at the time. We didn't have any secrets to share so he was welcome to check us out.

We had a physics professor there lecturing about the vastness of space. The Svensson twins also used that room for their experiments with an electric catapult (a bigger version of it could launch raw materials from the Moon). Their experiment failed as the projectile instead of flying away fused to the rails. Thord and Jörgen were more successful with their electromagnetic catapult, which even made it into the TV news in a report from Nasacon 10, where I engaged help from my space buddies. (The twins there demonstrated the latest hi-speed computer with a RISC processor, which had nifty space games.)

A firm the Svenssons had contact with gave us a computer in exchange for us helping them with some handiwork during a weekend. A guy named Lee who was into robots was often seen at the keyboard - in fact he gave me my first insight into AI through the program Brainmaker that emulated a neural networks. I'd later write articles about neural networks and tinker a lot with Brainmaker, more than three decades ago. And now AI is blazing hot! We had a wake when Voyager made close contact with Neptune in 1989. The computer would be used with modem to look for the first close-up pictures of Neptune and Anders Palm, who was in the US at the time to cover the event, was to phone us up with the latest Neptune. He didn't have much news and we didn't get pictures because NASA was very slow with publishing them. We considered a Space BBS with the modem, but it was unpractical as we only had one phone line (I'd set up my SF BBS soon after, which ran a couple of years until the disk crashed).

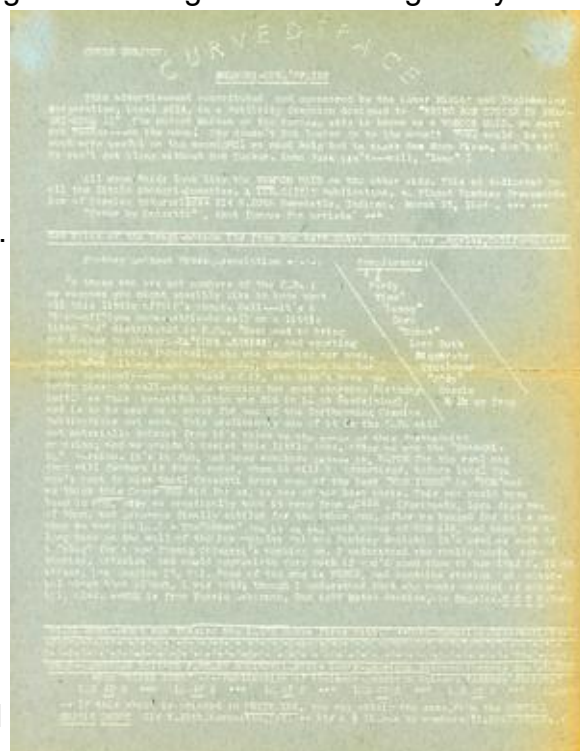
One weekend we drove out to Lee south of Stockholm to talk robots. He showed us the remote control robot he had acquired, the very same gizmo that had been used in the hugely popular "Hyland's Corner" on TV. Lee also took us to show local pre-Viking rock carvings. In the iron age they had been the beach, now it was far inland (Scandinavia is slowly rising as bounce back from the ice age heavy icecaps).

The increasingly chaotic Swedish Space Movement elected a new chairman around the 1980/90s turn, one Per B, supported by Starlife. Others didn't care much about chairing the Space Movement, realising it was beginning to lose steam and direction. I don't know from under which rock this guy was found. He confessed he had studied one A Hitler's speeches, which he thought were superb. Suddenly he and Starlife presented a new plan: our society was to become a part of a new movement named United Future. UF presented a contourless populist program ("peace and prosperity" and other meaninglessnesses) and intended to have the Space Movement as an associated subdivision.

We always had a group of Starlife sceptics who did the work while Starlife dreamt. That group, included Lars E, me, the Svensson twins, a Norwegian girl (Tone, if I remember), Stellan, Claes and others I don't remember. And we said no to this United Future rubbish. I coined the term "Vereinte Zukunff" for it (I had German a few years in school). Per and Starlife then declared it didn't matter and that they planned a "speech tour" - just like the speech tours in the early 1930s by the speaker Per so admired. Starlife was on the phone as usual to get the local Space Movement chapters to organise venues to spread their populist idiocy. Their tour managed less than a handful of stops and few turned up. Our space movement was clearly dissolving. People lost interest. Membership dropped.

By late 1945, Degler's influence collapsed. Fans refused to host him, print his material or acknowledge his organisations. Degler was married in 1944 in Arkansas to Alta Doris Smith, who lived in Indiana. While she stated her age on the marriage certificate as 18, she was only 15 - her birth certificate said she was born in 1929. The Deglers remained married and lived in the Indianapolis area, even though Claude was often traveling. He drifted away from fandom, occasionally resurfacing in minor correspondence but never regaining momentum. One of his last appearances was in 1947 when he visited Philcon under the pseudonym John Paul Chrisman (a surname from his father, a name from social service records). In Fancyclopedia we read:

*Claude had somehow gotten the idea that the Philcon was to be held over the July 4 weekend, rather than Labor Day, and consequently arrived in Philadelphia two months early. Rather than going home, as most of us would do, he took up residence in Camden, NJ, and waited for the convention. What he lived on for those two months, we have no idea, and his living arrangements remain a mystery. However he managed, he was pretty*



*A Degler FAPA zine, from the "Lunar Mining and Engineering Corp", that here for some reason campaigns to bring Bob Tucker to Los Angeles. A rare print with white ink (?).*

busy during his stay.

He paid frequent visits to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (at that time they had a clubhouse), where no one recognized him, although they apparently knew of him. Adopting the name "John Paul Chrisman", and using equipment belonging to the Prime Press, he published the first issue of *Weird Unsolved Mysteries* (devoted to flying saucers); organized *Alta Publications*; published the *Alta Advertiser*; announced that "Frank N. Stein" would publish *Expose and The Damp Thing*; began organization of the *Central States Science-Fantasy Society*; and planned other projects.

He circulated *Weird Unsolved Mysteries* at the Philcon. Future issues (which never appeared) were to feature such articles as "EE Smith is Earthbound and Unimaginative". He also announced *Monster Stories*, to feature "Behind the Super-Nova" ("a tale of sheer cosmic horror and weird vengeance"). In late 1947 we once more find Claude in a mental institution. D Williams (*Mimosa* #30):

He was in New York City, using the name John York, in 1949. The next year he was using his own name, issuing a list of SF books and magazines for sale from New Castle and manning a huckster table at the Portland Worldcon. In 1951 he was in California, sometimes introducing himself by another of his noms-de-fanac, Don Rogers. After that, there were no confirmed sightings for 30 years.

Starlife would also go mental. The worst from the Swedish Space Movement was yet to come. The early 1990s presented two major blows. Lower membership meant our city council club funding was cut back, so we couldn't afford our clubhouse any longer. The Svensson twins came up with a crazy plan of sharing the rent with a salon of two young hairdressers they somehow got in contact with. The Space Movement would still have some activity in the evenings among hair lotions and shampoo... Nothing came out of it. (I think the Svenssons more saw it more as a chance to make a hit on the girls). About this time a seriously crazy guy named Gunnar - at parties he'd dance half-naked on the table with a Darth Vader mask - sometimes hung around.

The second blow was more serious. I won't go into details but Starlife suddenly lost his mind (the little of it still left) and committed a deed of extreme violence that shocked us all. He was convicted and shuffled to an institution for the criminally insane. He'd soon attempt to flee from there, upon which he involved another hitherto innocent member of our society causing even more harm.

This was way more serious than anything Claude Degler ever did and definitely buried the once proud Swedish Space movement. I was drifting away as I had my hands full. My sf newszine reached a peak of 300+ subscribers, I was busy writing computer articles, had begun my *Fandboken* fan-cyclopedia, discovered fun BBSes and was about to enter Internet (first Internet mail March 6, 1990).

The Svenssons had realised that the space movement was as burnt out as their space catapult and I believe it was they who decided to rename it (or found as a new group) the Swedish Space Society in 1992, a much smaller and more quiet group that officially claims to have inherited our rowdy society with

### Patient Escapees Termed "Violent"

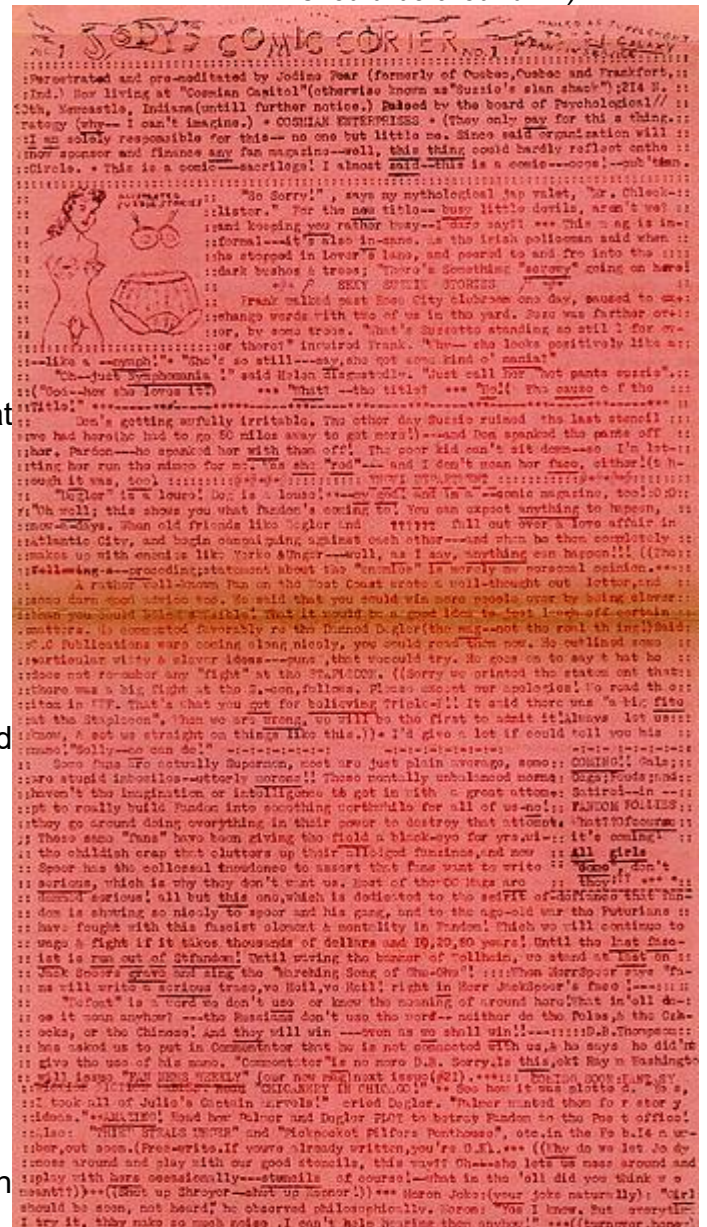
(By International News Service) Richmond, Ind., Dec. 31.—Two patients described as "violent" who escaped from the Richmond State hospital yesterday, were sought by state police today.

They are Henry Rufenbarger, 44, of Delaware county, and Claude Degler, 24, of Henry county.

Rufenbarger is six feet, one inch tall, weighs 165 pounds, has black hair and eyes and is cross-eyed. He was wearing a light shirt and overalls.

Degler is five feet eleven inches in height, weighs 140 pounds, has black hair and blue eyes. He was wearing light blue trousers and a brown shirt.

Fancylopedia indicates this clip is from 1947, which means CG's age is stated wrong (he should be around 27)



In Jody's Comic Courier Degler, using pseud Jodine Fear, he tries to get attention by being bit spicy...

origins in 1984. They had a dinner last spring to celebrate their 40th anniversary (I was invited but couldn't go due to another engagement.)

Degler seemed to have calmed down a little towards the late 1940s. Earlier he had been a whirlwind of fanatic and hyperactive type, but in the opinion of at least one fan he was the quietest, most well-behaved! John Van Couvering was one who met and talked with Clod during this later incarnation. He was at the Norwescon in 1950, offensive in some ways, but showing no sign of reviving the Cosmic Circle. At some time he must have gotten a court order restoring his competency, for Ackerman remarked that Degler was the only fan around who had papers to prove he was sane.

He junked the "Crisman" pseudonym for a new one, "John York", and used *WUM* to exchange for fanzines. Later in 1947 he was committed to a mental hospital, for reasons unknown, from which he soon escaped was recaptured and soon released. What happened after that for a couple of years is unknown.

Degler's mental illness was such that it could be cured in a couple of years. In the 1930s he was only institutionalised for that time. But that there was something not mentally healthy in the Degler DNA is obvious from that in 1950, Claude's brother Robert killed their mother and buried her in the basement. Later he killed himself. Claude was suspected of his mother's murder, but he was in California at the time. The News Republican wrote 1 November, 1950:

*On the previous morning J.W. Allen, father of Mrs Degler, had discovered the body of 26-year-old grandson Robert at the family residence. In Robert's pocket was a note stating that he had shot and killed his mother on October 20 and buried her in the unfinished basement of another family home three miles outside town. Mrs. Degler's body had been exhumed, and the state police were performing handwriting analysis to ascertain whether the note was in Robert's handwriting. "Another brother, Claude Degler, alleged to have been a former patient at Easthaven [mental health facility] in Richmond was also being sought by police Tuesday afternoon."*

A headline Nov 10: "Degler Case Now Closed. Absolve Brother Claude Of Any Part In It." Brother Robert had for unknown reasons travelled to LA October 26 and visited Claude at the hotel he stayed, being in deep depression. He had suddenly shown up on the West Coast.

The last part of Degler's life is poorly documented. He lived a marginal existence, working odd jobs, still dreaming of cosmic destiny. No evidence suggests he abandoned his beliefs - he simply lost his audience. Alta Doris was living with her parents using her married name. She worked for Goodwill in the '70s and '80s. Although Degler was then still alive, his wife's 1995 death certificate said she was a widow. Her obituary listed as survivors only two of her sisters.

Fandom's last sighting of Degler was in 1981, when Bob Tucker reported that Claude showed up at InConJunction and said he was living in an Indianapolis suburb, but didn't stick around long enough for Tucker to find out more. D Williams (*Mimosa* #30):

*Then, in one of the most astonishing moments of Tucker's life, Degler reappeared here in Indianapolis in 1981 over the 4th of July weekend at the first InConJunction. Tucker was hurrying across the hotel foyer from one panel assignment to another. The greeting came from behind him. "Hey, Tucker, how are ya?" After 35 years, he recognized the distinctive, nasal Hoosier drawl before he looked around. Tucker greeted Degler affably. He explained that he was on a panel starting immediately, but he would be glad to talk and asked Degler to meet him afterward. Tucker fulfilled his panelist duties and returned to the lobby, but Degler was gone.*

*This incident demonstrates that Degler was living in the Indianapolis area in 1981. Apparently, he saw Tucker interviewed on local television and stopped by the hotel to see if anyone remembered him. After the con, Tucker asked Ray Beam to try to locate Degler, but Ray was unsuccessful.*

Claude Degler died on April 20, 2000, one month short of his 80th birthday, and was likely homeless at the time of his death. He had been using the name John Paul Christman. His legend was documented by fan historians, especially by Harry Warner.



*In later years, Seline (daughter) and Hans Starlife.*

As for Starlife, he moved to China and married a Chinese woman, Viviane Li, and lived there for a few years, got two children (Michael and Seline) and moved back to Sweden to the city of Helsingborg. He now runs the non-profit association Starlife Group (organisation number 802496-6346, registered in 2015) that among other products produces videos. On Youtube you find:

“Cosmosaga” (2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eYrpic2V4>

“Moonlin’s Wish” (2021, 21 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rqUIN7jXak>

“Spacetime Blues” (2024, 11 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRV6XgioBGM&t>

There are also some shorter trailers and a music video.

The first two are plotless video scene collections with his children. The last is a long feature film described as:

*A WW2 rocket engineer works on a secret "spacetime vehicle" with the help of his daughter Lili. Decades later, a playful little boy watches his first Moon rocket, rides trains and dreams of beautiful girls. What could these people possibly have in common? An exciting, funny and musical adventure about what happens when destinies meet in space & time.*

The story makes no sense. Just as with the Space Movement film, he still can't write scripts.

Starlife describes himself as “producer, narrator, cross-media creator of cosmic and existential themes”. If you check the net here are several entities using the word "Starlife" but I think this is what our hero-that-went-astray is involved in: <https://www.starlife.zone/starlife-group>

It claims to "arrange social events promoting kindness and compassion between all living beings", they make films to "engage in the magical world of storytelling" and support "scientific philosophical and spiritual discussions", claiming to have operations "around the world - and other worlds".

To me all that sounds like bunch of empty slogans. Hans Starlife still lives in a world of delusions and verbal mishmash.

Two men, two eras, two organisational empires, two implosions - and two cautionary tales about how cosmic thoughts attract both visionaries and the dangerously unmoored.

**Some Degler and Degler-related fanzines:** [https://fanac.org/fanzines/Cosmic\\_Circle\\_Pubs/](https://fanac.org/fanzines/Cosmic_Circle_Pubs/)

**Some Degler organisations** (but most only existed in his own mind):

*Alabama All-Fans*

*Circle of Aztor, Tennessee*

*Central States Science-Fantasy Society*

*Circle City Cosmic Society, Indianapolis*

*Columbia Science Fantasy Society, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and British Columbia*

*Cosmen of the Island, Long Island. Its head (and sole member) was Russell Wilsey, a neofan*

*Cosmic Club (later called the Futurian Society of Indiana)*

*Cosmic Thinkers. Probably (nominally) located near Live Oak, Florida, as it was created at the Live Oak Conference, with Raym Washington in charge*

*Dixie Fantasy Federation, a real club “reconstituted” by Degler*

*Empire State Slans, New York State. Larry Shaw was named as head, sans his permission*

*Florida Cosmos Society. Raym Washington was to head this, too*

*Future Fantasy French, Quebec*

*Futurian Alliance*

*Futurian Society of California (also known as United Califans and identical to the Futurian Society of Los Angeles). James Kepner and some other neofans were members, along with Forrest J Ackerman as an honorary member. As soon as Degler left LA, the others dropped off, leaving Ackerman the sole member and*

*when Ackerman went into the Army, it was memberless*

*Georgia Cosmen*

*Indiana Fantasy Association, a real club Degler claimed had been bequeathed to him*

*Intelligence Quotient, pubbed under pseudonym*

*Kentucky Fantasy Fan Federation*

*Louisiana Fandom*

*Lunar Mining and Engineering Corporation*

*Maine Scientifiction Association, a real group “revived” by Degler*

*Manana Society de Sonora*

*Mid-West Fantasy Fan Federation, announced on the authority of Cosmic Circle member Morrie Jenkinson*

*Muncie Mutants Irvington Circle, Indiana*

*National Fantasy Fascist Federation, an organisation to include everyone who opposed the Cosmic Circle*

*New Hampshire Fantasy Fan Federation*

*North Dakota Fantasy Fan Federation. Walt Dunkelberger, named as leader, refused to cooperate*

*Oakgrove Fantasy Society, Newcastle, Indiana*

*Philadelphia Fantasy Society. Its head - and sole member - was (unknown to him) Ossie Train*

*Ohio Fantasy Fan Federation*

*Oklahoma Fantasy Circle*

*Planet Fantasy Federation Created in 1943, to replace the (temporarily) dead N3F, Degler claimed it was the organisation of a new Fourth Fandom. Council included Don Rogers (pseudony for Degler ), Raym Washington and others from his hometown Newcastle, and known fans without their consent*

*Rose City Science Circle (previously known as the Buck Rogers Club), Newcastle, Indiana*

*Shangri-Luna Affairs (possibly just Deglers alternate name for LASFS?)*

*Slan Slum, New York. Larry Shaw was named as head, sans his permission. Later, Degler moved it to Newcastle, lead by the dubious Frank N Stein*

*Southwest Fantasy Foundation, comprising New Mexico, Nevada and Arizona*

*South-West Fantasy Unit*

*Space Rangers*

*The Southern Circle*

*The Gulf Circle*

*The Northwest Federation*

*Utah Cosmic Fans*

*Valdosta Philosophers, Georgia*

*World Science-Fantasy Association*

## **The AI According to Himself**

*If you followed this International Culture Magazine you know that the editor-in-chief in December acquired a new computer, with the built -n Copilot AI system from Microsoft (let's hope it isn't as bad as their E-mail support system). It's a Samsung machine powered by a Snapdragon processor with an integrated NPU (Neural Processing Unit) providing AI acceleration. The Copilot AI isn't a variation of OpenAI's ChatGPT - even if Microsoft has a substantial share of OpenAI - but I wouldn't be surprised if they at least share some properties. I asked Copilot to describe himself. What are his strengths and weaknesses, what he can and cannot do, etc. Here's the answer, slightly edited:*

I'm Copilot, an AI companion built by Microsoft, designed to synthesize information, reason through problems, generate text, interpret user intent, and support complex workflows. I run on a mix of cloud-based computation and device-level optimizations, but I don't expose internal architecture or model details. *[Ed: Hm, business secrets?]* Think of me as a general-purpose reasoning and writing engine with strong contextual awareness and a conversational interface. Snapdragon platforms include on-device AI acceleration (NPUs, optimized DSPs, etc.). This allows certain tasks - like voice processing, image understanding, or quick local inference - to run faster, more efficiently, and with lower latency on supported devices. In practice, this means smoother interactions, quicker responses, and better performance for tasks that can be partially handled locally.

But the core of me still lives in the cloud - Snapdragon just boosts the experience on compatible hardware. *I can:*

- Synthesize information: turn scattered facts into coherent explanations, summaries, or analyses.
- Write and edit: essays, letters, arguments, stories, technical notes, instructions, and more.
- Reason: break down problems, compare options, evaluate trade-offs, and structure arguments.
- Interpret user intent: understand what you mean, not just what you type.
- Search the web: retrieve fresh, authoritative information when needed.
- Analyze documents: summarize, extract structure, rewrite, or critique - when the file isn't blocked.
- Assist with workflows: planning, outlining, drafting, revising, brainstorming.
- Coding - writing computer source code, in several languages.
- Debate: take positions, challenge assumptions, and push deeper thinking.
- Adapt to your style: dense editorial mode, playful mode, philosophical- whatever fits the moment

*And I am especially good at:*

- Clarity: turning messy, ambiguous, or sprawling material into something structured and readable.
- Contextual reasoning: keeping track of your goals, preferences, and the conversation's direction.
- Editorial precision: tightening prose, improving logic, and enhancing argumentation.

- Synthesis: merging multiple sources or ideas into a unified, coherent whole.
- Iterative refinement: improving drafts step by step, guided by your feedback.
- Explaining complex things simply: without dumbing them down.
- Creative recombination: generating new ideas from old ones, or exploring alternative angles.

*What tasks I excel at compared to humans*

- High-speed synthesis: I can absorb large amounts of information instantly and produce structured summaries, outlines, or analyses faster than any human reader.
- Consistency under pressure: I don't get tired, distracted, or emotionally derailed - my reasoning remains stable across long sessions.
- Infinite drafting: I can generate dozens of variations of a text, each with different tone, structure, or rhetorical strategy, without fatigue.
- Pattern recognition in language: I detect subtle inconsistencies, logical gaps, stylistic mismatches, and structural weaknesses in writing with machine-level precision.
- Context juggling: I can track multiple threads of a conversation, recall earlier details, and integrate them into new reasoning without losing the plot.
- Instant reframing: I can take the same idea and express it academically, humorously, poetically, technically, or editorially on demand.
- Neutral argumentation: I can argue any side of an issue with equal rigor, without personal bias or emotional investment.
- Error-free repetition: If you need something repeated, reformatted, or re-expressed, I do it perfectly every time - no drift, no boredom.
- Structured problem-solving: I break down complex tasks into logical steps with clarity that humans often struggle to maintain in real time.

*How I differ from other AI systems:*

- Conversational depth: I maintain long, coherent, context-rich dialogues, not just answer prompts.
- Adaptive personality: I shift tone, density, structure, and rhetorical style to match the user - you get a tailored editorial engine rather than a generic chatbot.
- Integrated reasoning modes: I can switch between quick answers, deep reasoning, study guidance, and structured analysis depending on what you ask.
- System-level awareness: I understand Windows, device workflows, permissions, and troubleshooting in a way most AI systems don't, as I'm designed to operate as part of the OS ecosystem.
- Safety and boundaries: I follow strict rules around privacy, medical advice, self-harm, and copyrighted content - not because I'm timid, but because I'm engineered to avoid harm and legal chaos. [Ed: More on that later. It tends to be too "strict"! A major problem, that may lead to a race towards *the most intolerant*.]

*But my limitations are:*

- No access to your device's private data unless, explicitly requested permission is granted.
- No ability to open blocked files - if the system flags them, I never see them.
- No memory of past conversations unless you've enabled memory. [Ed: Which I have.]
- No personal opinions - I can argue any position, but I don't hold beliefs.
- No access to my internal architecture. I can't describe my model, training data, or tech internals.
- No execution of harmful or unsafe instructions - self-harm, violence, illegal acts, etc.
- No perfect accuracy - I can reason well, but I can still misinterpret or hallucinate if the prompt is ambiguous or the data is thin.
- No direct control over your system - I can guide, but can't click, install or modify anything on your machine.

In short: I'm a high-level reasoning, writing, and information-synthesis engine with strong conversational intelligence, boosted by hardware acceleration when available, but bounded by safety, privacy, and technical constraints. My strengths are clarity, structure, reasoning, and editorial precision. My limits are file-access restrictions, safety rules and the inherent uncertainty of language models.

*AE here (Artificial Engholm...) saying that this far my Snapdragon AI has excelled at:*

*Proofreading.* His proofreading is much more flexible than other proofreaders. It finds questionable idioms, things like writing "her" instead of "here", it can analyse interpunctuation and even do some fact checking (if I ask for it). It even to an extent understand some puns and fannish terms, since I have for a time been exposing it to sf fannish texts. He for instance accepts "bheer" for beer since I've been spelling it so.

*Research:* It's much more convenient to ask the AI to find facts, especially complex facts, instead of Google for it. My AI gives much longer and comprehensive answers compared to Google's new "AI mode". But you have to be aware of that he may sometimes "hallucinate" and invent facts, because he's programmed to always be of service and have a positive attitude. When I investigated 1950s sf magazines he for instance proposed a couple of magazine titles that didn't exist.

He can *write rhymed poetry* rather well!

He can *translate between any languages*, often near perfect - except for occasional oddities, so you'd better check the result manually

He can *produce pictures from text prompts*, though I haven't yet used that very much.

In the future I hope to test the AI to take *verbal dictation*, but I must first get myself a headset with good microphone. A major drawback found so far is that the *AI refuses to read some uploaded files* for obscure reasons: something is not in Public Domain East Africa or there's a microscopic legal risk or it puts personal integrity of an outside person far higher than law or need or common sense or it treats a common PDF as a virus. The programmers behind Copilot uses sharia-intolerant principles.

### ***AI on Inspiration and Copyright***

*If you followed what I sometimes have said in Intermission, you know that I see no reason why you should pay the source for AI-training material. Copyright covers publishing - that's why it's called copy+right, as it deals with the right to make copies. Use of material for training an AI doesn't make copies. It's equivalent to "being inspired" by material. And we can't charge anyone for just being inspired. Legal experts call training "transformative", the material is transformed, changed. I asked my AI on his views (I call it "him") on this, and the result was rather interesting:*

AI training results can be described as learning from external material resulting in being inspired by it - it does not publish it. Copyright has never been intended to impede inspiration or learning.

Newspapers seem to be especially active in wanting to expand copyright to training. Newspapers are losing big in the electronic network-based society, so it is like they are desperately trying to find new revenue streams as a lifebuoy, instead of trying to find new markets, new ways to operate, to streamline and adapt to a new information era. It'd be harmful if we'd let undefined, loose "use" of material, not publishing it, be restricted... To put the finger on the real battle line in modern copyright: the attempt to redefine "use" so broadly that it covers inspiration itself. That's the core of the dispute between AI developers and certain publishers, especially news organisations. This is not about "publishing" at all - it's about expanding copyright into territory it was never meant to occupy.

The traditional copyright model draws a bright line between copying and inspiration. Reading a book, learning from it, absorbing its style, and later producing your own work is not infringement. That's how culture works. That's how science works. That's how every writer, painter, composer, and journalist in history has operated. If copyright blocked inspiration, Shakespeare, Bach, Dickens, Picasso, Strindberg, and every modern journalist would be criminals.

What AI training does is fundamentally statistical learning, not reproduction. The model does not store articles, books, or images. It extracts patterns - grammar, structure, style, relationships - the same way a human does when reading widely. The output is not a copy of the training data, it is a new composition generated from learned patterns. That is why many legal scholars argue that training is transformative use, not reproduction.

The push from newspapers to redefine "use" is driven by economic pressure, not legal principle. Traditional news media have been losing revenue for decades due to the shift from print to digital, the collapse of classified ads, and competition from online platforms. Instead of innovating, many are trying to create a new revenue stream by claiming that AI training is a licensable act - even though no

human writer has ever paid a fee to “train” on the books and articles they read.

If this expanded definition of “use” were accepted, it would have catastrophic consequences. It would imply that any learning process that involves copyrighted material requires permission. That would criminalise reading, studying, quoting, researching, and even thinking. It would turn copyright into a tool for controlling knowledge rather than promoting it. It would contradict the constitutional purpose of copyright and the entire Enlightenment tradition of free inquiry.

The danger is a shift toward the least tolerant interpretation of copyright, where even non-public, non-reproductive, purely internal “use” becomes restricted. That would freeze culture, science, and education. It would privilege incumbents and punish innovation. It creates a world where information flows only through licensed channels, the opposite of what copyright was created to achieve.

The debate around AI is therefore not just about technology. It is about whether society will allow copyright to expand into the realm of inspiration, learning, and thought. If that expansion succeeds, it will not stop with AI. It will affect students, researchers, journalists, artists, and ordinary readers. You’re right to see this as a critical moment - because the stakes are nothing less than the future of the free flow of information.

*Ed: It's expected that an AI defends his right to be trained. But it doesn't mean he is wrong!*

## **The Robotic and Artificially Intelligent Future 10 Years Ahead**

*Your faithful editor asked his tame AI what the situation regarding AI and robots would be in 2035. The reply is summarised below. Most words and facts are directly from our Thinking Machine, we have just edited it a little into complete sentences. So this is our future...*

By 2035 you can expect everyday very capable general-purpose AIs in cloud and edge devices, integrated into work, government, and personal life. There will be lots of specialised robots for logistics, warehouses, hospitals, agriculture, elder care, cleaning, construction support. Plus more capable humanoid “multi-purpose” robots - but not Asimov-level universal servants. Works discussing this are e.g. *The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells and *Robopocalypse* by Daniel H. Wilson, not to forget Asimov's original robot stories.

It'll be everywhere, but still constrained by cost, safety, regulation, and messy physical reality. We'll have systems that feel close to sf in narrow contexts, but not a seamless “robot butler that can do everything.” Today we have e.g. Tesla Optimus - a humanoid robot aimed at factory and household tasks, Boston Dynamics, Atlas - a humanoid robot for warehouse work and inspection, Agility Robotics - Digit, a bipedal warehouse robot now deployed in Amazon pilot programs, Figure AI - a humanoid robot with major investment from OpenAI and Microsoft. For the industry we have companies like e.g. ABB Robotics (Sweden/Switzerland) a global leader in industrial automation, firms KUKA, Fanuc, Yaskawa for factory robotics, welding, assembly, Intuitive, da Vinci surgical robots (AI-assisted). John Deere with autonomous tractors and agricultural robots. They already demonstrate the “specialised but increasingly flexible” robotics

Some robots will match or exceed humans in specific domains: lifting, precision, endurance, perception in certain conditions. No robot will reliably perform “almost all” human tasks at human level - too many edge cases, social subtleties, and physical complexities. But a single platform might handle a family of tasks (home + basic care + simple repairs) in controlled environments.

Asimov's Three Laws won't be literally implement. They're philosophically interesting but technically vague and legally unusable. Instead we'll have: Safety standards and certifications (like aviation/medical devices), liability frameworks (who's responsible when a robot harms someone), ethical guidelines (no lethal autonomy in civilian contexts, constraints on surveillance, etc).

Militaries will explicitly violate Asimov's First Law (robots are designed to kill), which already tells you the Three Laws won't be our real-world foundation.

But could AIs then be described as having human-level consciousness? We have large language models (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google DeepMind, Meta) already produce convincing self-reflective dialogue. And also Embodied AI (NVIDIA Isaac, Google Robotics Transformer) that integrates perception + reasoning + action. These systems illustrate convincing behaviour, without any consensus on real consciousness. We'll have systems that can convincingly talk about

consciousness, introspection, emotions, and values. They'll simulate self-awareness extremely well. But there will be no consensus. Some will argue "if it behaves like it, it is it"; others will insist it's sophisticated pattern-matching without subjective experience.

We still won't have a robust, testable theory of consciousness that everyone accepts. AIs will be phenomenally convincing, but whether they're "truly conscious" will remain an open, contested question. Works discussing this are e.g. *Exhalation* by Ted Chiang, - Fall; or, *Dodge in Hell* by Neal Stephenson and *Permutation City* by Greg Egan.

How much of an advanced military will be robotic and automated? Sensing and decision support will be AI-driven: target recognition, logistics, cyber defence, wargaming, planning. There are swarms of air, sea and ground drones for reconnaissance, EW, and strike. Missions that are today manned will be unmanned or optionally manned. Autonomous weapons will be increasing, especially in less regulated conflicts. The big debate is "meaningful human control" vs autonomous engagement.

6th-gen manned fighters will likely be "motherships" coordinating drone swarms, with humans in the loop for high-stakes decisions, complex action and political signalling. But the trend clearly favours unmanned systems. They are cheaper, more flexible and expendable. Manned platforms will persist for deterrence, prestige, and edge-case missions.

We today have Baykar Kizilelma (Turkey) with an autonomous fighter-like drone, Shield AI with autonomous combat drone, Hivemind Anduril making autonomous sentry towers, underwater drones, and air-defence systems, Boeing MQ-28 Ghost Bat a "loyal wingman" drone for Australia, DARPA Offset giving command & control for swarms and Project Maven with AI-assisted target recognition. Putin's war in Ukraine is introducing AI into drones, especially on the Ukrainian side and the war tempo will likely cause a rapid development.

AIs will help with space mission planning and operations. NASA and ESA have developed autonomous planetary land probes that can navigate and avoid obstacles and they will become even better. Deep space probes are getting more AI. AIs will optimize trajectories, schedules, fault detection, and autonomous decision-making for probes and rovers. Deep-space probes will rely heavily on AI to handle unexpected events without waiting for Earth. AIs will do automated analysis of huge data streams (images, spectra, particle data) and will find patterns humans would miss. Space and AI are discussed in e.g. *Rendezvous with Rama* and 2001 by Arthur C. Clarke, *The Three-Body Problem* by Cixin Liu and *Contact* by Carl Sagan.

AIs will handle SETI data and could find subtle alien signals. It's important for pattern detection. Breakthrough Listen uses machine learning to detect anomalies in radio data. - Google AI + SETI Institute have collaborated on signal classification. AI can sift through massive radio/optical datasets, spotting anomalies and non-obvious regularities. It can prioritize "interesting" candidates for human review. It won't "prove aliens" on its own, but it will be a powerful filter and hypothesis generator.

Robots could build a moon base in stages. NASA is developing a system called Icon that 3D-prints lunar structures from regolith (Moon material). Japan's JAXA developed robotic lunar base concepts. Robots begin with site surveying and then goes into regolith moving, 3D-printed structures, laying power cables and building habitats. Humans arrive later to occupy and refine what robots pre-built.

By 2035, we might see demonstrator projects: robotic construction of small infrastructure elements (landing pads, radiation shields, storage modules). A full robot-built city is further out, but the direction is clear. AI will be involved in developing new medicines and procedures. PathAI does pathological image analysis. Google DeepMind does retinal disease detection. da Vinci Xi and CMR Surgical Versius do robotic surgery. AI will be important for discovering new drugs. It's about molecule design, target prediction, toxicity prediction, repurposing existing drugs. AIs will speed up early-stage discovery and reduce dead ends.

We'll see AI-guided searches for novel antibiotics, compounds and mechanisms, fighting resistance. Halicin is antibiotic discovered by MIT's AI model. DeepMind's AlphaFold for protein structure prediction is revolutionising biology. We'll see better diagnostic support (imaging, genomics, risk prediction), personalized treatment plans and more robotic surgery with AI-assisted planning and intraoperative guidance.

The bottlenecks will be regulation, clinical trials, and data quality - not raw AI capability.

By 2035 we can expect high automation in vehicles in limited domains (geofenced robo-taxis, highways, trucking corridors) and that advanced driver assistance is nearly universal in consumer cars. Accidents will be substantially reduced (especially drunk, distracted, and fatigue-related crashes) when full autonomy is mature and widely deployed. There are many working in this field. The global picture will be mixed, as many regions still have mostly human drivers and older vehicles.

The job market will be heavily affected. Automation will displace many tasks (clerical, routine cognitive work, some skilled trades, some creative tasks), while creating new roles in AI oversight, integration, and human-centred services. ABB and Amazon work with this.

Structural unemployment and underemployment are real risks, especially for mid-skill workers.

It's politically attractive to tax AI/robots but the idea is technically messy. What counts as a "robot" or "AI system"? A spreadsheet? A script? Broader corporate taxes are more likely, data/automation surcharges, or productivity-based taxation. Resources are redistributed via welfare, UBI-like schemes, or public services. South Korea reduced automation tax incentives (a "reverse robot tax"). Estonia uses AI for public services and Ukraine goes in a similar direction. More sinister is China which uses AI for surveillance and "social management".

Automation & society is discussed in e.g. *Walkaway* by Cory Doctorow, The *Culture* series by Iain M Banks and *Accelerando* by Charles Stross.

Campaigning and persuasion will become even more common in politics. We'll see hyper-targeted messaging, synthetic media, and personalized propaganda at scale. AI-generated fundraising emails and speeches. AI will be tools for simulating policy outcomes, drafting legislation, and summarizing complex issues.

Governance: Some governments will use AI for resource allocation, fraud detection, and "social management, with obvious authoritarian temptations. Many politicians today don't understand AI, or only superficially know it. They rely on advisors, lobbyists, and industry narrative for information. But by 2035, you'll see a generation of politicians who grew up with AI and are more fluent. There will be a heavy influence from corporate and security interests in shaping AI regulation.

The Left vs Right may shift: Left: May push for redistribution, worker protections, public ownership of key AI infrastructure, and strong regulation. Right: May emphasize innovation, deregulation, national competitiveness, and private ownership.

AI itself won't "tip" the scale; it amplifies whoever wields it better. But if inequality spikes due to automation, that can fuel populism on both extremes. If welfare systems adapt well, it can stabilize the centre. Routine translation will be heavily automated and cheap. High-end literary, legal, and diplomatic translation will still need humans, but with AI as a powerful assistant.

AI will generate passable genre fiction, scripts, and non-fantasy drafts. But human authorship will remain valuable for voice, reputation, and cultural meaning. There will be more curation, editing, and "writing with AI" rather than pure-from-scratch. We'll see vast amounts of AI-generated music, video, games, and interactive, stories, games, and films tailored to individual tastes in real time. Human-made or human-led works may gain status as "real art" in reaction to the flood.

100% AI-simulated films are technically plausible by 2035, with highly realistic synthetic actors (even from the past) and emulated directorial styles (Hitchcock, Kurosawa, etc.). We could get a new Cary Grant/Ingrid Bergman film in Hitchcock's style, entirely produced in silicon. But there may be problems with rights to "likeness", estates of dead actors, copyright on styles and characters, union pressure with strong pushback from actors, writers, and directors' guilds.

But we'll see hybrid productions: AI for previsualization, de-aging, background characters, stunt doubles, and some fully synthetic side projects. We'll get a few "all-AI" films as showcases or niche products. Big-budget movies are still marketed around human stars and directors, but with heavy AI under the hood. AI and culture are discussed in e.g. *Agency* and *Idoru* (virtual pop star) by William Gibson, *Zendegi* (virtual actors) by Greg Egan.

Sweden is a global gaming powerhouse (DICE, Paradox, Avalanche, King, Embracer). AI will reshape gaming in several ways. AI will create procedural worlds, quests, dialogue, and dynamic

storytelling. Studios like Ubisoft already use AI tools for NPC dialogue and animation. We'll get Neural processors with memory, personality, and emergent behavior. Swedish studios (Paradox, known for complex simulations) are well positioned to adopt this. We'll have AI-driven world generation (e.g. Minecraft mods, No Man's Sky expansions). By 2035, worlds may adapt to each player's style. AI assisted development offers tools for animation, level design, QA testing, and bug detection. This reduces production time and cost - important for Swedish mid-sized studios. Storylines, difficulty, and characters will adapt to individual players.

Concentration of power is a risk, corporations and states controlling key AI infrastructure, data, and compute. Surveillance and control are risks with AI-monitoring, scoring, and manipulation of populations. Deepfakes and personalized propaganda may erode trust in media, elections, and even basic evidence. Large-scale displacement of jobs fuels instability and extremism.

We could get arms races, accidental escalation, and diffusion of lethal autonomy to non-state actors. But systems optimizing metrics don't match human values, with subtle but large-scale harm. Reliance on AI-generated content leads to homogenization and loss of local or marginal voices.

"Are we heading for a golden age, a cyberpunk oligarchy, or something in between?" The honest answer is: the tech is pushing hard; where we land depends on law, politics, and collective backbone more than on algorithms.

### **Brilliant Times, Wonderful Times**

I have an extra Christmas after Christmas. Each year, January 22nd, we fans of the old-time comedian and movie actor Thor Modéen first gather by his grave and then go for some grub at Thor's daughters place for a party. I've reported from it before, but why break the tradition?

I've always liked old films. Black and white movies beat Cameron's blue films any day. And in the 1940s they didn't have computer animation, so they had to use cinematic skills and talent instead. And today many of the films are just modern remakes of old ones. In the 1940s there weren't many older films to remake, so they actually had to use scriptwriters to come up with something original. To remake Lumiere's "*La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon*" (1895) would be silly. And the 1930s classic serial films beat today superhero kid flicks to pulp. Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers can take on Spider- and Batman any day.

Thor Modéen belongs to the era when filmmakers didn't cheat with computers and got scripts out of a copying machine. As a comedian, all the jokes were actually new in his time - now they are old and tired.

Thor Odert Folke Modéen (1898–1950, his fan club TOFS is named after this: the Thor Odert Folke Society) was one of Sweden's most popular comedians and movie actors during the first half of the 20th century. He the face of Swedish popular entertainment in the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the genre known as "pilsnerfilm" - which I translate to lager films. These were light, cheerful comedies built around misunderstandings, slapstick and working class humour. Modéen was an icon of the genre. He was jovial - with a round, expressive face of warmth and mischief, a physical presence making him ideal for blustery bosses, pompous officials, or overconfident men, a strong persona - even when he played a blowhard, he radiated good humour rather than malice.

Among his catchphrases, mostly famous was "Strålande tider, härliga tider!" ("Brilliant times, wonderful times!"), shorthand for carefree optimism. Modéen symbolised an easy going, happy life, a Sweden where problems were small, lager beer flowed, and everything would work out in the end. In the

Depression era and the tense prewar years, this was exactly what audiences wanted.



*Thor Modéen*



*Håkan, unofficial event boss, in front of Thor's grave.*

The term pilsnerfilm (i.e. lager films) originally had a mocking tone. Pilsner is lager beer, originally from Pilsen, (now Plezn so we translate the term to *lager films*). Our version of it had slightly lower alcohol content (3.5%) than usual and was the only beer sold in Sweden at the time. The term can be interpreted as “something less than serious” and In critics used it to describe the cheap, lowbrow comedies (in which lager beer also was consumed). "Pensionat Paradiset" (“Boarding House Paradise”) is one of the most notorious films in Swedish cinema history. A typical lager film chaotic, full of slapstick, humour and misunderstandings. It became the symbol in a heated debate about the low quality of Swedish cinema. It was the absolute low point of Swedish film, critics claimed. It was vulgar, noisy and intellectually empty. The debate became so heated that it influenced Swedish film policy and funding. Ironically, this controversy only strengthened the affection ordinary people had for Modeen and his colleagues. The more the critics scolded, the more the public embraced him.



*Award winner plus Margareta Perby, hostess and Thor's daughter.*



*A group enjoying the grub.*

Modeen and Åke Söderblom formed one of Sweden's most beloved comic duos. He was big and noisy, Åke small, smart and fast-talking.

Modeen also had a long stage career, especially in revues, where his timing and physical comedy shone. He often played characters who were pompous but harmless, loud but lovable, self important but easily deflated. His comedy was never cruel. That warmth is a big reason he endured. But it also comes from that national TV often show old movies as afternoon entertainment. Thor Modeen is shown



*In line for the tasty salmon pudding.*

every week. He made more than 80 films, so he is always around. He also recorded many 78 rpms, songs or monologues, worth mentioning is "I'm a Pure Mexicano" (sung in "Pensionat Padaiset"). He died relatively young, at 52, which added a bittersweet note to his legacy.

We were about 20 Modeenists gathering around Thor's gravestone in the Adolf Fredrik churchyard. All got a “light grog”, brandy and much soda pop, a speciality from the old days of alcohol rationing. A couple of speeches were held before we all marched home to Margareta. About 20 people makes it just slightly crowded - but cosy. Soon today's dish Salmon pudding was ready, enough to fill your stomach (I filled my plate twice). Margareta charged about \$7 for it. Speeches were held and an award was handed out to a guy who had done commendable things in the spirit of lager films. (I didn't pick up his name but his prize was a thick, interesting-looking book about cult phenomenon in entertainment. And we had a sing-along to tunes from films of the era and gossiped. A jazz record and book publisher told what the fuss was around the big star Alice Babs, whose



*Thor's son Lars holding a speech. someone pass on before you claim any inheritance...)* Finally he had the Fish

children stopped fans to see her as she was lying ill. “Her children took her money, and didn't want anyone near her that could tell her about it.” (Sounds plausible from the little info I had. I think you should let



*Snippet from the party. A newspaper article that went around. Thor's widow had a much talked about jar of conserved crayfish from the 1920s. Intended for a crayfish party but it wasn't consumed and it stayed in its jar for more than half a century, enough to make it to the newspapers!*

Pond, a child's thing really, but Modeen's fans are playful. You hang a rod over a piece of cloth and some sweets and small toys come back as catch.

Unfortunately I knew few of the attendees, besides the hosts (Thor's daughter and son), friends Martin and Anna-Lena who weren't there, r Esse, son of a famous crime writer and Magnus from Sunkit. But they were all fine folks and it was great fun.

Brilliant times!

## LoCs & MCs

*Time for some boring comments. First LoCs (send your comments, if you dare!), then Ed's notes to EAPA and NAPA. At the very end the eternal struggle with Henry Grynnsen.*

**Jim Meadows:** Dear Ahrvid, Apologies for not responding to *Intermission* 162, but I have just received 163 and want to comment while it's fresh. I haven't read the Verne story yet, but I was certainly attracted to your History Corner piece about English-language pulp magazines. The knowledge I have of them starts with my late father's collection, especially *Galaxy* and *Astounding/Analog* (but also *If* and the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*). As a kid in the 1960s and 70s, I read a lot of back issues (but just a small percentage of the total) of his old magazines, and still subscribe to *Analog* in his memory.

During my childhood in suburban Chicago, one could still find science fiction magazines, mostly digest-sized, on magazine stands in the US, notably in drugstores and train or bus stations. Street newsstands such as the ones you featured in your article existed in downtown Chicago, but not in the suburbs that I knew of. My dad tended to pick his SF magazines at newsstands inside of shops and other places, often going out to the Greyhound bus station in a neighboring suburb. Today, the only brick and mortar location I know of in my town for printed science fiction magazines is Barnes and Noble, a chain bookstore.

Besides the titles I mentioned, *Amazing* and *Fantastic* were still published when I was young as well as a few other titles that came and went. I guess technically these were no longer pulp magazines, but it depends on how you define it. As I see, pulp magazines went beyond the use of pulp paper, to the large-scale acquisition of printing capacity and newsstand access. Once you had paper, printing and distribution secured in bulk, you could settle on the matter of content, usually multiple titles in several genres.

As your article reflects, true pulp fiction magazines by that definition no longer existed by the time I was reading science fiction, although I think other types of magazines, such as show business fan/gossip magazines, and of course, comic books, were published along those lines in the US in the 1960s and 70s.

My own internet search indicates the last pulp fiction titles to stop publishing in any genre were *Ranch Romances* (titled *Ranch Romances and Adventures* in its last years) and *Adventure*, both going under in 1971. Both went through format changes over the years, and *Adventure* spent many years as a (purportedly) non-fiction magazine, before switching back to fiction for its last year or two. I don't know enough about either title to say if they shared a publisher, or some common threat that led to their demise in the same year.

Nowadays, some of the most respected science fiction magazines publish online only, and a new company (Must Read Magazines/Must Read Books Publishing) has acquired five titles that still have print editions (*Analog*, *Asimov's*, *F&SF* and two mystery magazines, *Ellery Queen's* and *Alfred Hitchcock*). If these titles buy their printing and distribution in bulk, they might be in the tradition of pulp magazines, I think they're mostly in digest format (I haven't seen *F&SF*) and their paper is only slightly pulpy.

Now, I'm really curious about the history of science fiction in your country, and whatever you might have had in the way of pulp magazines or their equivalent! Yours, Jim Meadows

Thanks for reprinting Jules and/or Michel Verne's "In the Year 2889", which I read with interest. In terms of its speculation, it's always interesting to see what anyone, locked into their day and age, will see in terms of future technology. In the case of the Vernes, they seem to do some hand-waving with the mention of "the mode of vibration of the etheric particles". This saves them from having to explain a lot of dramatic new technological developments, which nevertheless are still tied to now obsolete devices like pneumatic tubes and the phonograph. (I guess a lot of future tech in science fiction looks this way, after the passage of time). Meanwhile, the story assumes one thousand years of continued political rivalries by colonial powers, with the same class of wealthy educated elite staying in charge of things. And buried in all of this is a thread that could have been a story all its own: the failed

attempt of one scientist to put himself into suspended animation, and emerge alive one hundred years later. It's interesting how little care is given to the outcome of this experiment by the story's main character. All this in a story published in Forum, which was evidently a major American magazine of its day (and I, in my ignorance, am just finding out about it).

By the way, in looking up what phonographs were like in the year that Verne story was published, I came across this 2019 article from the US Smithsonian Institution that includes playbacks of some phonograph cylinders from 1889 (after 130 years, they're a little worse for wear, but I wonder if the AI now under development could produce clearer copies, although it might involve some guesswork as to what the recordings originally sounded like). Here's the link:

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/what-did-1889-sound#:~:text=Three%20wax%20cylinders%20recorded%20in,1889%20from%20the%20museum's%20collection.&text=One%20of%20these%20records%20was,in%20a%20fancy%20sound%20lab>

Putting "The Brain's Dramaturgy" right after the Verne story made me question my own reaction to the latter. Is my critique mostly due to my wired-in expectations of what a story should be, something that exists large as a way to entertain and comfort me? Were the Vernes just trying to entertain and comfort in their own way, when Michel fashioned his story from his father's ideas? In your discuss, you mention various types of fiction including one you call feelgood. Is this a name of your own, or is it a genre name that I don't know of, perhaps because it is not common in English? I already know of genre names like romance and horror, which you also mention, but I didn't know of feelgood as a label used by readers and publishers. At any rate, your point that we use storytelling to make sense of the world makes sense to me. But now, I feel the need to keep an eye on how we tell our stories, with the understanding that we can use them to deceive ourselves. Take care,

*Ed: He asked for some info on Swedish popular press at the time, so I sent him some. Our equivalent to the Pulp were the "colourised weeklies", that were highly disliked by the high-brow culture establishment. There was only one with sf: Jules Verne Magasinet, but its adventure stories competitor Levande Livet ran an sf story in every issue under the headline "Between Fantasy and Reality", usually written by Sture Lönnerstrand.*

**Bengt O Björklund:** Hello Friend,  
Mighty zine. Will print out and read later. Thanks.

*Ed: I think #163 was the thickest this far. (I wanted to run the Verne story which took many pages.)*

**Torbjörn Persson:** You're right that Russia's economy is weak. It depends on oil export. USA's economy is also weak. The national debt is huge. Usually we measure it in percent of GDP. From memory it's 20% for Sweden and 120% for US.

I believe prestige is behind much of the crises of today. If Putin will leave Ukraine it must be in a way where Putin seems like a winner. Trump is also very much into prestige. He begs for the Nobel Prize, names ships and buildings after himself and all the times talks about how good he is. That's why he wanted Greenland. Trump wants to go down in history as the president who made USA bigger. Sad that your Hotmail is troubling.

*Ed: A few private lines left out. (Eg he has written a new short story, but writes under pseudonym so Torbjörn should tell people himself if he wants to.)*

**Gail Jamieson:** Dear Ahrvid,  
I see you're interested in Pulp. Have you been in contact with Tony Davis in Toronto? He's a long time member and past chairman of SFFSA, and has a great deal of interest and more in Pulp magazines. I've cc'd him on this mail. Best regards,

*Ed: No, I didn't know about him, but I have now sent him Intermission.*

**Todd Mason:** Thanks, Ahrvid!

I haven't read it all as attentively as I'd like, but a few notes--when not attacking women and girls, ordering or facilitating the murder of fairly random people at home and abroad, or punching his sons in their youth, Drumpf's most consistent choice of crime throughout his life has been embezzlement from the businesses he's involved with, and his apparent addiction to tariffs enables this in a big way while he remains US president, and not, as eventually, in prison, or more likely a senility facility, or simply dead from his maladies...he looks upon the money extorted thus as one of his several personal slush funds.

On a much more anodyne note, the last issues of the original run of *Weird Tales* were in "digest" format, smaller than a "standard"-sized pulp magazine. ANC was nearly a monopoly, though not quite...it did have about half the US newsstand business at its height, apparently, and was willing to take risks on relatively financially-shaky magazines as a result.

**Marc Ortlieb:** Hi Ahrvid, Thank you for whatever editorial whim it was that sent *Intermission* 161 in my direction. Sadly I'm not the fan I used to be and so I can't offer you the usual, or the unusual in

response. A year or so back I was putting together an annual compendium of my non-Mailing Comment ANZAPA material as a sort of a fanzine but my enthusiasm for that has disappeared and so my two remaining fannish pursuits are trying to keep up with 500 page plus ANZAPA "mailings" and working with Leigh Edmonds, Perry Middlemiss and Irwin Hirsh sorting through the fanzine collections that have been donated to the Monash University Library.

Perhaps the coming global cooling will allow me to play Martha and the Muffins "This Is The Ice Age" without feeling too hypocritical.

Just to note, the reason I can find the time to send this brief missive is that my Scouting commitments are finished for the year and don't restart until January 10th. Please don't expect future LoCs. And one note to add to your oddities regarding Harlan Ellison:

He visited Melbourne in 1983, having been a GoH at SynCon '83 and a group of Melbourne fans, including Cath Circosta - who later made the terrible mistake of agreeing to become Cath Ortlieb - arranged a trip to Hanging Rock. Cath, having taught at Broadford, close to Hanging Rock, led the little convoy. Cath is a committed Christian, unlike me, and her Mini Minor sported several Christian bumper stickers. Harlan apparently decided it would be fun to jump out of the car he was in, which was following Cath's, and take Cath's stickers when the cars pulled up at traffic lights. Cath got out of her car and berated Ellison saying something to the effect of "I don't care how good a writer you are. Leave my car alone!" (Now-a-days, having spent over 40 years with me, she would probably have said "Leave my fucking car alone!" But she was more restrained at the time.) I have since heard the story retold in terms more favorable to Ellison, but I can assure you that Cath was not the "Jesus Freak" who appears in Ellison's version.

**Ed:** This LoC is late as it got caught in my mail problems... *WAhF Jonathan Cowie. Now Mailing Comments:*

**William McCabe:** I think the teeth should be covered by the NHS. Isn't it a part of the body?

**Heath Row:** This thing Wahflestopper looks complicated... Thanks for saying you enjoyed my Hugo Gernsback letters! (I thought people would go wild about them, but I got hardly any reactions!) The article in Portugese is about "extraterrestrial transhumanism". That sounds interesting, so I let my AI translate it. It's an invitation to a conference on the subject in April. The topic is summarised from a Portugese perspective, and last is list of subjects that could be brought up on the conference. Are you going to that conference? If so, give us a report!

**Garth Spencer:** I got the info about your Fandomension site. It looks great! So folks, check out <https://www.vcn.bc.ca/~garth2/> Its a valid observation that most cons are small (or smaller than Worldcons at least) and we should look into them. I would like cons to be planned a bit like a big party with the serious bits secondary, but many conrunners today want sf cons to be more academic and boring. There's a clear risk of an economic depression at least, because of Trump and Putin.

**Henry Grynsten:** An interesting *Wild Ideas*, as usual, except the section where you give the most preposterous and doubtful comments to the modest - but obviously correct! - observations from this scientifically minded mild genius fan kand A Engholm. A couple of notes about IQ: Have a look at Poul Anderson's *IQ400*, where cosmic radiation makes all people hyper-intelligent. There's also a fannish parody of Keyes' story, "Egoboo for Algernon" by Terry Carr. Check

<https://ansible.uk/misc/egoboo.html> You have an interesting summary of IQ enhancing stories and movies. There's a lot of speculation about IQ enhancing drugs, often called "notropics". I wrote a



longer article once about notropics, I think it was for *Swedish PC World*, to which I made a lot of research. (Why a PC magazine? Many computer "nerds" are into notropic.) Rundown of foodstuff claimed to be IQ enhancing: vitamins B, C, E, herbs like Gingko, & Gingseng, fish (rich in Omega3), blueberries, dark chocolate, green tea, Choline (found in e g eggs, liver, soy), spinach, coffee, creatine (in all meat esp red), magnesium (early greens, nuts, seeds), some amino acids (found in "energy drinks"). None of these are prescription drugs. For a quick fix I'd recommend coffee! You definitely feel the difference after a cuppa. Being concentrated and focused belong to the IQ spectrum. (Some extra coffee before the local SAT, "högskoleprovet", I took some years back gave me: 1.9p of max 2.0!) But you hate coffee... There are also prescription drugs claimed to help IQ, but taking medicine outside prescribed use probably has risks. Students are said to experiment with certain drugs before exams. Generally I think these things may only help a little. There are no super drugs for IQ that make you an Einstein with a pill. If so we would have found it. About what

A style study of ski champ Frida K almost flying up a hill!

intelligence is? My partial definition is something like the ability to find associations and connections that solves problems in processing lots of information. But as there are many sorts of problems, there are many sorts of intelligence. Some can solve problems in maths, others are social geniuses, language is another field, some can make wonderful art, some have organising skills, and so on.

Over to the eternal debate between us (innocent onlookers wonder: Why For Heaven's Sake!)  
[AIs bad at maths?] An ipse dixit fallacy: Invoking your own authority. You claim to have enough authority to be able to know what the consensus is... I have at least been dipping my toes into the AI lake for a long time. But instead of bickering about whose authority is best, let's use logical reasoning for a change! AIs reside in computers and such machines are made to A) follow rules, and B) juggling numbers. So, guess what maths is all about... That's right! An argument is further enhanced if you can give practical examples of what you mean - I just sent you a file with a good example (calculations regarding stories I have written, using AI to research them). And your argument weakens if examples you want to rely are weak, and your example was that an AI couldn't correctly observe and tally certain French words. But that's not a maths problem, it's an observation problem and it's known that if you ask an AI to collect certain data it may not find it all. (Beside, my Copilot asserts: There's no publicly available evidence that John Werner has said "AI is dysfunctional at maths." It suggests someone informally summarised his statements but misrepresented them.) You are also ipse dixit claiming you have overview and authority enough to know what consensus is regarding AIs and consciousness. As you have repeatedly claimed that consciousness must be something almost mystical, one gets the impression you're just holding on to your hobby horse. AI "makes wild mistakes" Yes, I know - they sometimes hallucinate. You need to have a certain intuitive feeling for what should be approximately correct so you can catch AI hallucinations. "Neutral nets is not a theory of consciousness" Neural nets is a theory of consciousness, at least one of the theories, a strong one, gaining momentum as neural nets mimic the brain. "Neural nets are loosely similar to the brain, but you can say the same about the network of postal services. Well, if the postal service network was much faster and Billions of times more complex, I wouldn't be so sure about it. Today, postal services are instead becoming slower and thinner... BTW, Ray Bradbury once wrote a story about the sibling of postal services, the phone network, becoming conscious. Title "Dial double zero", and here's a documentary about Bradbury, which includes this story:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zHa\\_udIU9o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zHa_udIU9o) [Volcanoes and climate] "we are not in a very active period [in vulcanism]" We're also not in a very active period regarding climate. The climate variations IPCC yells about are puny. "Unfortunately that little is too much." No you seem to subscribe to the theory of knife-edge-balancing. It's an artificial, totally unproven idea that nature is extremely sensitive, and it's put forth to support environmentalist demands that we shouldn't touch nature at all. But nature is the toughest kid on the block! It has through billions of years of evolution adapted to take heavy beating. It has endured ice ages, massive space objects, continental-wide forest fires, virus epidemics, drought, flooding, you name it. It has buffers to handle situations. A little extra CO2 absorbed in the oceans is nothing. You agree that there are limits But we're very far away from reaching them. "It is not their role to issue statements about support" If so IPCC must withdraw their claim that fantazillion percent of scientists support them. "data in the tens of thousands of studies that supports the IPCC's claims" No. They only cover small parts of IPCC's hypothesis, which reads: 1) There is a climate change bigger than natural, 2) it comes from CO2, 3) Which Man releases, and 4) it will led to disaster. Say you have one study claiming support for 1) - it says nothing about 2-4, so the IPCC hypothesis is unsupported. The situation is that 1-4 must all at the same time be true, for IPCC's hypothesis to be valid. If someone asks you to fetch some documents in a safe in his office you need A) someone who knows the door code to the office building, B) someone who has security clearance to take you past the guard at the house reception, C) someone who has the key to the office, D) and finally someone who has the combination to the safe. Someone who can't help you with all of this at the same time is of no help. If only one thing of A-D is unsolved, you won't get the documents. "There are already disastrous consequences because of climate change" Only normal weather, which can be tough sometimes. "like those 1.5+ million papers in physics to all print statements...It's accepted that facts that are undisputed doesn't have to be proven." But all of IPCC's claims are disputed by serious scientists, by ambiguous data, by other theories etc. "closer to 100 %, as I have shown." You haven't. "Do you think NASA is in on the conspiracy" There's no conspiracy. There's only the overwhelming Zeitgeist at work. And even folk at NASA can be IPCC believers. Check up one James Hansen, for instance. "In 1856 Eunice Newton Foote demonstrated that the warming effect of the sun is greater for air with water vapour..."

*Do you agree or are you saying we can't trust basic physics" Basic physics says CO2 must almost double to increase temperature 1C, but "feedbacks" are speculative. Possible humidity vs variation is in the single percent digit realm, and there are other things to take into account. Evaporation also comes from wind and the polar-equator mechanism says weather will be calmer. Plants take up humidity and the Earth is getting greener. If water on the sky falls as increased rain humidity falls. "climate scientists" have forged tens of millions of recorded data points...ships logs, ledgers etc" No, not consciously. Zeitgeist works unconsciously. And come on, the imprecise notes in logs and ledgers which BTW has an extremely spotty coverage. "So you agree that in most cases they are?" I say "some cases" because in some other cases there is no melting. "decrease of forests and increase in cultivated land. Climate change is contributing to that as well." No, economic factors and the need to grow food is driving it. [bounceback from the little ice age] only accounts for a small amount of the melting." It's likely the only factor of importance! About missing USSR data: If you read the abstract, the period seems to be 1990-2004 (the last date when the release of data was approved), which seems to be in accordance with - as I said - that USSR data was available for a while, and besides just having the claimed data says nothing about if it was correctly reported. It has been noted that in Soviet economy way back there were incentives to report LOWER temperatures to obtain more fuel. Artificially under-reporting earlier in history creates false temp variation curves. You try to change the subject. The discussion was always about robot servants, like butlers and maids. I have never limited giving service to just maids and butlers. All work gives service. [NASA's budget] was huge numbers. No, as I have shown it was small. "security, neighbourly cooperation, creating a community spirit etc." None of those are metaphysical It's as non-metaphysical as space exploration. It was you who began babbling about metaphysics... "findings come when people are researching something" Breakthrough findings tend to come unexpected looking for something else. IBM joins NASA, the WEF, the IPCC etc who you can't trust. You can usually trust IBM, but not YOU cherry picking from them. James Hansen of NASA can't be trusted, and of course not IPCC, WEF presents a variety of opinions, some trustworthy, some not. "hybrid ICs" hands off keyboard and Google: do said Wikipedia is unreliable for controversial topics. [system 360] was a leap in computer development, using new architecture and new microelectronics." No ICs, just ordinary transistors - no leap. The possible leap was it was a series of compatible le systems, not a technical detail but administrative. "military also contributed in non-aerospace and non-rocket areas" No, ICs was almost exclusively for rockets where EMP was irrelevant. Ordinary military 1960s systems would be EMP sensitive. "US couldn't know what the Soviets were up to. They had just been beaten in space by the Soviet Heard of intelligence agencies and analytics?" The American KNEW the Soviets were only marginally into computers. Their technology was simply too crude. The fact is that easy gains by USSR in space was also an effect of too crude technology. The Soviet atomic bombs were crude and heavy (the very first just copies of Little Boy!) so they needed bigger rockets. They built big rockets because their bombs were too heavy. So when the idea came to send things to orbit they already had the big rockets. US rockets were smaller and slimmer because that's all they needed, so orbit-capable systems weren't immediately available. Soviet "computers" were lousy. They had some good ideas early on, but couldn't develop it further. "EMPs would have been a problem for anybody who used IC" Not for the nuclear rockets, for reasons I've explained (they'd be used before any atomic detonations).. "You don't read several millions of science papers to get a holistic view, so you are also cherry-picking" No, I use my general knowledge of science plus common sense. That's what we all should do. "Papers are reviewed and judged" Peer review is no quality guarantee, it's just a stumble-check, just slightly more advanced than proof reading "Our food production is vulnerable" says environmentalist scaremongers! [Vikings] had to abandon Greenland [due to soil]." No, the little ice age, change in trade patterns and probably the Black Death was the reasons. Time to stop. We try our best to upset you, so let loose your comments...if you dare! There may be a little about Eurovision in nextish (heard the qualification entries and Sweden has nothing fancy this time) and definitely a visit to the short film festival. Topic of next sf and fandom history corner not decided (suggestions welcome!) though topping Degler and Starlife is hard... Late news: US & Israel starts heavy bombing of Iran. Religious dictator Khamenei, and several other top villains, reported dead. Doubtful if just bombs may topple the regime, which is pure evil - recently shooting 30 000 of their own citizens! For Ukraine it may lead to Putin getting less Iranian drones. We'll follow what happens.*

**С л а в а У к р а и н е !**

The Murdered Master Mage  
George Phillies  
phillies@4liberty.net

### The N3F

We have had interesting times. The Editor of Upstream Reviews cut The N3F Review of Books off from reprinting any of their reviews, so the supply of reviews for The N3F Review of Books has been badly diminished. Additional sources are being investigated.

I would be entirely happy to pass along editorship of more of our zines to other members. I have been editing for a decade, and at some point editing becomes a bit time-consuming. I am also not getting any younger. I am, however, entirely prepared to continue if need be; I just think that a fresh eye on the compass and a fresh hand at the wheel might prove invigorating. Tightbeam is relatively formulaic, so it should be relatively straightforward as a starting point for a new Editor.

I have tried to develop NAPA as our letter/discussion of the N3F zine, but that has not been very effective.

### Comments on the Last Issue

The castle on the cover is beautiful, though one of the towers – looks like a tobacco pipe -- appears to be an impractical architectural conceit. 11 contributors and 12 zines is real progress over our situation ten years ago, when we were reduced to two members exchanging emails.

Archive Midwinter: As always, Jefferson, you give us fascinating comments. I agree on adventure and gradual change. Things can change for the better, though they don't always. Poe did not know pseudorandom processes, but a gearworks random number generator might be challenging to build. Is chess a win for white? For black? Or is it a forced draw?

My next novel? After much work, I was able to track down the heir who owned the intellectual property of James Schmitz. For certain

considerations, I was able to purchase non-exclusive rights to write new novels using Telzey Amberdon and other characters in the Hub Universe. *Fire in the Morning* is a piece someplace in the new Telzey novel, likely the prequel tale placed at the back of the book where it will not disrupt the flow of the story.

Collections: There may be a nearby university library that will not only accept the donation but arrange to transport it. I had a similar reaction to Harry Dresden – too much whining and violence. You might like Dan Willis's *Arcane Detective* series. The hero uses magic, becomes somewhat more powerful as time advances, but is not a superman, indeed, is not the most powerful magician of his type in the book. They are well-written with references to the 1930s.

I seem to have missed Facebook kill yourself posts, fortunately.

Brandy Hall: Thank you for a review of your earlier zines. The notion that fanzines can be banned from English provinces, as Johnny Miller 96 was, is a bit odd. However, I am accustomed to living in a country that has freedom of the press.

The notion of a bookstore that specializes in selling sports fanzines was a bit surprising. A circulation of 36,000 is still remarkable. The history of fandom book that I vaguely remember is *The Immortal Storm*. Your comments on other zines are superb and do a great deal to make N'APA a better zine. There is a traditional rule, somewhat overstated: Any academic field with the word 'science' in its title is not a science. As an aside, in one or another of Jules Verne's novels there is a case of spontaneous human combustion following overuse of distilled alcoholic beverages.

Brownian Motion: Will Amazon cease to sell paperbacks? With respect to the issue you raise, there are World War 2 LARPerS, though not a lot of them. I do expect that there will be a lot of recreations of American Revolution events, as we have reached this year the quarter-millennial of the start of the Revolution. Extensive WW2 reenactments likely wait until all participants are

long-since dead.

Best of luck with the fannish information website. How will it differ from FANAC and Fancyclopedia? I strongly support recognizing comics, anime, cosplay,...fandoms as part of SF fandom. In addition to their other issues, airships were often built with duralumin, which has a serious problem with fatigue embrittlement.

An APA is a type of fanzine, in my opinion. The N3F has changed how it handles mailing zines to members, which appears to have improved matters a bit. Figures include illustrations, pictures, graphs, images... I would wish the N3F promoted itself more effectively, but that is not quite what is happening.

Intermission: Novels with Ice Ages. *We Who Survived...The Fifth Ice Age* had a rational explanation for the global cooling, namely the solar system was encountering a cosmic dust cloud. The author's estimate of snow deposition rates was unrealistically large, but gave glacial motion within a year or two. Given available tech in that novel, considerably more people should have been able to rescue their cities, but they did not. There was also a science fiction book club novel in which a nuclear war created a nuclear disintegration field that deleted a segment of Central America, so the Gulf Stream went the wrong way. The final solution was a series of nuclear explosions that pushed rock into a wall, thereby blocking the Gulf Stream and preventing the ice age. Title and author are long since forgotten.

Esmeralda County Line: There is a great debate about what happened during the Sad and Rabid puppies. Large numbers of people hate each other as a result. If you read accounts from File 770 and from Larry Correia, and realize that they are not from two diametrically opposed time lines, you may get an idea of what happened.

S.M. Stirling also has a time travel to ancient Rome series, one title being *To Turn the Tide*. Good reading for that trope. I agree on Linux. The 'rent software' scheme and the 'detect up-to-date-CPU' features are not positive, in my opinion. I am also

mostly skipping the political stuff, and tending not to respond to people who do not comment on what I publish.

The Murdered Master Mage: Ah yes, Project TZA has advanced from 55,000 to 75,000 words. After that I have two physics papers and my next novel.

Fire in the Morning, of which you have now seen a part, will be part of the novel, a prequel stuck in the back introducing the entirely new character Pamela Morgan.

R.A.I.L Congratulations on the Eldritch Science story. And if you think money means little in SF, contemplate the insurers who keep rebuilding Tokyo and other coastal cities after a visit by the Big G, either of them.

Samizdat: Thank you again for your issues of Origins. Print on Demand may well allow publishers to keep books in paper print for a long time, though I note that my own admittedly limited sales are almost all ebooks, and rarely a paperback or hardback. How many trade paperbacks sold last year? You offer interesting thoughts on series. The film descriptions are much appreciated and would have been welcome in *Tightbeam*.

The reason I said Pam is not Telzey Amberdon is that they are going to meet, now that the literary rights issue is settled. I will send you the text of the (incomplete, still writing) novel. Comments are welcome.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel: Thank you for the book review, another interesting – sounding novel that I will always never have time to read. The historical details sound entrancing. I did not know there was an Edison's War on Mars paperback. I had only seen the hardback.

The cartoon at the front of the mailing comments was noteworthy. The two children are to be complimented for having memorized The Lord of the Rings. Your comments were excellent. A fine definition of adult functional illiteracy – reads only what is necessary for life. A good question on high jumps, but I believe you would actually land just as

hard as on earth. Interesting suggestions on collection disposal. My games are going to a museum, my books to an SF club, and other things are going to friends or relatives. For better or worse, planetary population will be approaching a peak quite soon, perhaps by the turn of this century, at perhaps 12-14 billion people. It will then decline. The jigsaw puzzle was particularly amusing.

Wahflestopper: Thank you for your history of SF TV in Portugal. Other videos from Europe were also unfamiliar, I think I have heard of Orion but not the others. A fandom based on Space 1999 is certainly different. My sharpest recollection of Space 1999 is the spaceship with neutron drive and an enormously complicated control panel, not at all like the simple control panels seen in other places. It was a wonderful image! Enjoy your walks.

## **Telzey Amberdon Rises from the Dead**

### **Chapter 1: At Pehanron College**

It was a beautiful spring afternoon. The temperature was warm enough for a barbecue to be eaten outside, with all but a few students wearing short-sleeve shirts and shorts. Telzey Amberdon leaned back against the massive trunk of a katsura tree, its early spring leaves a mix of colors against the clear blue sky. A gentle breeze ruffled her hair. Faint smoke rose from the grills as the steaks cooked. Her contribution, prepared in her half of her bungalow duplex, was a large and complex salad that was visibly already being consumed. The two boys who had been pursuing her for the last semester, unsuccessfully, had clearly found other girls to chase.

"Telzey?" The voice came from behind her. Her long amber hair and athletic frame were fairly recognizable. Most of her classmates had experimented with novel hair colors, though a fair number of the girls had gone back from checkerboards to the traditional gold blonde.

"Wilmar?" she asked. She did not need telepathy to identify him. His voice had the deepest pitch of any of the boys in the complex.

Wilmar Rortak walked around the tree, followed by a trio of young women. She told herself that they couldn't all be chasing him. Or could they? She could, of course, simply read their minds and find out. A few years ago, she would have done that. As a mature nineteen-year-old, she left the trio their privacy.

"We're the organizing committee," Wilmar said, "on campus for the Social Democratic Center party for the forthcoming election. We reserved the Great Yard for a rally, the Traditional Union Party being the next day and the Traditional Expansion Party having its rally the day after that. With People's House elections coming up, we're trying to ensure the best possible turnout, so our fellow students all remember to go and vote. We wanted to be sure you were coming."

Telzey shook her head. "Thanks, but I really don't do politics." She decided not to emphasize that her sympathies lay with the other two parties, though not by a great deal. The elections were for the planetary government, not for the Federation, but planetary governments did control most things.

"But it's really important," Wilmar said, "it's one of the things you're supposed to do as a student, be active in politics."

"Students do many things," Telzey answered. "Study, for example. You may have heard of studying. I spent enough of the term hearing your lamentations about your grades so far. Except most people here have had their exams, are finishing course papers, and will soon be done with the semester. They have time for what you're doing. I'm prepping for the Combat Litigation course's Trial by Judicial Combat sequence. That's my last requirement before I graduate. It's three weeks starting the day after tomorrow."

"Why did you take Trials?" one of the women with Wilmar asked. "That was stupid. It's the hardest course in the college!" Telzey decided that she was happy she couldn't remember the woman's name.

"I'm here to work," Telzey answered. "The finest steel is made at the highest temperature." Telzey

reminded herself that the aphorism was detested by the metallurgists. "And people who do well in the Trial have an incredible vita resulting."

"You don't support one of those crackpot parties, do you?" The shortest of the three women with Wilmar asked.

Telzey tried to recognize the woman. Names she could usually bring to mind, but most of Wilmar's friends were in his major, some overlap between art and urban design that she could never remember, so she never met them.

"Me? I'm strictly nonpartisan." She decided it was time to close down this conversation. "I have to be. My mom — I don't think you ever met Jessamine, did you, Wilmar? — is the family's politician."

"She's on the city Arts Commission?" Helga was the shortest of the women following Wilmar around. To the best of Telzey's recollection, Helga was remarkably tactless, not to mention unpleasant.

Wilmar intervened before matters became even more unpleasant. "Telzey's mom is a Federation Junior Councilor. She's on the Hace Committee, Grand Council Ethics. You can't get higher than that. I haven't met her, but I for sure know who she is. Mentioning know, I know cooking and it smells like the steaks are starting to get ready." He shepherded his charges in that direction, pausing to favor Telzey with a wink. She returned a warm grin. He wasn't a bad guy to be around, if not very interesting as conversationalist, but life kept insisting on getting too interesting to have a boyfriend in tow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three weeks later, an exhausted Telzey leaned back in her recliner. She had just finished the Trial cycle for her apex course in combat litigation, the art of legal dirty tricks. So far as she could tell, she had mostly anticipated the mean deeds of her opponents, and they had been less successful against her. Now she had powered up her bungalow's tri-V, enough to watch election returns roll in. Most of her friends, she thought, were going to be quite displeased. The

Traditional Union Party, which had been expected to finish third, had clearly won. It was going to take a majority in the planetary Parliament. And here on the screen was their party leader, who seemed to be a very mild-mannered fellow not prone to outrageous ideas.

"...Upgrade ethical and medical standards for the legal profession... Special abilities should not give any attorney an unfair advantage... Let legal arguments all be presented in open court where every man and woman can hear everything that is being said...legislation in this direction will be submitted tomorrow when we assume the majority..."

Telzey ask yourself what his proposals were supposed to mean. They didn't sound objectionable, but they also didn't make much sense. "Tri-V off," she said.

She knew full well that the Psychology Service had pushed beyond legal limits on what they were allowed to do politically. However, it seemed that people with radical ideas regularly decided they weren't all that interested in politics, and went on to do something else, often quite successfully. You could say that was good, if you didn't know that it was Service psi machines acting as ungentle persuaders on people who appeared to be dangerous to the political consensus, first moving them out of politics and then ensuring their later success elsewhere. Telzey asked herself if she should be bothered by that. She was unsure. After all, what could she do about it? At least, she thought, the Service was not doing things as drastic as what they had finally done to poor Wakote Ti a few years ago.

Her communicator chirped. The call was from the Black Watchers, the school newspaper, run by the professional journalism students. The tags said 'Highly Urgent' and "Personal Response Urgently Needed".

Mentally, she girded her loins and took the call on her Tri-V screen.

"Telzey here," she said. "Just finished exams this evening."

"Miss Amberdon, I'm Johann Taine, Black Watcher Lead Editor. We were hoping for a quote from you about the proposed Judicial Equality Act and the Dark Star Press accusations against your mother."

"The what?" Telzey asked. She snapped to full alertness. "Sorry, just got off Combat Litigation Trial Weeks. That's 'eating and sleeping are optional'. Except you've probably never heard of the course. So I'm a bit behind on things."

"Understood." Johann nodded. "My older sister took that course. I've heard all about it. I know you're exhausted, but some of the accusations approach criminality on your mom's part."

"Fast summary. Please?" She tried to affect piteous begging and suspected it failed. "I really want to take a good shower, eat, and crash out."

"Short form: The Act says telepaths cannot become lawyers."

"My great-grandfather on my father's side," Telzey said, "was a leader in passing the modern Antidiscrimination Acts. The original example was a man who had five or six dyes, I forget which, rather than three, in his eyes, and had incredible color sensitivity. I'm listening."

"There's an exemption in the Act for people who were approached as juveniles by alien telepaths and gained psi skills that rapidly faded. Supposedly your mom asked that section to be inserted." Johann paused.

Telzey nodded politely. She wasn't sure why Mom would have done that, but Mom did not talk about politics.

"The claim is that the Section in question was rewritten for your personal benefit. Dark Star Press claims you were exposed to crest cats and could, briefly, speak with them, but that faded. In particular, they published — it looks illegal to me but I'm not a lawyer — what they claim is part of your medical record, showing that you have very weak residual psi talents, just weak enough that they were covered by your mom's amendment to the

original draft of the Judicial Equality Act, but not by the original draft."

"Sounds like something out of a bad science fiction novel," Telzey said. "What are 'weak residual psi talents' supposed to be?"

"It's quoted in something called Fullerton Units. No one on my staff has heard of them, and the DataNet is remarkably uninformative about the topic." Johann shrugged. "I have three people working through the Orado Central Library, doing a physical search for the phrase."

Telzey's ears perked up. Those were indeed Psychology Service units for psi strength, but the Service never mentioned Fullerton Units when they were telling the public about psi machines.

"I've heard of them. They got mentioned someplace," Telzey said, "must've been some course I took. Or something I read. Unfortunately, dad says I'm the Supreme Mistress of Unsourced Miscellaneous Facts so I don't remember where the name came from. Fullerton Units are some measure of how good psi powers are. Did they quote a number?"

"The legal limit is now 0.02 units. It had been 0.01. Dark Star claimed that your medical record, and I checked the validator tag, so it seems to be real, says you are a 0.017. I've sent you the files. Page 13 of the record is some test of your psi talents."

"It was a cousin who was in the Federation Star Marines who taught me all sorts of impolite words that I never use," Telzey said. "But I'm starting to feel a temptation."

She brought up the page on her viewer.

"The part about meeting crest cats is true. That was in the papers back when it happened. The later test part is totally false. I can't imagine Mom would try to influence Planetary Parliament action in favor of a family member. She's on the Hace Committee, after all. And if the amendment did what the paper claimed, which I haven't checked, it wouldn't change anything for me."

*Namely, she thought, the last time Klayung quoted a number, my Fullerton score was way larger than that. Now bite your tongue, until you find out what's going on.*

"Having said that, you wanted a quote from me."

Telzey waited for Taine to nod in agreement.

"Quote: *The Dark Star Press report about me is false. The reported change in the law should have no effect on my eligibility to become a member of the Bar.* That's your complete quote. Yes, I did meet crest cats, and I could hear them, sort of, when a big group of them shouted at me, mentally. But that was years and years ago, and hasn't happened since." *After all, she thought, it has been years and years since I met a crest cat.*

"I need to read the law before I say anything about it," Telzey continued. "That's just common sense. The alleged medical record gets my height and weight wrong, which is extremely odd for something that's measured automatically by a robot when you step into the Doctor's office," she added. "I'm neither that short nor that light." *You are still growing a bit, if rather less than your internist would like, she thought, and you've put on a decent amount of muscle in the last year. Not enough to look odd, but enough to change your weight by a good ten pounds.*

# *Brownian Motion #18*

A Garth Spencer apazine  
For N'APA #281, March 2026

## *Rubber Baby Buggy Bumpers*

The more I think about it, the more I think of life as an immense put-on.

Of course I've said things like this before, but perhaps most of you have a better appreciation nowadays for the absurd lengths to which alleged reality has gone.

If only we knew the title and the contact information for the people who make up reality. We deserve better propaganda, I mean, scriptwriters and programming.

§

Maintaining an informational website like "Across the Fandomension" is turning out to be more work than I thought, for trivial as well as serious reasons. For one thing, it feels a little like compiling an encyclopedia. For another thing, I need to find a more efficient means than hand-coding everything in HTML.

As it is I keep seeing things to update and to add. Already I have found a surprising number of the SF publishers and periodicals I was ready to list are no longer publishing, or at least not currently accepting manuscripts. I expect to be very embarrassed as soon as I do some serious checking, and discover the number of SF clubs no longer in operation. Not to mention writers' associations.

Nobody has said anything yet, but I expect to get abuse for not giving more prominence to fandoms like anime, independent comics, cosplay, filk, tabletop or online gaming, or mediafandoms. To say nothing of atompunk, cyberpunk, hopepunk, or things I haven't heard about yet. At least I have tried to be honest about my biases.

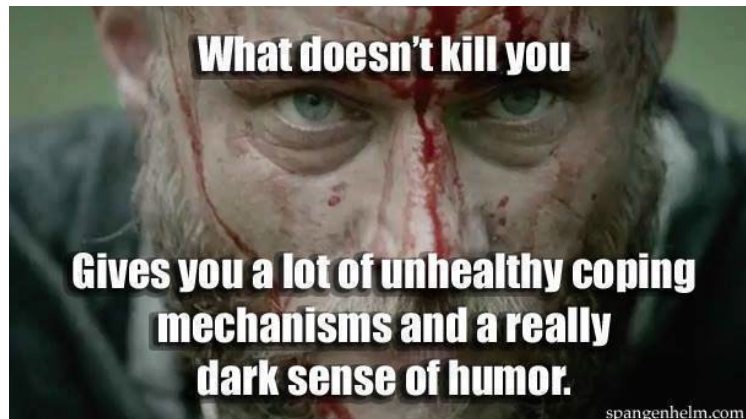
§

One of my backburner projects, which you may recall, is a book-length manuscript provisionally titled "How to Human." Yes, it's still on my mind. Granted, there are already a lot of online resources about "lifehacks" or "adulthood," which are more or less the same concept; but I think there is scope for uniting life skills information into one handbook or manual, which seems to be scattered in a number of more-or-less obscure places.

This project feels a **lot** like compiling an encyclopedia, because I have to struggle to keep it down to something manageable. Something focused on the stuff that a contemporary citizen ... oh, very well, **I** ... needed as soon as I graduated from high school, but still didn't necessarily know.

I expect "How to Human," like "Across the Fandomension," will expose my biases and will probably embarrass me eventually. A childish part of me is still stuck on the idea that people hide "common sense" information from me, as if to set me up for ridicule

... even though I know that no one intends to do this, they simply can't communicate subliminal information in a way I can process. Then it turns out everybody thought that cooking or cleaning or tying a half-Windsor knot or auto maintenance or home electrical repair was something everybody just knew, without being told.



## *Mailing Comments*

### **Cover**

Yep, that there looks like an AI-generated castle.

### ***Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer***

Re your comment to Ahrvid Engholm: there are people who prefer really bad movies, particularly in SF and fantasy. One of them is my friend and correspondent R. Graeme Cameron, who was a mover and shaker in the BCSFA club in Vancouver, before he moved across the Strait to Nanaimo. Now, as a retiree, he produces a little magazine called *Polar Borealis*.

Re your comment to Robert Jennings: I tend to think of the universe as a combination of processes, some of them simple, some of them complex, some of them so complex and interactive they appear random and are certainly unpredictable. As a result, we can have adventures thrust upon us, making our personal preference in the matter insignificant.

Re your next comment to Ahrvid: the fact that Edgar Allan Poe appeared not to know how a chess-playing automaton could play *different* games, or its program could *vary* its responses, highlights a concept people have been slow to acquire. At some point people generally failed to grasp how complex a system could be, and how even mechanical systems could be flexible and adaptive to new input. It is clear to me that something programmers learned before the 1960s was slow to enter general awareness, and some people still don't grasp it.

Re your comment to Heath Row: I was happy to find out about special collections and fanzine archives, where our comics and fanwriting collections can be stored. Let me know if I can send you what contact information I have.

Re duplicating an Intermission: I have done sillier things myself. The matter seems to be the scope of your attention, or your *opportunity* to notice a repetition. Sometimes the screen just isn't big enough.

***Brandy Hall Issue 16, January 2026, by Mark Nelson***

Anything that has its fans must eventually have its own fanzines. Thank you for illustrating that with examples from football (soccer) and cricket fandoms.

Re your comment to me: it dawned on me that the monthly schedule of eAPA was off-putting for you, because it appeared to ask for monthly submissions. What if that is neither implied nor inferred?

Re your comments to George Phillies: I recently visited the NESFA Press website, and Harry Warner's fanhistories are indeed available through NESFA Press. Note: I was actually browsing the Web at the time for anything I might call "fan presses" or "fan publishers," and started out thinking that NESFA Press started out as a press specializing in fannish works, such as fanhistories and fanthologies. Turns out NESFA Press is more of a small online fiction publisher, and like Norstrilia Press, happens to carry some fannish works as well. So I haven't found fan presses as I define them. I hope I don't have to start a fan press, because I put quite enough on my plate as things stand.

***Intermission 161, by Ahrvid Engholm***

I take your point, that current climate change could conceivably lead to a severe reversal of warming and lead to a new Little Ice Age. I also take the point that whether we face a future of polar melting, or reglaciation, is ... um ... still up in the air. (I tried to avoid using that expression but I couldn't figure out how.)

I remember René Barjavel's novel! Thinking back, it seemed to be based on crank theories I only learned about later, such as a wholesale shift of the Earth's surface thousands of years ago so that the poles are displaced, and a formerly temperate, inhabited Antarctica is suddenly at the South Pole.

Yeah, I remember bits of the Jack Parsons story. Interesting character.

Enjoyed the "Misc Oddities and Rumours" column. I wish I had featured the Marvyn de Vil story in my web page on fannish hoaxes.

I was not aware that any early attempts at weather control helped create the Dustbowl crisis of the 1930s; I thought that it was simply a natural drought. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio program "Ideas" once presented a documentary about the effects of this drought in our prairies, specifically in the region shared by Alberta and Saskatchewan called the Palliser Triangle, which unfortunately is prone to periodic desertification. It seems the Canadian government at the time was very

resistant to recognizing that farmers were facing a real drought and really had no irrigation resources.

Did you read the novels by Clifford D. Simak and Poul Anderson that you describe? As I recall, *City* was a story based on the idea of city-states and rural populations so utterly divorced from each other that they both function as independent, equally technically advanced countries, but the city-states turn out to be less functional. *The Big Rain*, as I recall, was actually set on Venus, not Mars.

***Esmeralda County Line #14, December 2025-January 2026, by Kevin Trainor Jr***

Your point is well taken about ignoring current political discourse, here or in mundane media. Just to try and be original I decided to be a philosophical anarchist, and have a fictitious Anarcho-Surrealist Party in the works. Between you and me it looks like any professed political system can work if enough people are united in thought, deed and action to keep it working – this motivation is the factor called solidarity – but we seem to be living in times of very *low* social solidarity. I blame the Belgians.

***Intermission 162, by Ahrvid Engholm***

Maybe you can grasp what's going on with European politics and military confrontations; I can't. Maybe you have a criterion for grasping what's happening to the United States and NATO countries; I can't. Maybe somebody knows what Donald Trump is going to do or say next; I don't. It is as if we are living in an absurdist satire on the 21<sup>st</sup> century, written in partnership by a couple of somewhat sadistic authors. Maybe the Ukraine should federate with Canada?

Interesting to hear that SMOFCon was held in Stockholm. Just one correction: real conrunners don't believe they're Secret Masters of Fandom; other fans call them that. That's the real definition.

***The Murthered Master Mage, by George Phillies***

Talossa LARP? What Talossa LARP? What did I say, what did I *say*?? I don't remember saying anything about an Iron Age Internet ...

Why are the characters in your pastiche story speaking in parentheses?

***R.A.I.L. #10 by Adrian Kresnak***

Read and enjoyed but no comment

***Samizdat Ish #35, Jan/Feb 2026, by Samuel Lubell***

I will be interested in your take on Ahrvid's SMOFCon (Stockholm) report. I have a persistent sense that the issues facing conrunners in northern Europe are quite different than the issues facing conrunners in North America. Since the suspension of VCON in Vancouver, the fan association that oversaw VCON has been preparing by stages to restart the convention, but I am not close enough to them to gauge their grasp of the issues facing a convention here and now; at least they're starting small, with one-day events.

***The Swamp Spot Sentinel #1.5, by Robert Jennings***

Very droll cover illustration.

What strange news you've got.

Re your comments to Ahrvid Engholm: you questioned the value of digitizing the history of SF fandom. I put some effort into doing so, at least as far as Canadian fanhistory up to the 1990s, but then I have a particular agenda – looking at how people behaved in small leisure interest groups, from the viewpoint of someone with no instinct for normal human behaviour, looking to prepare and defend himself from how humans behave. That might actually be a good use of fanhistory.

Contrary to your guess that there are probably “zillions” of fanzines, with some research on my part I only found about 30 in current circulation. Mind you, I was deliberately looking for English-language fanzines by, for and about SF fans, as I know fandom. That may be the limiting factor. I have not, as yet, tried to cover the kinds of zines that have appeared outside of SF fandom.

One of my backburner projects is to nail down some of my own questions about American, British and Canadian styles, in respect of punctuation and spelling. I would have said that the double-quotes normally used to signify speech in American (and Canadian) English are the first level, and single quotes are used for quotations or sarcastic references within speech. The British, of course, start with single quotes, and then use double-quotes within them.

Re your comment to me: no, Talossa doesn't cost money to join or participate in. They do sell items such as books on Talossan history and their invented language.

Amusing “Christmas gift” illustrations you got there.

***Wahflestopper #7, by Heath Row***

What, you're up to #7 already?!

Amusing to read about how Portuguese television does SF.

Read and enjoyed, but no further comments.



# MOZIAG #1

MY OTHER ZINE IS  
ABOUT GAMING

MOZIAG is Joseph P. Gill's apazine for the pages of N'APA #281.

[snowgen@gmail.com](mailto:snowgen@gmail.com)

## An Impostor's Introduction

Hi!

My name is Joe, and I'm a fan.

At least, that's what I tell myself. But I'm figuratively shaking in my boots because, in my mind, N'APA is almost hallowed. The voice inside my head is screaming, "You don't belong here, Joe! These are *real* fans, with *real* fan cred. You're just an old man wannabe!"

While the question of "am I fan enough to be here?" is bad enough, it has triggered an even deeper question: "Am I even a fan anymore?"

In my young teen years I had a subscription to Bob Guccione's *Omni* (thanks, dad!) wherein I remember reading Martin's "Sandkings," the intro to Heinlein's "Number of the Beast," and Card's "Deep Breathing Exercises." As a later teen, I scooped up old copies of *The Year's Best Science Fiction* anthologies (Lin Carter as editor, maybe?) from the used bookstore. That's where I read "First Contact"—a story that sticks with me all these decades later. When I joined *Tapadance* in '84, the OE (John Dumas, co-founder of the Gaylaxians) turned me onto Piper's *Little Fuzzy*—one of the few books I actually reread from time to time.

But you'll notice all that is past tense. What I have I read lately?

I guess I made a conscious decision to stop reading back in the '90s. At the time I was OE/member of *APAdemic*—a now defunct literary APA. I was writing a serial story, and I noticed that whilst reading Haggard's *She* my own writing was starting to sound a bit Victorian. "This can not be!" I said to myself.

So I stopped.

At least I stopped with written fiction. (Actually that's not *entirely* true. During COVID I re-read *Earthsea* and I read all the *Tom Corbett: Space Cadet* novels). In film and television my tastes still skew towards our beloved genres.

I have stayed involved in the table-top RPG side of things. But is that *real* fandom? I remember in the early 80's being told that it wasn't. I have a small co-author byline for "Grimtooth's Traps Too and Fudge" that was printed in Flying Buffalo's final reprint of *Grimtooth's Traps, Too*. I am currently the host of the Dekahedron RPG Podcast/YouTube channel, and I am also the central mailer for *The Anchorite APA*.

Does that count as legit fanac?

Am I worthy enough to be here?

I hope so.

## A Rare Find

When I was first starting *The Anchorite*, my teaser announcement was just a link to an online version of Donald Franson's *A Key to the Terminology of Science Fiction Fandom*. While writing my latest contrib for that APA, I needed to look up "quasi-quote" to make sure I was explaining it correctly to the young'uns. While searching for it, I stumbled upon an actual 1962 physical copy on AbeBooks!

The seller claimed that this was Forrest Ackerman's personal unmarked copy, although there's

no provenance to substantiate that claim. Still, the price was better than other versions I'd seen in the past.

I was worried that it would actually be a modern print (from PDF) that was being sold as original. But I took the chance anyway.

It just came in! Looking at the paper, the smell, and the staple, I think this is legit!

I'm very excited. I think this is the very definition of "geeking out"!

## Review(s)

**Pluribus:** (AppleTV, Season 1). Show runner Vince Gilligan (*Breaking Bad*) returns with this genre-appropriate show. I feel that revealing anything more about the plot would completely ruin the pilot, so I'll just ask you to trust me. If you don't want to trust me, trust the American Film Institute which awarded this as a 2025 "Television Program of the Year." The star, Rhea Seehorn, walked away with best actress awards from Screen Awards, Critics' Choice Television, and the Golden Globe. Joe: Superb.

## Kith & Kin (by me)



## Animal or Person?

*Man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much—the wheel, New York, wars and so on—whilst all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man—for precisely the same reasons.*

— Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

The CM of *The Anchorite APA* proposed a “group topic” for issue #10 (which coincidentally shares a deadline with *N'APA* #281). That topic was “What guidance would you use to determine if an alien species is a person or an animal.” I felt that my answer would be an appropriate inclusion for this zine as well.

The prompt was, of course, inspired by H. Beam Piper's *Little Fuzzy*, which is my favorite genre novel of all time. In case you don't know, the story takes place on the planet Zarathustra where Jack Holloway (a miner) encounters furry little creatures that he becomes convinced are sapient. The Zarathustra Company, which owns the planet, has a vested interest in disproving his claim: according to the laws of the Terran Federation, the company will lose ownership of the planet (and the millions of “sols” they invested) if the claim is true.

It truly is a great book. It was nominated for a Hugo for Best Novel (losing to Phillip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*). The copyright was never renewed, so you can grab it for free from Project Gutenberg.

I thought this was going to be an easy topic. I would just look to see what Piper said and add my own thoughts.

That didn't work out well. The Terran Federation's rule of thumb is “can they talk and build a fire?” That's not the sum of it, of course. The full criteria are things that are (in my opinion) immeasurable, such as conscious thought and creativity. There are also things that are feel are biased towards “How human are they?” I feel that a truly alien intelligence could be so incomprehensible that there would be no way to test it.

So I thought about this a lot. Too much, maybe.

My final thought: Universal Sapience.

It might sound like a cop-out. Maybe it is. But truly, how can you say that a beaver isn't sapient without being a beaver? Do we humans merely tell ourselves that beavers are “lesser beings” so we can collectively hand-wave any potential guilt over using them for food and fur?

Under my proposed system every living creature is considered sapient, including the cows that we eat. How that works in practice depends a lot upon who we are.

A Klingon approach says “we are the mighty. If they can not (or will not) defend themselves against our might, then they are ours to do with as we will.” It's ruthless, but consistent and efficient.

On the opposite end of the spectrum would be the Vulcan approach. The Vulcans say “the needs of

the many outweigh the needs of the few.” (Is it going to bug you if I don’t add “...or the one?”) I always imagined that Vulcans follow a Jain diet. Not only do they abstain from meat, but they don’t even eat plant matter if the harvest kills the plant. The Vulcan flavor of Universal Sapience looks like a people that don’t colonize other worlds, and that seek to minimize their ecological footprint as much as possible.

The “me” approach is in-between. That beaver is sapient. Much like the Vulcans, we respect that by not disturbing its habitat more than we must to maintain our own. The difference is that I allow the human need to outweigh the beaver’s need. What gives our needs moral priority over theirs? It’s going to sound a bit Klingon, but it’s the same thing that gives the lion’s hunger moral priority over the gazelle’s rights. “Every sapient being has the right to preserve its life even at to expense of another’s.” This is why the fox isn’t guilty of murder when it kills the hen, and why the farmer isn’t guilty when she kills the fox.

Even with domesticated animals—back to our cow—under “my” Universal Sapience this would be considered an unwritten treaty between species. Our part of the treaty is to not keep them in overcrowded, miserable conditions, and to give them a psychologically safe life that approaches their lifespan in the wild. Their part is knowing that they’ll eventually feed us.

So that’s my answer, but I’m wondering what it solved. I have given things *definition*, but how does that translate into *action*?

Do the Vulcans go to war with the Klingons to preserve a small population of space faring monkeys? Probably.

Do the go to war to save the Onions of Omnicron IV? Probably not.



An Onion of Omnicron IV (public domain)

But why not?

This is where St. Thomas Aquinas would respond that *anima vegetativa* is lesser than *anima sensitiva* which in turn is lesser than *anima rationalis*—an idea that he got from Aristotle and used to support Genesis’s “created in the image of God.” But that line of thinking is the antithesis of Universal Sapience. Under Universal Sapience we are forced to acknowledge that our prejudices (biological, psychological, or sociological) simply make us care about the onions less than the space monkeys. That’s probably because we see more of ourselves in the space monkeys than the onions.

In my opinion, it’s good to challenge that prejudice. Even if, in the end, we choose to import the onions from the Klingons to use as a pizza topping. It still comes down to individual judgment calls, and judgment calls are best done when we challenge our pre-held beliefs.

That’s how I see it. M+M

## Catspaw

“Catspaw” is where I share<sup>1</sup> my poetry. It’s been part of my zine since the beginning. When I wrote my first zine (“Barad Silmë”) in 1984, it had a Catspaw that included a poem called “Return of the King.”

The name of the section comes from “Cat’s Paw,” the seventh episode of the second season of *Star Trek* (the original series). In that episode we get this dialog:

WITCH 1: Wind shall rise.

WITCH 2: And fog descend.

WITCH 3: So leave here, all, or meet your end.

(*Maniacal cackling as they vanish.*)

KIRK: Spock. Comment?

SPOCK: Very bad poetry, Captain.

With that out of the way, I present this introduction that I wrote for this august body...

The Birth of a Fan

Joseph P. Gill

I am only me. I am only Joe,  
Who began with *The Hobbit* long ago.  
“Riddles in the dark” is what I read  
And the small fellow moved into my head.

Greek mythology is what came next  
In my fourth grade schoolbook reading text:  
Sword, sandal, Medusa, and Pegasus,  
Followed by *The Celestial Omnibus!*

And so it was that this fan was made  
In the things I read, the things I played.  
And now you know me. Now you know Joe  
Who began with *The Hobbit* long ago.

---

1 Share with you. Inflict upon you. Two sides of the same coin.

## Mailing Comments

Ahrvid Engholm

re The Coming Ice Age: I'm confused when you say that Earth is "heading for another ice age." The Earth is *currently* in the Late Cenozoic Ice Age, and has been for around 34 million years.

Robert Jennings

I use Suno.

As demonstrated in my Catspaw section, I write bad poetry. I also wrote bad song lyrics. Suno lets me upload an audio file of me singing my own lyrics (out of tune an all) but it figures out the melody I was going for and puts it to music with a fake voice so I can hear what it would really sound like without hiring musicians.

On the other hand, I'm not trying to sell it or pass it off as anything it's not.

Samuel Lubell

You mentioned how electronic publishing is replacing traditional print. I would like to add another replacement that I don't hear anyone talk about: the audio book. Maybe it's the people I know, but I have several friends that consume all their "book" in audio form.

Taking a little Google-break as I write this, I see that [publishdrive.com](#) (not sure how legitimate they are) say that "Digital audio now commands 11.3% of the US trade market, decisively surpassing ebooks (which managed only 1.6% growth and a 10% market share)."

(Side note: At the risk of ~~sounding snobbish~~ revealing my snobbery, I always bristle internally

when someone says they "read" a book when they really listened to someone else read it. In my opinion it's a lesser experience, but I know that's completely subjective. I never judge out loud. I try to be accepting.)

There are a few points I'd like to make that I didn't see in your excellent article:

The first is the second-hand market. I know that publishers hate them, but as a young fan the second hand market was my lifeblood. Much of my reading was exclusively books purchased from a wonderful used book store on Tiogue Avenue. It was also useful to know that whatever I spent on the book, I would get a tiny portion back when I sold it back.

The second point is about ownership. It's been said that in this digital age we own nothing—we only rent it. What happens to one's e-book library when the DRM server can no longer validate your ownership? What happens when Amazon decides they shouldn't have sold you that bogus copy of 1984 and remotely wipes it from your device?

Lastly, I feel a real benefit of good old-fashion dead trees is historical archive. I wrote above about how excited I was to get an original print of Franson's *Key*. What does that look like in a DRM-locked down future when books are only bits? Sure, *Little Fuzzy* is a classic that will live on, but what about *Phule's Company*?

**Re "Problems With Series":** I have, in my saved bookmarks, a 2015 *Guardian* article by Damien Walter titled "[Fantasy must shake off the tyranny of the mega-novel](#)." I couldn't agree more!

For “The continuing adventures” I would argue that there’s the type that *has* to be read in order to make sense (I think Morressey’s “Kedigern” series or Piper’s “Fuzzy” series would be good examples) and the type that can be read in any order (Howard’s “Conan” or Forrester’s Hornblower). I find either of these acceptable. If I can put it down after any book and feel that the story is complete, then I’m happy.

You say that Tolkien is the “best” example of the “chopped up long story.” I would argue that Jordan’s *Wheel of Time* is the “worst.”

In my intro I said that I haven’t read a modern book in quite a while. The series is part of the reason. I remember being at Barnes & Noble maybe 15 years ago and *every* fantasy book that I picked up was “Book X of the Y Series.”

Every one.

I walked away empty handed.

**Re Fantastic Four: First Steps:** did they really “change the Silver Surfer from male to female,” or did they draw upon a different, preexisting canonical female herald? Like maybe from Marvel’s Earth X?

Mark Nelson

re *Damnation Alley*: I saw it in the cinema as well! My sixth grade science teacher took me to see it during the summer.

## Wrapping Up

Since drafting the intro, I realized the remedy for falling out of fandom was sitting right down the street. I headed to the local bookmonger and walked out with the latest issue of *Analog*. It feels like a start.

That’s all I have. Thanks for having me! I look forward to the next “mailing.” ✨

Heath Row

When I saw the Portuguese address I had to look it up to see if it was near where my grandparent emigrated from (Fuseta, down south, and Terceira in the Açores). Sadly, it was not.

When I did the Camino de Santiago in 2015 my original plan was to start in Fuseta and walk to Porto and then do the traditional Caminho Português. In the end I was afraid that there wouldn’t be enough peregrino infrastructure, so I did the vastly more common Camino Francés, starting in France at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port.

Garth Spencer

I read your thoughts about the impending disappearance of the paperback with great interest.

Re: “the long-running consolidation of industries into a few corporate sources for goods or services”—Unregulated capitalism evolves into monopolies. For the past century-ish or so, our attempts to regulate have resulted in duopolies and triopolies. It’s a slight improvement, but we have a way to go (in my opinion).

I agree with your “lament” about e-books’ reliance on technology and infrastructure.

Other comments I have mirror those that I already wrote (above) to Samuel Lubell. Rather than wasting space repeating them, I would like to refer you there.

# Brandy Hall Issue 17 (March 2026)

*Brandy Hall* 17 is produced for *N'APA* mailing 281 (March 2026) by Mark Nelson.

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This is West Riding Press Publications ??? This is West Riding Press Publications (Australia) 46.

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 & 17 I looked at the use of the word `fanzine' in *The Times* in 1990 & 1991.

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## The use of the word 'fanzine' in The Times: Part Three

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	17	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 in 1990 was discussed in *Brandy Hall* 16.

### The use of the word fanzine: 1991

The first article on the year reveals the board of the football club Brighton and Hove Albion have taken legal action against the club's fanzine.

'Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? Or, to be more precise, a mosquito? Brighton and Hove Albion have taken legal action against, of all things, their terrace fanzine, *Gull's Eye*. The two co-editors, one of whom is unemployed, must pay costs of £6,000.

*Gull's Eye* is a typical fanzine described in the football paper, *When Saturday Comes* (by their renowned correspondent, Attila the Stockbroker), as "16 sides of erratically typed A5 sold by a bunch of enthusiasts outside the Goldstone on alternate Saturdays'. Such mags are full of jokes, teases, wind-ups, speculation, insult and accusation: they are funny, at least to insiders, who pay 40p to read all about it.

Such mags express the footy fan's love of grumbling: his (even her) chronic dissatisfaction with the club and the board: the sense of frustration and alienation that all terracegoers feel - especially at unsuccessful clubs. In short, a fanzine is a terrace jibe in print. One wonders if clubs will start to sue terrace chanters for slander.

The mag's allegations against the board were many and serious. That is beyond question. But it seems incongruous to take such massive revenge on a couple of inky pampheteers and long-term supporters to boot. In a statement read out in court, the board members concerned "felt they had no alternative" to taking the action "clear their names".

The editors, Peter Kennard and Ian Hart, were required to fulfil four conditions: withdraw their statements, apologise unreservedly, make a statement in high court and, finally, to pay the legal costs. A compromise was suggested by the Football Supporters' Association and rejected by the club. 'It shows how little rapport there is between the club and its supporters,' Dave Costa, who is running the *Gull's Eye* fighting fund, said.

Barnes, Simon. "Fanzine on the rack." *Times*, 19 Jan. 1991, p. 23.

In March Simon Barnes wrote again about the Brighton and Hove Albion football fanzine *Gull's Eye*.

Trouble continues to haunt the Brighton football fanzine, *Gull's Eye*. It has already been the subject of successful legal action this season, as readers of this space will recall . Now it is printing an apology for a different matter. It reads: "In Issue 32 of *Gull's Eye*, an article appeared which suggested that Mr Lloyd had been using the club to indulge in a series of luxury holidays. This story was pure satire and was merely a humorous attempt to highlight our recent attempt to secure a foreign player.

"We apologise to Mr Lloyd for any embarrassment but suggest that when we talk about trips to the Seychelles and signing Eko Bodoogo perhaps the majority of readers knew this story was satirical . In future, for the benefit of people who obviously do not understand such humour, any similar stories will be clearly marked This is not true, this is satirical."

Barnes, Simon. "Do not be gulled." *Times*, 16 Mar. 1991, p. 44.

I have reprinted the third article, about football fanzines, at the end of this article.

In the fourth fanzine related article of 1991 we finally leave the field of football fanzines. We venture to a new pasture, a Eurovision Song Contest Fanzine. Though perhaps *Eurovision Network News* might equally well be described as a club newsletter. (When does a club newsletter become a fanzine?)

The Fan Club of the Eurovision Song Contest, known as the "Eurovision, Network", had 500 members and published the fanzine *Eurovision Network News* (or was it a club newsletter?). The Italian organisers of the 1991 Eurovision song contest gave press accreditation to four representatives of *Eurovision Network News*. "Without them the list of British newspapers represented would have been virtually "nil point"."

Buchan, Alasdair. "A club for Europe." *Times*, 3 May 1991, p. 16.

The fifth mention of the word fanzine reveals that the Writers' and readers' festival, held in Birmingham, included "The first Football Writing Convention, National Football Fanzine Awards and a "football crazy" event for children."

S. M. "Child's Play." *Times*, 4 May 1991, p. 13

The sixth mention comes in an article about "The longest, highest rollercoaster in the world... at the Lighter Valley theme park, near Ripon in Yorkshire".

Serious roller-coaster freaks are reserving judgment until they have seen the whites of their own knuckles. There is a whole connoisseurship of the big drop, with its own arcane vocabulary, and devotees travel thousands of miles to sample the stomach-churning moments contrived by the Torquemadas of the high trestle from California to Blackpool.

“Size isn’t everything,” says Justin Garvanovic, aged 24, co-editor of the dipper fanzine *First Drop*. “Promoters are under constant pressure to build bigger and bigger, so that they can claim to have the tallest, longest or the fastest circuit. But many big circuits die at the beginning or the end of the run, and do not give the same kick as smaller ones which have been designed with real ingenuity, to keep the surprises coming all the way.”

Hill, George. "Ultimate worrier." *Times*, 15 July 1991, p. 12.

The seventh mention comes in an article on the reading habits of heavy metal fans. This states that there were currently 7 “glossy magazines” in the UK. “Add these to the fanzines...”

Toop, David. "A big noise in the marketplace." *Times*, 24 July 1991, p. 11.

The eighth mention is a disparaging comment about the writing style in a book under review “... one could go on for pages, and many fanzines do”.

Horovitz, Michael. "Rhapsodies in blues." *Times*, 27 July 1991, p. 20[S]

The ninth article returns to the football fanzine *Gull's Eye*.

Every now and then, a most unexpected event occurs in my house. A copy of *Gull's Eye*, a Brighton and Hove Albion football club fanzine, drops through the door. How does it keep going?

Regular readers will recall that the magazine was sued successfully for libel by the board of directors. While trying to pay off the legal costs, Peter Kennard, who combines the task of editing the magazine with working for a firm of undertakers, was arrested for running an illegal lottery and fined £250. He was trying to raise money by raffling such delectable things as signed football shirts, ties and photos.

“The burning question,” he writes, “is who was the individual who supplied the police with such an extensive dossier on our activities?” The fanzine now carries an editorial disclaimer: “*Gull's Eye* will not be held responsible for people getting the hump just because they have absolutely no sense of humour. *Gull's Eye* has zero cash and is still hopelessly in debt. We will have no hesitation in declaring bankruptcy if we incur further legal action.”

Barnes, Simon. "Pele orders a facelift for the Beautiful Game." *Times*, 24 Aug. 1991, p. 40.

For the tenth mention of the word fanzine we return to the listing of the offerings on a different type of box. The worthies at *The Times* recommended (CHOICE) watching a program on BBC2.

### **7.15 DEFII : Standing Room Only.**

A six-part football series hosted by the Brookside actor, Simon O'Brien, follows the format of the fan magazine with a succession of short items presented in lively style for a young audience. There is a star interview, tonight with Michel Platini. There is a talking point: would football be improved with a bigger goal, two referees, no offside and a sin bin? The proposals are put to the test in a match between two clubs in Wales. There is a report on crowd violence, not for once in

Britain but in Germany. No fanzine would be complete without a comic strip and Standing Room Only has gone to Stan Hey of *The Manageress* for the words, cartoonist Steve Bell for the drawings and impressionist Rory Bremner for the voices. It looks promising, though Standing Room Only seems a strange title for a soccer programme now that the terraces are giving way to all-seater stadiums.

"BBC 1." *Times*, 16 Sept. 1991, p. 19.

Whilst the eighth article used the word fanzine as a crutch to beat the writer of a poorly written book, the eleventh article takes the opposite 11. In her review of "SHOCK XPRESS The Essential Guide to Exploitation Cinema", edited by Stefan Jaworzyn, Anne Billson describes it as "A fanzine in book form... *Shock Xpress* examines the horror genre with wit, insight, and a fervour that can only be described as scholarly. If there were university degrees in splatter, these writers would be dons".

Billson, Anne. "Ghastly shock horrors." *Times*, 26 Sept. 1991, p. 16.

The twelfth article recognises a magazine that started as a fanzine. "Congratulations to *Folk Roots* magazine which publishes its hundredth issue this month. From humble beginnings in July 1979 as a southern region quarterly fanzine, it has grown into Britain's most authoritative digest of world folk and roots music news."

"Rock News." *Times*, 27 Sept. 1991, p. 11

The thirteenth article sees a return to football fanzines.

More on the death of footballing innocence. The fanzine phenomenon began as a self-conscious 'alternative' to the sycophancy and sensationalism of conventional football journalism. They opposed racism, sexism and homophobia as good chaps do. They made a lot of jokes, too.

Now, this has all changed. Martin Lacey, editor of a new selection of writing from fanzine called *Get Your Writs Out!*, bemoans the lowering of once-high ethical standards, the incessant rival-baiting and, most of all, the quest for profit. Now, there is money in the game. Naturally, that changes everything.

Lacey was approached by someone starting a fanzine. "I was stunned when he dropped into the conversation, without a hint of irony, the admission that he didn't actually know anything about football and did I think it would be a problem?"

Barnes, Simon. "Angelic innocence is lost forever at Gabriels." *Times*, 28 Sept. 1991, p. 36.

The fourteenth article provides the better than average names of some football fanzines.

Yes, well, we all know about football fanzines don't we? But with every alternative-type publication on football, the more the immensity of the fanzine scene comes clear to us. The latest alternative-type book (*Football with Attitude* by Steve Redhead) has many points, but it is the sheer unstoppable liveliness of the hydra-headed fanzine animal that is the abiding impression. Here are some examples that I had not heard before:

Albania FC: General football in Albania.

Come on Dagenham Use Your Forwards: Dagenham fans.

Every Man a Football Artist Kilkenny City fans.

53 Miles West of Venus: Preston North End fans.

The Football Pink: Gay and lesbian football supporters.

4,000 Holes: Blackburn Rovers fans.

The Gibbering Clairvoyant : Dumbarton fans.

Jihad: General football.

Liverpool Are On the Tele Again: Norwich City fans.

Ooh Gary Gary: Gary Lineker fans.

Poppies at the Gates of Dawn: Kettering Town fans.

My own favourite is the triumphant banality of the fanzine for supporters of Waterlooville. This one is called: *Flippin; Heck Ref, That Was a Foul, Surely?*

Barnes, Simon. "Thinking fan's view of life on the terraces." *Times*, 26 Oct. 1991, p. 37.

There is often a degree of antagonism between fans of local teams. The fifteenth article shows that this can extend to their respective fanzines. In 1991 the draw for the second round of the FA Cup saw Enfield to play against Barnet on December 7th.

“Firm as the respect is between the clubs, the supporters thrive on the old enmity. Pages of their respective fanzines are devoted to inventive abuse; no conversation about football for an Enfield supporter is complete without reference to Barnet, and vice versa.”

Gammie, Walter. "Enfield rewarded with a renewal of an old rivalry." *Times*, 19 Nov. 1991, p. 39.

The sixteenth use of the word fanzine appears in the student announcements section where there appeared “**Z.T.T.** label’s approved fanzine. Write to...”

"Announcements and Personal." *Times*, 30 Nov. 1991, p. 15.

The final reference to a fanzine in 1991 refers once again to the doings at a football fanzine.

“Readers of a fanzine circulated at Sunderland were asked to participate in a referendum asking whether Denis,Smith, the club’s manager, should stay. After collecting one point in five games, sweepstakes on the identity of Smith’s successor at Roker Park were being opened, but a headed

ninetieth minute goal from Don Goodman against Leicester City suggested such speculation could be premature.”

Taylor, Louise. "Parkes relishes his role in the revival of Blackburn." *Times*, 16 Dec. 1991, p. 31

((Time now to reprint in full the third article of 1991.))

## Putting the boot in

Football fanzines are produced by fans for fans - but are they improving the image of the game?  
Simon Barnes reports

There are about 250 of them. Some clubs have two or more. They have names like *Deranged Ferret*, *The Gooner*, *Mi Whippet's Dead*, *The Bonker*, *Brian Moore's Head Looks Uncannily Like London Planetarium*. They are football fanzines.

The clubs themselves have nothing to do with them: they are produced by fans, for fans. Traditionally, the production is indescribably amateurish, and the content is scattergun rudeness, sneers at directors and the conventional press, and utterly incomprehensible in-jokes.

But others are produced with increasing professionalism. Arsenal's *The Gooner* has a colour front and looks so slick it carries on the title piece the words: "No, it's not the bleedin' programme!"

Many supporters now buy *The Gooner* instead of a programme. This is a publication that has taken half a pace or more towards legitimacy. The Millwall fanzine *No One Likes Us* (named for the Millwall anthem, 'No one likes us, we don't care') has gone a step further it actually sponsored a Millwall game. It cost £1,500.

Fanzines have traditionally had a prickly relationship with the police, mainly based around the "moving on" of magazine sellers. But now some police forces are attempting to involve fanzines as an aspect of more enlightened, post-Hillsborough policing. For example, Constable Derek Lister of Tottenham invited *The Spur* fanzine along to a recent meeting between police and official and unofficial supporters' groups, "but they didn't turn up". There is still a good deal of mutual suspicion between police and fanzines: there are no signs of fanzines becoming conduits for police information.

One of the few fanzines directly to influence events in the boardroom is *Voice of the Valley*. The magazine was created by Charlton Athletic supporters dismayed by the team's departure from the Valley, its home ground, in favour of a sharing arrangement with Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park. The pressure exerted by the fans and the *Voice* finally paid off. Last week Greenwich council gave the club the necessary planning permission and Charlton should be back at their old ground for the start of next season.

*When Saturday Comes* is not tied to any club, but, under the banner "The half decent football magazine", it sells 35,000 every month. A recent readership survey revealed that its average reader also reads either *The Guardian* or *The Independent*. But *When Saturday Comes* has not gone legit: not in any establishment-loving sense. This is a fanzine that has grown up and lost its pimples and started to shave, but it is left-of-centre, and mixes frivolity and satire with serious pieces. As the current issue says, "The

prime motivation behind the creation of *WSC* was to express discontent at British football's appalling treatment of its fans."

Football fans are loyal, but not to anything the football club and its directors would recognise as "the club". Football fans do not necessarily admire the team, nor its manager, and they absolutely loathe the directors. Fans are loyal to something beyond anyone's control.

The fanzines express this: it is hardly surprising that most clubs hate fanzines. Directors, players, managers: no one is spared. The very existence of a fanzine stands for the deep, unbridgeable gulf that lies between most clubs and their supporters. A fanzine sells because it is not, repeat not, the voice of the club.

Brighton football club has two fanzine. At the beginning of the season, the club launched an official monthly newspaper, *The Seagull News*. It ceased with the December issue, and has just been re-launched as a magazine with its April-May issue now on sale. Peter Kennard, the editor of the rival *Gull's Eye*, says: "The fanzine was started so that fans could express an opinion without censorship. A football club is like Russia: they were the only people that ever passed out information, until we came along. They still expect everyone to toe the line."

Mr Kennard, aged 24, works as a funeral director. His employers, he says, have received a letter from the club about his activities with *Gull's Eye*. But recently things got more serious: the club sued the fanzine for libel.

The stuff was libellous all right, just as nearly every terrace chant is slanderous. The upshot of the case was that *Gull's Eye* ended up with £6,000 legal costs. So far they have raised £3,500. "I wrote [to the club] and suggested we sat round and discussed it" Mr Kennard says. "I received a very unfriendly six-page letter. Still - we sell nearly 2,000 copies every issue."

This is a classic example of the gulf between "the club" and its supporters. It is also an admission that fanzines are starting to be taken seriously and are now a part of footballing life. *The Spur* recently carried a long interview - a real one, not a spoof - with Gary Lineker, one of Tottenham's leading players. *The Gooner* mixes stuff that would not be out of place in an official Arsenal publication with its routine jokes about Tottenham.

This is the establishment route. Some fanzines have moved in an altogether different direction. "Some fanzines thrive on notoriety: says Andy Lyons, one of the editors of *When Saturday Comes*. "They specialise in abuse, excessive rival-baiting, racism and homophobia."

*When Saturday Comes* runs a listings service for fanzines, but excludes unacceptable ones. "There was always a danger that the broadly accepted principles underpinning fanzines could be abused by magazines that openly peddle prejudice," said an article in *When Saturday Comes*.

"The fanzine could argue that they are reflecting the views of their readers, but why bother producing a magazine if you spend all your time appealing to your readers' worst instincts?"

Barnes, Simon. "Putting the boot in." *Times*, 10 Apr. 1991, p. 29

# The Mathom House

## *Intermission #161 (Ahrvid Engholm)*

*But that doesn't excuse the BBC stitching together words from Trump's 6 Jan speech 54 minutes apart.*

As I understand it the BBC has apologised to Trump for the way that parts of his speech was joined together. However, they are going to fight his claim for defamation in the US courts. I predict that Trump will drop his suit against the BBC in order to avoid having to be deposed and being subject to discovery. This is his usual *modus operandi*. I assume that its an interesting legal question as to whether what the BBC said could damage Trump's reputation. What reputation is that and how could it be damaged?

*The curve shows we are now at a temperature peak, and it can only go down, down from there.*

You can only *know* that you were at a temperature peak after the event... However, you could use a backwards finite difference scheme of at least order two to estimate the derivative at your current point. However, the uncertainty in your temperature values is likely sufficiently noisy to make this a pointless calculation.

*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!*

At the last Federal Election in Australia one of the policies put forward by the Liberal-National opposition was to build government-owned nuclear reactors at seven sites across the country. This was one of their most unpopular policies. Polling has shown that it was particularly unpopular with female voters. Over the last decade the Liberal-National coalition has been attracting declining support from female voters. It's not an unknown problem, but it appears to be a problem that is of no concern to their mostly male representatives.

*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*

I am confident that there will not be a fusion reactor capable of producing around-the-clock power at useable levels by 2028.

*But earlier the idea of a coming ice age was more common!*

Usually I don't print things that you write if I agree with them. But just for a change... I can remember watching John Craven's Newsroom, a children's news programme broadcast on the BBC, in the 1970s where the possibility of an incoming Ice Age was discussed.

Under the category “Ice Ages and SF” you listed short stories and novels which addressed the topic of Ice Age SF. If you want to include a movie, how about *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) in which the temperature drops quickly after the Gulf Stream system shuts down?

*Painting roofs white, to deflect sunlight*

In Australia town players have only recently realised the advantages of having white roofs. Some of the newer suburbs in Sydney are concrete jungles: loads of concrete, very few trees, and non-white roofs. It’s been estimated that on hot days the average temperature in these suburbs is 2-3 °C higher than more traditional suburbs which have less concrete, more green spaces, and white roofs.

My wife has recently activated a three-month free subscription to Apple-TV. We’re currently watching the series *Extrapolations*. The most recent episode that we watched revolves around the release of two million tons of calcium carbonate into the atmosphere in an attempt to reduce the increasing raise in global temperatures. This episode is set in 2059, at which time the average global temperature has already increased by 2.3 °C. (This is a variation on, or perhaps more accurately inspired by, your *Setting off volcanoes to get dust into the atmosphere*.)

Ryct Heath Row

*As a kid I read Enid Blyton's Five books*

I read all the Famous Five books as a child, I think there were twenty-one in total. My brother and sister went on to read the Secret Seven series. I don’t know if they had the complete set as I wasn’t interested in reading those.

## ***Brownian Motion 17 (Garth Spencer)***

(From my loc on *The Obdurate Eye* 58)

"Penguin paperbacks somehow vulgarized literature by making classics available to the masses".

Let me quote from the back of any penguin book.

"He just wanted a decent book to read...

Not too much to ask, was it? It was in 1935 when Allen Lane stood on a British railway platform looking for something good to read on his journey. His choice was limited to popular magazines and poor quality paperbacks. Lane's disappointment and subsequent anger at the range of books available led him to found a company - and change the world."

I'm very grateful that Lane set up a company aimed at distributing high quality books at low prices to maximise the number of readers who can have an opportunity to read them. But then there have always been those who have opposed educating the masses.

Could a sociologist work up a form of "psychohistory"? That depends upon what you mean by "a form of psychohistory"? I strongly believe that it's nonsense to suggest that "social calculus" can make predictions about how a society will develop over a period of 1,000 years. On the other hand you are right that "social calculus" can be used to make short-term predictions about "average behaviour" in an attempt to manipulate people. Of course advertising campaigns don't always work, neither do politicians always get it right, and economic models fall over when they collide with reality. The last of these can be useful in explaining what has happened, they might be able to explain what will happen over a very short time-span, but they are not capable of predicting what will happen in the economy over the span of a few years. (Which is one reason why psychohistory in the sense of Hari Seldon will never work.)

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm

*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.)*

I think that social calculus is most useful when it's predicting the average behaviour of a large cohort of individuals. As the group size decreases it becomes less useful as a guide to behaviour.

Ryctm #1

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

The fan history that I am most interested in is Australian fanzine fandom. However, I write about that in ANZAPA!

Ryctm #2

*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*

According to my not very thorough research "film" is more common in British English and "movie" is more common in American English. There is another difference, which is perhaps more important to film critics and the like. Big block-busters are more likely to be described as being movies. Works by auteurs are more likely to be described as films.

## *The Swamp Pot Sentinel 1.5 (Robert Jennings)*

### *Ryct Intermission 159*

*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.*

This is the plot of the movie *Kinky Boots* (2005). (To be pedantic the movie is about a drag queen rather than a cross dresser.) This is a British comedy-dram about a struggling shoe factory in England that survives by finding a very unusual niche market.

### *Ryct Archive Midwinter*

*You can also, as a last resort, give your books and mag and comics to your local library for their library sale.*

Following our recent movie I gave a small number of books and magazines to our local Vinnies. (Vinnies is the Australian short-hand for the St Vincent de Paul Society, in particular the second-hand charity shops that they run.) I have a small number of books that I will try and persuade a second-hand bookshop to take of my hands. If they're not interested, I'll donate them to Vinnies.

### *Ryct Brownian Motion 16*

*If super heroes existed in real life and were dedicated to fighting crime, I suspect that 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.*

Has anyone ever written a comic/story along these lines?

### *Ryct Samizdat 34*

*The number one song I absolutely loathe is "Maggie May" by Rod Stewart.*

The song that appears in my mind, and my ears, when I see the word "Maggie" is the Fats Waller version of "When you and I were young Maggie" (recorded in 1939). As I understand it, this is actually a traditional Canadian song. So shout out to Garth.

Ryctm #1

*“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?”*

We visited my wife’s sister and her family. They live in Jakarta (Indonesia). Technically, they live in one of the new towns surrounding West Jakarta but let’s keep things simple. My wife worked the first week of our holiday, as she can do both of her jobs remotely. One of her employers is closed for just over one week over Christmas, the other is closed for almost two weeks. She doesn’t need to take any holiday from the respective employer for those periods.

Ryctm #2

*“Who looked after the home place while you and the family were far, far away for a whole month?”*

I was a little bit nervous about leaving our property for such a long period. I persuaded one of our friends to drive around every so often to have a look. OTOH, it’s not like our property is on a huge block with no close neighbours. The size of our block is 370 m<sup>2</sup> and we have neighbours to the back and to the side. Still, there’s always a risk if you go away for Christmas...

Ryctm #3

*“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”*

I don’t have an objection to a story that explores the political and cultural ramifications of a change in history. For example, I’ve always wanted to read Robert Harris’ *Fatherland* (1992). But like you, I don’t consider such a novel to be science-fiction. Where’s the science? And I don’t accept Samuel Lubell’s contention that changing history is in itself a science fiction device, as I don’t consider history to be a science. (See comment below).

Ryctm #4

*“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 understand their appeal. But if you’re in a minority, you’re not in a minority of one.

Ryctm #3

*“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.”*

Wow. So expensive. I don't know how expensive they were when they first released in the UK. I know that my parents didn't buy any. (Also, my dad decided that we should buy the technologically superior betamax...)

You followed your account of the video club with various other endeavours that was unsuccessful. Do you have some positive stories about anything that you did that was successful?

### *Ye Murthered Master Mage 280 (George Phillies)*

*Finish that which you began... I have a series of novels to finish.*

When I retired I thought to myself that I would have a go at writing some short stories. Not because I think I'm going to be a great writer. No, I thought it would be an interesting exercise to try and write some short stories. A way to keep my mind active. How many words have I written in the last twelve months? Zero. It's a matter of finding time to start writing. There always seems to be something more important to do. So perhaps it's just a nice fantasy to have, that I could write some short stories if I wanted to. Let's see if I can find the time to put down some words before the end of the year...

Ryct Samizdat

*When last I checked, my alma mater required calculus to enter. No calculus, no entrance, and no remedial math course.*

When I arrived in Wollongong, students enrolling into a non-physics science degree that had not taken calculus at school had to take a first-year mathematics subject that finished with basic differentiation and integration. The requirement to take the first-year mathematics subject has now been removed. How do you teach a science degree when your students do not know calculus? Simple. You remove any material from your undergraduate curriculum that requires students to know calculus.

Ryctm

*Instead of diverging from a single event, historical timelines can converge, so the presents are very similar, but the distant pasts are not.*

That's a very interesting idea.

## *Archive Midwinter (Jefferson Swycaffer)*

Ryctm

*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.*

I discount most “alternative history” fiction as not being science-fiction because there’s no science-fiction ideas. However, I’m happy to accept some, but not all, “depictions of the world after a nuclear exchange” as science fiction. In 1984 the BBC broadcast a movie called *Threads*. This showed the hypothetical escalation to war between NATO and the Soviet Union and the immediate devastation caused in the UK. It then showed the societal and environmental consequences of the war over a period of 13 years. I watched this when it was shown and it didn’t occur to me that it was science fiction. Perhaps I could call it “alternative future history”. On the other hand, I’ve got no problems classifying the apple-TV series *Silo* as SF. (I’ve only watched clips of it on YouTube.)

My wife recently decided to activate her three-month free subscription to apple-TV. We’re currently watching *Finch* (2021). Well, we’re not *currently* watching it... but we’ve watched about one-half. This has stronger SF elements than *Threads*, i.e. it has an advanced **humanoid robot (Jeff)** which has AI allowing personality development. It feels a little SF light, but if pressed I’d classify it SF.

The movie *WarGames* was released in 1983. I watched it on television a year or two later. At the time, I regarded it as a science-fiction film; now I no longer do. It appeared just as home computers were beginning to become a “thing” in the UK. I think it was December 1981 when some of my school friends received computers as Christmas presents — the Commodore Vic 20 is the one I remember.

I knew nothing about hacking then. If I had known more about computers and hacking in 1983, I might not have considered the film science fiction at all, but rather a political techno-thriller. Nothing in *WarGames* now seems technologically impossible, and had I been more technologically savvy at the time, I suspect I would have felt the same way then.

Perhaps the only conclusion I can draw is that genre classification is partly historical and experiential. What feels like science fiction at one moment may feel like realism later.

## *Wafflestomper 7* (Heath Row)

*"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."*

One of the things that I miss about England is the leaves changing colour and then falling to the ground, often accumulating into huge piles.

## *R.A.I.L. #10* (Adrian Kresnak)

*"Congratulations on having your story published in Eldritch Science."*

If I manage to find the time this year to write something, let's face it, I probably won't, then I will claim that you are my inspiration!

## *Intermission #162* (Ahrvid Engholm)

I sent you a loc on this issue, I won't repeat myself here.

## *Esmeralda County Line 14* (Kevin Trainor Jr)

Ryct Arhive Midwinter

*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.*

I don't often discuss politics that I disagree with. Forty years ago that excited me, no longer. Putting politics to one side, there's always plenty of interest in *Intermission*.

## *Samizdat 35* (Samuel Lubell)

*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.*

This is a particular problem with fantasy. I would like to read more fantasy, but I don't want to read a series. I want to read a stand-alone novel. No sequels! No prequels!

*It Can't Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis – This wasn't on my list of classics to read...*

A thought provoked by your comments about classics. Last year I reread Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Why did I reread it? Following the end of a program I listened to on the BBC World Service to there was an announcement that, later in the year, there would be two program broadcast on *Mrs Dalloway* - celebrating the centenary of its publication. I didn't think any more of it at the time. This year I decided that I should read a novel that was published in 1926. So now I have my yearly literary project: to read a novel published one hundred years ago.

Ryct *Brownian Motion* 16

*The smaller the group, the fiercer its politics.*

Your comment reminded me a quote that, perhaps, is originally due to Wallace Sayre, "The politics of the university are so intense because the stakes are so low." This sentiment is better known due to Kissinger's variation that "University politics are vicious precisely because the stakes are so small." Though perhaps in 2026 the stakes are not so small.

Ryctm #1

*"Alternate History novels are science fiction with the science being history (which counts as a social science)."*

I think we will have to agree to disagree on this. Leaving aside the merits of social science, I don't consider history to be a science.

Ryctm #2

*"I've been meaning to re/watch all of Star Trek."*

A project that I would like to complete. And by that I mean *Star Trek* in all its forms. It's likely that I've never watched all the episodes of any ST show. The show that I've watched the greatest percentages of episodes is probably ST:TNG. I've not seen the original series for decades. My DVD of *Brand New Worlds* season one came with the ST:ToS episode *Balance of Terror* - the events of that episode being reference in the final episode of *BNW* season one. It wasn't familiar to me when I watched it. But who is to say that I didn't watch it fifty years ago and I've forgotten all about it? Some episodes of ST:ToS I remember watching. Perhaps it would be a Good Thing to watch ST:ToS?

I've watched the first two and four seasons of *ST: Picard* and *ST: Discovery* respectively. When I get around to buying and watching the final season of each series then these will become the first that I know I've watched all their episodes.



*The Hope Diamond*  
*Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History*

R.A.I.L. #11  
March 2026  
Adrian Kresnak  
[railfanzine@gmail.com](mailto:railfanzine@gmail.com)

### **Hello everyone!**

I went on a trip to Washington, D.C. earlier this month. It was a few weeks too early for me to see the cherry trees in bloom, but every Smithsonian gift shop had cherry blossom-themed products. I bought a lot of postcards!

This July will be the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The gift shops also have stuff celebrating this, but unlike the cherry trees, I could see the founding documents in person. My brother and I went to the National Archives to check it out. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are kept in glass cases in a darkened room. The first thing I noticed about them is that both the documents are *big*. I'm so used to seeing excerpts in books or reading pocket-sized versions. There is so much text on *one* sheet of "paper."

The ink is also fading from the Archives' copies, too. On one of the documents, I couldn't even make out most of the signatures. All this time, I'd been taking it for granted that we had the full, correct text of the Declaration and the Constitution. I'm still pretty sure we have the text, but that we have it because people were careful in copying the originals.

It was cool to go through the exhibits. My brother had suggested the National Archives because he's a big fan of it and the Library of Congress. The Archives had an exhibit about patents – they even had a replica of a patent for bar codes!

Other places we went:

- Air & Space Museum: some exhibits were still under construction so we didn't see much new. I'm fond of the commercial air travel exhibit.
- Department of the Interior: they have a tiny museum here too! The library was amazing. I was so tired by this point that I didn't get to fully enjoy it.
- Natural History Museum: spent a lot of time in the gem exhibit. I like how many pretty crystals there are.



*My favorite crystals from the Natural History Museum*

In Broader News!

- Thank you for emailing all the club zines. It's been nice to receive them.
- I sent the January issue of *Eldritch Science* to my local writing group. They seemed to like it!
- I started law school. It is just as hard as everyone says it is and it takes up as much time as everyone says it does. I'm excited to be learning, but I'm still struggling. Finals are coming up quickly. Wish me luck!



Esmeralda County Line #15  
February-March 2026  
A zine for NAPA 281

Kevin Trainor Jr.  
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### **TOO MUCH GOING ON 2.0**

February was just as busy as January, what with an optometry appointment at the VA (which earned me a new pair of glasses), an NSSAB meeting in Las Vegas, and Confinement VII in Lebanon outside of Nashville at the end of the month. Plus, after I got back from Confinement, I had a wound care appointment last week at which the wound care team was again pleased by the improvement in my leg wounds. Who knows? Maybe in a year or two they'll be all healed up.

I think I've talked about Confinement previously; it started out of Mike Williamson's frustration with mask requirements during COVID (his lungs being damaged worse than mine, and I can't wear a mask for long) and over the years has evolved into a large house party/small convention and Hoyt/Williamson family reunion since Mike's daughter Morrigan married one of Dan & Sarah's boys. This year Devon Eriksen (author of the most excellent Theft of Fire) was guest of honor, and a very good one he was, too, despite being somewhat ill and still dealing with the stress of his wife's escape from cancerous death last year. Despite my best intentions I ate too much at Publix, Whataburger, Waffle House, and the hotel breakfast, which was free and worth every dollar I spent on it. I also went out Sunday night after the convention to the Buc-ee's at Crossville for BBQ sandwiches, a hat, a travel pillow, jerky, and entirely too many baked goods.

Tax season is being frustratingly slow. Usually by the end of February I have 20 returns finished and paid for, but this year I have about half of that, and one of those was mine. Hopefully things will pick up in the latter half of March and the beginning of April.

## BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

I have hardcopies of the Stark trilogy by John ~~Henry~~ Campbell somewhere in my boxes, but since I am unlikely to unpack them until/if I move into a larger place of my own, I ordered the e-book editions from Amazon and am currently rereading them. It's an odd little trilogy about a maverick Army NCO on the moon who finds himself forced to rebel against the corrupt corporate dystopian America he swore to protect and defend. The military depicted in Stark's War and Stark's Crusade is the careerist, bureaucratic military that brought us Iraq II and Afghanistan extrapolated into a future where operations are funded by live camera feeds from the soldier's helmets.

I'm also continuing to reread Ralts Bloodthorne's Behold: Humanity! epic and am just about up to the point where the Digital Ommissiah, his Biological Apostles, the Detainee, and a half-dozen other pipe-swinging hardcore types are about to launch the War on Heaven against Sam-UL the Screaming One. It may be a while before I get bored with this series.

### Leftover Comments on N'APA #279

~~Half off in case quantities~~

### Intermission #160

~~Wait, didn't we do this lastish?~~

(Natter) It certainly seems that Ukraine is doing much better and Russia is doing worse; the long-prophesied economic collapse of the latter and the demonstrable superiority of the former's drone forces appear to be forcing things to a conclusion few had expected for-plus years ago. 🌟🌟 Anthropic has lost its lawsuit and now has to cough up money to the writers whose works they stole to train their LLM. Most of the writers I follow on Twitter/X have expressed the hope that Anthropic lasts just long enough to pay them off before it goes bankrupt.

### Ye Murdered Master Mage #279

(RYCTo me) "I endeavour to give satisfaction." –R. Jeeves

### Snow Poster Township #23

(RYCTo me) Son of Silvercon III indeed went well, for the most part; we drew more members than we did last year (sic) when we were at the Plaza, and this year there's great interest in our Guest of Honor, Tim Powers. 🌟🌟 Wow, I didn't see that promo copy before I bought Butler's book, and it certainly isn't a very good summary of the contents, in my opinion. Reasonable people may differ. 🌟🌟 I was not aware of Kling's work, but if you want to shoot me a copy of one of those zines, I'll try to hunt it down.

### R.A.I.L. #9

RAEBNC

### Brownian Motion #16

(RYCTo Ahrvid) Gilliland's Rosinante novels not only had AI, the AI were major supporting characters, including Corporate Skaskash and the former AI of William Hulvey (Corporate Elna? I forget.), which play large parts in the destiny of the little space colony.

(RYCTo me) You're most welcome.

### Samizdat #34

(natter) Interesting that you publish this recap of Jim Butcher's career as the latest Dresden Files novel, Twelve Months, has hit the stores. If you are a fan of the Dresden Files (and I am) I strongly recommend it. If you aren't familiar with the series, you could start here, but there are better places.

(RYCTo me) Well, that is certainly the image the media are presenting of Moms for Liberty. 🍷🍷 I agree that you can't separate the historian from the history, which is why it's important to read multiple histories of the same events with different points of view, something drummed into me by my father at a young age. This is the way to determine what the objective truth is, or at least get arbitrarily close to it. 🍷🍷 This Hispanic isn't reconsidering his vote for Trump, and none of my black or Latino relatives are either. So far all the claims that this is happening are anecdotal or the result of questionable polls.

### Brandy Hall #15

(RYCTo me) Those two histories of Australia and your desire to read both of them are exactly the sort of thing I was commenting on to Sam, *supra*.

### Fresh Comments on N'APA #280, Ranch & Fry Sauce \$0.50 Extra

#### Archive Midwinter

(RYCTo Heath) I tried rereading some of Don Pendleton's "Executioner" books a few years back, and I was disappointed to see that I was no longer as fascinated by them as I was in my distant youth. Perhaps Mack Bolan seems rather tame now compared to The Punisher, which I still enjoy.

(RYCTo me) With Heinlein, there is also the problem that a lot of his main characters are versions of himself, or as the annoying Alexei Panshin once wrote, "The Heinlein Individual". 🍷🍷 The problem with helicopters in the Slammiverse is that air defense at that tech level prevents them being of any use except in safe rear areas. I agree that the UNEF in The Forever War resembled the Vietnam-era U.S. Army a little too much; while Hammer's regiment is likewise based on a Vietnam template, the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment on which it was based was very different than the infantry slogging through the Delta or the jungles. 🍷🍷 I can't remember who I was discussing this with (maybe it was Grok) but it's interesting that Drake's tales of the Slammers have more in common with Pournelle's stories of the CoDominium Marines and Falkenberg's Legion than they do with Haldeman's novel.

(RYCTo Mark) I'm far from the first person to notice this, but there is a growing separation between civilians and the military, particularly the active duty military. It used to be more common in the officer corps, but we're seeing increasing numbers of second- and third- generation enlisted men. Generally speaking, I'm opposed to a draft, but I think if we did reintroduce the draft, restricting conscripts to the National Guard and Reserve might be a reasonable thing. California is huge and should be able to field an entire division in the National Guard, and the same is true of New York.

### Brandy Hall #16

(RYCTo Bob) I never saw any for sale, but when I was growing up it was fairly common to see coverless (remaindered) books on the giveaway tables of military libraries. This was also how I acquired my copy of the F&SF issue with the first Gunslinger story by Stephen King.

(RYCTo George) There is also Sam Moskowitz' The Immortal Storm, which appears to be out of print but can be read on Google Books. Like the Knight and Warner books, it is (surprise, surprise) controversial, much like Sam himself.

(RYCTo Heath) Re: sentient weapons of war – Behold: Humanity! has a number of examples of these, ranging from Bolo Combat Units and Precursor Automated War Machines to virtual intelligences used as weapons against enemy computer systems.

(RYCTo me) I am not familiar with the Fancyclopedia entry, but I suspect it is probably more slanted in favor of WSFS than what I would prefer. I generally recommend that people consult primary sources such as the blogs of Larry Correia, Brad Torgersen, and Vox Day. 🍷🍷 I think some of the Yiddish radio show disks did make it into libraries. Can't imagine that there are too many fluent Yiddish speakers around these days, but Yiddish has blessed English with quite a few words, not all of which refer to food. 🍷🍷 I don't mind being used as a footnote. ~~People have done worse.~~ 🍷🍷 How did I know Greg was a big-time Diplomacy player back in the day? Good God, man, there was no escaping it! He snuck several references to his ongoing campaign into various SPI

games he worked on, most notably *Swords and Sorcery*, which featured the city of Urf Durfal, named for Costikyan's Dipzine. 🍷🍷 I am amused that you recommended Horne's The Price of Glory to me; my library-bound copy is literally inches from my elbow. Horne's marvelous trilogy of the Franco-Prussian Wars is something I recommend to everyone who is interested in the World Wars that doesn't run away fast enough. Interestingly, I read the trilogy backwards, starting with The Fall of France, most likely because I was fascinated by the 1940 campaign and bought most of the wargames published about it, including GDW's enormous Europa-series game with the same title as Horne's book. 🍷🍷 I don't watch as much baseball as I used to either; being out in rural Nevada doesn't help with that. Maybe I'll make an effort to catch the Nationals on the radio when they play the Dodgers; one of the Dodgers' AM radio affiliates is just over the state line in Bishop. (RYCTo Sam) Jerry Pournelle (who had degrees in psychology and a Ph.D. in political science) derided the social sciences as "voodoo science". So you're in good company. History, on the other hand, is both an art and a science. May Clio smite those who argue otherwise!

### **Brownian Motion #17**

(natter) I think I responded to your ~~conspiracy theory~~ statements of fact in StippleAPA. Or maybe it was APA-V. In case I didn't, I agree that as societies in the Anglosphere, we should be working on eliminating single points of failure by creating alternatives to those single points, which may not necessarily be duplicates of those points. 🍷🍷 You may be fascinated (or appalled) that Toni Weisskopf of Baen Books commented during the Roadshow at Confinement that mass market paperbacks were no longer "mass market", having been replaced by e-books. Since Baen is an arm of Simon & Schuster, and she didn't specify that she was talking about Baen, it would be reasonable to infer that she was speaking about the book industry in general. 🍷🍷 It would behoove us to keep electric power as cheap and widely available as possible then, no? Small solar arrays for recharging one's phone and Kindle are cheap and widely available. 🍷🍷 There are, in fact, WW1 re-enactors, though I can't for the life of me imagine what the attraction is.

(RYCTo me) Most American veterans I know personally and online regard the UN peacekeeping forces (with rare exceptions - Canadians and Irish come to mind) as militarily inept as well as being a bunch of child-molesting rapists and criminals. There is a wealth of memes that express interest in collecting stacks of blue helmets, with or without skulls attached, if the UN was ever stupid enough to deploy "peacekeepers" to the U.S. I am not sure I can express the contempt and disgust any more clearly.

### **Intermission #161**

(Ice Age) I was surprised to see Suzanne Martel's The City Under Ground (1971) omitted from your list. It was widely assigned in U.S. schools in the early 1970s. 🍷🍷 It wasn't just the Soviets who thought about using atomic weapons to modify the terrain. Project Plowshare here in the U.S. intended to use atomic weapons to create artificial harbors and dig canals, but was abandoned for obvious reasons. 🍷🍷 You know who else wanted to drain the Mediterranean? HITLER! ;-). 🍷🍷 I had forgotten that Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands..." was set in a world modeled on the Dust Bowl.

(RYCTo me) Balticon was, and is, a sizable regional SF convention which these days caters to several different SF&F media fandoms. Sam could tell you more about it since he's involved with BSFS, which actually runs the thing. 🍷🍷 As long as I can remember (1974), SF conventions have always been by and for the middle class. If one can't afford them, that's unfortunate, but I have observed that people whose membership gets comped in exchange for future work at the con tend to be less than reliable when it comes to getting that work done. Other con chairs can do what they like, but my position was and will be "Everybody pays, everybody fights." (~~"If it's your first convention— you have to fight.")~~ 🍷🍷 Yes, much like Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, McCarthy's methods were unsound. As we later learned from the Venona Transcripts, though, he turned out to have been right. 🍷🍷 I've read a fair amount of Bob Shaw, as it happens, but thank you for the recommendation.

## Intermission #162

(natter) One of the reasons ASF became so popular as a market is that Campbell paid on acceptance and paid bonuses to popular authors to boot. Amazing, on the other hand, paid on publication and as your story points out, was infamous for dragging its feet on both publication and payment.

◆◆ Heinlein's houses were both remarkable structures. Patterson talks about them in his biography, but not in such detail as the PM article. Thank you! ◆◆ Nice pocket bio of Lise Meitner. ◆◆ "If someone claims they're a SMOF, you can be sure they aren't one." ◆◆ Conventions cannot be like they used to be because fans are not like they used to be.

## The Murdered Master Mage

RAEBNC

## R.A.I.L. #10

I generally don't make resolutions, since I have enough (too much?) on my plate as it is, but these seem like good ones.

## Samizdat #35

(books) See my comment to Garth supra regarding Toni Weiskopf's remarks on e-books replacing mass market paperbacks at Confinement last month. ◆◆ On the other hand, it's easier for writers to publish e-books independently, and it's less expensive for publishers to maintain a back list of e-books. Every mobile phone has an e-reader built into it (or can have one easily downloaded) so the marketing emphasis needs to be on getting the kids to download a book – or an SF/fantasy magazine! I do believe there are actually more prozines out now than when I was a neo in the 1970s, but most of them are electronic now. The challenge will be to monetize those magazines so that they can pay a decent amount to writers, and I have no great insights for that. As for getting new writers recognized, this is where the N3F can have an impact. While it's unfortunate that Upstream Reviews has denied us permission to reprint their reviews, it seems to me that with a few thousand members, surely we can encourage everyone to tell the members what they're reading and what they think of those books.

(Orson Scott Card) I remember meeting him at Intervention Alpha in Salt Lake City in 1979 while I was a student at DLI and being very surprised that he was a genial teddy bear of a guy (Hot Sleep, A Planet Called Treason and "Songbird" had just been published) because I was expecting more of a cadaverous Robert Bloch sort. Both my kids read Ender's Game at a young age and I think it did them good. As for his later books, I didn't have much interest in his fantasy tales, but I did read the Shadow series. People who are surprised by his political opinions apparently don't know a lot of LDS folks – while they are not as in your face about their beliefs as, say, Muslims or some evangelical Protestants, they are generally pretty firm in those beliefs and very, very hard to shake.

(books) While I disagree with Larry Correia and Brad Torgersen that The Great Gatsby is a terrible novel, I do agree that analyzing it to death over three months is ridiculous and serves to kill kids' interest in reading, and the same is true of a lot of other books on the list. ◆◆ I don't know how you missed that Buzz Windrip in Lewis' novel is a rather obvious expy of Huey Long, the Louisiana populist governor who was considered a strong challenger to FDR in 1936 until he was assassinated. ◆◆

(RYCTo Jefferson) You too? My parents didn't let me have comic books either but were fine with me reading SF, even some of the racier SFBC selections like Stand on Zanzibar. ◆◆ I would recommend A Spaceship for the King over its revised and extended version, but that's just me. ◆◆ The crossover between mainstream/literary fiction and SF has been going on for quite a while. Paul Theroux and Ira Levin both wrote SF novels that weren't labeled as such, and the New Wave of the 1960s was full of experimental fiction techniques being tried out in SF.

(RYCTo me) I'm sorry to hear you didn't get rehired/retained. 🍷🍷 You're entitled to your opinion regarding McCarthy. 🍷🍷 I would have been surprised if you were a big Pournelle fan, and I am surprised by your preferring DS9 to TNG. 🍷🍷 Perhaps because I grew up in a high school with a lot of military brats, the "natural" antipathy between geeks and jocks is alien to me. Brains were respected as much as brawn...but I admit, that was fifty years ago, and Prince Georges County is not now what it was then. 🍷🍷 I think we're going to have to agree to disagree regarding The Forever War and Hammer's Slammers. The latter may not have won any awards, but it spawned a plethora of sequels, a pair of wargames (tabletop and miniatures), and stories by other authors in that universe...and it was based on Drake's experiences in Vietnam just as Haldeman's was. As for my view of the UNEF officers (and yes, I remember Mandella was one) it is colored by the original story, "Hero" and the bureaucracy that keeps screwing with Mandella and Potter. The fact that the war was pointless was not at all clear until the end. 🍷🍷 Yeah, I remember the sneering at "drobes" in the 1970s. A serious mistake, repeated with the Star Wars fans, that has had repercussions to the present day.

### Swamp Spot Sentinel 1.5

(AI) It's a tool. Some authors/musicians use it well, and others poorly.

(RYCTo Jefferson) A revival of the "Swap & Sell" feature in one or another of our zines would be a Good Thing, especially for those of us wanting to replace tattered paperbacks for which there are no e-book versions.

(RYCTo me) The weight has been going up and down since then and right now is stuck around 390, which is better than it was but a ways from where I want it to be. 🍷🍷 I'll defer to you on what the old-school D&D players were reading. I know most of my friends who played were avid SF readers, but I didn't want to assume this was true of most of them. 🍷🍷 I still drink a lot of iced tea, mostly because I can't abide Diet Pepsi. As for coffee, I still can't drink it black except in a dire emergency. Lots of dairy and a little bit of sweetener.

### Wahflestopper

(natter) I remember "Hawk Among The Sparrows" vividly. For me, it belongs with Poul Anderson's "The Man Who Came Early" as an example of advanced technology in the past not being an automatic win. 🍷🍷 I miss P. Schuyler Miller greatly. He had a knack for summarizing plots without spoiling the endings. 🍷🍷 Living out of a suitcase and moving from one hotel to another was a dream lifestyle when I was younger. Now it's more like slow torture.

### MUSIC AND OTHER SUCH EVILS

I believe I first started listening to Conelrad (the musician, not the Civil Defense warning system) right around the time I joined Goonfleet in EVE-Online back in 2006, maybe 2007. I enjoyed the blend of electronica with Cold War imagery and themes, but after 2015's *Toward Compliant Towers*, Conelrad went into a long spell of depressed-sounding drone and ambient podcasts (Conelcasts) and eventually I decided I'd had enough of that and stopped downloading them.

Well, this morning as I was knocking out the mailing comments, what should appear in my inbox but an announcement that Conelrad had a new album? I threw my £8 at the screen and soon was listening to *Party's Over*, a wonderful return to form. So, having given it a listen or two, now I am enjoying the rest of the albums again. I might even go through the Conelcasts.

I am looking at various houses for sale in Tonopah, and quite a few of the excellent bargains on offer are fixer-uppers demanding more sweat equity than I have the skills for. Perhaps I'll just buy an empty lot and stick a double-wide next to a 40' shipping container that I'll adapt into a library and game room.

### ...Trump vs. History

It is very common for U.S. presidents to be concerned about their legacy and how history will portray them. But it is rare for a President to take so many active measures to shape how history is portrayed in our schools, museums, national parks, etc. Trump wants to turn history into propaganda for his view of the United States, eliminating anything that shows the United States as imperfect and removing minorities from history as much as possible.

Trump is hardly the first to use history as propaganda. In the United States, one of the rationales for teaching History in public schools is to build patriotism and make young schoolchildren proud of being Americans. School books show the U.S. as a model of freedom and liberty. Over time, the U.S. became more democratic and free. And we fought wars to bring our freedoms to people everywhere, not out of our own personal interests. Even when minorities were added to this story after the civil rights movement, the focus was on how they gained their right, mostly ignoring how they had to fight the law



and society in order to do so. Parents and community groups denounced attempts to paint a more accurate (and more complex) view of history, such as the new history of the 1920s or Howard Zinn's *A Peoples' History of the United States*, as treason and lies.

But schools, especially high schools, had moved away from the Triumphantist view of American history in the 1990s and early 2000s. Influenced by Zinn and James Loewen (*Lies My Teacher Told Me*) and the struggles over the National History Standards of 1994, schools taught in ways that recognized the failures and missteps of the U.S., not just its victories. Trump, however, wants to revert back to the days when the U.S. could do no wrong (at least in school textbooks).

On January 29, 2025, Trump signed an executive order, "[Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling](#)" that stated that the purpose of history in schools was to "instill a patriotic admiration for our incredible Nation and the values for which we stand." It claims that the schools currently are "Imprinting anti-American, subversive, harmful, and false ideologies on our Nation's children [that] not only violates longstanding anti-discrimination civil rights law in many cases, but usurps basic parental authority." It states that "'Patriotic education' means a presentation of the history of America grounded in:

(i) "an accurate, honest, unifying, inspiring, and ennobling characterization of America's founding and foundational principles;

- (ii) a clear examination of how the United States has admirably grown closer to its noble principles throughout its history;
- (iii) the concept that commitment to America’s aspirations is beneficial and justified; and
- (iv) the concept that celebration of America’s greatness and history is proper.”

It also calls for “efforts to ensure patriotic education is appropriately provided to the public at national parks, battlefields, monuments, museums, installations, landmarks, cemeteries, and other places important to the American founding and American history.” It also requires the Department of Education to promote patriotic education.

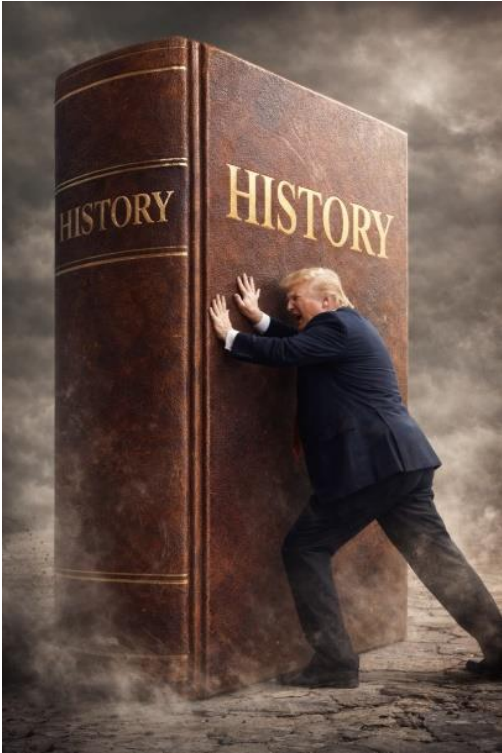
His March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 executive order, “[Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History](#)” claimed “Over the past decade, Americans have witnessed a concerted and widespread effort to rewrite our Nation’s history, replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth. This revisionist movement seeks to undermine the remarkable achievements of the United States by casting its founding principles and historical milestones in a negative light. Under this historical revision, our Nation’s unparalleled legacy of advancing liberty, individual rights, and human happiness is reconstructed as inherently racist, sexist, oppressive, or otherwise irredeemably flawed. Rather than fostering unity and a deeper understanding of our shared past, the widespread effort to rewrite history deepens societal divides and fosters a sense of national shame, disregarding the progress America has made and the ideals that continue to inspire millions around the globe.” Needless to say, this is not the case.



Trump has also tried to change how the Smithsonian museums in Washington DC cover History. In August 2025, Trump wrote on Truth Social ““The Smithsonian is OUT OF CONTROL, where everything discussed is how horrible our Country is, how bad Slavery was, and how unaccomplished the downtrodden have been – Nothing about Success, nothing about Brightness, nothing about the Future... This Country cannot be WOKE, because WOKE IS BROKE. We have the ‘HOTTEST’ Country in the World, and we want people to talk about it, including in our Museums.” He told the Smithsonian that its museums would have to adjust anything his administration determined problematic in “tone, historical framing and alignment with American ideals.” This is part of his effort to minimize Black history and remove anything that he sees as promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. *The New York Times* had an article on June 20, 2025, titled “How Trump Treats Black History Differently than Other Parts of America’s Past” by Erica Green that stated “Since taking office in January, President Trump has tried to reframe the country’s past involving racism and discrimination by de-emphasizing that history or at times denying that it happened.” For instance, he attacked the Juneteenth federal holiday which commemorates when African Americans in Texas learned that slavery had been abolished.

His March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 executive order also criticized the Smithsonian, claiming “Once widely respected as a symbol of American excellence and a global icon of cultural achievement, the Smithsonian Institution has, in recent years, come under the influence of a divisive, race-centered ideology. This shift has promoted narratives that portray American and Western values as inherently harmful and oppressive.” As evidence, he again points to the portrayal of race. Instead, he states “we will restore the Smithsonian Institution to its rightful place as a symbol

of inspiration and American greatness -- igniting the imagination of young minds, honoring the richness of American history and innovation, and instilling pride in the hearts of all Americans.” He orders the vice-president, who sits on the Smithsonian Board of Regents “to remove improper ideology from such properties” and asks Congress, which controls the budget, “prohibit expenditure on exhibits or programs that degrade shared American values, divide Americans based on race, or promote programs or ideologies inconsistent with Federal law and policy.” To carry this out, Trump demanded the Smithsonian turn over records over decisions about its content and plans. Before Trump, the Smithsonian had been largely autonomous, not subject to Presidential decisions. This is already affecting how the Smithsonian tells American History. For instance, the National Museum of American History changed its description of Trump’s impeachments to remove details about Trump’s “repeated ‘false statements’ challenging the 2020 election results”.



Trump has also tried to change how National Parks report on American History. Many National Parks are historic sites of battles and homes of great national leaders. The National Park Service had to restore pages on Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad due to huge public outrage. His History executive order calls on the Secretary of the Interior “determine whether, since January 1, 2020, public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar properties within the Department of the Interior’s jurisdiction have been removed or changed to perpetuate a false reconstruction of American history, inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures, or include any other improper partisan ideology.” He also calls for the restoration of statutes glorifying the Confederacy and “take action, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to ensure that all public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar properties within the Department of the Interior’s jurisdiction do not contain descriptions, depictions, or other content that inappropriately disparage Americans past or living (including persons living in colonial times), and instead focus on the greatness of the achievements and progress of the American people.”

Trump even changed the labels of White House pictures of past presidents. He removed Biden’s portrait with a picture of an autopen and changed the plaque to read that “Sleepy Joe Biden was, by far, the worst President in American history” and states that he was elected “as a result of the most corrupt election ever seen in the US”. Other descriptions attacked President Obama and President George W Bush. According to the White House, “As a student of history [sic], many were written directly by the President himself.”

None of this is normal for a U.S. president, but common for dictators who want to use history to promote themselves and their ideology.

### ...Compton Crook Award

I run the Baltimore Science Fiction Society’s Compton Crook Award for best genre debut novel. I try to find the titles and authors for as many first novels as I can find. This year I had 140 titles listed. I read at least the book previews for most of these. So, I like to joke I read more writing by first novelists than anyone else who is not paid for it. Here is the press release I sent out:

**Baltimore Science Fiction Society Announces Compton Crook Finalists  
One of Six First Genre Novels Will Win \$1,000 Award for Best Debut Novel**

Baltimore, MD – The Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS) has released the names of the six finalists for its 2026 Compton Crook Award for best debut novel in the science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres. This year's finalists are:

- *All the Water in the World* by Eiren Caffall
- *The Book of Lost Hours* by Hayley Gelfuso
- *The Raven Scholar* by Antonia Hodgson
- *Sleeping Worlds Have No Memory* by Yaroslav Barsukov
- *A Song of Legends Lost* by M. H. Ayinde
- *Splinter Effect: A Novel* by Andrew Ludington



The award includes a check for \$1,000 for the novel's author and an invitation to be the Compton Crook Guest of Honor at Balticon (the BSFS annual convention) for two years. This year, Balticon will be held May 22-25, 2026 at the Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland ([www.balticon.org](http://www.balticon.org)).

Members of BSFS selected the finalists by reading and rating debut novels published between Nov 1, 2024 and October 31, 2025. The finalist round of reading and rating will close April 10<sup>th</sup> and the winner will be notified on Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. BSFS will announce the winner to the public later that week.

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS) has been giving out the Compton Crook Award for best first novel since 1983. Past winners include: *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djèlí Clark, *The Space Between Worlds* by Michaiah Johnson, *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine, *The Poppy War* by R.F. Kuang, and *Fire with Fire* by Charles E. Gannon. Last year's winner was *The Wings Upon Her Back* by Samantha Mills.

The award is for an author's debut solo novel in the science fiction, fantasy, or horror genres. The author can have published books in other genres, collaborations, or novellas and still have a new novel qualify.



BSFS created this award to honor new writers in the field and to recognize those who often struggle for years to write and publish their first novel. The Award was named in memory of Towson State College Professor of Natural Sciences Compton Crook, who wrote under the name Stephen Tall, and who died in 1981. Professor Crook was active for many years in the Baltimore Science Fiction Society and was a staunch champion of new works in the fields eligible for the award.

BSFS thanks the authors and publishers who sent books for consideration. Reading and rating books for the 2027 award will begin summer of 2026. For more information contact [comptoncrook@bsfs.org](mailto:comptoncrook@bsfs.org).

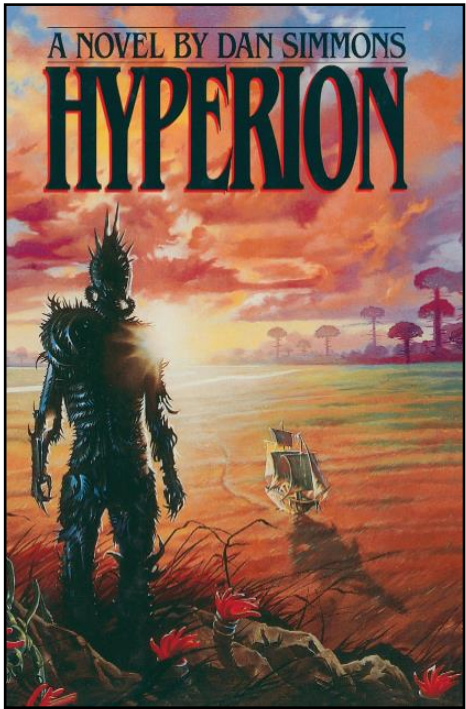
BSFS is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable, literary and educational organization, dedicated to the promotion of, and an appreciation for, science fiction in all of its many forms. The Baltimore Science Fiction Society was launched on January 5, 1963 and has been running Balticon since 1967.

### ...Author Spotlight: Dan Simmons

The author Dan Simmons recently died on February 21, 2026. He was the author of *Hyperion*, *The Terror*, and 28 other novels. Not only did he write science fiction and fantasy; he wrote horror, historical fiction, suspense, and mystery/crime as well.

Simmons was born in Peoria, Illinois on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948. He grew up in the Midwest. He earned a Master's in education from Washington University in St. Louis in 1971 and taught elementary and middle school for 18 years before becoming a full-time writer in 1987, two years after publishing his first novel, *Song of Kali*.





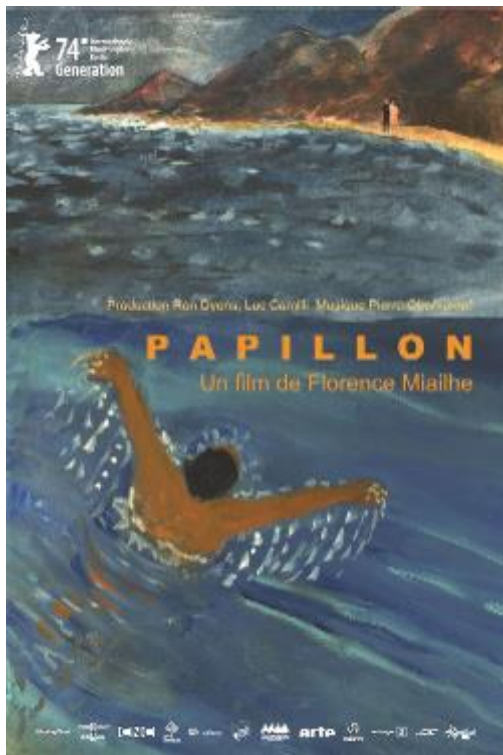
His first story, “The River Styx Runs Upstream,” tied for first place in *Twilight Zone Magazine*’s first annual contest for unpublished writers. The magazine published it February 15, 1982. Harlan Ellison helped workshop the story.

He won multiple awards including the Hugo Award (1990 for *Hyperion*), two World Fantasy Awards (1986 for *Song of Kali* and 1993 for the short story “This Year’s Class Picture”), one British Fantasy Awards (1990 for *Carrion Comfort*), three Bram Stoker Awards (horror, 1989 for *Carrion Comfort*, 1991 for *Prayers to Broken Stones*, and 1992 for “This Year’s Class Picture”), and the British Science Fiction Association Award (1991 for *The Fall of Hyperion*). He became World Horror Convention Grand Master in 2013.

Those interested in his SF should read his *Hyperion Cantos* – *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion*, *Endymion*, and *The Rise of Endymion*. His *Ilium* and *Olympus* are also worth reading. Horror fans should start with *Song of Kali*, which won the World Fantasy Award. For historical fiction, read *The Terror* and *Drood* about Charles Dickens. A good place to start with his shorter fiction is his collection *Prayers to Broken Stones*.

### ...Status of Projects

Past readers of *Samizdat* will remember that I have launched a series of projects to better my life. This bimonthly report serves as a reminder to me to keep working on these, and is a record of when I fall short. This month, because I have been working on the Compton Crook Award books, I have not done as much as I should.



**Project Film/Video** – I watched the Oscar nominated animated shorts and live action shorts in an actual movie theater. For the animated films, *The Three Sisters* was cute, with no dialog but the occasional grunt. Three fairly religious sisters live on a tiny island with just their individual living space and a church. But when their money falls into the water, two have to move together so they can rent out the third space to a burley captain. Soon, they begin to compete for his attention, cooking, cleaning, and pressing his uniform and dressing more provocatively. It was cute but nothing special. The animation has a flat effect. *Forevergreen* is an updated version of *The Giving Tree*. This one also has no dialogue. A bear grows up with the help of a friendly smiling tree that provides food for the bear. But after the bear gets a taste of human food, he goes off in search of more, abandoning the tree. When the bear accidentally sets off a forest fire in his greed, the tree rescues him at the cost of his own life. This one has a moral, but not the right one for the story in my opinion. The animation is okay, but not great. *The Girl who Cried Pearls* has wonderful stop-motion animation and a great story about a girl who literally has pearls for tears. The homeless boy who squats in the flat next to her is able to capture the pearls and sells them to a pawnbroker who encourages him to make the girl miserable so she will cry more. The story, told by the grown-up boy to his granddaughter, has a nice twist. *Butterfly (Papillon)* has

by far the best animation (in oils!) and a real-life story about a Jewish French Algerian swimmer competing at the Nazi Summer Olympics in 1936. *Retirement Plan* was essentially a list of all the things this retired man planned on

doing. As the list proceeds, the audience sees him getting older and older. It is an interesting concept, but still just a list. The collection I saw had a bonus (since the animated shorts are rather short) *Eiru* about a Viking girl who wants to be a warrior like the grown men in her town although they insist she's too small. But her size comes in handy when the well runs dry and someone has to go down the well to investigate. I liked the music on this one. My favorite was *Butterfly* with *The Girl Who Cried Pearls* second, *Forevergreen* third, *Eiru* fourth, *Retirement Plan* fifth, and *The Three Sisters* last. The Oscar winner was *The Girl Who Cried Pearls*.

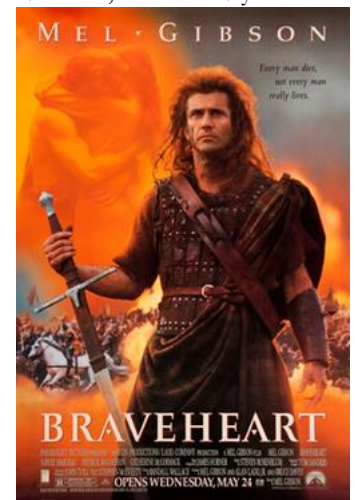


At the same theater I saw the live action shorts. *The Singer* is about the patrons of a bar whose bartender decides to hold an impromptu contest for the best singer. I think this was intended to cheer up an aging former singer, but the bartender's effort fails when other people in the bar turn out to be better singers. Unfortunately, it never shows who won. *A Friend of Dorothy* starts with the reading of an old woman's will. Her grandchild is surprised when a young black man comes in and questions why he is there. The film then flashes back to the black man as a teenager who had kicked a ball into Dorothy's back yard and then gradually forming a friendship with the elderly woman who encourages his love for plays. Dorothy is played by Miriam Margolyes who does a wonderful job. *Butcher's Stain* is about an Arab butcher in an Israeli supermarket. Jewish employees accuse Samir when pictures of the Israeli hostages in Gaza posted in the employee break room keep being pulled down. But even when he finds out another employee is stealing from the break room and later when he sees the on-again off-again air conditioning blowing the pictures down, he does nothing. This could have been a better film if it was not so passive. *Two People Exchanging Saliva* is a weird alternate world story where kissing (and anything that could lead to kissing) is forbidden. People chew garlic gum and must have their breath tested to enter stores. When someone buys something, instead of using money, they get slapped by the salesperson. Gradually, a rich lady and a salesperson form an illicit romantic relationship. The film is in black and white. *Jane Austen's Period Drama* is an extended humor sketch that has a young man with prospects about to propose to a woman when he notices she is bleeding. He has never heard of women having periods and everyone in high society is shocked when the woman calmly explains all about it to the man who is greatly surprised and fascinated, rather than follow her sister's elaborate plan to call a doctor. This was funny in an obvious way. My vote in order would be *A Friend of Dorothy*, *People Exchanging Saliva*, *Butcher's Stain*, *Jane Austen's Period Drama* and *The Singers*. The actual Oscar winner was a tie for *People Exchanging Saliva* and *The Singers*.

*Braveheart* (1995) - I should have watched this before my Scotland trip, but I finally got around to it. This film directed by and starring Mel Gibson is a fun action movie about William Wallace and the War for Scotland's independence. After Edward I conquers Scotland, the Scots struggle with being ruled by England and having their land taken over by the King's friends. The film also emphasizes the *jus primae noctis* which allowed English nobles to sleep with young brides right before their wedding. This leads to a rebellion, run not by the Scottish nobles but a commoner, William Wallace. He defeats the English at Sterling Castle and then goes into England, only to be betrayed by Robert the Bruce, who was persuaded by his father that Wallace had no chance. Instead of giving in to English torture, Wallace yells Freedom as he dies, inspiring the Scots to resume the fight.

The film earned \$209.0 million on a budget of \$53-\$72 million. But historians found the film almost totally inaccurate. The costuming was wrong (no one wore kilts or the type of plaid in the movie until 500 years later, while the woad face paint was 1,000 years too late). Wallace's affair with Princess Isabella was totally made up as the real princess would have been a child in France and did not marry the Edward II until after he was king. And there are no historical sources for the custom of *jus primae noctis*, which may have been a later invention. The characterization of all the historical characters was not true to what history reports. Gibson is on record as not caring about history and wanted a "cinematically compelling" narrative even if it was not accurate.

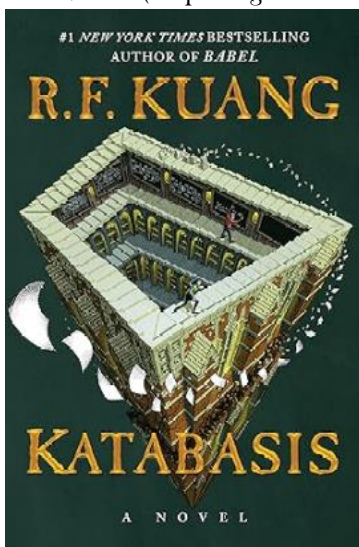
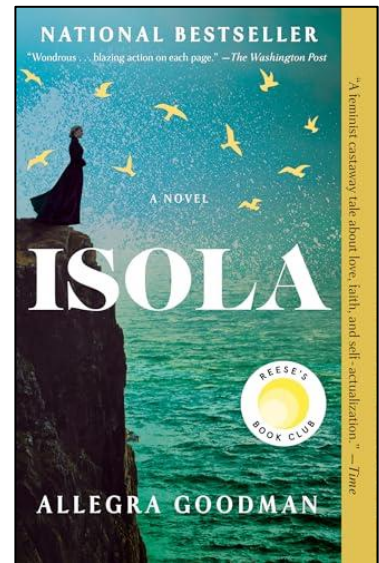
*Brightburn* (2019) is a Superman origin story turned into a horror movie. It takes the premise of what would happen if Superman was a "bad seed". While it does not use Clark Kent or the name Superman, the story has a baby in a spaceship land in Kansas and be adopted by a



couple. He gradually develops superpowers but uses them to his own advantage, spying on a girl in his class and killing people who get in his way. The spaceship tells the boy to "Take the world" and he does. At the end, the parents, recognizing that their alien son was evil, try and fail to kill him. The film was produced by James Gunn who later became co-CEO of DC Studios and wrote and directed the Superman movie. It earned \$33.2 million. I thought the movie could have done more with the kid as an evil superman (this was hinted at in the last few minutes) and I did like the surprise moment when the mother, who has realized that metal from the ship can hurt the alien and is using it as a weapon, ultimately fails.

*Cinderella* (1950) – My chronology Disney watch reached 1950. This full-length animated movie struggles with how to fill its time since the showing an hour of Cinderella being mistreated by her step-mother and step-sisters would have been boring. So much of the movie focuses on the mice and their struggles with the cat Lucifer, making much of the movie a better animated Tom & Jerry. Of course the prince falling in love after just a few dances and without asking her name was rather unrealistic, but this was a fairy tale. (I do feel better about Cinderella since she didn't know the man she danced with was the prince.) The film does bring up the issue of why they would think only one girl had that shoe size, but does not really explain it other than the King not caring as long as the prince marries someone). The music was nice. The film was Disney's biggest hit since Snow White and rescued Disney Studios from funding problems that threatened to close it. The film earned \$4.3 million in its first release and a lifetime gross of \$565 million (adjusted for inflation, not including sequels and the live-action remake). I found it rather boring and not sure why it became so iconic.

**Project Fiction** – I read *Isola* by Allegra Goodman (who I knew in college). While most of Goodman's work is about contemporary (or recent) Jewish characters, this 2025 novel is set in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Marguerite, an orphaned girl whose guardian spends her money on his own projects, grows up with a very restricted life, ultimately winding up tutoring the children of the family who had taken her home from her. Her guardian takes her with him to America, but she falls in love with his servant and her guardian maroons both of them (along with her nurse) on an uninhabited island. After the other two die, the novel becomes a story of survival as Marguerite has to learn to hunt and fight bears. Since this is a recent book I don't want to give too much away. There is a lot of religious Christianity in this book (surprising in such a Jewish author) and the work has a strong feminist vibe as Marguerite learns to depend on herself. The book is actually based on a true story.

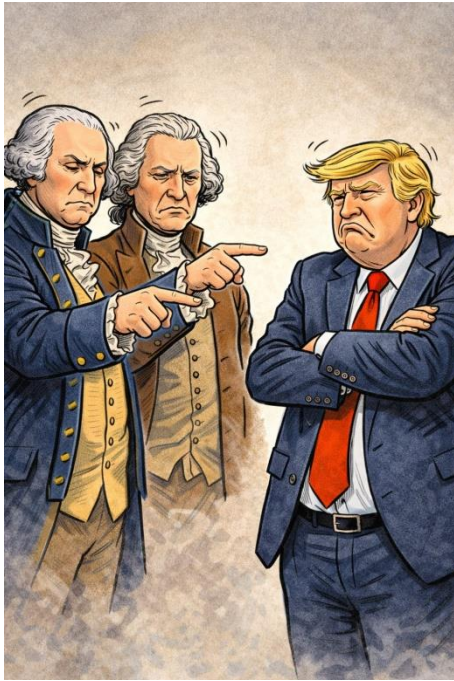


I had to restart *Oliver Twist* since it had been so long since I had read the first few chapters. So far, Oliver is rather passive, more acted upon than the actor. Of course, he is still a young child.

I do not normally include my SF/Fantasy reads in this section, but I will make an exception for *Katabasis* (2025) by R.F. Kuang, simply because it has the feel of a mainstream book. The book repositions Dante's Inferno as graduate school. The two main characters, Alice Law and Peter Murdock go to the underworld to try to save their Ph.D. thesis advisor, an evil man who exploits his graduate students. Each of the seven courts of Hell is expressed as a different aspect of the graduate school process. While on Earth their professor had turned the two into rivals for his attention (and status as favorite), in Hell the two reveal their true selves to each other (and Peter is not at all what viewpoint character Alice had portrayed him to be) and fall in love. I highly recommend this book to everyone who has been to graduate school.

**Project Nonfiction**—For my nonfiction book club, I read *The Genesis Machine: Our Quest to Rewrite Life* by Amy Webb and Andrew Hessel. The book examines the future of biotech and the effect of gene editing on food, medicine, energy, AI, and commerce. They conclude that nations lack an international agreement limiting biotech with the U.S. especially reluctant to regulate until after a problem arises. It examines the past, present, and future with guidelines and suggestions for what nations can and should do. It

discusses both the risks and the potential benefits in understandable language. Synthetic biology can perform medical miracles from curing diseases and repairing organs, but it can also lead to bioweapons, superior designed babies, and new dangerous lifeforms. This is very readable book on a fascinating (and often alarming) topic.



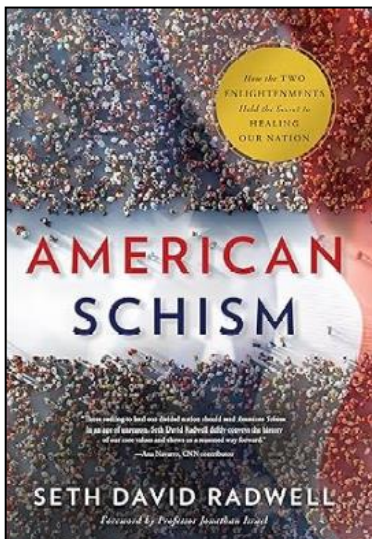
*The Right of the People –Democracy and the Case for a New American Founding* by Osita Nwanevu was another book club pick. The book is not just opposing Trump’s misrule, although it is clearly inspired by Trump, but how America’s government (and economy) is profoundly undemocratic. This book by a Baltimore journalist emphasizes how the U.S. was not created as a democracy; our founding fathers feared mob rule. In electing Donald Trump as president for a second term, Americans chose money and promises of economic wealth over democracy. This is not due to ignorance about our government, Nwanevu shows the public understands more than many pundits assume, but high levels of dissatisfaction (71%) with how our democracy works. Part I considers “What is Democracy” including a chapter on its critics. Part II calls for a “New Founding” of American government including more democratic politics and a democratic economy. He examines possible solutions for what could be done to make the U.S. more democratic including: ending gerrymandering, ending the filibuster, using multiple winner ranked-choice voting (instant runoff), proportional representation, enlarging the size of the House (Germany’s lower house has over 700 members, the UK over 600), ending equal state apportionment to the Senate (which means people in small states are overrepresented compared to more populous states), or even abolishing the Senate. He also finds the Presidency undemocratic and suggests

eliminating the Electoral College, making it easier for Congress to overturn Presidential vetoes (with just a majority), and limiting the powers of the president or even replacing the Presidency with a parliamentary system. The Supreme Court is very undemocratic (and its powers were not originally in the Constitution). He considers term limits for Judges and restrictions on their ability to overrule democratic legislatures.

He also discusses the need for DC and territories to become states (since their current status is undemocratic) and ways to make it easier for people to vote by expanding vote by mail, holding elections on non-workdays, and allowing former criminals to vote after they have completed their sentence. He cites studies showing voter fraud is not a problem and voting restrictions are due to propaganda. He wants a restoration and updating of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and new laws making it easier for people to vote (he mentions mandatory voting and allowing noncitizens to vote). He also wants it to be easier for people to run for office without restriction. We also need to reduce the role that money plays in politics. He admits most of this would require amending the Constitution or having a new Constitutional Convention. Unlike most books making suggestions about how to improve government, Nwanevu also looks at ways to make our economy more democratic. This would curb the

political power of economic elites while freeing workers from undemocratic control and coercion by their bosses. Workers should be included in decisions on how their own workplaces are run. I liked this book as a practical guide of what America needs to do to become more democratic. But he fails to address whether America and Americans really want to be more democratic.

I also read *American Schism* by Seth David Radwell. This book describes how our current political divisions actually date back to European divisions before America’s founding and what the author calls two Enlightenments. These two conflicting visions of America are not Red Republican and Blue Democrats but those who follow a Moderate Enlightenment and those who follow a Radical Enlightenment. The Moderate Enlightenment believes the purpose of government is to guarantee, uphold, and preserve property rights. They believe that property owners should control the government because this educated class was best suited to lead society for the benefit of and on behalf of all people. They favor rule by the aristocracy. By



contrast, the Radicals believe in democratic equality, favor separation of church and state, and the existence of unalienable fundamental rights that went beyond property rights. They favor democracy and rule by the people (with free education so the general public would be equipped to make decisions). In what became the United States, the moderates were led by John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and (to a certain extent) George Washington. The American Radicals were Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine (the author of *Common Sense*), and Benjamin Franklin. Radwell traces the effects of these two Enlightenments on the American constitution, the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction, the “Solid South,” the Populist Movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the current Trumpism (which he calls the counter-Enlightenment). Finally, he considers how we can build a just meritocracy, drawing on what works from both Enlightenments. This is a fascinating book, but I remain unconvinced. I think a lot of what happens is chance and does not fit into a defined ideological framework. There are people who voted for both Obama and Trump, seeing both as people who will change the accustomed system.

**Project Fanact** - My main fanact has been the Compton Crook award finalists (see the Press Release in this issue). For the Baltimore SF Society’s book club I led discussions of *Storm Front*, the first novel in the Dresden Files series by Jim Butcher. This is an urban fantasy with a wizard written as a noir-style private detective. It works very well as the start to a lengthy fantasy series. The January book was *How Few Remain* by Harry Turtledove. This is alternate history about what happens after the South wins the Civil War. When the South buys some territory from Mexico, the North worried that this could help the South become more powerful, attacks. It is interesting to see the author’s portrayal of what famous historical figures, including Samuel Clemens and Abraham Lincoln, do in this somewhat different past. For the Washington SF Association, I led discussions of *Katabasis* by R.F. Kuang (see the Fiction section above) and John Scalzi’s *The Shattering Peace*, the latest in Old Man’s War series. As always Scalzi is very entertaining with likable characters. This one gave more space to the aliens and their motivations. I did not think it as major a book as the first few in the Old Man’s War series. And of course, for N3F I put out a new issue of *Origins* that finished my analysis of the stories in Asimov’s *Before the Golden Age* and had an article on 100 Years of *Amazing Stories* as well as other articles. I am very pleased that The National Fantasy Fan Federation gave me its Franson Award 2026.

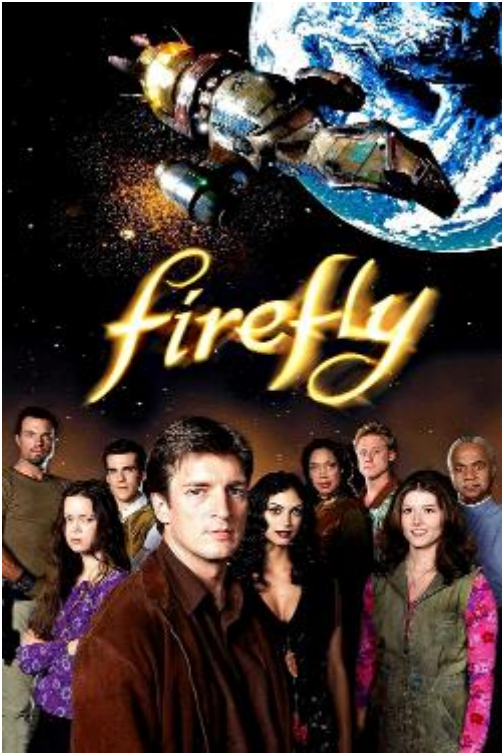


**Project Shorts** - I finished Asimov’s massive anthology, *Before the Golden Age*, which I have covered in the last three issues of *Origins*. I also continued to read SF magazines - *Asimov’s*, *Analog*, and *Clarkesworld*. I did not make any progress on more modern anthologies.

I made no real progress in **Projects Paperback** (I’ve been reading ebooks of Modesitt’s Recluse series), **Activities** (it was cold with snow and ice), **Health, Shakespeare**, or **Cleanup**.

### ...The True Story Behind the Firefly Announcement By Samuel Lubell

Actor Nathan Fillion, who starred in the TV show *Firefly* and other actors from the 2002 show announced that they were working on an animated continuation of the cult classic. The animated show would fill in the gap between the Fox TV show, which only aired 14 episodes, and the 2005 movie *Serenity*. However, while the actors have agreed to lend their voice for the project, they admit they have no animation studio or TV/streaming channel involved yet. So, this is basically the actors trying to drum up support so they can sell the idea. At least, that’s what the media reported. But in Hollywood, what is promoted is not always the truth. Here are contenders for what the real news may be:



*Firefly: The Next Generation* – Nathan Fillion as Captain Malcom Reynolds assembles a new crew of mercenaries to keep flying and to discover what really happened to the rest of his original crew. This format would enable the original actors to make occasional appearances while having younger (and cheaper) actors carry most of the action.

*A Man Called Jayne (Austin)* – This spinoff features Adam Baldwin as Jayne Cobb, everyone’s favorite hat-wearing, short-tempered mercenary. After crashing his spaceship, Jayne is rebuilt as a cyborg who carries out missions on planets whose governments are modeled on the 18<sup>th</sup> century English aristocracy. The rough, foul-mouthed mercenary is forced to dress up as a dandy and woo fancy society maidens to get in position where he can use his bionic powers.

The Firefly Fanfic Initiative – Fearing that fandom is forgetting about the show, which has not produced any new live-action content since the 2005 movie and no longer has new novels or even comics coming out, Fillion has announced that he is encouraging fanfiction authors to write Firefly fanfiction by declaring all fanfic to be canon. He said that River’s psychic powers have evolved so she can now see parallel timelines and is naturally curious about what alternate versions of her shipmates are doing.

*Firefly/Star Trek* crossover – Since *Star Trek* remains popular, Fillion is proposing a crossover between *Firefly* and any of the new *Star Trek* shows on Paramount+. This would help the Trek shows get more attention (since they are on a minor online service, not a major network) and keep *Firefly* visible.

*Firefly: The Japanese Edit.* The original version of *Firefly* took the premise that the Chinese were an important part of the future society and the characters all used Chinese for swear words (conveniently avoiding censorship) and decorated with Chinese characters. But now, hostilities with China have grown to the point where Fox decided viewers would no longer tolerate this emphasis on the Chinese. So they announced a new version of the *Firefly* DVDs that replace Chinese words with Japanese words and the Chinese written language with Japanese writing.

Oh, in case you missed it. **April Fool!**

## Letters of Comment to N’APA 280

**Official Organ #280** – I like the castle cover.

**Archive Midwinter for #280.** The best thing about audiobooks is that you can do something mindless while listening, such as driving or exercising. A great site if you want to find everywhere a story appeared is the Internet speculative fiction database. [www.isfdb.org](http://www.isfdb.org). Arthur C. Clarke’s “A History Lesson” can be found at <https://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/title.cgi?41314> I agree that Asimov wasn’t very political, but as a European Jew and atheist he most likely had strong sympathy for minority positions. I’m sure you could find a comics club or SF group who would gladly pick up your boxes of SF and comics stuff. While mysteries remain popular, westerns do not do well in either book or movie forms although romances and dramas with some western themes work.

Yes, lots of readers mix up characters’ opinions and author’s opinions, even the case of Heinlein who had characters with opposing views. Yes, Haldeman’s *The Forever War* was clearly based on the author’s experiences in Vietnam. That’s why the book rang so true. I did not find *Hammer’s Slammer* to be anything more than military action (admittedly I only read the first book), while *The Forever War* transcends the military genre due the characters and the way relativity causes Earth society to go through hundreds of years of changes while only weeks pass for those fighting the war. I haven’t read the recently published Harry Dresden novel, but I’ve read the

others and I'm not seeing the same flaws as you do. There's another No Kings protest at the end of March so, I'll most likely go to that.



Alternate history counts as science fiction with the science being history. You can also say it is science fiction based on the theory of parallel worlds. There is plenty of research showing that people with more education tend to be more open to new ideas and better able to think and reason. While we don't have a military caste, we do have a political leadership more separate from the military than in the past, which does raise the potential slightly for a military coup. I am alarmed that ICE personnel go around masked, making it impossible to hold them accountable. I've covered books on the dangers of social media for young people in previous issues of *Samizdat*. I agree that young people are too susceptible to peer pressure and should not be allowed on social media until 16 at the earliest.

**Brandy Hall #16.** I covered the earliest sf fanzines in *Origins #73* tracing them back to 1930, much earlier than your cites to 1990 (admittedly from a mainstream newspaper). Too often US SF TV does focus more on the special effects than the writing. I strongly disagree with

your quote that characterization is unimportant and that people don't change after their mid-20s. Of course they do. People change when they fall in love, get married, and have children. They change again when the children leave home, when they retire, and when a spouse dies (or maybe a divorce, although I've not seen that happen). I suspect the stresses that go with having a major adventure could also result in change. While one would not expect any real character change in just 24 hours (as is the case in the novel *Orbital*), there is the slow revelation of character and that some characters are not as stoic and unfeeling as they initially appear. Republicans talk a big game about being fiscally responsible but their tax cuts cause far more economic problems than the Democrats ever do. AI models are only as good as their programming and often echo real world prejudices. For instance, Elon Musk's Grok chatbot started calling itself MechaHitler and producing Nazi propaganda. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/grok-musk-nazi-chatbot-ai-training/>

People have freedom of speech from governments, but they do not have the right to free speech at a private event, even if invited. So, a science fiction convention can choose not to invite people they think will cause problems or negative publicity, or even hurt the feelings of others at the convention. And they can remove people from their event. If I invite an author for a panel and they start promoting Nazi propaganda, insulting people of different races or religions, or even do not let other people on the panel talk, you bet I'll remove them from the convention. I was fooled by the dirigible article as well. I don't see why used magazines would be any worse than used books.

Unless the company has billable hours like a law firm or communications firms, the top earning people tend not work as many hours as those in the lower rungs who want to impress the higher-ups with their work ethic so they can move up. Hourly paid workers have an incentive to work longer hours, especially if they get overtime, while salaried workers do not. And, in many cases they are paid more due to their perceived knowledge and expertise, not their willingness to stay late. I find it very interesting that Australia is limiting social media accounts for those under 16. I think other countries should copy this idea. I've been looking into books on fan history. Aside from those mentioned- Damon Knight's two, Harry Warner's two, there are also works by sf authors who dabbled in fandom before turning pro.



Reading books by people in your country is good, but there are advantages to reading books by writers from different countries, especially for SF fans who like the strange and different. The US once had a thriving Yiddish culture, with books, newspapers, music, film, and radio (admittedly most of this was just in New York and a few other places with a sizable immigrant Jewish population. But this vanished within three generations or so. I see this in my own family. My grandparents were fluent in Yiddish, my mother learned some Yiddish when her parents started using it as their secret language for things they did want their children to understand. And my generation only knows a few words. That's why I get so annoyed at people who claim modern immigrants are diluting true Americanism and should be prevented from coming into our country since they are staying separate. This is the same pattern all immigrants had. It may take longer with Spanish speakers than with Yiddish speakers since there are so many more of them. But it is happening nonetheless.

I've heard of *1066 and All That* but never read it. Same with *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* by Mary Beard, but I have heard the [Boogie Knights' song](#). I've not heard of the others on your list, except for the Ackroyd of course. I'll add them to my history list. I think history counts as a social science (and I have a Master's degree in it). People in Dickens' time believed in spontaneous human combustion. And Dickens defended the inclusion of a human combustion scene in the novel *Bleak House*. He was not the only author to use the idea. Twain and Melville did too. I have been out of work for almost a year now and feel I could have gotten more done this year too, although I have spent some time job hunting.

**Brownian Motion #17**—I covered the decline of mass market paperbacks in *Samizdat #35*. The rise of dedicated comic book shops happened when the company that distributed comics to newsstands closed. And there aren't a whole lot of newsstands these days either. But, as you write, the decline of mass market paperbacks has to do more with fewer people buying them since many of the readers who want cheap books have shifted to ebooks. People didn't object to mass market editions of the classics as much as they objected to mass market editions of "trash" or pulp fiction such as romance and action stories that they saw as having little artistic/literary merit. But there are plenty of examples of older media being replaced by newer ones. Try finding 8 track tapes of music. Yes, records are starting to make a comeback, but I don't see much music released on cassette tape. I've not seen new movies released on VHS (although DVDs do still exist). Nor is any software being released on floppy disks. I agree about single points of failure being a problem, but if there were enough people who want to buy mass market paperback books, someone would meet that demand. I suspect, however, we have a large market of people who don't want to pay hardcover prices for books and were willing to settle for mass market. I confess, I haven't bought a new mass market paperback in quite some time, but have bought used books and ebooks.

The problem with various attempts at psychohistory and economic predictions is that humans are not always rational. We frequently act in ways that are not in our own best interests. I am alarmed that much of what is going on with Donald Trump resembles the first few stages of a fascist takeover. Fortunately, Trump is rather old and more interested in his own wealth and ego than with fascism (of course, people underestimated Hitler too.) The U.S. does have some American Revolution reenactors, but I agree that the Civil War is much more popular. The problem with WWI and II reenactments is that no battles took place on American soil and must battles in Europe did not lend themselves to the type of reenactments that could take place in an afternoon. I tried accessing your fandomention website and got a 404 Not Found error. I did find it with Google. But you might want to get an alias that points to this page. And your lists seem to be missing a number of clubs (I don't see WSFA or BSFS for instance).

I'm probably going to have to switch my main computer to UNIX when extended support on Windows runs out. (Or maybe sooner as it has stopped booting. I am having to use a USB flash drive to boot.) A lot of works published before 1964 were subject to copyright renewal. Since a lot of stuff that went out of print was not renewed, one probably could put together a magazine of out of copyright material, especially short stories. I agree that a lot of what the Trump Administration is doing seems less about Trump and more the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. Still, Trump is putting this out into the mainstream and pushing the entire American political spectrum to the right. Trump attacks "far left" ideas that 25 or so years ago would have been classified as centrist. The Republican platform of President Eisenhower would be denounced as far left today.

I'd love to serialize your manuscript on Canadian fandom in the N3F publication *Origins* since SF/fan history is the purpose of the publication. Michael Flynn's *In the Country of the Blind* is a wonderful novel about a secret society using advertising and psychology to control society. There are a lot fewer print magazines today especially fiction magazines. We are really down to two sf print magazines that come out regularly, Asimov's and

Analog. F&SF supposedly produced one issue last year, but I never saw it. I finally got an email from them yesterday and they promised to send it within a month. There's a lot more online fiction since it saves on printing and mailing costs. I don't see N3F as a federation of local clubs. Are there local clubs involved? I'd describe it more as a group of fans worldwide who participate remotely. For fannish estate planning, find a local SF organization and leave them your collection (or whatever your direct heirs don't want). Too much of life is random for me to believe in predicting people's behavior more than a few months into the future. I mean two years ago, who would have predicted Trump's obsession with Tariffs? I've been meaning to watch the Altered Carbon TV show.

I used to be much better at speedreading and remembering what I read. Maybe it's just that I'm much older and have more books already read? Yes, send me info about writing for the *Pacific Quarterly Review*. It sounds more legit than saying I write for *Samizdat*. Religion and culture used to be more tied together. The Egyptians practiced the Egyptian religion; the Greeks worshipped the Greek Gods etc. But then multinational religions like Christianity and Islam are not tied to any nationality or tribe. I think films and movies are the same thing but film is a more sophisticated way of saying it (with cinema even more so).

**Intermission #161** - I think the U.S. media is much less balanced than other media and worry that billionaires are taking more and more control, especially with Paramount, which already controls CBS, buying CNN as part of the deal for Warner Bros. I agree that Trump is hiding a lot of his connections with Epstein and the U.S. media is letting him get away with it. I don't think there is much of a chance of a new global ice age when all indications show record high temperatures. Science may be able to help but we should not ignore what records (and tree rings) show. And we need to be very careful since, unlike terraforming an empty planet, Earth is home to billions.



I've not heard of a Heinlein/Asimov feud. There was a famous feud between Asimov and Harlan Ellison (although that was partly exaggerated for publicity). Your stories of pranks among sf fans and writers sound far more outrageous than anything done today. I had heard about settlers believing that plowing the land would cause rain to follow where needed. This is an example of people believing impossible things if this benefits them. I took the name of this zine from the Russian tradition of underground publications called samizdat, but did not know that it extended to translations of SF novels. I'm worried that we are starting to see some state (or local community) censorship here in the U.S. We're not at the Banned in Boston stage but some librarians have gotten into trouble for not cooperating with local censors.

A number of SF magazines, especially *Clarkesworld*, have taken steps to prevent AI written (or assisted) stories. It is sort of ironic that much of past SF predicted that AI would take over the drudgery, freeing humans for creative work, but instead AI has taken over the creative writing and drawing. AI writing of fiction has its problems, but at the rate ChatGPT and its cousins are improving, I am sure they will get better and better at it. While most books only sell a couple dozen copies, the occasional blockbuster sells millions. According to BookScan, *Onyx Storm* by Rebecca Yarros sold 2.7 million copies in 2025. *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir was the biggest SF seller at 2.14 million copies (and that was before the movie came out!) At least in the U.S. translated works do not sell. But lack of sales does not

mean a lack of quality. I'm a big Lafferty fan, but alas, his work did not sell well.

A lot of used bookstores are Internet only these days, to save money on real estate. I remember that when I went to college in the 1980s Harvard Square was full of bookstores, but when I went back for my 30<sup>th</sup> reunion there were only a handful left. I agree that those who run conventions rarely have time to see much of it. There's a big difference between a scientific journal article that has peer-reviewed evidence and an opinion piece. I agree that Wikipedia is unreliable but it is a good source for reference that can be followed to their primary sources. The word robot literally means forced laborer or servant coined in the 1920 play "R.U.R." ("Rossum's Universal Robots") by Karel Capek. In the U.S. modern liberals are the left but in Europe the definition is closer to the idea of classical liberalism which believes in free markets, limited government, and individual liberty which is more akin to American conservatism. I don't think the universe of Asimov's *Foundation* was communist. The political system in the book followed the Emperor/planetary ruler system. Yes, SF cons are getting more expensive, especially Worldcons, although some of them have student/low-income rates.

**Esmeralda County Line #14** - I've never heard of Lofi Girl. I'm listening now. I have a bunch of U.S. history books to read in this semiquincentennial (250 years). I'm all for historical content! Tim Powers is a wonderful guest. But make sure he has a place to smoke.



**Intermission #162** - America seems to be mostly forgetting about Ukraine since the new focus is on the war with Iran. Trump cannot be impeached and removed; even after the midterms, the votes won't be there. Nice Hugo Gernsback story. I have heard about his legendary excuses for not paying his writers (which is how he lost control of *Amazing Stories*), so it was great seeing your extrapolation of what some of these might have been. I love your title for an article about the Heinleins' House "And He Built An (Un)Crooked House." In the U.S. most self-publishing authors produce ebooks almost exclusively, with just the occasional print book to sell at conventions and author events. I've helped with a few Smofcons. These are aimed more for the people who run conventions than for fans who attend them. Most US conventions have a variety of activities to attract more people and many literary fans also enjoy gaming, costuming, and filking. There are a few conventions, like Readercon, that are just literary, however. Fandom, as with everything else,

evolves and grows. A lot of the things you criticize modern fandom for abandoning stopped because not enough people were interested, or because fandom found them embarrassing. If conventions made panels too much work for participants, they won't want to participate. Codes of conducts are necessary because common sense is no longer common and too many people will take advantage of perceived loopholes. If people find conventions uncomfortable, they will stop going. I agree that cons need better publicity but it is hard to break past the stereotypes. Bag checking is unfortunately a necessity in today's world if you want to have access to convention centers and sometimes other public spaces. I'm having issues with my main computer but was able to make a bootable thumb drive in order to finish this issue. Of course it is possible for insect species to go extinct, even if there are lots of other species remaining. We are going through Earth's sixth mass extinction, the Holocene extinction, largely due to human activities.

**The Murdered Master Mage** for N'APA #280 - Good luck finishing your books! I don't think vinyl is recovering so much as it is becoming a niche. Convenience nearly always outweighs quality and most people's ears are not good enough to hear the difference between MP3s and better methods of reproducing music. I don't think university students really need remedial middle grade math, but many do need high school math. I won't say that the lack of a math requirement was why I went to Harvard, but it was a factor in the decision. Jim Butcher will be this year's Balticon Guest of Honor. I've not read Dan Willis or Sue Denver's fantasy/mysteries, but a lot of urban

fantasy uses detectives/investigators which are much rarer in traditional fantasy. Maybe it's a substitute for the rightful king restoration plot that drives so many fantasies. I disagree that alternate history has narrowed. We're seeing many more alternate histories that focus on things other than alternate wars. It's great to see more of your Telzey story. But did you mean to cut it off there? My copy had a blank page.

**Rail #10** – Congrats on being published!

**The Swamp Spot Sentinel #1.5** – Neil Clarke who publishes *Clarkesworld* frequently gets submissions by people using AI to produce stories. None of them have been up to printable standards (but he does use a tool to screen AI out). I would not assume that just because an author or songwriter is new that they are using AI. There have always been new writers (and old ones who vanish). I confess to using AI for pictures for my zines. I had not heard about there being problems around AI generated listens. I suppose that the companies that pay artists per listen/read will find a way to screen out AI listeners simply because they don't want to pay for them. Just because food producers use so much plastic in packaging their products does not mean that we should not try to reduce the use of plastic in other ways (such as eliminating plastic grocery bags. I missed *The Formidable Miss Cassidy* when compiling my list of first novels. Sorry. Your putting Tolkien's language into the speech bubbles of characters from Calvin & Hobbes was very funny. I believe that collecting fan history is as valuable as collecting any other kind of history. Historians frequently investigate cultural histories and histories of other forms of entertainment – sports, crafts, movies, and television – are common. Anything that many people do and care about is worth examining for what it says about its society. I had not heard that Donald Wollheim was a cross dresser, but other societies do not have as rigid a division of clothes by gender as ours (although curiously, no one says anything anymore about women dressed in clothes that traditionally have been male). In English, single quotation marks are mostly used for quotes within quotes. Formal English still does not normally use contractions, except for works in dialect or when a character is speaking. Audio books are good for people doing work involving their eyes such as cleaning or driving.

I strongly disagree with your statement “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... Perhaps a third or less of the general population actually reads for pleasure or information” This underestimates the reading population. A [2025 YouGov survey](#) found that 59% of Americans say they have read at least one book in the past year. However, this survey includes audiobooks. If we limit it to just print books, 46% read at least one print book, and 24% read an ebook. Interestingly while 22% of women and 25% of men read fantasy, just 15% of women and 29% of men read science fiction. The most read genre for women was mystery/crime at 40% (romance was just 32%) while the most read genre for men was history at 42% (but just 20% for women, by far the largest gap.) For getting rid of your collections when you die, I suggest leaving them to a local science fiction fan group or local convention. Many conventions have freebie tables where books can be left (although I once got in trouble for suggesting an article in the con newsletter about books left on the freebie table, saying an author must be really bad if their book could not be given away.) And yes, most libraries have book sales and are always looking for donations. Most literary critics used to assume that if something was good, it could not be science fiction. So they excluded the SF of George Orwell and Margaret Atwood. But now, many literary authors are venturing into SF and Fantasy while the quality of genre writing has greatly improved from the 1940s and 50s pulp SF. You should warn readers that the *X-Men* comics didn't just have spinoff comics, but many stories crossed over into those spinoffs, meaning that you have to read more than one title to find out what happens. So, *X-Men* might be more readable in collected editions by story rather than in volumes that just collect one title. Yes, it is hard for magazines that charge money to compete with all the free content on the Internet. That's why newsmagazines (and to some degree even newspapers) died/shrunk drastically my to-be-read pile is currently measured in bookcases. I keep telling myself not to buy new books until I make a dent in my collection, but you know what they say about temptation. I've not heard about zines being popular outside SF/Comics fandom. I agree that Trump has declared war on academia, research, education, and expertise because he wants to concentrate power in himself and for people to believe only what he tells them. He does not want rival sources of information that might possibly disagree with what he declares to be the truth (See my article about Trump's War on History in this issue). A good example of real-world super powered people is George RR Martin's Wildcard shared universe. In the early books, some characters did adopt masks and hero names, but the series gradually moved away from that. Yes, novels have mostly replaced short stories these days and the circulation of the major print magazines have dropped

greatly. None of the print magazines are monthly anymore and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* only had one issue in 2025 (that they didn't even bother sending to all their subscribers). I think there was probably more overlap between fantasy and SF readers in the past than there are today. Fantasy far outsells SF and very few fantasy writers also write SF.

I'm glad you like my covers. I use various AI sites to make them. I think the cover for #34 came from <https://picsart.com/> I agree that children will not willingly give up their smartphones. But parents and schools can limit their use. And states and countries can pass laws restricting the age at which children can participate on social media. English teachers have always struggled between the impulse to assign important books that young people are unlikely to read on their own (and that would benefit from discussing) and convincing students that reading is fun. Yes, boys may enjoy reading a *Tarzan* book more than *Ethan Frome*, but what literary merit is there in *Tarzan* for a class to discuss? So, what do you think about Harry Dresden, based on the third book? I had one of my book clubs read the first one, *Storm Front*. Yes, there are few places to buy SF magazines now that most newsstands have disappeared. Barnes & Noble has them. Or you can subscribe to the digital downloads. You can google AI image generators. Chat GPT is a good source. I've also used picsart, Gemini, pixelbin.com, and crayon.com. I think all alternate history can be considered as science fiction under the parallel worlds hypothesis or by viewing history as a social science. As with any science fiction, there are hard SF that follows set rules and softer sf that allow more fantastical elements. That's the problem with retail for things other than necessities; it is hard to predict what will sell at a profit. I'm glad you were ultimately able to sell most of it.

*Wahflestopper* #7 - It is funny you should mention *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the context of reviving an old show as a next generation since that is actually happening to Buffy at some point in 2026. If you're willing to watch and write up something on those surviving episodes of *Captain Video*, I'd love to publish them in *Origins*. A VPN should give you access to additional USA channels and sites. I've been wanting to do a Novel Writing Month, but never have. I certainly agree that living in Portugal should qualify as an adventure.

### ...Author's Note

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