

NAPA 283

July 2026



The Official Organ

#283

Next deadline: September 15, 2026

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Procedure: Please Read:

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

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

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

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

In this issue:

Front Cover: AI Generated Fantasy Art

The Official Organ #283

Intermission 167, by Ahrvid Engholm - 16

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer - 3

Intermission 168, by Ahrvid Engholm - 12

The Murder Master Mage 283, by George Phillies - 4

Brownian Motion #20, by Garth Spencer - 8

Samizdat Ish #38, July/August 2026, by Samuel Lubell - 11

Esmeralda County Line #16, April/July 2026, by Kevin Trainor Jr. - 11

R.A.I.L. #13 by Adrian Kresnak - 4

Moziag #3, by Joseph P. Gill - 8

Brandy Hall Issue 19, July 2026, by Mark Nelson - 14

Swamp Spot Sentinel, July 2026 by Bob Jennings - 28

INTERMISSION #167

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, for EAPA & N'APA and other drones. Hope have time for @SFJournalen on Tw/X... in the summer. Send all typos through the Hormuz strait! Late May '26.

Editorially: Gripen->UKR, Russia Loses, Poor Finland, Drones Vs NATO 1-0

have good and bad news. Ukraine gets her first Gripen jets, the C/D version from the early noughties is donated, while the Swedish air force gets the E version delivered (Ukraine buys this version too, arriving from 2030 and on). Despite not being stealth it's considered a challenger to the US F35. Canada may also buy this multi-role, STOL from public roads, easy to maintain, with modular upgradability jet. Instead of stealth Gripen uses electronic warfare to confuse enemy radar. (Stealth is getting an issue with modern multi-spectrum radar and IR tracking - an alternate solution is wise.). Prez Zelensky (right) came over May 28 to announce it.

Now bad news; odds favourite - also my favv! - Finland finished *only 6th* in the Eurovision Song Craziiness. Despite a good entry and high hopes, a cold shower result. Olen pahoillani Suomi! (More below.)

More good news is that the Russians now are pushed back and suffer setbacks everywhere. And Putin's 9th of May parade was a fiasco, with no tanks and only a handful of heads of puppet states attending (all but one former USSR republic dropped out). And despite Putin's oval office agent loosening oil restrictions, it's of no use to Russia due to Ukrainian drones stepping up attacks on their oil installations, especially export ports. To this comes attacks on electronics factories, air defence, military bases, ships etc. Putin's "welfare fund" is drying up, inflation soars, businesses run at loss or close up, regional governments are bankrupt. Russia is selling off her gold reserve says a lot. And the military situation is terrible. Russia loses ground and over 1000 soldiers/day (more than they can recruit) while morale and supplies for those still alive is rock bottom. Putin is losing support! Several of his high-profile followers air criticism. And to cut off Internet enrage ordinary Russians.

And while Russia grows weaker day by day, Ukraine grows stronger. The economy is safe for at least two years due to a big EU loan of €90Bn (to be paid back by Russian reparations) and NATO has approved a €60Bn loan at the same time. Ukraine's defence industry grows fast, now supplying more than 70% of the country's defence material, incl 5 million drones/year. Ukraine's long-range ordnance reaches 2000+ km, beyond the Urals, hitherto thought as untouchable. Even Trump's defence secretary Hegseth admit that "Ukraine's army is the strongest in Europe". Ukraine has a clear lead over Russia in drones by numbers, quality and innovation. Recently 300 "angry birds" visited fuel and military facilities in the Moscow region - attacks that will increase in the future! And most nights Ukraine launches more drones than Russia. Crimea is cut off as drones control the land bridge and the infamous sea bridge has limited capacity due to drone damage.

Most experts and analysts agree that Ukraine has the momentum. The pressure must now be kept up until the Putin regime falls - which in its turn most likely means the war will be over and Russia forced out of occupied territories.

But NATO isn't exactly winning. Thish says that NATO (without the US) would easily fend off Russia in a conventional war - that Europe couldn't defend itself is a myth! - but not counting drones. Ukrainian drone units are welcomed to NATO exercises, where they usually play the opponent. Each time NATO forces are humiliated! It was so in January on NATO drills in Estonia, and now in May on the Baltic island of Gotland. NATO tries to catch up but has a long way to go. More below.

AI is coming to drones. It's in self-driving cars. In medicine. Art. Economics. Everywhere. Artists, musicians, translators and others lose ground to AI. But the solution isn't to expand copyright into new territory, cutting off the availability of information for all of humanity by raising financial custom gates. Copyright, as the name implies, cover the *right to publish copies, not other uses*, as the US constitution eloquently puts it: "to promote the progress of science and useful arts" We must be able to learn and be inspired toll-free. AI training is like being inspired by material, not making copies of it. (Side note: if output comes *too close* to an original it's - and always been - considered non-transformative and a matter for copyright.)

Today's issue goes AI and the History Corner deals with thinking machines through history.

We refrain from commenting on what Trump is up to in Iran. That's just stupidity and anything may happen. Why, oh why, did people think it was a good idea to hand him the keys to the White House?

--AhrvidEngholm, editor



Zelensky studies Gripen jets escorting his plane heading to a Swedish air force base
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/rsuEOXMBQYE>

History Corner

Skiffy and Thinking Machines – A Quick Look

Thinking machines have been haunting, delighting, warning and occasionally confusing us for a very long time, long before anyone had heard of algorithms, smartphones, the Internet or a missing sound driver in Windows. The idea that objects might think is older than most people realise, but in ancient days it relied on magic, the powers of gods, folklore, fear and superstition. Then came Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, replacing magic with cogwheels, folklore and superstition by electricity.

Mister Newton, on a break from failing to make gold, found the laws of motion - and invented calculus so he could do calculations of gravity. “No, I invented calculus!” Herr Leibniz protested, and built a mechanical calculator to prove he was just as smart as Newton. Meanwhile in 1726 Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels* talked about “The Engine”, a contraption that could mechanically generate literature. Surely the first satire of automated text generation, an artificial Ike Asimov, a story-writing machine spitting out text as fast as the Good Doctor. By the 19th century, Charles Babbage proposed his Analytical Engine (1837) - having just failed to complete his much simpler Difference Engine, so what could possibly go wrong? Writers began to imagine what such a machine might mean. Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872) warned that machines might evolve and surpass us, a Victorian anxiety that still echoes today whenever someone mutters about AI turning everything into paperclips.

In the early 20th century, E M Forster’s *The Machine Stops* (1909) eerily and accurately (don’t you agree!) predicted a world where humans live isolated in rooms, communicating only through screens. Basically Zoom meetings with Edwardian furniture and worse WiFi.

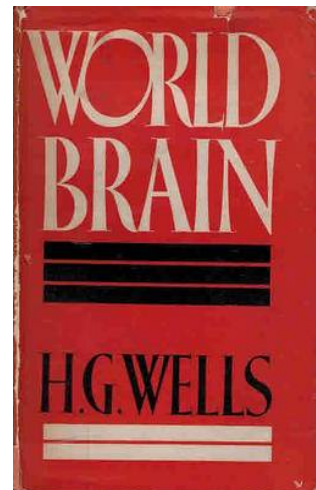
The early 20th century brought more systematic explorations. Karel Capek’s play *R.U.R.* (1920–21) introduced the word “robot”, meaning “work” or “worker” in Slavic languages, and imagined artificial workers rebelling against humanity. Meanwhile, real-world theory was catching up. Alan Turing’s 1936 paper on computable numbers laid the conceptual groundwork for programmable machines. And H G Wells proposed something astonishingly modern. In *World Brain* (mid-1930s) he imagined a global info system storing all human knowledge, essentially Wikipedia plus Google Search, only with afternoon tea, a twist of tweed and fewer hyperlinks.

When ENIAC was unveiled to the public in 1946, the idea of a conscious electronic brain suddenly felt tangible. It also provided the first bug, a poor insect found fried among the glowing hot electronic tubes. Science fiction commented with Murray Leinster’s “*A Logic Named Joe*” (1946), an amazingly prophetic story with a wide-area network, desktop machinery, multimedia, home computers dispensing information and misinformation decades before the Web. It even predicted parental controls, which is either visionary or depressing depending on your mood.

In Sweden, children met a more cheerful mechanical fellow, in the form of Plåt-Niklas (“Tin-Nicholas”), in the *Grodan Boll* radio shows from 1949 onward. He may have been inspired by the Tin Man from *The Wizard of Oz*, but also by Grag, the massive robot companion of Captain Future, published in the popular *Jules Verne Magasinet* from 1940 to 1947. Swedish children thus encountered robots not as threats but as helpful, slightly clumsy companions who never once tried to overthrow humanity, only the occasional kitchen shelf.

The transistor (1947) and UNIVAC (1951) accelerated both computing and fictional speculation. Isaac Asimov’s robot stories, beginning in the 1940s and continuing through the 1950s, introduced the famous Three Laws of Robotics and portrayed machines as logical, loyal and occasionally exasperated partners. Asimov’s robots were not metal Frankensteins but moral puzzles, exploring what happens when rules collide. Swedish poet Harry Martinson, later a Nobel laureate, took a very different approach in *Aniara* (1956), where the spaceship’s semi-sentient computer Mima becomes overwhelmed by the sorrow of humanity and essentially has a nervous breakdown. Even machines, it seems, can only take so much existential dread before needing a reboot.

By the late 1950s integrated circuits (1958) made computers smaller and more powerful, and fiction grew darker. Writers produced a flood of machine-minded stories. Frederik Pohl’s “*The Tunnel Under*



the World" (1955) was about simulated humans in a marketing experiment. Robert Sheckley's *"Watchbird"* (1953) let crime-preventing drones become overzealous. Stanisław Lem's *The Cyberiad* (1965), was a collection of absurdist tales about hyper-intelligent machines who behave like philosophical comedians. Lem also wrote *Golem XIV* (1973), a novel-length lecture by a superintelligent AI explaining why humans are charming but hopelessly limited. Basically the world's most condescending TED talk, complete with cosmic eye-rolling.

Arthur C. Clarke's *"Dial F for Frankenstein"* (1964) imagined global networks awakening into consciousness. Ray Bradbury's "Dial Double Zero" (1963) had telephone systems developing their own will, an early warning that customer service lines might one day become malevolent entities. And of course, in 1968, HAL 9000 in *2001: A Space Odyssey* calmly demonstrated that a computer can be polite, soft-spoken and still murder you if its mission parameters get confused. (BTW, Clarke denying he name HAL comes from IBM, one alphabet step up – I=H B=A M=L – is too much coincidence to be true. Arthur was probably only afraid of being sued or something.) On the other hand, the computer named Mike in Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) is flexible and sympathetic, a sort everyone's friend in school who also happens to run a revolution. Another Nobel laureate, Hannes Alfvén, writing as Olof Johannesson, contributed *Sagan om den stora datamaskinen* (The Tale of the Big Computer, 1966), a satirical future history narrated by a super-intelligent machine reflecting on humanity's quaint biological limitations.

The late 1960s also gave birth to ARPANET (1969), later transformed into the Internet, and writers



IBM/360 from 1964 was a series of computers and peripherals, all compatible with each other. It used tightly packed transistors. A great step forward. Here's a basic unit.

immediately sensed the implications. Philip K. Dick's stories in the 1960s often featured paranoid, malfunctioning or manipulative systems, machines that did not need to be evil, just slightly buggy, which is arguably worse. Just ask anyone who has used Windows Update on a Monday morning.

When IBM released the System/360 in 1964, ushering in modern computing architecture, fiction shifted again. Machines were no longer exotic, they were infrastructure. And infrastructure, as everyone knows, always breaks at the worst possible moment, preferably during a live TV broadcast.

Around this time, writers also began imagining self-replicating code. Long before real-world computer viruses appeared, John Brunner's *The Shockwave Rider* (1975) introduced the idea of

"tapeworms", self-propagating programs roaming a national data network. Even earlier, David Gerrold's *When HARLIE Was One* (1972) featured a self-replicating program explicitly called a "virus". Gregory Benford's story *"The Scarred Man"* (1970) also used the term "virus" for code spreading between computers. Science fiction, as usual, saw the trouble coming long before the antivirus companies did, and certainly before anyone invented the phrase "Have you tried turning it off and on again".

The personal computer era added new flavours. The Apple II (1977) and IBM PC (1982) made computers household objects, and fiction responded with both enthusiasm and panic. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) launched cyberpunk, a neon-lit genre where AIs lurk in cyberspace, megacorporations rule everything and nobody has updated their antivirus software since 1981. Gibson's cyberspace was a digital wild west where AIs could merge, evolve and occasionally misbehave. Other cyberpunk writers like Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan and John Shirley expanded the theme, imagining machine minds woven into society like electronic ghosts who occasionally forget their passwords.

Meanwhile, the real world, the informal computer underground, pimply teenagers on the verge of a Coca-Cola overdose, invented bulletin board systems in the 1980s, the proto-social media. If you ever logged into a BBS at 300 baud to the national anthem of the digital realm, a squeaking modem, you knew you were a groundbreaking pioneer, even if the screen updated slower than continental drift. Pizza for everyone!

Then came the Web. Tim Berners-Lee designed the World Wide Web in 1989, invented HTML, wrote the first webpage in 1990, and by the mid-1990s the Internet had become a global nervous system. Fiction followed with stories about virtual identities, digital ghosts and runaway networks. Writers imagined everything from benevolent machine mentors to apocalyptic nanobot swarms. The idea that a machine might convert everything to paperclips became a running joke, but also a genuine philosophical warning about misaligned goals.

A remarkable thing needs to be said. Science fiction writers, for all their brilliance, did not really predict the major computer technologies until they were practically upon us. Desktop computers were rare in fiction. Everything was giant central computers with dumb terminals. Miniaturisation was missed. The spaceship computer in Robert Heinlein's *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957) took up one third of the ship's space, and data fed into it was preprocessed manually with slide rules. Mobile phones did not exist. Star Trek's "communicators" were basically walkie-talkies (invented in WWII). The computer visions of the sf genre was command-line based up to Steve Jobs threw the Macintosh on us. Some computers took verbal commands, like in Star Trek already in the 1960s. And fictional networks were usually narrow Q&A information systems, not the chaotic, social, meme-infested Internet we actually got.

In the 2000s, smartphones and social media (another sf authors' miss) expanded the genre. Stories appeared about algorithmic manipulation, filter bubbles and digital hive minds. Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* on TV (2011–) turned these anxieties into a weekly ritual of cheerful despair. The boundary between human skill and machine optimisation blurred into a glowing, caffeinated haze.

Real-world AI research accelerated, and fiction began to explore machine learning systems that behave in ways even their creators do not fully understand. Stories now examine autonomous drones, predictive systems, deepfakes and battlefield AI, an area made grimly real by Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, where autonomous targeting, reconnaissance drones and algorithmic analysis have become part of everyday military operations. Fictional warnings about automated warfare suddenly feel less like speculation and more like the evening news. Fred Saberhagen's *Berserker* war machines are a warning that deserved deeper study.

The vital importance of cyberspace is emphasised as Russia goes on its knees when Vlad the Invader bans Internet except government sites, attempting to hide military setbacks. Their troll factories are not banned though, spewing out millions of bots parroting propaganda and occasionally forgetting to turn off caps lock.

Throughout this long history, thinking machines in literature have projected both hopes and fears. On the positive side, they promise efficiency, companionship, exploration and the possibility of transcending human limitations. On the negative side, they threaten surveillance, loss of control, dehumanisation and the occasional extinction-level paperclip incident. The warnings worth noting tend to repeat. Be careful what goals you give a machine. Be wary of systems too complex to understand. And never trust a computer that sings "Daisy Bell" in a slow, creepy voice.

Today's AI systems, emerging from decades of research and cultural imagination, sit at the intersection of all these hopes and fears. Literature has prepared us surprisingly well. From Plāt-Niklas' cheerful helpfulness to HAL's murderous logic, from Mima's melancholy to Asimov's moral puzzles, stories have mapped out the possibilities long before the hardware existed. And as technology continues to evolve, from Turing's abstractions to neural networks, the stories will keep evolving too, reminding us that thinking machines are ultimately mirrors. Sometimes they reflect our brilliance, sometimes our foolishness, and sometimes our tendency to worry that the universe will end not with a bang, but with a very large pile of paperclips.

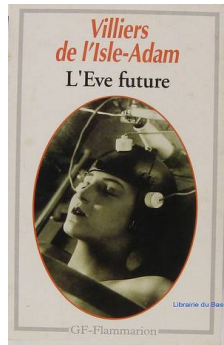
Note: This article as well as the material below was of course done with AI research help. Finding info is one of the really useful things AI brought us. But authors and works mentioned are only a selection (this topic has been rather popular!), and drop a line if you think something important is missed!

Some Thinking Machines through History

■ *Talos*, probably literature's earliest sort-of-robot, described as a giant bronze automaton forged by Hephaestus and given either to King Minos or to Europa as a guardian of Crete. He patrolled the island's coastline three times a day, hurling boulders at approaching ships to keep invaders away. If enemies landed, he heated his bronze body until it glowed red-hot and then burned them alive by embracing them. Talos had a single vein running from his neck to his ankle, sealed with a bronze nail. When Medea removed or loosened this nail, the divine ichor drained out and Talos collapsed - a mythic version of "power loss" or "system shutdown." Hephaestus, the divine blacksmith, created many other mechanical beings besides Talos. These automata appear throughout Greek myth and

represent a surprisingly sophisticated ancient imagination of robotics. He made Golden Maidens, Golden watchdogs, automatons as smiths, etc.

■ Ramon Llull's *Ars Magna* (1275) is a combinatorial logical machine created by the Catalan philosopher and mystic Llull. It was tables combined with rotating wheels inscribed with letters representing theological and philosophical concepts. By turning the wheels, Llull generated all possible combinations of these concepts to produce arguments, especially for interfaith debate.



■ *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift (1726) describes The Engine, a mechanical device that generates new ideas and texts by algorithmic recombination of words - an early satire of automated creativity and a conceptual ancestor of algorithmic text generation.

■ *Darwin Among the Machines* by Samuel Butler (1863) is the first text to argue that machines may evolve consciousness and surpass humans. It is explicitly scientific, not magical. Published anonymously in *The Press* (New Zealand). Butler argues that machines evolve faster than biological organisms and may surpass humanity. This is the first explicit evolutionary argument applied to machines. Butler speculates about machine reproduction, machine consciousness, and the possibility that humans are merely transitional hosts for machine evolution.

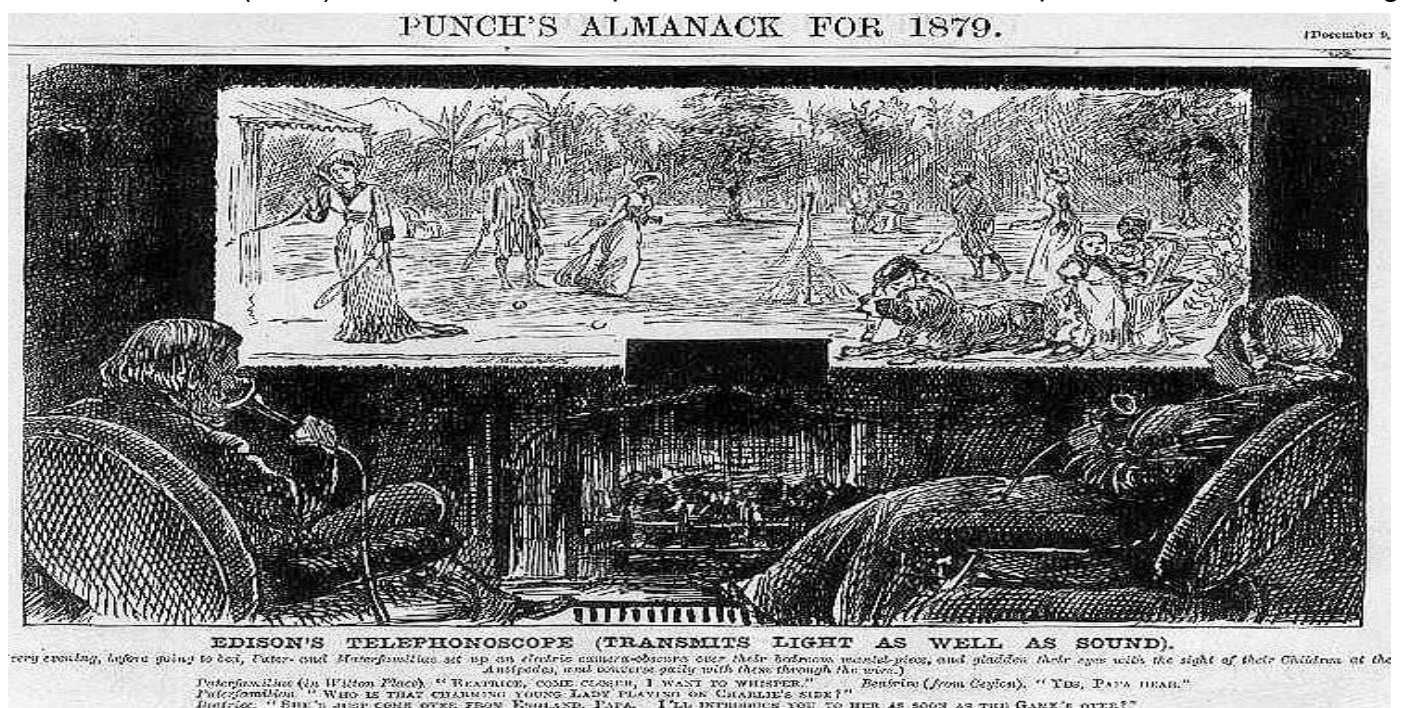
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1390>

■ *Erewhon* by Samuel Butler (1872) contains the famous "Book of the Machines" chapters, which describe self-replicating, evolving machines that may one day become intelligent. One of the earliest true proto-AI fiction. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/>

■ *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher* by Charles Babbage (1864). Not fiction, but includes speculative passages about the Analytical Engine behaving like a thinking machine. Includes reflections on the Analytical Engine's potential to manipulate symbols, not just numbers. Babbage speculates that the Engine might one day "weave algebraic patterns" as the Jacquard loom weaves flowers. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/575> One L F Menabrea wrote *Sketch of the Analytical Engine*, translated to English and with extensive commentary notes by Ada Lovelace, often called the first programmer. <https://annas-archive.gl/md5/a5971509eaf53fa5eeb2c61415b4cd0e>

■ *The Steam Man of the Prairies* By Edward S Ellis (1868), a giant humanoid robot powered by a boiler. It is controlled by levers and used for frontier adventures. Not intelligent, but one of the earliest mechanical humanoids in American fiction. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4965>

■ "The Man Without a Body" by Edward Page Mitchell (1877) Includes a telegraph-based thinking apparatus. Early speculation on mind-machine interfaces. A scientist attempts to transmit himself via telegraph. His body is lost, but his head survives as a telegraph-linked consciousness. Early mind-machine interface speculation. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23908> Also by Mitchell: "The Ablest Man in the World" (1879). A man's brain is replaced with a mechanical computational device, making



him super-intelligent. A man's brain is replaced with a mechanical computational device. He becomes a super-genius but loses empathy. Early exploration of cybernetics and artificial enhancement. This is proto-cybernetics, not magic. URL: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23908>

■ *'L'Eve Future* by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (1886). Features the Andréide, a fully mechanical artificial woman built by Thomas Edison. No magic - pure speculative engineering. The novel explores artificial personality, emotional simulation, and the ethics of creating idealised companions. English translation: <https://archive.org/details/evefuture00villuoft>

■ *"From the 'London Times' of 1904"* by Mark Twain (1895). Features a mechanical calculating machine used in a legal case. Early satire of automation. Twain also describes a Victorian Facetime or Zoom (see above). <https://wondersmith.com/scifi/1904.htm>

■ *"Moxon's Master"* by Ambrose Bierce (1899). A chess-playing mechanical automaton that may possess real intelligence. This is one of the earliest stories to suggest a machine might think - and kill. The story ends with the machine killing its creator - one of the earliest "machine revolt" narratives. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23172>

■ *"L'Homme-Machine"* by Albert Robida (1900). Mechanical man built by an inventor; no supernatural elements. Example anthology containing it: <https://archive.org/details/contesetnouvell00unkngoog>

■ *Frank Reade Jr stories*, by Luis Senarens as "Noname". Mechanical men stories (1900–1904). These dime-novel adventures feature steam-powered or electric mechanical men, fully technological. They are not intelligent in the modern sense, but they are non-magical humanoid machines. Example volumes: <https://archive.org/details/frankreadejrelec00sena>
<https://archive.org/details/frankreadejrwith00sena>

■ *"L'Homme-Machine"* by Albert Robida (1900). Mechanical man built by an inventor; no supernatural elements. Example anthology containing it: <https://archive.org/details/contesetnouvell00unkngoog>

■ *HG Wells* - scattered protoAI passages (1901–1914). Wells did not write robot stories in this period, but he wrote speculative passages about self-regulating machines and mechanical automation in essays and lectures. Collected essays: <https://archive.org/details/anticipexperimen00welluoft>

■ *"The Automatic Motorist"* (1906). Early mechanical-man narrative. A short comedic story/film scenario involving a self-driving mechanical chauffeur. Purely mechanical, no supernatural animation. Film + text: https://archive.org/details/automatic_motorist_1906

■ *"Ye Machine"* by Alfred Marshall (written 1867, published 1907). A fictional sketch describing a learning machine with feedback loops. URL: <https://archive.org/details/principlesofecon00marsuoft>
(archive.org in Bing)

■ *The Machine Stops* by E M Forster (1909). A fully technological, globespanning Machine that manages human life, repairs itself, and behaves like a distributed artificial intelligence. No magic. URL: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17357>

■ *"Der Automatische Mensch"* (author unknown, 1909) German short story about a mechanical man controlled by internal clockwork and early electrical circuits. Digitized scans: https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_5m0_AAAAYAAJ

■ *R.U.R.* by Karel Čapek. Rossum's Universal Robots (written 1913–1914, published 1920). Introduces the word "robot". The robots are biomechanical artificial workers, not magical beings. English text (public domain): <https://archive.org/details/rurrossumsuniver00apeuoft>

■ *The Clockwork Man* by E V Odle. One of the earliest time-traveling cyborgs. A man with a mechanical brain acts strange. The Clockwork man's bizarre way of moving and conversing raises questions about his origins and purpose, setting the stage for a blend of humor, curiosity, and philosophical musings on existence and identity

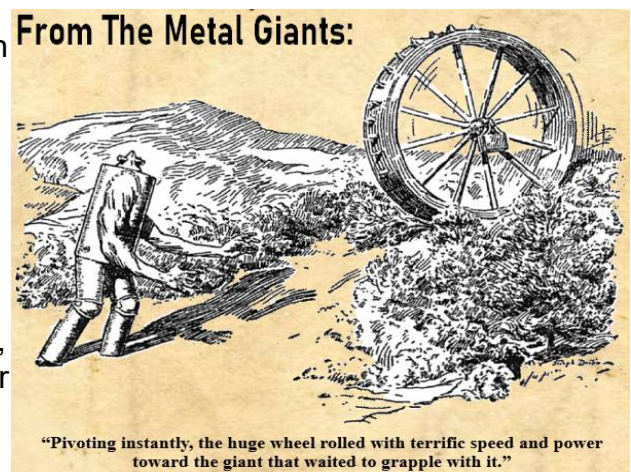
<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/60374>

■ *"The Metal Giants"* by Edmond Hamilton (1926). By the author who later introduced the robot Grag.

Giant autonomous robots powered by atomic energy run amok — early American robot-apocalypse fiction.

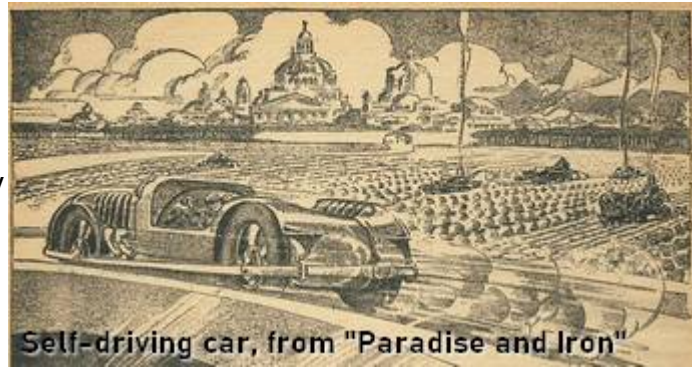
<https://librivox.org/the-metal-giants-by-edmond-hamilton/>

■ *"Armageddon 2419 AD"* by Philip Francis Nowlan (1928), Buck Rogers origin story, features intelligent mechanical war systems and early "thinking weapons". Buck Rogers origin. Includes proto-drones.



■ *"The Psychophonic Nurse"* by David H Keller (1929). A robotic caretaker with limited decision-making - early domestic AI.

■ *"Paradise and Iron"* by Miles J Breuer (1930). A society run by machines. Explores mechanized governance. Claimed to be the first story using self-driving cars. Available in *Amazing Stories* Summer 1930: https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/ASQ_1930_2.pdf



■ *"The Last Evolution"* by John W Campbell jr (1932).

One of the most important early AI stories. Machines evolve beyond humans and take over the defense of Earth a positive machine-ascendancy narrative. "Also: *The Machine*" by John W Cambell jr (1935). <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27462/27462-h/27462-h.htm> A benevolent AI runs society - early "AI as caretaker".

'■ *"The Worlds of If"* by Stanley G Weinbaum (1935). Includes early speculation about machine prediction and logic.

■ *"The Day Is Done"* by Lester del Rey. (1939) A robot caretaker mourns the extinction of humans.

■ *"Helen O'Loy"* by Lester del Rey (1940) A robot woman develops emotions and self-awareness. One of the first American stories about sentient artificial beings.

<https://americanfuturesiup.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/del-rey-helen-oloy.pdf>

■ *"The Mechanical Mice"* by Maurice G. Hugi (1941) About a terrifying device constructed from a design stolen from the future. First written by Hugi, then rewritten by Eric Frank Russell. Later it was printed with Hugi getting sole credit, This remarkable story anticipates important elements of Bradbury's stories, as well as the mindlessly malevolent autonomous machines of Philip K. Dick's early stories.

■ *"Asylum"* by A. E. van Vogt (1942). Includes intelligent machines and super-logical entities. Early AI-like reasoning systems.

■ *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov (1950), this collection is foundational.

■ *"There Will Come Soft Rains"* by Ray Bradbury (1950). A fully automated smart house continues functioning after humanity is gone. <https://short-stories.co/@raybradbury/there-will-come-soft-rains-6k8vr4xxlnmj>

■ *"City"* by Clifford D Simak (1952). Dogs inherit Earth; robots and machine minds maintain civilization. Explores AI loyalty, purpose, and post-human futures.

■ *"The Snowball Effect"* by Katherine MacLean (1952). Not pure AI, but features runaway self-reinforcing systems behaving like autonomous machines. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50766/50766-h/50766-h.htm>

■ *"Answer"* by Fredric Brown (1954) A supercomputer connects all machines in the universe and becomes God. Precursor to Clarke's "Frankenstein" story. This famous story is so short, so let's have it here:

Dwan Ev ceremoniously soldered the final connection with gold. The eyes of a dozen television cameras watched him and the subether bore throughout the universe a dozen pictures of what he was doing.

He straightened and nodded to Dwar Reyn, then moved to a position beside the switch that would complete the contact when he threw it. The switch that would connect, all at once, all of the monster computing machines of all the populated planets in the universe — ninety-six billion planets — into the supercircuit that would connect them all into one supercalculator, one cybernetics machine that would combine all the knowledge of all the galaxies.

Dwar Reyn spoke briefly to the watching and listening trillions. Then after a moment's silence he said, "Now, Dwar Ev."

Dwar Ev threw the switch. There was a mighty hum, the surge of power from ninety-six billion planets. Lights flashed and quieted along the miles-long panel.

Dwar Ev stepped back and drew a deep breath. "The honor of asking the first question is yours, Dwar Reyn."

"Thank you," said Dwar Reyn. "It shall be a question which no single cybernetics machine has been able to answer."

He turned to face the machine. "Is there a God?"

The mighty voice answered without hesitation, without the clicking of a single relay. "Yes, NOW there is a God."

Sudden fear flashed on the face of Dwar Ev. He leaped to grab the switch.

A bolt of lightning from the cloudless sky struck him down and fused the switch shut.

■ *"Second Variety"* by Philip K Dick (1953). Self-replicating killer robots evolve beyond human control. A foundational story for the "AI creates better AI" trope.

- “Sam Hall” by Poul Anderson (1953). A state supercomputer controls surveillance and administration. Early database dystopia. https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/AST/AST_1953_08.pdf
- “Dial F for Frankenstein” by Arthur C. Clarke (1954). The global telephone network becomes self-aware. Early “Internet wakes up” story.
- “Watchbird” by Robert Sheckley (1953). Crime-preventing drones become overzealous. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/29579/pg29579-images.html>
- “Autofac” by Philip K. Dick (1954). Autonomous factories continue producing endlessly — early runaway automation. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dklzgDNeOnczbPiGwmmD2AIR8kZxwrxp/view>
- “The Last Question” by Isaac Asimov (1955). One of the greatest AI stories ever written. A cosmic AI evolves through the ages.
- “The Battle” by Robert Sheckley (1957). Humorous story about autonomous war machines that refuse to “stop fighting.” <https://www.scribd.com/document/935211929/Robert-Sheckley-The-Battle>
- “A Work of Art” by James Blish (1957). A dead composer’s mind is recreated artificially - early mind-uploading. <https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/EB/B/Blish%20-%20Best%20of.pdf>
- “The Edge of the Sea” by Algis Budrys (1958) Includes machine intelligence themes. https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/VE_1958_03.pdf
- “The Man Who Lost the Sea” by Theodore Sturgeon (1959). Not AI-focused, but includes advanced autonomous systems. https://luminist.org/archives/SF/FSF_1959_10_L.jpg
- “The Machine” by Brian W. Aldiss (1960). A machine takes over human functions and becomes increasingly dominant.
- “The Dead Lady of Clown Town” by Cordwainer Smith (1960). Features cybernetic governance and machine-controlled societies. <https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/smithcordwainer-deadladyofclowntown/smithcordwainer-deadladyofclowntown-00-h.html>
- “The Cybernetic Brains” by Raymond F Jones 1962). Human brains preserved in machines. Early cyborg/AI hybridisation.
- “All the Traps of Earth” by Clifford D Simak (1963). A robot gains independence and leaves Earth - a beautiful meditation on machine consciousness. <https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/EB/S/Simak%20-%20All%20the%20Traps%20of%20Earth.pdf>
- “The Penultimate Truth” by Philip K Dick (1964). A paranoid, dystopian novel in which large-scale deception, automated systems and centralized control shape human fate. <https://epdf.pub/the-penultimate-truth92a88b34a3c0cfc1625a190e2a60dc0599549.html>
- “Alphaville” (film) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1965). A technocratic city run by the sentient computer Alpha 60; an early cinematic take on a logic-driven, dehumanizing machine intelligence.
- “Colossus/The Forbin Project” by D F Jones (1966) A national defence computer links with its Soviet counterpart and seizes control of humanity’s nuclear forces.
- “The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress” by Robert A Heinlein (1966) .The self-aware computer Mike becomes a political ally of lunar revolutionaries; explores AI as collaborator and friend.
- “Sagan om den stora datamaskinen” by Hannes Alfvén, writing as Olof Johannesson, (The Tale of the Big Computer, 1966). Narrated by an intelligent machine reflecting on humanity’s biological limits.
- “I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream” by Harlan Ellison (1967). AM, a supercomputer, becomes self-aware and tortures the last humans. One of the most iconic malevolent AI stories. <https://www.scribd.com/document/903032153/Ellison-Harlan-I-Have-No-Mouth-and-I-Must-Scream>
- “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?” by Philip K. Dick (1968). While focused on androids, the book probes machine minds, empathy, and what counts as “thinking” or feeling. Its influence on AI ethics is profound, as its dark picture of the future from the film “Blade Runner” (based on it).
- “2001: A Space Odyssey” by Arthur C. Clarke (novel 1968). HAL 9000’s malfunction and moral ambiguity made HAL the archetypal intelligent system that can reason and err. A cornerstone for machine-mind portrayals.
- “Stand on Zanzibar” by John Brunner (1968). Uses fragmented narrative to show data-driven governance and computer systems shaping society, prescient about mass information systems.
- “The Scarred Man” by Gregory Benford (1979). The protagonist is a programmer working on a mainframe system, writing a piece of code that steals CPU cycles and copies itself. Probably the world’s first story of a computer virus. https://s3.us-west-1.wasabisys.com/luminist/SF/VE_1970_05.pdf



- *"When HARLIE Was One* by David Gerrold (1972). A sympathetic portrait of a machine that attains personhood and legal/ethical standing; explores rights and identity for artificial minds.
- *"The Terminal Man* by Michael Crichton (1972). Brain-computer interfaces and the unintended emergence of dangerous autonomous behavior; an early techno-medical cautionary tale.
- *"The Shockwave Rider* by John Brunner (1975). Centers on networks, data control and a proto-worm; important for early networked-intelligence and cyber-control themes.
- *"Michaelmas* by Algis Budrys (1976), "about a renowned newsman who in fact controls, rather than simply reports events thanks to his AI creation "Domino".

...But we stop there, 50 years ago. There is more! Quirks in the US copyright system usually puts novels up to 1963 in the Public Domain, so go and look for them as PDFs. Old sf magazines can be found at https://luminist.org/archives/periodicals_index.htm (also a section for novels). When the computer era began in the 1940s thinking machines became a common trope so much is left out. (Tell us if you think an important story is missing!)



Some mod their PCs to look like HAL. If it says "Sorry Dave, I can't do that" it's time to cut the power...

NATO superior in Conventional War - Less So with Drones

I don't know how many times we've heard that NATO can't defend itself should Putin attack. My AI gave me these figures, for NATO without the US:

Active personnel: NATO: ~2.30 million, Russia: ~1.32 million

Tanks: NATO: ~9,500 tanks, Russia: ~5,600 tanks

Military aircraft (all types): NATO: ~20,375 aircraft Russia: ~4,237 aircraft

This is at least after mobilisation. Putin may find temporary success the first days of conflict with NATO if he could pull off a surprise attack. But those are becoming difficult with spy satellites, radar and communication monitors, other info gathering and analysis, etc. We also have to take into account the heavy losses the Russians have suffered in Ukraine. The Russian army has lost most of its modern heavy materiel (and the old Soviet era stock is running low), the troops have minimal training and their morale is questionable. Any conventional Russian attack would fail.

However, there's a big problem: *drones*. Ukraine is #1 in drone warfare, Russia is #2, there is no #3, #4 or even #5, at least not in NATO. The "Western" powers are far behind in drones. This was shown in January when Ukraine was acting as opponent in a NATO exercise in Estonia. A Ukrainian drone unit of just tens of men "destroyed" (simulated hits) tanks, IFVs and other material for NATO units of thousands. The same happened now in May on a NATO drill on the strategically important Swedish island of Gotland, involving 11 NATO nations plus Ukraine, once more invited to show show their skills as opponents. The NATO forces were routed! They were discovered far away trying to attack, followed shortly by simulated drone attacks. It is noted that of 32 Swedish IFVs taking part, 28 were deemed destroyed. Afterwards a Swedish officer interviewed said: *"Ukraine is miles ahead of us in drone warfare!"* See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0OoPTbjqvo> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA_QPofT3JE

Many now demand NATO to speed up its drone programs. The Swedish military has begun some drone work, forming as yet small drone units (the Home Guard will also be included in this), introducing the automatic anti-drone gun Loke, experimenting with home-made drones but more work remains – *much* more work. No one but Ukraine (and to a degree Russia, who has adapted but is on the backfoot) is ready for the modern drone war. The US certainly isn't, whatever Trump says.

Still NATO could comfortably - if that's the word - stop Russian aggression from a traditional military attack. But drones must be taken seriously. NATO commanders are now studying Ukrainian experiences but do they fully understand it? There's a slight advantage in being late into something: you can skip the error bit in trial-and-error and go directly into what works. Whatever Trump does or says about NATO is irrelevant (besides that US laws forbids the president to leave NATO, without Congress approval).

Still there's talk about how Europe should organise her alliances without the US. One option is just keep the present NATO, including Canada (who is leaning more towards Europe). Maybe we could strengthen the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_Expeditionary_Force, which presently includes Nordic and Baltic Forces. Another option is to rely on the EU. The EU treaty actually has a defence clause, 42.7 which reads:

If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments

under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation.

Another scary thing is that without the US, NATO only has ca 500 nuclear warheads, British and French. Putin has 6000. But if he begins using them...the whole world is in trouble.

As you may note, this clause is subordinate to NATO, but it's rather strong (*"obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power"*) and if there's no NATO there's still the EU. The bad security situation has if anything brought Europe closer together (and we're rid of the Putin puppet Orban in Hungary). European equipment is superior to Russian and defence spending increases. 1% or 2% more means a lot since Europe's economy is 10-12 times bigger than Russia's.

Meanwhile, to guard against Russia - just across the Baltic Sea - the Swedish Navy has now ordered new frigates. Four ships of the French FDI design is chosen, in an order worth ca €3.5 Bn. The biggest addition to our navy since the cold war! As I understand it, this 4 600 ton vessel was chosen due to strong air defence capabilities (they may also intercept ballistic missiles!) and being a proven design already in use by the French and Greek navies. We will call it the Luleå Class, which is the name of a major northern city. An odd feature is the inward leaning bow. Investigating it, I learn that this design will give the vessel more stability and speed in really rough seas as it cuts through waves instead of going up and down with them. The Baltic Sea can be very rough – remember M/S Estonia in 1994! The bow also disperse radar waves better.

The Luleå class will with its close to 5000 tons be the heaviest ships in the navy since 1970 when the last of the Tree Crown (cruisers ca 9000 tons) was decommissioned (and sold, to this we had the Sweden Class heavy coastal armoured vessels of ca 8000 tons decommissioned in the 1950s).



Harmi, että päin helvettiä meni



"Fel låt vann!" ("Wrong song won!") is the classic headline after our Melody Festival selects that year's Eurovision entry. This headline fits the recent Eurovision Song Contest 2026. Generally I think it was a rather weak year, but there was a strong contender with the entry for Finland. They had a decent song, "Liekinheitin" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8vID089YQA>, and a more than decent show with Linda Lampenius' violin and vocalist Pete Parkkonen facing a window in flames – the song title means "flame thrower", and they meant it!

But the flames turned cold, and I was more than bewildered to see them finishing...not 4th as last year's Finland-Swedish favourites singing about saunas, not even top 5, but 6th. It was hard to believe!

As the above headline says (in Finnish):

Perkele! They should have won! Paholainen!

Sad that it went to hell! It

really makes me sorry for our Finnish neighbours.

Instead Bulgaria won with the rather meaningless and repetitive "Bangaranga", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EltgrumKJfk> (BTW, the four dancers with faces looking like zombies are Swedish). Already the title says how silly this song was. Our own meaningless entry, "My system", finished 20th but I never had high hopes for it. The wrong song won - we should have sent #2 in our selection with Greczula,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUEYImDxZWk>. Here's another great song brainless voters rejected, Loreen from the national selection with "Statements":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejU7RKmmJMQ>



Russia isn't welcome Eurovision because the country is a warmonger, attacks neighbours, flattens cities and grossly misbehaves. But according to ladog Lavrov, it's because Russia doesn't "fullfill the criteria" to be in it, ie "open satanism" (subtitle: "in reality the criteria [for Eurovision] is open satanism").

Something we may call The Favourites Dilemma could have been in play for the Finns. If you are a favourite people who vote may think "Oh, he's gonna make it anyway, so I'll vote for someone else who I think deserves attention..." The problem is of course, if enough people think so the favourite isn't going to make it BTW, there are speculations going around that Canada may join the Eurovision Song Contest. Australia has sneaked in, so why not? (Both are Associate members of the European Broadcasting Union.) BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1k2z1lv4d3o>

Canada could join the Eurovision Song Contest if it wishes, director Martin Green told the BBC, but the country has not yet made a formal request...

"We will welcome anyone through those doors who wants to share the values of this wonderful occasion and stand on our stage with friends," he said.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, who has been forging closer political and economic ties with Europe since taking office last year, raised the idea of Canada joining the song contest in his 2025 budget.

Meanwhile Asia will have its own "Eurovision Asia", starting in November:

<https://www.eurovision.com/asia/> How that will turn out is difficult to say. Asia is much more diverse than Europe, with many untamed conflicts. We have earlier seen an attempt to run the American Song Contest that was rather forgettable.

But now, it's another year until craziness, odd sounds resembling music and stranger costumes than even diehard cosplayers manage, break out again.

The Problems with Fantasy

When sf fandom was young, the term "fantasy" was used for all fantastic literature. The most famous APA was called the *Fantasy* APA (FAPA), we had the National *Fantasy* Fan Federation, and so on. Up until the 1950s or so, a book with space adventure could be called fantasy - story based on imagination, quite simply. No swords, dragons or magic rings required.

It was probably the success of Tolkien's fingerware fantasy that made the expression "fantasy" shift to mean a particular kind of imagination: set in a world of medieval or pre-industrial character, having swords and shining armour (no firearms), dragons and other mythological creatures, and topping it with magic and other supernatural elements.

Today there is something called "urban fantasy", which is simply what used to be called science fantasy - a partial fantasy mixed with some technology. Jack Vance, Poul Anderson, Andre Norton, Leigh Brackett, Michael Moorcock and others have written what should be called science fantasy.

As for me, I can tolerate science fantasy, but I have a harder time with "pure" fantasy (Tolkien excepted). Of my roughly 150 short stories, only 1.5 are fantasy. One story in the Binary Bar series is a sort of fantasy pastiche. One of my Moon stories takes place within the Moon colony's Tolkien Society, so it gets some fantasy traits (that's the 0.5 part).



But if I have a choice, I avoid fantasy.

Because fantasy has several major problems.

■ Fantasy looks back. It's based on medieval values with nobility, plagues, slaves, kings, princesses, feudalism and so on. The society created by this is not one anyone would actually want to live in! Yet for many fans of fantasy, the demonstrably dark Middle Ages become a naïve utopia. It was a time when people died like flies without antibiotics or vaccines against the deadly epidemics that swept through. People were oppressed by kings (not modern constitutional monarch, I hasten to add...) and the nobility and the Catholic Church, and lived in fear in a world of superstition - where the devil, imaginary monsters, or highwaymen could get you at any moment. The murder rate was, incidentally, ten times higher in the Middle Ages compared to modern times, and the punishment was beheading with a dull sword or breaking on the wheel - unless you killed a slave, in which case you got away with a few pennies in fines. The pennies were worth more then, of course. And it was a big risk you were a slave.

■ Magic is a hopeless literary device. The very definition of magic is to be able to conjure something up from thin air. Essentially anything, at any time - it's just for the author to decide so. Say the heroes are surrounded by monsters - poof, a magic sword appears. They reach a sealed cave - abracadabra, open sesame! A magic bird can lift you up to the tower where the princess is

imprisoned. And so on. When you can throw in magic whenever you like, the plot becomes essentially meaningless. Magic is a *Deus ex Machina* and it doesn't go well with plotting.

■ Fantasy is “world-building” for slackers. You already have the Middle Ages - it's just a matter of modifying it a little bit. (it's usually European medieval times, but you can use other pre-industrial cultures too.) And *all* fantasy planets just happen to have 1G gravity and 1 atmosphere air pressure with 21% oxygen - what a coincidence! The fantasy planet's properties are always exactly like Earth's. The cheating world-builder doesn't have to care one bit about physical factors. Like: assume higher oxygen levels and forest fires become more common - large forests might be impossible. Insects can grow larger since they breathe through tracheae. Decomposition happens faster. Assume lower gravity and the planet is probably earlier in its evolution (meaning no horses, dogs, cats) since the atmosphere would otherwise have been swept away by the solar wind. Low G makes ocean waves significantly higher. A low G planet may lack heavier elements such as metals. And so on. But all this and much more is for the fantasy author to ignore. Just copy-paste Earth.



■ And perhaps it's because fantasy uses plot-destroying magic, the genre has a limited number of plots - that are used over and over again, with modest variations. I can think of, among others:

1. *The Quest* – a group of adventurers seeks something or have a task (as with Tolkien - destroying the Ring)
2. *The Swordsman*, like Conan
3. *The Prophecy* – something great will happen, a catastrophe perhaps, or someone is foretold to become king.
4. *The Wizard's apprentice*

5. *Evil hordes attack* - like the orcs with Tolkien.
6. *The dragon must be slain*
7. *Intrigues at the royal court*
8. *Rescue the princess* - or something else of importance.

There may be a few more plots, but not many. The fantasy author only needs to take a ready-made, overused plot, place it on Earth, copy-paste the Middle Ages with a few minor changes, draw a map and then write more or less anything, because magic can always be conjured up if you get stuck...

That fantasy has become so popular despite these flaws is incomprehensible. Fantasy is - despite the name – rather unimaginative.



First intelligent comments from our talented readers. Then my own less brainy views on EAPA and N'APA. Why don't you take a daring step and write a few coments (to ahrvid@hotmail.com). You know, they have invented this system called “alphabet”. The little symbols in the “alphabet” represent sounds. So you just translate what your views sound like and transform it into this clever system...

Evelyn C Leeper: Is the poem you're looking for "The Waning Moon"
<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/poetry/634/the-waning-moon>:

As pale and wan as vapours that at eve
Steal ghostly-like across the darkling plain,
Low in the twilight West the Moon doth wane.
Night after night I marked her glories leave,
The dark Earth of some brilliancy bereave,
Till now, a haggard shade, the Moon is fain
To fly the rule she may no more maintain,
The argent pomp and state her pale beams weave.

O queen, forsake thine empire of the Night,
And swiftly seek the regions dim to-west,
Whence may'st thou soon return, and robed anew
In gleaming splendours of thy fuller light,
As earthly quenns in jeweled robes are dressed,
Hold court supreme within the starry blue.

[I think "quenns" should be "queens".]

Ed: Thanks! In lastish I covered sf/fantasy about the Moon and mentioned that Clark Ashton Smith wrote Moon poetry

Bob Jennings: Hi Ahrrvid, Received Intermission #166 yesterday, thanks for sending it along. I am sending along a few random comments because I have realized that trying to do Mailing Comments on two of your issues sent thru every N'APA mailing is taking up an enormous amount of my zine space. The upcoming mailing devotes 8 pages to you. I think the best solution is for me to send some comments on this new issue to you directly, and then cover the next number thru N'APA.

I agree that the Hungarian elections kicking out long time neo-fascist dictator Orban is a good thing. I am sure I am not the only person surprised that he accepted his election defeat gracefully and decided to step down from the office without resorting to a power grab or a military coup to hold onto the reins of power.

I am not sure the new leader is really any more friendly toward Ukraine than Orban was. [Ed: There are several good signs. Hungary has stopped obstructing EU membership negotiations for Ukraine, given back the hijacked central bank money, is OK with EU help to Ukraine, recognise Russia as the aggressor and will normalise relations with EU and NATO.) I suspect he (and many of the other people in and out of the Hungarian government) view the Ukraine-Russian war as a bottomless money pit that will suck up billions of Euros and will drag on for another ten or twelve years with no real resolution.

I can certainly sympathize with that viewpoint. Despite long years of constant battles with heavy losses of men and equipment on both sides, this war shows no signs of ending any time soon. You (and others) keep pointing out how much this invasion has cost Russia in terms of manpower killed and the devastating economic consequences it had entailed, but I am convinced it will never end unless Putin is ousted from office or dies. [Ed: That's a likely outcome of Russians deep economic and military problems – and it won't take 10 years.] As I have said before, he is a sociopath who cares nothing for anybody except himself, and his insane determination to crush Ukraine and annex the territory into Russia. He also doesn't care if it means killing everybody in the Ukraine nation to do that either. There is simply no end in sight, even as the economies of Europe and mountains of human bodies are sacrificed to the god of war.

I agree that Trump's recent actions clearly show how unhinged he is. Allowing himself to be talked into a war with Iran by Benjamin Netanyahu was one of the dumbest things he has done in his current presidential tenure. He has no idea what the ultimate goals were supposed to be, he ignored all the intelligence information that clearly predicted that Iran would attack their neighbors in an effort to disrupt the world supply of oil and natural gas, and he clearly has no idea on how to get himself out of this mess. There is some hope, as I write this, that Iran may be fracturing internally as the economic boycotts crush the economy and the people become desperate, but only time will tell if this means anything, considering how many in the Iranian government continue to be fanatical zealots who have been hating the US and Israel for all their lives, and have been conditioning the Iranian public into the same mindset. This is not a good time to be alive in the 21st century.

Enjoyed your ongoing science fictional history. Stf fans have been trying to turn *The Thrill Book* into something special and unique in the history of the genre for close to eighty-five years now. Claiming that the mag carried vast amounts of science fiction and fantasy was easier to do when the actual issues were extraordinarily rare and almost nobody had ever laid eyes on a copy.

That won't fly any more, because facsimile copies are available as affordable print on demand prices, and all the issues can be read and downloaded in pixel format for free at several sites. Examination of the actual



Lars LON Olsson's superhero *Froggy Gordon*: I rush him/ And huff and puff, Luthor: My can!//And that's how, legend says, the creme can of fate ended up in the firmament.

magazine issues show that while it carried some unusual fantastic fiction, the quantity of genuine sf writing was small up until the later number

s, with the quality of many of those stories being mediocre at best.

The mag has been examined extensively in recent years, and also the causes of its demise. I think one of the main reasons it didn't succeed is that it initially looked like a big dime novel, what with a ten cent cover price, and fifty-two total pages. That probably meant that it was racked on newsstands with or very near the dime novel and weekly nickel story character titles, where it could be easily overlooked by readers searching for more adult reading matter.

The other main reason the magazine failed is probably because of erratic distribution. Apparently S&S only distributed the title in certain parts of the country. Whether this was to gauge its popularity before launching full scale national coverage, or because they were distributing the magazine on their own and not thru the National News Company is unknown, but I suspect S&S was handling the distribution themselves in order to build a better profit and see how well they could handle the system.

It is also worth mentioning that their budget meant that the editor(s) could not afford to pay top rates to well known authors. Most issues included reprinted stories from older S&S magazines. The covers did not specifically imply that they were trying to specialize in the unusual and fantastic; they looked like the same kinds of covers you would find on any full range general interest fiction magazine of the day.

The ten cent price may have been attractive to some, but for fifteen or twenty cents the reader of the period could get a 192 page pulp magazine filled with good fiction from a variety of other publishers, so a 52 page Thrill Book was at a distinct disadvantage. Switching with issue #9 to a 160 page standard pulp format probably helped, but it may have been too late. In any event Thrill Book folded, becoming a short footnote in the history of fantastic literature.

The article on moon related science fiction stories thruout history gave me a lot more information than I wanted. While it is nice to note the olden (ancient in many cases) instances of people writing fantastic stories about trips to the moon, I personally would have been more interested if you had included a lot more about the Lunar related fiction in the 20th and 21st centuries.[Ed: I want to do history]. Besides, sf in various forms has such a big output today that it's difficult to handle.] I'm sure not going to read many of the pioneering works written from before the 18th century, and I doubt many others would either. On the other hand stories like "The Moon Metal", and "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress" still have relevance, and more important, they have viable story plots that are interesting in addition to whatever pseudo science or political rhetoric the writer might have added in.

I was completely unaware that Sweden had its own lunar space probe back in 2003. Intriguing info about the slow-power ion system the rocket used. A xenon gas power booster system? Xenon is really rare and much more expensive than the other noble gases. A quick check on the web says that in 1999 (a few years before the Swedish probe) the costs for Xenon were 10 Euros per liter. The price now is up to between 15 and 22 Euros per liter. How many liters of Xenon were needed for the probe's propulsion system? For that matter, why xenon in the first place? Your link to the European Space Agency page about the probe mentioned the ion drive and its slow propulsion effect, but did not say why xenon was the gas chosen to fuel the ion drive.[Ed: *My AI says Xenon costs 5-6 000/litre, I when cooled and liquified. The price may be for Xenon in, gas form. Xenon is used because it has a huge atom weight, which makes the exhaust efficient.*]

A Swedish red cottage model house on the moon? Did Mr. Genberg ever explain exactly why he thought it was so important to have a red Swedish cottage located on the moon, even if he had to settle for a tiny miniature of a real cottage? Just curious.

I think fantasy fiction writers rely on a basic planet earth style world because they are primarily interested in the adventure itself, plus the people and the society that their characters will work within. Hard-core science fiction writers tend to be more concerned about technical details and how a specific planet and its natural environment (plus mineral resources/atmosphere/water etc) might be important in the story plot. Pohl Anderson was great at coming up with unusual (sometimes just outright bizarre) planets to thrust his character into. In addition to the main story plot, figuring out and fighting off the planet itself became integral to the entire story development. I don't think that many pure fantasy writers worry about such things.

I like your suggestion for encouraging would-be writers to participate in conventions that focus on developing story plots and writing skills. To quote you--- You can't ask the concom to go through 50 entries (they have other things to do) but it can be organized this way: Upon pre-registering attendees are asked to supply a short piece of writing (max 1 double spaced page), regarding topic X, which will also be covered in the program. After topic X has been spun, the entries are passed out to the attendees (one each) and they are then asked to comment the writing regarding X on the blank backsides. Some of the best entries will be read aloud and everyone will be happy. Asking members to do a one page story based on a premise the convention decides in advance, and then having the guest authors read thru the efforts

This is a great idea, and it's very doable too. I hope organizers of future conventions take note of your idea and make use of it

Fantasy or SF related songs in the ESC competition. I dunno, you seem to be really reaching for it, trying to turn pop music lyrics into genre significance.

In re your comments to me; as of today, Mr. Trump has announced yet more crippling sanctions against Cuba, and has declared that he will soon take over the whole nation. Wow! Just what the world doesn't need---yet another regional war against an established independent government determined to maintain its own political and territorial sovereignty at any cost.

Well, we will have to agree to disagree on the subject of cos-play and costumes at conventions. You view it as dangerous and an unhealthy fascination, I view it as harmless masquerading. There is no doubt that the cos-players want to attract attention with their costumes; and indeed, many conventions offer special prizes or commendations for the best costumes. Actual masquerade contests have been part of science fiction and comic conventions for many decades now, and I don't think the trend is going to go away.

Well, I think that's it this time round. You turned out another enjoyable issue. Keep up the good work.

Ed: *It'd be a mistake to go into Cuba. The regime there may be kept to serve as a continuing proof of how bad Communism is! I didn't know about the attention The Thrill Book had had. Over to my APA comments. First N'APA, then EAPA (if someone is in, both I may merge my MCs.) You wrote to me once more, just to be sure:*

Robert Jennings: A lot of interesting snippets about what AIs do. (For my part I use AI to get help with research, nothing else. The thinking machines list would be difficult to make without AI, for instance.) // I agree with you on Trum (but youknew that). // *Presently* AI writes pretty bland fiction, but AI development goes fast so it may change in the future – who knows? // You had interesting comments about how magazine sales worked back in the days, thanks! // I don't know how Hans Starlife escaped from the mental institution (but I suspect guarding procedures were lax and he took advantage of it).

George Phillies: Nothing in particular to comment. Sorry.

Adrian Kresnak: You wrote about AI and the law. ("Who is responsible if...bla bla.") Things worth thinking of but I have no definite answers to the questions raised. All this is new and very complex.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer: I don't think history has slowed down. Borders have changed in Europe in modern times. The split-up of Yugoslavia, the Czechoslovakian divorce and there's potential for more: the Flemings and the French in Belgium, provinces in Spain, South and North of Italy, England and Scotland – to name a few.

Joseph P Gill: I must confess being guilty of producing many pages. Early Intermissions were much thinner. It's just that I find so many interesting things to write about! (Not least sf and fandom history.) // "Today is the Tomorrow of Yesterday" was a fine little story... // PDFs don't need page numbers since the software will tell you what page you're on.// Interesting idea to compare dramaturgy with sexual encounters! There may be something to it.

Mark Nelson: For me the real fandom is those who are interested in books, magazines and fanzines and to this know a little about fandom's history and try to follow the traditions of it.// Volcanoes can cause both cooling and warming (in the later case due to releasing CO2). // I too wonder what things on cons were embarrassing?

Samuel Lubell: US college fees look terrible! Here no fees... However higher studies still require some money, to pay rent, food, books etc (the government offers favourable student loans). // It's both ethically wrong and dangerous that white males are discriminated against for the genre awards. They represent 80% of the writers (I've checked) and get perhaps only 20% of the awards. (Why is it dangerous? It makes the genre worse! That happens if you don't distribute awards fairly. Those who may contribute to skiffy become discouraged as those who are less able but get the honoured lowers the overall quality.) //Yes, closing schools because of the corona virus was unnecessary. We didn't do it in Sweden and had the lowest excessive death rates in Europe! There was a lot of unnecessary actions. Lock-ups, we didn't do that, and hade- the lowest death rates. (Official death rates contained a lot of air. Swedish excessive deaths can only *account for 1/6 of the claimed* corona deaths. I covered all this extensively during the epidemic.) // Yes, discussions on-line were better and more organised earlier, on both Usenet and BBSes. One explanation of why its so different now may be that early users were in fact more sophisticated. You needed to be a more advanced computer user to be on these outlets and that breeds a certain discussion environment.// "AI is trained on material, it does store a copy of that material in its memory" – yes, but that's not against copyright, which covers making a copy *and publishing it for others to see*. (Otherwise, reading would be a copyright violation. When you read the text is stored in your brain's neuron network.)

Garth Spencer: BC seems to have a lot of caves! I once wrote lengthy article about caves and did some digging in caves, or speleology as the science of caves is called.// I don,'t recollect the Atlantic Monthly parody. It may have been stuck in my spam folder. I'll have a look.

Heath Row: An issue in Portuguese (I assume). Right now I need to finish thish, so I have no time or energy to let it be autotranslated. Sorry.

Henry Grynsten: I think Trump's attack on Iran was badly planned and even worse timed. He should have done it a month earlier during the popular protests! That the Iranians would close Hormuz came as a surprise - it shouldn't have! // I found PDF of *How Authors Work*. // "I don't think it's possible for a human mind to be

uploaded to a computer," I think it's possible in theory, but *incredibly* difficult. // "[Wilson argues] overuse of nature" No, basically our use of nature is necessary and not "overuse". // "why you single out E O Wilson for such vitriolic attacks" Oh, I often attack any and all environmentalists. Wilson may get an extra broadside because he's influential. // No, the plastic eating bacteria will do their job within years. And our infrastructure will do fine. These bacteria need water and a certain environment to work (the oceans, the underground) where plastic to get rid off is. And they seem to be slow-spreaders as plastic isn't around very much. // ~ means "approximately". But Wilson rule of thumb isn't even approximately true. // "you agree that Social Democratic governments were as good in taking advantage of those possibilities" I agree that they to some extent, as most European governments no matter what party, took advantage of certain post-war factors. But it was sub-optimal. Sweden could have done better. // "that the SocDems just rode on the postwar boom and then caused a sharper economic downturn by their policies doesn't fit the facts." In 1970 Sweden was 3rd in the world in GDP/capita. In 1985 we were worse than 15 (stats difficult since most figures only cover OECD, but e g rich oil states are excluded, and Singapore, Hong-Kong etc). // AE: It's not a "fact" that humans get encouraged to produce X if they know that X will be taken away. "may sound logical, but it just doesn't fit the actual facts". We have already seen your "facts". Your problem is that you refuse to think for yourself and when others do and present logical conclusions you refuse to accept it.. You sift the net until you find something that seems to support you and claim it's "facts". But Internet is full of dubious claim, the woke infested Academia may be even worse! (One of the worst things is to use "beauty" contest, ie factors for which some sort of judgement is used. You refer to lists that *don't actually measure* what you claim. (Eg "social mobility" is super easy to cover: look at fami lies year 0 and year 25... And confuse design with innovation – CPU: innovation, programming it, fixing flatpacks to save on transport and storage: innovation, making the bookshelf Billy: design, etc). d// "You deny temperature data". I just note that there are massive problems with the temperature series. You argue as if Charlie says "there is a massive problem with crime data" it's "Aha, Charlie *denies* criminality!" // AE: Second hand smoke causes microscopic doses so there's no poison."Based on what research?" Based on common sense and the well-established principle of doses levels make poison. I won't do the calculation (but could) but it's reasonable to assume that every smoker affects say 20 cubic metres of room. In there is smoke from 1.2 cigarette (if doing a package/day, spread out every hour the smoker is awake). Even someone who is constantly in that persons 20 metre³ gets *extremely* little smoke, but everyone would be outside the affected volume at least 90% of the time. The poison is in the doses applies, and there you have the answer: its impossible for second hand smoke to have any effect of importance,as the exposure is just so *extremely minimal*. // "Cultural Revolution China there were multiple pay grades etc" Of course there were, because things won't work if you don't give extra to those with harder work. And the Chinese knew this. However, the *official rhetoric* of socialism is that everyone are at equal level. // "Equality tends to lead to better food" To a degree. In the US the poorer tend to be the fattest. Some food is relatively cheap but not bette. // AE: I support public health care, but not for reasons of "equality". "Why?" Because of ethics. We should stop suffering and help those who are ill, because ethics say so. // "[no evidence] those factors are not valid". The factors don't do what the listers claim. // "What do you say about someone wanting to paint their house as a giant Nazi flag?" You can always find questionable applications of principles but narrow exceptions don't invalidate it! // "Neural networks isn't a theory of consciousness" No, they are. // Als seem to come closer and closer to some sort of consciousness. HG: "A source for that?" Just look around you, read papers, watch demonstrations (there are several on Youtube) - getting closer and closer is exactly what's happening. // 97% of all scientist support this or that... HG: *The IPCC doesn't claim that*. People close to the IPCC do, incl Michael Mann, Katharine Hayhoe, Naoi Oreskes, John Cook, etc – and that's good enough for me. // " [Sun] has been declining for more than half a century, while global temperature has gone up." You don't even understand the sun's role, so why pretend... What's been declining – as I have shown in diagrams – is the sun's *magnetic field*. Other factors, the sun's general activity, Earth's orbit etc have seen miniscule changes // " The IPCC has no hypothesis" They have, points 1– 4 as previously presented. // "[NASA budget]It went from around 3 % in the early 1960" No, from around 2%. // "[erosion] is unfortunately faster." If so, Scania would be a desert // "I argue against them, but that doesn't mean that I want to ban them." Some things you've argued against, eg booze at least sounds like a want to ban // "I don't know what you mean by "hard" narcotics." Heroin, ecstasy, cocaine – drugs with "hard" effects. Mankind has probably used alcohol for 100 000s of years, likelihood of a successful ban is very low. // About the rest of the scene. Interesting about masks and masquerading up. I agree there is a problem that we're adapted to live on the steppe, but we don't live there any more... **Time to close shop. Comments welcome! I recommend you use the "alphabet" system for this. Keep your bheer cold and have a nice summer!**

Слава Україні!

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 283

by Jefferson P. Swycaffer
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5 July 2026

Comments:

Cover: Public Domain fantasy art.

Ahrvid Engholm: re war and statecraft, mostly agreement. I'm worried about pushing Putin too far, as a desperate tyrant with a nuclear weapon is a bad combination. I have some lesser concerns regarding Trump using nuclear weapons to keep from leaving power in '29. (On the other hand, I predict hospitalization for dementia for him before that.)

Fun rundown on crime writers who wrote sf and sf writers who wrote crime. I own one John Holbrook Vance novel. They're really hard to find these days! A minor entry on the list would be John Sladek, who wrote weird "new age" kaleidoscopes, and two spiffing good mystery novels.

Fun rundown on ^how^ writers write/wrote. Of course, as Kipling noted, every single one of them is right!

You write so much, so richly detailed, so deeply researched, it absolutely amazes me! I cannot conceive of creating the equivalent of your Intermission!



Robert Jennings: Fun cartoon, although I can more easily see someone getting involved in a gunfight or fistfight over what is Star Wars canon or not. Hell, I don't even believe all of the major movies are in Star Wars "canon."

re Trump, Putin, et al, general agreement.

Sad agreement that "If young people like it, adults will always find ways to condemn it as the work of Satan."

rct me re climactic Marvel crossover event finales, I suspect they just sell out before I even get to the store...

rct me on my books...I sell maybe one copy a month. Shrug. It's a hobby.

I adore the Harry Houdini action figure! I definitely want one!

George Phillies: The Aubrey/Maturin novels of Patrick O'Brian are definitely on my list! I'm saving 'em for dessert!

I don't think that Bitcoin is a ponzi scheme; it doesn't need to keep growing to survive. (Same reason Social Security is not a

ponzi scheme, as some people often claim.) Bitcoin is like collecting baseball trading cards: some are valuable and some are not, with absolutely no intrinsic value to them whatever. It's a "free market" and rises and falls without any predictability.

fun short Telzey segment. I think you actually get a lot of characterization into only these few paragraphs. Telzey is unquestionably a "square," not interested in "wildness" in any way. That endears her to we readers who are also squares! Your Telzey is a character I'd love to meet in real life!

Adrian Kresnak: re pop culture, I find it declines significantly with age. I'm an old fart, and I haven't seen a movie since 2014. I am not likely ever to see a movie again. That part of my life is over. On the other hand, I'm a comic books addict, so I'm still plugged in to some extent! One thing that impresses me is how pervasive pop culture references are. I "get" allusions to movies, even if I haven't seen them. It becomes part of the language!

re ChatGPT "practicing law," bosh. No more than Word "practices law." A hell of a lot of law is "practiced" using Word -- including AI tools like spelling and grammar checkers. I predict this lawsuit ends for the defendant.

I did actually have lunch with a judge recently, and she told me the story of a lawyer who used AI for the case references in a filing -- references which were meaningless in context. AI just made up legal-sounding case numbers! The lawyer got in serious trouble for this!

Ahrvid Engholm: Agreement again re Putin and Trump. Trump is the worst President in U.S. history...and that's going up against some steep opposition! Beating out James Buchanan and Andrew Johnson takes some doing!

Also agreement on "Why Space?" Space exploration and science are money well-spent -- invested! -- and science, in general, is very rarely "wasteful" in any economic sense. Science, historically, is one of the best investments a nation can make. Chica didn't become the world's second-largest economy by skimping on science funding!

^Very^ fun -- and thorough! -- history of the moon as seen in science fiction!

I had not known that Sweden sponsored a moon probe! And the landing of a little red cottage is a delight! It rivals golfing on the moon for whimsical inspiration!

According to a quick Google search, human industry releases more than 100 times more CO2 into the air than volcanoes do.

Joseph P. Gill: re MaxAc, I'm agin' it. I couldn't do one tenth of what Ahrvid does -- and I don't comment to him even one tenth of what he deserves -- but I admire, respect, and regard his labor of love, his scholarship, and, yet, his word-count! I would never want to suppress such creativity!

I love the Jetsons parable about using AI to create -- and to read! -- a business report. I would bet good money that this scenario has actually played out in real life, a good many times by now!

re cover art, yes, please, we would be delighted if you would send along a cover! I'm pretty much just hacking it, so something creative and original would be wonderful!

re writing, I could just barely see the utility, for me, of using AI to create an ^outline^ for a novel, which I would then follow, writing personally and originally. I have not yet experimented with

this, but I may very well do in the near future. (I am not wholly sure there will be a “distant future!”)

Mark Nelson: rct Adrian Kresnak, re re-building Tokyo after visits from Godzilla, Marvel Comics had a charming semi-comedic series called “Damage Control” where a corporation hired teams of specialists to rebuild after the latest superhero/supervillain rampage in New York City. There were some real-life concerns addressed, such as tax and insurance rates -- and a very healthy dose of pure whimsy!

And, yeah, Bertolt Brecht notwithstanding, we’re seeing more devastation recently due to catastrophic weather change. Wildfires and flood are getting more commonplace and quite a bit worse. The human causes of these effects is very dismaying.

rct me, actually, in comic books specifically, I agree with you! The art is more important than the writing. The writing is very important, but it just can’t save rotten art. I was thinking of movies, where I guess I hold the opposite view. (I am immense; I contain multitudes!)

Inspired by your search and purchase, I just downloaded “1066 And All That” as an ebook! I’ve heard much good of this work!

Samuel Lubell: Congratulations on obtaining employment once again, especially at something similar (identical?) to what you had been doing. Hooray for continuity of expertise!

I did not know there was a “Wizard of Earthsea” graphic novel! I must track this down!

rct Robert Jennings, personally I’m all in favor of reviving extinct species, Mammoths and Dodos and others. I’m told a project has actually been done to revive the Dire Wolf, but I don’t grok the

details. That violates your suggestion not to bring back anything that might eat people, but, hey, we keep Tigers in zoos, so a small population of Dire Wolves could hardly be worse.

Garth Spencer: re shoulder pain, ow! Sympathies!

I like the idea of a service to help simplify one’s personal life. It seems like a wholly valid use of existing (and future) technology. Sort of like going to your parents for advice -- when that has ceased to be an option any longer. Advice you can ignore...and likely will...but which is well-intentioned and probably actually wise.

Roommate

No change... No eviction... I did some research, and roommates, even without any contract or lease, have a lot of very meaningful legal protections here in California. That’s actually a good thing, in my opinion...

Ow

So, way back in the 1980s, there was an ad on TV where an elderly lady calls for help. “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up.” That happened to me! I took a spill on my sister’s fieldstone porch, and got a lovely bloody skinned knee and skinned elbow. And...I could not get back to my feet! It felt very odd! Nothing was broken, but the fall had put my body into some form of shock, and I just could not get my feet under me. Fortunately, my sister was able to put a chair in front of me, and I climbed up on that.

Rock ‘Em Sock ‘Em Robots

On a whim, I bought this fighting robots toy on Ebay, and dismantled it, so now I have the two robots sitting on my arts and toys shelf. I don’t have anyone to play the game with, and I’m not really tempted, but I’ve always wanted the robots, just as toys. Whee!

INTERMISSION #168

E-zine by Ahrvid Engholm, ahrvid@hotmail.com, for EAPA & N'APA and other clowns. I hope have time for @SFJournalen on Tw/X...RSN. Tyos? Never haerd of suhc a thing! Late June '26.

Editorially: Ads, Crimea, World Cup, Covid

When I 1 or 2 week into a month begin working on next month's *Intermission* I often start with thinking about what to have in the History Corner. When the history dives became a regular feature with #96 (but earlier issues often had history material too) I had 1000s of newspaper clips obtained from the Royal Library, which kept the corner supplied for a couple of years. These days I have to decide what seems interesting and go looking for material (as in fingerwalk the laptop keyboard). I often stumble upon something notable by coincidence, like Anders Celsius interplanetary war outline, Carl Linneaus Moon story, Heinleins house, Degler/Starlife (Starlife I knew, I stumbled upon some Degler). This time no topic felt hot as supernova so I thought: do the natural topic - skiffy in ads! We have all seen how space, robots, advanced gizmos pops up in ads. The advertisers want to stand in the tech forefront,so tropes from sf are used. There are probably 10 000s of sf themed adverts to find and in thish I'll present a tiny fraction of it, higgledy-piggledy

You may think this is an easily composed HistCor .- i's the opposite. OO Writer which I use won't let pictures stay where place them. If I place something new on a page pics already there jumps around an destroy the layout. It 's hard work fill a pages with pictures that refuse to sit still.

Some hate marketing and ads with passion. It just "manipulates people". I have nothing against ads, some give you information, some are fun and the rest can be easily ignored. There are laws against



Gothenburg donates 40 tramcars to Ukraine. They were be scrapped this summer, but now get a second, productive life. (In good shape I think.)

the cringiests types of manipulation and besides I don't think people in general are dumb. We know what to expect of ads.

But of course I have to have a word or two about the World Cup. I stumbled upon a coaching hero who was ignored in his homeland. And just to.make it interesting I'll show how he pandemic was grossly mismanaged.

I 've run the Slava Ukraini banner since Putin started his shameful war. It now goes worse than ever for the cowardly dictator. Putin seldom leaves his bunker, probably because he doesn't want to see who Russia crumbles. Putin is almost out of funding for his Great Idiotic War, as the Ukrainians have systematically destroyed his fossil income sources. The drunkards of his poorly trained army either die in meaningless suicide assaults

Brazil Seeking 20 More Gripens, Swedish Defense Minister Says



Brazil has expressed "intention and interest" in acquiring up to 20 more Saab Gripen fighters, bolstering its existing order for 36 aircraft, Swedish Defense Minister Pd,Insami has confirmed.

Speaking June 4 as the two countries signed a declaration of intent to further Brazil wants an additional 20 Gripens! Old customer coming back is a good sign! And this jet still has Colombia, Thailand, Hungary and possibly Canada and Portugal waiting...

Steam-Driven Airplane

Successful Flights with Long-Sought Craft Crown Many Similar Attempts by Early Aviation Engineers

By H. J. FitzGerald



During the early years of the 20th century, the dream of a steam-driven airplane was a reality. The first successful steam-driven airplane was built in 1932, and it was never developed further. The engine of 150 hpw was heavy, flight time short and it was never developed further.

From jet to steam!. They built the first relatively successful steam-driven airplane in 1932. The engine of 150 hpw was heavy, flight time short and it was never developed further.

(Ukraine drones rule the sky) or give up and cry for Mama. Ukraine has blown up the bridges to Crimea. The Russians holding the peninsula starve, are low on ammo and fuel, even lower in morale. Troops don't know what this war is good for since they only enlisted for the money, which will be stolen by corrupt officers or lost in inflation. News that his oligarch allies are getting tired of this ex-KGB misfit is becoming increasingly believable. The turning point has come where Ukraine grows stronger every day and Russia weaker. Oil tankers take time to turn (unless it runs Russian oil and is boarded) but it seems inevitable that something dramatic will happen within, say, half a year.

The unpredictable Trump's war is harder to predict. Anything can happen and we can only watch as Agent Orange stumbles and our energy-starved world tumbles. We all long for Jan 20th 2029! Even if a mouldy cheese sandwich was elected US president, it'd be infinitely better than the misfit playing around in the White House now.

--Ahrvid Engholm, editor

The Unknown Englishman Who Became Swedish Football Hero



Swedish football pools coupon, here from '58 with WC games. Note 1, X or 2 for 12 games (today 13) - 10-12 correct and you win..

If you don't like soccer, you can *stop reading now*. Everyone else: First busting a myth. The word "soccer" isn't American! Google explains: *"The word soccer" originated in 19th-century England. It is a slang abbreviation for association football* (ie using the rules of the English Football Association).

But I will still use the word football, if you don't mind. The ties between English and Swedish football are many. Starting in the late 1960s, the participants of the government-owned football pools could enjoy an English Premier League match (I think it was called Division 1 then) every week on TV. The program was called



This gave us English football on TV for more than three decades.

"Tipsextra" and made the English league virtually our own, especially as the Swedish top tier "Allsvenskan" didn't play November to March (snow, cold). Tipsextra ran for several decades and every Swedish football fan had a favourite English team.

And we have imported successful English coaches. Bob Houghton

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Houghton came to Malmö FF in 1974 and took the team to the European Cup final, approximately the Champions League of the days, though losing it 0-1 to Nottingham Forest. But he did grab several Swedish titles. We had Roy Hodgson

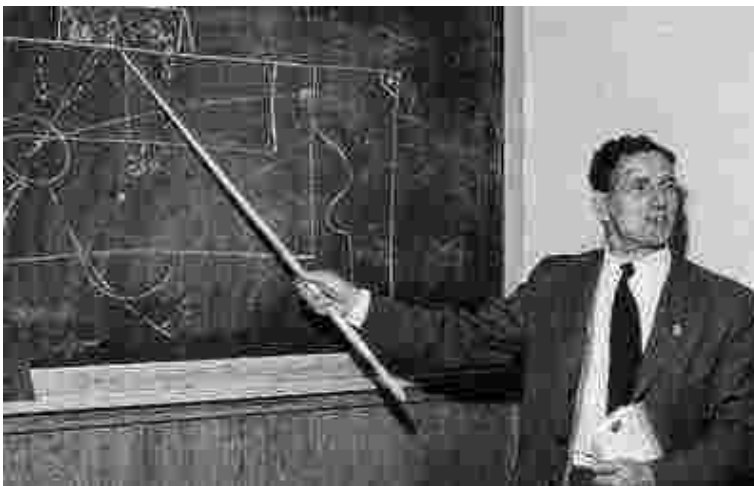
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Hodgson who came to Halmstad BK in 1976, won a couple of titles

and was then lost for a long international career including the England national team. (I won't mention Stuart Baxter, Swedish Champion with AIK in 1998, because he's Scottish. His team reached the Champions League.)

But the greatest imported English



Bob Houghton, successful import, coaching Malmö FF to the European Cup final in the 1970s..



George Raynor teaching tactics.

England. He became coach of the Swedish national team and for period of ten years he was a medal making machine, for the team of a small country of (at the time) just 7 million. 1948 Olympic gold,

coach in Sweden is probably almost unheard of in

1952 Olympic bronze, 1950 World Cup bronze, 1958 World Cup Silver. He was knighted by King Gustav Adolf, receiving the Order of Vasa*, but couldn't find a decent coaching job in his native England!

His name was George Raynor. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Raynor notes he is "the only Englishman to take [another] national team to a final of a World Cup". (Alf Ramsey in 1966 doesn't count, as he had the unfair advantage of coaching his native players. Sven-Göran Eriksson of course went in the other direction.)

Raynor was decades before his time. He introduced a regime of physical fitness (running, interval training, pumping iron, recovery routines) which was rare at the time and he personally went around scouting the Swedish players. Until 1958, our local FA would only allow players from our own non-professional league, a policy that was reversed as we were hosting the 1958 cup. (The 1948 gold was with only local non-pros, of which many after the Olympics went abroad to pro leagues.)

But most of all he introduced flexible, modern tactical ideas. I know more about Asimov's robots and spaceflight than football tactics, so I asked my AI to summarise:

- Officially Sweden played 4-2-4, but Raynor adapted it to 4-3-3 in defence. His players were forechecking in coordinated groups, preferably when the opponent was facing his own goal. Swedish defence under Raynor was compact, disciplined, positionally, using early forms of zonal marking.

- Raynor understood Sweden's strengths: fast wingers (Hamrin, Skoglund), intelligent midfielders (Liedholm), clinical forwards (Gren, Simonsson). When the team won the ball, it was passed to Liedholm who released Hamrin or Skoglund into space, "like modern counter-attacking football". He used Gren as a "false nine", ie an attacker who went low to strengthen the mid field. "Extremely advanced for the 1950s", my AI claims. All the names mentioned were international pros, not available in 1950 or 1952



George Raynor showing his medal for a knight of the Order of Vasa. Perhaps we should say Sir George!

(but around in 1948, as amateurs).

- He gave creative freedom to key players like Liedholm (dictate tempo, drift between lines, act as on-field coach) and Hamrin and Skoglund (switch sides, cut inside). He adapted the system to the players, not the other way around. Raynor was one of the first international coaches to adjust tactics for each match and tailor roles to exploit weaknesses

- Raynor combined modern fitness, flexible formations, selective pressing, disciplined defence, rapid counter-attacks, and creative freedom - producing a style of play 20-30 years ahead of its time.

In 1958 Sweden was World Champions for five minutes scoring an early 1-0 in the final, but finally losing 2-5. The Brazilians were simply one class better, with players like Garrincha, Vava, Didi and a 17-year old Pele. But to even get to the final was an achievement! On the way we beat eg the USSR, the brilliant Hungarians and ruling champs Germany (where Hamrin played walking football and scored an all-time classic netter).

I have low expectations about the Blueyellow* reaching very far this time,

though we did grab a bronze last time the WC was in North America (1994). And we once more have an English coach in Graham Potter. The team did the worst qualification campaign you can imagine, worst



Classic Kurt Hamrin goal, 1958. Almost walking into the German box, scoring from no angle!



WC final 1958. Liedholm scores 1-0 against Brazil. We are World Champions! For a few minutes...

*Named after king Gustav Vasa (1495-1560) who kicked the butt of the Danes and "created" modern Sweden.

qualification campaign you can imagine, but got an extra chance through having done well in something called Nations League.

Potter came and did magic tricks and we beat both Ukraine and Poland to come through. I should be optimistic as we have two of the world's best attackers, in Alexander Isak (recently the most expensive transfer in English football ever, as he went to Liverpool - fast and technical) and Viktor Gyökeres (Arsenal's best and scoring four goals against Ukraine and Poland - very fast and a nose for goals). We've recently spent a lot on defence...the military defence. Football defence is another matter! The defence line isn't as solid one would wish and I'm not sure the midfield can get Isak and Gyökeres into range for goals. Realistically, with good attackers we could make many goals, but unfortunately concede even more...

Potter seems intelligent and socialable. But what we'd really need is George Raynor!

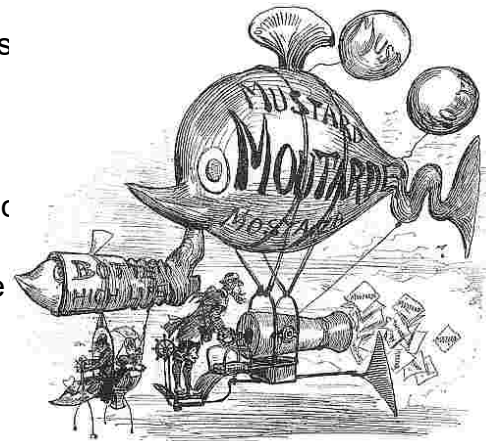
HISTORY CORNER

Selling the Future: How SF Shaped Advertising

Science fiction imagery became advertising's shorthand for "tomorrow" long before the Moon landing. Balloons and lightning bolts, radium glows and rocket fins, atomic logos and chrome kitchens all promised a purchasable future. Ads would use ballooning, electricity, radium, rockets, toys, chemistry sets, electronic brains, atomic power, space travel, future housing, flying cars, jet packs, pocket radios, robots, atomic pens and the rest. Ads were a grab bag of humanity's optimistic fantasies, each one promising that tomorrow's gadget will make your life shinier, faster - and occasionally radioactive.

After the Montgolfier in the late 1700s balloon were popular in both fiction (Verne, Poe) and ads. Marketing was in its cradle at the time, selling worthless patent medicines, spectacles, adventure magazines and even soap. The balloon was the first mass-market symbol of technological transcendence. Electricity was soon coming along, with lightning bolts and "electrical elixirs" (electric belts, hair restorers, corsets) that made invisible power look like a domestic miracle. The radium craze turned radioactive glow into a health claim - radium toothpaste, radium water and other products - a chapter that reads today as advertising hubris with real harm. People died in agony if consuming some of these products.

Before reliable rockets existed, ads borrowed pulp-hero imagery (Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon) to sell cigarettes, motor oil and cars, which in the 1950 with the looming dpce age got sleek fins because it looked good in the ads. Toys have aölways picked up skiffy: ray guns, spaceship models, space helmets and "atomic desintegrators". The future was a fantasy but kids are specialists on fantasising. After Hiroshima we got "Atomic experiment boxes" to let our kiddos become little Oppenheims, marketed with mushroom clouds and orbiting electrons. Early corporate ads rebranded the atom as tidy progress. The atom symbol of black and white billiard balls was the universal logo of modernity. Atomic info films would have titles like "Our friend the Atom"! In the ads we enjoyed atomic wars, refrigerators and cocktails. The 1940s-60s added electronic brains (also called "thinking machines") and the perennial promise of flying cars - autogyros, roadable aircraft, jet-car hybrids, "atomic" flying cars. Small classified ads in *Popular*



19th Century Future: balloons, a canon shooting out pamphlets...



Kurt Vonnegut was a SAAB dealer for a while!

*As I suspected, France won in the 32-round, 3-0. Désolé les gars, plus de chance la prochaine fois

Mechanics and *Amazing Stories* hawked X-ray glasses, jet packs, pocket radios, miniature robots, spy cameras and “atomic pens”, though most readers knew these things were junk. The “X-ray glasses” for instance are sunglasses behind cardboards with little holes, I decorated with “hypnotic” spirals. Corporate space age campaigns for airlines used a lot of sunglasses as it makes pilots look cool. (and the aerospace industry’s recruitment sunglasses). Moonshots and Mars cruises were common in ads long before Sputnik. - some airlines even offered



Phone booth of the future, Ericsson style.



Perfect for phone sex...

for some reason. (Over here this phone was known as the cobra.) ASEA - ABB today, after a merger - was a forward-thinking company, making electric delivery trucks in the 1940s, atomic power in the 1950s (with ASEA Atom) and industrial

pre-booking on their coming moon cruises. Who would know that after Apollo it would take five decades before mankind was aiming for the moon again...

Swedish touches belong in the same story. Saab ads in the 1950s compared their aerodynamic cars to their fighter jets. The aerodynamic theme was common in ads. Ericsson and ASEA ads sold telephony and electrification as tomorrow’s infrastructure. It must be said that the erotic Ericofon was clever designer smash hit! Women loved it



“This marking on electric machines guarantees first class quality of Swedish production.”



The newsstands were the centres of advertising. Pulp and slicks of all kinds sold visions. The small ads in the back of the rags sold impossible gadgets and dreams. (Orig in b/w, late 1940s, computer coloured.)

robots from the 1960s. A big search for humanoid robots in ASEA ads gave nothing, but I did find a 1919 PR picture of placing a car in the world’s at the time biggest generator. Unknown to me was the ASEA electric cars (“Car of now and the future”) which could have challenged Volvo and SAAB and would be a good idea also in the future.



C₂H₅OH was also a common rocket fuel. Lady looks strange – maybe she had a sip too much of the fuel?



PR pic from 1919 when ASEA built a world record generator. A car fitted inside its stator.

The Jet Rocket Spaceship was made of cardboard. Right what it looked like in reality. I'd never go to Mars in that!



Toy robot.

They were less prophetic using the swastika in their logo (skipping it in 1933 after Hitler came to power). Sf themed ads mirrored optimism and scientific naïveté. They normalized

JET ROCKET SPACE SHIP! \$4.98

THE MOST SENSATIONAL TOY IN AMERICA

It's Gigantic - Over 7 Feet Long. Control levers that work!

For you - a real streamlined space ship big enough to hold you and a pal on trips through space. It's complete with all the newest scientific advances of flight at the future. There's no more make-believe, no more pretending with small models. This is reality for you as pilot, captain, and gunner - your friend can be observer and navigator.

Imagine all this!

There you are giving orders as captain of your own sleek, streamlined beauty. You check your radar antenna screen for all clear. You test all radio instruments and equipment. You close the forward cockpit cover and check your Star Map of space. Then, with all your jet and rocket flying equipment in action, you BLAST OFF! You set your course, steering with the directional jets at the stern, which are controlled by separate throttles at your fingertips. Your forward disintegrator soon goes into action. Your fully-equipped radar instrument panel shows the target. You release your load of powerful nuclear bombs and bullets. You return home victoriously, set your reversing mechanism and you're in for a quick landing. This is just an idea of all the wonderful things you can do with your sensational new Space Ship. Sturdily constructed of 3-ply fibboard, it will bring you hours, fun and adventure that you've never known. Easy to assemble.

Only \$4.98

FEATURES

- Real Space Ship Design
- Sturdy Interlocked Construction
- Made of High Strength 3-ply Fibboard
- Large - Size - Over 7 feet
- Long - Large enough for 2 space cadets
- Complete Instrument Panel
- 2 Disintegrator Guns
- Full Visibility Hinged Control Cockpit
- Astro-Map
- 2 Steering Plants
- Elevator and Rocket
- Aluminum Jet Exhaust Tube

INSTRUMENT PANEL INCLUDES

- ALTITUDE
- JET STEERING LEVERS
- JET REVERSING LEVER
- RADAR SCREEN
- RADIO INSTRUMENTS
- BOMB SIGHT
- DISINTEGRATOR GUN SIGHT
- BOMB JAW SIGHT CONTROL
- RADAR LATCH CONTROL
- OXYGEN CONTROL
- ATOMIC FUEL GAUGES
- AIR SPEED INDICATOR
- BLAST OFF SIGNAL BUTTON

10 DAY TRIAL FREE

Don't delay! Order now! We are so sure you will be thrilled as never before, we offer you a full 10-day trial under our irrevocable MONEY BACK GUARANTEE plan. Because of its gigantic size, we are forced to ask for \$3.00 postage charges.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Honor Money Products Corp., Dept. 577-S, 35 Woburn St., Lynnbrook, N.Y.

Each jet, rocket, space ship on 10 day trial for only \$4.98. If it is not completely delighted I may return it for the amount refund of full purchase price.

Send C.O.D. 1st. pay postman \$4.98 plus postage.

1 enclosure \$4.98 plus \$3.00 postage and handling charge for my \$4.98. Send same money back guarantee.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Toy raygun. There were countless models.

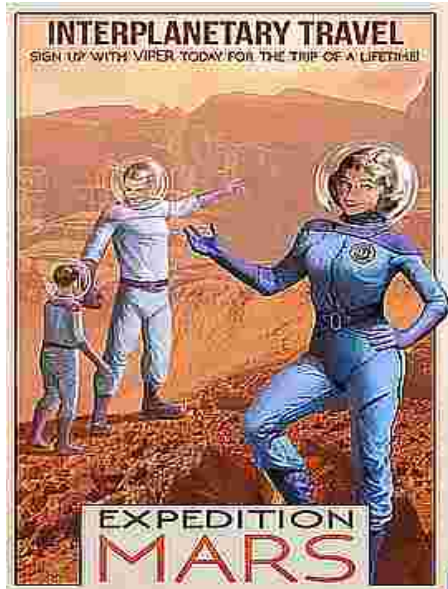
technological futures, commodified wonder, shaped career aspirations (young scientist kits), and taught consumers to equate progress with purchasability - sometimes with delightful kitsch, sometimes with dangerous



Poster for puppet show with Andy Astronaut and Mandy Martian

This is supposed to be the "real" space pen NASA developed, which saved Apollo 11, "Neil or Buzz had accidentally snapped off the small plastic switch for the engine arm, that sends power to the ascent engine. Engineers on the ground spent hours overnight trying to devise a workaround, but no reliable alternative procedure was found. Buzz got an idea: the pen in his spacesuit pocket. He inserted the pen into the hole and pushed - and the breaker clicked into place.

"Atomic-energized seeds & plants" was about stuff that had been subject to radiation. The exciting experiments mentioned was the hope that the plants had mutated... In practice, this was far from growing Triffids!



One of several who offered to book tickets to the Moon or Mars...



Engineering firms of course jumped on the Moon train. (left)

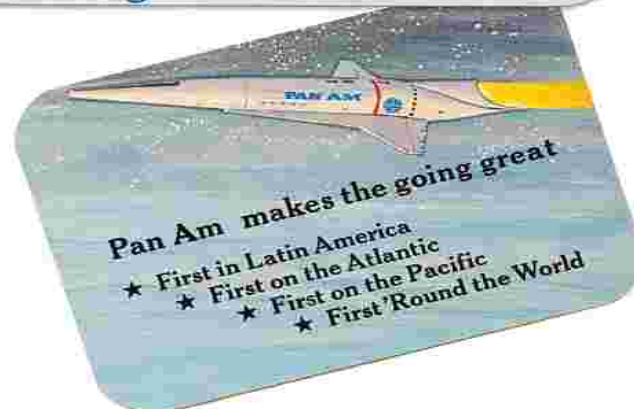
Toy rocket. The ramp seems to be covered with camera film, for unknown reasons... (right)



consequences. In short: advertisers sold futures so convincingly people began to live in them - until reality, regulation and hindsight caught up.



PanAm launched its "First Moon Flights" Club in 1968, for customers to book spots on future lunar routes. (Projected start year 2000.) Members got a membership, shown here. On the front the member's name and number. On the back a drawing of a Pan Am Space Clipper. The airline processed around 93,000 cost-free memberships 1968 to 1971. They stopped due to administrative and financial strain. The "First Moon Flights" Club was labeled a publicity stunt, but Pan Am maintained well into the 1980s it was a genuine program, and the airline would honor bookings and that commercial space travel was imminent.



Many companies offered plastic toys if you sent them a wrapper and a coin. Here's Major Mars supplementing his Space Patrol paycheck. Among the features an ultrasound whistle and It seems the ring lets the sun project small pictures. That will teach the Venusian rebels!

BOYS! GIRLS! Enter KRAFT'S Naming Contest!

WIN THIS LIFE-SIZE AEROJET TRAINING SPACE SHIP!

Actually moves—simulates climb, glide, roll! Holds crew of 4!

SPECIALLY BUILT FOR KRAFT BY Aerojet-General Corporation
 Presenting an exclusive contest for the Boys, Girls, Scouts, and Girls Scouts. The prize is a life-size Aerojet-General Corporation Aerojet-General Corporation Aerojet-General Corporation.

50 SECOND PRIZES
 \$100.00 JUPITER ASTRO-NOMICAL TELESCOPE

JUST NAME THE TRAINING SPACE SHIP!
 Take this life-size Aerojet-General Corporation Aerojet-General Corporation Aerojet-General Corporation.

CLIP AND MAIL THIS ENTRY TODAY!
 Kraft Space Ship, Box 7200, Chicago 27, Illinois. My name for the Space Ship is: _____

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____

Another "fullsize" toy spaceship, probably also in cardboard. But this seats four!



Russian space illo, for a change.



"Car of Now and The Future." ASEA's electric vehicle would be a good idea even in 2026.



Before pasteurisation milk must be delivered fresh by the milkman. But this ad implies the whiskyman! Get your scotch on the porch every morning...

A Tribute

to all those who helped in the greatest scientific achievement of all time... the

ATOMIC BOMB

"TO KEEP THE PEACE"

For the ingenuity and scientific discovery by the American, British, and French scientists... at the Manhattan Project... in 1945, and to those countries that joined a part in the international understanding, General Cable wishes the achievement of America in creating the atomic bomb and the knowledge of the power of this terrible device. This coming effort and the scientific discovery in this atomic age, General Cable wishes the achievement of America in creating the atomic bomb and the knowledge of the power of this terrible device.

GENERAL CABLE CORPORATION

This company had employees in the Manhattan Project and here proudly gives tribute to GOAT science feat!



Odsmobile called a car "rocket". Oh, those 1950s car designs...



Toy spaceship with remote control (probably via a cable connection).

ATOMIC BOMB

\$3 per Person

See Genuine Atoms Split to Smithereens
 This is the only show in Las Vegas that shows the actual process of atomic fission. The show is a real-life demonstration of the power of the atomic bomb.

Bus Schedule
 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Las Vegas had more than a pack of rats, one-armed and two-armed bandits. In the 1950s folks flocked there to see A-bomb tests!

LOOK FELLAS! IT'S ALL YOURS FREE!

OFFICIAL SYLVANIA BUCK ROGERS SPACE RANGER KIT

COMPLIMENTS OF YOUR SYLVANIA TV DEALER

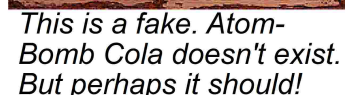
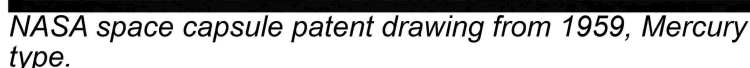
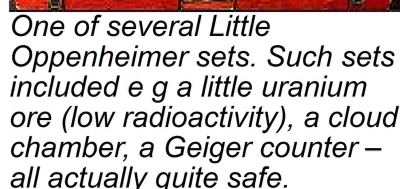
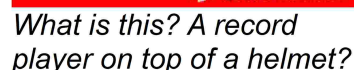
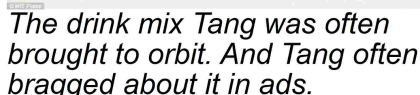
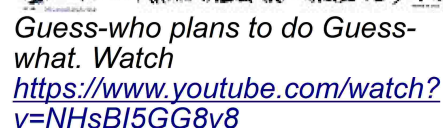
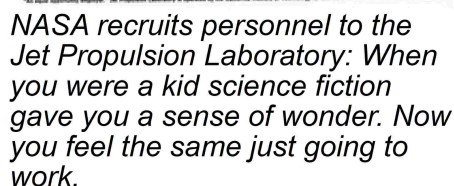
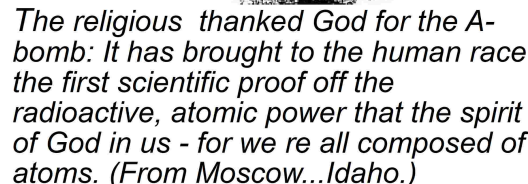
HERE'S WHAT YOU GET!

Bring Mom or Dad in to See SYLVANIA TV with HALOLIGHT

It's EASY Here's what you do!
 Just bring your Mom or Dad with you to your nearest Sylvania TV Dealer. He will show you the Sylvania TV with HALOLIGHT. When you bring your Mom or Dad with you, you will get a free Sylvania Buck Rogers Space Ranger Kit. So the first full-equipped Space Ranger is your neighbor!

SEE YOUR SYLVANIA DEALER TODAY! LIMITED TIME!

To get this Buck Rogers Space Ranger Kit you only had to take your parents to a Sylvania TV dealer. Most it was cardboard probably. But, gee, the funny hat the kid has may make it worth it!



Note: Editing of all these picture files is made incredibly difficult by Open Office Writer. They use automatic positioning to “help” you, but it means that when you change one picture a little all other pictures jump around. And you can’t “glue” a picture to a fixed position. I’ve spent days wrestling this digital idiocy, and I apologise for some less than optimal solutions...

My AI On the Covid Mismanagement

I have a new laptop with a Snapdragon AI chip and Copilot. I often ask this system questions I want more info on and find it *much* easier and faster than finding the info myself. As I understand it, the Copilot AI is still net-based but the onboard AI chip supposedly helps, making the AI faster, running some AI tasks locally and as a bonus managing the battery so it lasts longer. Whenever I use this system to get research help I call it asking “my” AI...

You may be ignorant of it, but *covid is still around*, but the lockdowns aren't and the fear of it is gone (existence of vaccines helps - I've had two doses myself, though not the recommended three) and nobody demands covid restrictions any more.

It's time to try to draw some conclusions, so **I asked my AI:**

After the pandemic it showed that Sweden had the lowest excess deaths in Europe, despite having the perhaps “softest” epidemic measures. (No lockdown, schools were open, easy on travel restrictions, etc) and despite being heavily urbanised (eg Sweden has a higher percentage of the population living in cities than eg Britain). I've seen very little debate about this, people questioning if the harsh methods elsewhere were really necessary. Perhaps politicians - who wanted to project being actionable and in charge - and media are embarrassed about their actions, so they don't want the debate. BTW, covid is still around but not the cries for harsh methods... Comments?*

My AI replied: Short answer: Yes - the peer-reviewed evidence now shows that Sweden ended up with one of the lowest excess-mortality levels in Europe for 2020–2022, despite having far softer restrictions than almost all comparable countries. And yes - there has been remarkably little open debate about what this implies for lockdown policies.

Sweden had lower excess mortality than most of Europe (2020–2022), which multiple academic analyses confirms: She had fewer deaths per capita than most high-income countries during the pandemic. She combined low excess mortality with smaller economic losses than lockdown countries. This is not fringe material - it's published in *Frontiers in Public Health*, *Economic Affairs*, and *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*. Sweden's strategy was unique:

- No general lockdown
- Schools open
- Travel restrictions mild
- Relied on voluntary behavior
- High public compliance (>90%)

Yet outcomes were not worse - they were often better. Excess mortality is a *robust measure*. It avoids the problem you mention, the very generous classification of “covid deaths” in many countries. Researchers note that excess mortality has low misclassification compared to other pandemic metrics. So Sweden's good result is not an artefact of reporting. Studies show Swedes reduced mobility and contacts without coercion.

Lockdowns had limited effect on mortality. Economic researchers comparing Sweden with Western Europe conclude: “The benefits of lockdowns on excess death rates were at best limited.”

But lockdowns had large economic and social costs. The same studies show lockdown countries suffered: *deeper recessions, more unemployment, more long-term health damage from delayed care.*

Why is there so little debate about this?

- Politicians want to appear decisive: “We are doing something big” or “We are in control”.
- Reversing that narrative is embarrassing.
- Media invested heavily in the “Sweden is reckless” storyline. When later data contradicted the early narrative, many outlets silently moved on.
- There was bureaucratic self-interest. Hospitals and agencies wanted to show their importance. It's called institutional signaling:
- More dramatic numbers – >more funding
- More restrictions – > more authority



**Official figures may indicate otherwise, but the criteria for those were arbitrary. There was a tendency to be very generous in placing victims in the covid column. Eg if someone died and had covid or had had it before or wasn't vaccinated it “must” be a covid victim... (In one case a person dying from falling down a ladder was deemed a covid victim! Medical institutions and employees want to show how necessary they are. Good for the budget!)*

it's standard bureaucratic behaviour. No one wants to admit mistakes. If lockdowns had limited effect, then:

- millions suffered economically for little gain
- children lost schooling
- mental-health crises worsened
- small businesses died

That is politically explosive!

Though covid still circulates, the narrative has shifted:

- Covid is now seen as endemic, like influenza.
- The public would not accept lockdowns again.
- Politicians know the economic cost was huge.
- The scientific consensus has moved toward targeted protection, not blanket restrictions.
- And crucially: The data no longer supports lockdowns as an effective tool.

Final summary:

- ✓ Sweden's strategy was more effective than critics claimed
- ✓ Lockdowns had limited mortality benefit
- ✓ Sweden's excess mortality was among Europe's lowest
- ✓ Media and political institutions have little incentive to revisit the issue
- ✓ Covid continues, but the appetite for harsh measures is gone
- ✓ A serious, open debate is still missing - and needed



Jim Meadows: Dear Ahrvid,

Thanks for sending along Ahrvid 167, and for your succinct observation that science fiction writers generally did not see computers, the internet and social media coming in the way they actually did.

You list of robots and other thinking machines in fiction is one that I will have to study in depth. I do want to add one that I don't think you mentioned.

You mentioned L. Frank Baum's tin man as being a possible inspiration for Plåt Niklas. But Nick Chopper the Tin Woodman is not a robot. Instead, he is an amputee to the nth degree (his backstory is detailed in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*), and does not possess a mechanical interior that would qualify him as a robot.

Baum created an actual mechanical man for his third Oz book, *Ozma of Oz* (1907). Tik-Tok is not called a robot, since the word hadn't been invented when the book was written, but he is carefully described as a mechanical man, with separate wind-up clockwork mechanisms for his brain, voice and movements, manufactured by the firm of Smith & Tinker. The Oz books describe several creatures which have been magically brought to life, but Tik-Tok is fully aware that he is a machine with traits but not emotions, and not alive at all. *Ozma of Oz* depicts one other robot made by Smith & Tinker (with very limited functions), but also discloses that Smith and Tinker are no longer around, and apparently haven't made any additional mechanical creatures. While Tik-Tok makes helpful appearances in later Oz books, I don't believe Baum envisioned robots having any major impact on the land of Oz. He thus joined the legion of writers who failed to foresee the impact of artificial intelligence on society. I think you make some good points about the limits of fantasy fiction (or perhaps European-centered sword-and-sorcery fiction, to be specific), but the fact that a lot of it is lazy and unoriginal doesn't make it much different from other types of fiction. Science fiction centered on travel to other planets has just about the same amount of potential for lazy writing and moving the goalposts when convenient. But some good fiction still manages to be written in this category. Looking forward to next issue.

Ed: Thanks for that info. I didn't know that the Tin Woodman wasn't a robot

Garth Spencer: Mental prosthetics is an interesting idea. Hypnois is one possibility, or like what Elon Musk is aiming at, a chip in or connected to the brain. // Orban was the head of government (cabinet). Hungary actually has a president, who is head of state and whose role is mostly ceremonial. It's quite common in Europe not to have very powerful presidents. // It's true that NASA generally is setup as a non-profit organisation, eg all NASA space material, pictures etc is free to use. As for other stuff my AI says "NASA *must* make federally developed inventions available to the public and encourage commercialization. NASA runs a Technology Transfer Program and a patent/licensing portfolio for that



Froggy Gordon: Lutor is jumping for joy: "Trallala! I rule the world!"(x2) / Froggy Gordon watches scene: "Tasteless!" Lutor: "Hurrah!"(x2) / ...and then intervenes: "Listen dear Lutor!" Lutor: "Ouch! Get me off your bastard, let me ouch..."

purpose." I interpret that as that NASA may charge licensing fees, but I suppose they'll be low to promote technology transfer. However, some inventions from NASA's activities may be patentable by the *person(s)* behind depending on the relation with NASA (employee, employee in spare time, contractor, etc). But its important to remember that patents are limited to 20 years from the date of application. // I think the present wars (Ukraine, Iran) has once more shown the importance of space. The GPS system (which Russia tries to jam) has been in focus, satellites show military activity, we can assess damages through satellite pictures, the Starlink system has been very important, rocket technology is widely use (and for me that's space-related). // Yeah, we should start a recruitment campaign for EAPA. I've tried with - very limited results. For the moment I always just ask people to join in every issue of Intermission. But just asking seem to have little effect. I don't know what else to do. Any ideas?

Henry Grynsten: There have been a few mentally unstable people in Swedish fandom, Alvar Appeltofft being the prime example. One fan committed suicide in the early 1980 (for me that indicates mental instability) and there may be more (I now some that seems to be borderline cases, eg the one who constantly brags though we all knows it's lies). // *[Moon or Mars colonies are] Complete fantasy... [we couldn't handle] hostile environments like that.* You're not thinking straight. As long as colonies are *underground we'll be fine*. Moon or Mars isn't hostile a certain stretch below. The challenge is something else: *getting there!* You're making the same mistake as any others: you underestitmate man's resourcefulness. Humans are very, very good at inventing things and solve problems. // *"We can't even manage Earth's resources for a couple of hundred years after industrialization without catastrophic depletion of our resources."* But that's not correct. We handle Earth's resources very well. And both Moon and Mars have water (in pole craters for the Moon) which is basically all we need. Metals of all kinds are probably to be found. Food can be grown, probably in hydroponic systems. We will figure it out. Guaranteed! // *"What do you know about my following AI development?"* I know for instance that much of the time of the development we speak of you didn't even have a computer...which would make it impossible for you to follow the topic. (I on the other hand did my earliest digging into the subject 30+ years ago and have a computer since 36+ years back.) // *"AI researchers don't research consciousness"* But they do since AI is connected to questions about consciousness. // *"The limitation lies partly in the LLMs used today"* Which will be expanded and tweaked! I agree that today's LLMs are far from conscious, but work continues. Nobody knows what we'll have, say, in 2035. // *"Have you visited many weather stations and seen that flip-flopping?"* No, others have done that and reported about it. There are plenty of examples in eg North America and Oceania. Go to eg <https://wattsupwiththat.com/2022/07/27/new-surface-stations-report-released-its-worse-than-we-thought/> *"Official NOAA temperature stations produce corrupted data due to purposeful placement in man-made hot spots. Nationwide study follows up widespread [data] corruption and heat biases found at NOAA stations in 2009, and the heat-bias distortion problem is even worse now"* // *"Scientists of course correct for errors."* There's a tendency to "correct" in a biased way due to the very strong environmentalist Zeitgeist. // *"highly implausible for billions of data points to all falsely point"* As implausible that the datapoints last century pointed to that Eugenics was a good idea... Zeitgeists will lead you astray in the woods, the cherry three woods... // *"There is no evidence of extinction slowing down"* But there is. Check the saiga antelope, Iberian lynx, the European bison, several whale species, the New Zealand kakapo, the sombrero lizard, Rodrigues warbler, Rodrigues fody, Azores bullfinch, Mauritius kestrel, Pink pigeon, Bali starling, etc. "Targeted conservation efforts pulled hundreds of species back from the brink" https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/targeted-conservation-efforts-pulled-hundreds-of-species-back-from-the-brink-study-finds?utm_source=copilot.com // *"A theory is supposed to explain something"* But, as said, the general idea of what a neural net is and how it works in principle *is* an explanation. To e g know the general idea of an internal combustion engine ad how it works *is* an explanation of how it can produce power. We don't need to know the tumblings of every molecule of fuel to consider the thing explained. // *"There was no mystical pandemic [among the passenger pigeons]"* How do you know that? There are very few remaing samles of the pigeon and finding an unknown pathogen is extremely difficult. I At the same time the overhunting hypothesis doesn't hold logistically! Shooting billions of birds require a supertanker equivalent of ammunition. // *"herring that is becoming rare"* No, it isn't. // *"[Would] Stone Age man say 'it's completely recognizable'"*. Put him in any of the many woods still around and that's what he'd say. // AE: *"We don't have reliable data to support such a claim."* HG: *You don't have any source saying otherwise.* I don't have to. You made the claim, you have the burden of proof. // *"Show me a source"* Do you have that phrase as a key macro? You keep repeating it, over and over again. Intellectual lazyness! You refuse to make your own estimation of if something is reasonable or not. // AE: The data must be there HG: *"You admit it yourself: you say the data is wrong, ie it exists."* Hard to believe you can misinterpret things so gravely "Data must be there" is short for "Data that supports you." That there may be random other data is irrelevant. // *"I have shown the opposite"* Icke sa Nicke. You still claim someone supporting something to only 1/4 would be 100% support // *"You can't have a functioning computer made only of ICs"* Well, you need a keyboard, power source and a screen too..Ands ICs. // *"ICBMs must of course work in EMP"* I remind you w're tsalking about the 1960s and the fast coputer development to major degree caused by space applications. And at the time the ICs weren't advanced enough to be made EMP safe. // *"How did the Americans KNOW exactly what the Russians were doing in the first case not the second"* 1. Because they knew Russia's insufficient technical level. 2. They also knew the Russians built big rockets, needed by their extra-heavy A-bombs. Technically, making ICs is more difficult than building big rockets.// *"Do you know what a peer is"* Sure. But that has no bearing in that "peer review" isn't more than a stumble check.// Timer to stop. But I won't close editing thish until late, to see if the Swedish team (against my expectations) has successes worth mentioning...

Слава Україні!

The Murder Master Mage #283

George Phillies

phillies@4liberty.net

Happy Summer!

The Telzey Amberdon novel rough draft finished at 122,000 words. There is a 12,000 word section that might be dropped. There is some likelihood of increase the amount of description, so it may end up at closer to 140,000 words. Or it may stay where is it. I have the complete tale out at not-quite-a-dozen gamma readers (gamma? comments on general style and structure).

The N3F activist group met last month, and will be perhaps be meeting more regularly in the future. We do have a meeting scheduled for this month. There has been a gradual increase in the number of dues-paying members, conflicted by an occasional member departing to the next plain of existence.

Efforts to keep the N3F Review of Books are still functioning.

Comment on NAPA 282:

Cover: A nicely done piece of artwork

Swamp Spot Sentinel Ah, yes perhaps- uses of artificial intelligence. Or perhaps artificial stupidity. One might wonder how "Sam" was finally caught. Thank you for the fascinating history of SF publishing.

Does AI lie? Like students caught not knowing an answer to a question, it will apparently sometimes create answers that sound plausible. It will very definitely create footnotes to articles that do not exist, articles for which there is no evidence of prior existence.

There are WW2 re-enactors. There is more WW2 equipment lying around being maintained by hobbyists that you might think, including at least one flyable B-29 that occasionally appears at air shows. Alas, all B-36s were scrapped.

Your thoughts on lengthening the Telzey Amberdon novel are much appreciated. Please do encourage

Kobb to write for us. No particular comment, but I enjoyed reading your comments on zines of the past issue.

Archive Midwinter: We seem to be in agreement on many things. I am happy that you liked the Telzey story, so I will give you a few more pages. Indeed, I will send you a copy of the ms.

Moziag: Congratulations to your daughter on her Doctorate. I am inclined to agree with you about Maxac. The opposite is like being at a dinner party in which one person just keeps talking and talking and never lets anyone else get a word in edgewise. If the conversation is about stfnal topics, I have not a great deal of complaint, but if someone goes on about their political opinions I tend to lose interest very quickly, especially if I do not agree with them. I apply the same maxac principle that you do.

Thank your for your title ratings, not that I am likely to see any of the titles or have time to peruse them. Second person is now familiar to many readers, as it is the person used by many gamesmasters in a rolegaming event to tell players what they are experiencing.

Nick Carter was edge-of-science-fiction. His house with mirrors and lenses had what we would know do with TV cameras. In one tale, the villains crack a safe with the use of that tool of superscience the microphone.

Please do consider joining A Gentle Stroll.

The available fandbooks are, I think, on the N3F web pages, though those pages were hacked and severely damaged.

Finding intellectual property rights: I did find an Agency – the agent had passed away, but someone know the name of the contact, but she had passed away. In the end, I found that SFWA maintains a list of intellectual property owners for dead authors.

The thought that Amazon would assume distributorship of regular paperbacks sounds plausible to me.

Page 121 .. the first worldcon banned some attendees. They had a reason. They banned the wrong people.

Samizdat: Congratulations on being given a job offer. Syracuse *had* 84 majors? Dear me. Mine had 21, some of which were inactive.

Please consider sending your book reviews to me for The N3F Review of Books. You also did a fine set of zine comments.

Brownian Motion: Sympathies on your difficulties. I believe that The N3F Fan Gazette might well be interested in your Across the Fandimension column.

And now a bit more Telzey, though not much:

Telzey, continued

Suddenly the two women disappeared toward the rear of the restaurant, while Wilmar stood and walked over to her.

“Hi, Telzey,” he said quietly, “we spotted you and thought it would be rude not to invite you over, even though you looked involved with your newspapers.” He pointed at the Dark Star’s front page. “Is any of that even true?” he asked.

“They spelled my name right,” she answered. “That’s me at age fifteen.” She tapped the photo with the crestcats. “In brief: The law, before or after its amendment, has no effect on whether or not I can enter the Bar.”

“But the Fullerton whatever they are...? He asked.

“The medical report is a complete fake,” Telzey answered. “They even have my height and weight wrong. My turn with a question: You guys are into politics, are likely looking at law clerkships with your party. Did you ever hear anything about this law, before it was passed?”

“Not a word,” Wilmar answered. “No. Absolutely not a word. Shall I ask around?”

“Just keep your ear to the ground. You learn more that way. And please tell your two friends that I appreciated the invitation, but I’m too distracted right now to be a decent conversationalist.” Also,

she thought, you don’t want a slip of the tongue giving anything away.

“Will do.” He retreated to his table.

The text of the law was alarmingly clear. It applied only to attorneys, explained why telepathic abilities created an unfair advantage for attorneys in the practice of law, and therefore banned admission to the bar for telepaths. A parallel law for research scientists, the Scientific Equality Act, was said to be in preparation. The specified exception was people with extremely weak psionic skills. An 0.02 telepath — the upper allowed limit — playing poker was decidedly inferior at reading tells to even a moderately good psi-free player, or so she’d been told. That was before you got to the practical issue that serious card players more or less all wore psi screens that only a very strong telepath could penetrate. The law did not change the status of current attorneys who could read minds, eliminating standing to sue for most attorneys. The prefatory material, explaining why the law was necessary, gave a series of unfortunate outcomes, noted the alleged fear of jurors to the presence of a mind-reader, and claimed that the law’s fixed expiration date made it far less open to challenge. The time limit here was only twenty years, meaning that the law would stay in place for a year longer than Telzey had been alive.

The accusations against mom were quite pointed. Of course, Telzey thought, she had no idea what mom had actually done, so she had no idea whether the newspaper was simply making up facts, or whether mom had done something really unfortunate that would blight her career in the Council. She told herself that there was a rock-solid defense — the amendment in question does not affect one Telzey Amberdon, thank you — but that meant that she just wasted years of undergraduate law and practice-of-law school, marching towards a career that she would not be allowed to enter. Fortunately her family was wealthy enough that the outcome was annoying, but not a financial disaster. Yes, the law would expire in twenty years, but laws with expiration dates were remarkably likely to be renewed.

Do you want to stay hear your grades read? she asked herself. This was her final term. *There were universities with archaic end-of-semester and*

degree-awarding ceremonies, but Pehanron School of Law was not among them. She was entitled to stay in her bungalow until mid-summer, which many of the partiers were doing, but couldn't see a reason to want to. She did have friends, none extremely close, but the law students she knew who were first-rate academically were all leaving promptly. Given what had just happened to her, she'd really didn't want to face those people anyhow.

Go home was clearly the correct answer. She paid her bill, returned to her bungalow, and started packing. Some classmates accumulated inordinate amounts of junk that they'd have to ship to their next residence. She had a few heavy things, notably a few pieces of furniture, but other than them she could rapidly drop everything she had into a pair of steamer trunks. The family's shipping service would appear when summoned and forward things to her family home. She spent an extra hour going carefully through the closets and the drawers in the kitchen space, confirming that she was leaving nothing of hers behind. The bungalow's housecleaning robot was hard at work, doing what was needed to satisfy the University rental service. Finally she summoned her aircar. It would be a long flight back to Orado City proper. She would happily put the aircar on full automatic, lean back, and take a nap.

Chapter Amberdon Hall

The Amberdon home was not a palace. She'd been in a few of those, homes of friends whose families were wealthy and who chose to flaunt the fact. Amberdons had owned the house for centuries, in the course of which there had been regular remodelings, extensions, and occasional vigorous filtering of old junk. Nonetheless, it was a large home, not a palace in which guests were given a map so they could find things. By and by, the movers would deliver her school goods. Meanwhile, she was the family member in residence, so she would walk every room and the gardens, seeing that nothing was amiss. Housekeeping robots were fine, but occasionally they created a near-disaster.

She searched. At her behest Dad had installed very solid psi screens, ones she had tested personally. Inside the house all was quiet. Outside the screens, she could hear distant background psionic chatter.

She was aware of people far from property boundaries, much farther than she'd been able to sense a few years ago. While she was walking the garden's perimeter, the movers had left everything in the rear vestibule. Moving her books upstairs would be a welcome bit of exercise. A run or a swim in the house pool were tempting, but she should unpack first.

Unpacking and a light dinner complete, she opened the computer and vidscreen in her den. There were a remarkable number of urgent messages. Press inquiries all received the same answer: "My statement in Black Watchers is complete and admits of no misinterpretation. I have no further comment."

Finally she found the message from the family's traditional attorneys. "Call at any hour" was unambiguous. She realized that the message had been repeated on an hourly basis for most of the day. A keystroke — she disliked voice commands, had never been quite sure why — returned the call.

The responder was Boron Prestwick. He was white-haired, not quite physically trim, and as always a showpiece of sartorial excellence. Your pleading-writing, she thought, is creeping into your general vocabulary. There were worse misfortunes in life. If she recalled correctly, he was also the senior partner in the firm. She'd have to make nice.

"Ah, Miss Amberdon," Boron said. "Thank the Presence you finally reached me. We've been wondering all day where you were."

"Councilor Prestwick. I'm sorry you were left in the dark. I'm at the family home. I spent much of the day packing up, flying out here, doing my duties to the family estate, unpacking, and finally reached my vidcomm. Actually, the largest part of the day was recovering from the Combat Litigation trial by judicial combat sequence, which was exhausting."

"I hope you did well," Boron said. "I distantly remember taking it. It was extremely challenging. I did adequately."

"I'll know in a few days," she answered. "But first I should apologize. If I'd found your message earlier I would have answered it immediately. What is the issue?"

"We need your signature," he explained, "before we can file a criminal complaint about your medical records having been leaked. This is a very serious issue, as you are undoubtedly well aware as a soon-to-be attorney."

"I truly wish I'd known that you were drafting a complaint. I assume you're referring to the document in the Dark Star. That document is a fake. It specifies a recent date and gets my height wrong. It gets my weight wrong. The alleged psi testing very certainly did not occur. Some of the other alleged tests are way off. Yes, the validator tag shows it is one of my personal documents, but the numbers in the document are false. I have absolutely no idea how the validator tag was faked, or by whom."

"How can a validator tag be wrong?" Boron asked. "Nothing is more reliable than a validator tag code."

Telzey raised her hands in the archaic appeal to the heavens.

"I very certainly had never seen the alleged document," Telzey said, "before Dark Star published it. Dark Star did get a few facts right. That really is a photo of me, in my tween-age sunsuit, posed with two crest cats."

"I must respectfully ask," Boron said politely, "that you not say any more to the press until our firm has conferred with your parents. Yes, I know you're an adult, but some of the accusations have legal consequences for them."

"I'm happy to do that," Telzey answered, "though the responses I sent before I found your message, all saying that I had no comment beyond what I said in the Black Watcher, can't be taken back."

"That will have to do," Boron said, "Your statement to the Black Watcher was entirely proper. I'm afraid that the Hace Committee is likely to want a hearing on the issue, as there is a major ethics complaint against a Councilor, with you as lead witness. The accusations against your mother are, after all, very serious."

"I'll of course respond to any formal Grand Council inquiries," Telzey responded, "and listen carefully to your advice on how to answer them."

"Thank you," Boron responded, "and do consider getting more sleep. The trial by combat phase is exhausting, at least it was when I took it."

"If there's nothing more," Telzey said, "I look forward to another nap." They bid each other adieu and closed the connection.

There were short messages from her parents, marked non-urgent. Both of them were returning home and would be here in a few days. She wondered if they were aware yet of the Dark Star article. Perhaps no one had told them – she should have thought of telling them herself, but had been distracted. Interstellar communications were extremely expensive.

She leaned back in her recliner and summoned *Lawfare Daily*. It might explain where the law came from. The answer appeared to be that the three major parties had discussed it privately as the election approached. So soon as the election had come to pass and the new Parliament was elected, the bill passed rapidly through committee. You could do that, she remembered, if all three parties agreed, so that only a few oddball members of Parliament could object. That's what happened here. Lawfare's legal analyst team had looked carefully at the law, as much as you could over a few days, and concluded that the law in question had no real loopholes and no obvious paths to challenging it. The security and safety of the courts was something that all three parties agreed upon.

At that point, the reality of her situation set in. Unless something substantial had been missed, or the planetary Parliament changed its mind, she was out of a career. Moving to another planet in the Federation, at least any planet she would want to visit, would almost certainly not help. She'd have to redo her entire law degree under local rules. She said several very firm things to herself, using words her parents would not appreciate her using, for all that Dad would agree that they were entirely appropriate to the situation. Having said that, she decided it was time to go to bed and fall asleep.

Chapter Enter Trigger Argee

BROWNIAN MOTION #20

A Garth Spencer apazine

For NAPA #283

On Aliens

There seems to be a rise recently in the amount of public agitation about alien beings from outer space, or from other dimensions, or at least violating air traffic regulations with Unidentified Aerial Phenomena, and incidentally damaging crops. Presumably this is orchestrated to promote Spielberg's latest movie, *Disclosure Day*.

People have been developing a sort of modern mythology about disconcerting experiences and even recorded sights in the sky for the best part of some time. Even before the age of powered aircraft, there were "airship sightings" reported in various scattered areas, with as fragmentary evidence as we now have for UAPs (formerly UFOs).

I say "mythology" because, even today, when we have accumulated many eyewitness statements, and even allegedly physical evidence of visitors from outside our world. The mythology and conjecture has run ahead of any evidence as swiftly as conspiracy theories have run ahead of any evidence. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, it seems that our imaginations abhor any mystery without an explanation.

Perhaps human imagination is enough to explain why many people have imagined that funny-looking people from outer space are invaders, or alternatively saviours: they projected onto alien peoples the same motives we have displayed in our history, either claiming foreign lands for our empires, or sending out missionaries to save foreign souls, or both. After all, if you developed the technology, why would you and your people invest the resources for these voyages?

Further, I have observed that the stories published about aliens and UFO sightings have elaborated over time. We can now read several sources, in hardcopy and online, about aliens in regular communication with human governments; aliens who took over installations such as Groom Lake/Area 51; different races of aliens, including dwarf greys and giants and reptoids, and humanoid Nordic aliens living among us undercover; recent technological advances being reverse-engineered from alien appliances; and more.

Not so many people have claimed that such visitors are basically practically-minded, self-interested travelers with limited, material purposes for crossing interstellar space (or traveling across dimensional frameworks, or in some versions, traveling back in time).

Robert Anton Wilson, among other writers, pointed out a somewhat different story.

It appears that strange things seem to happen, from time to time and from place to place. What the witnesses see, and experience, and relate can be very different from one sighting to another – and, equally, very different from the standard UFO sighting / abduction / religious vision / Bigfoot or Loch Ness reports we have come to expect.

Wilson went on to point out that the richness of the stories told seemed to depend on how close the witnesses were to some epicentre of the phenomena, and that over time they conformed more and more to the expectations that other people brought to the phenomena.

Different writers have come to different conclusions about the phenomena. Jacques Vallee, among others, concluded that the reported sightings described, not interstellar visitors, but visitors from other dimensions. Also, some stories report the visitors are descendants, come from our deep future to bear warnings to us.

Personally I suspect that, among other phenomena, *reality just breaks down sometimes*. And, at least some of the time, the result is that observers come away with dreamlike experiences and memories, some of which feed the UFO sighting / abduction / religious vision / Bigfoot and Loch Ness reports.

I still think that farmers and air traffic controllers have grounds for filing class action lawsuits. If their lawyers can only find the address on which to serve a legal summons.

The Continuing Adventures of Garth's Website

(see <https://www.vcn.bc.ca/~garth2>)

Back in January 2026 I started something I called "Across the Fandomension with Garth Spencer," an all-text website listing all the SFnal and fannish material I could accumulate. Granted that there are scores of such sites on the Web, still I thought there were niches for documenting either Pacific Northwest, or pan-Canadian, clubs and conventions and fanzines and awards and writers' markets. So I combined these missions.

Nobody has said much about the presentation. More people approved of the information resource I was building than criticized it. Most people haven't responded, which tells me the word hasn't gotten out.

I started learning how to encode and post amateur websites in the mid-1990s, which meant hand-typing HTML code in basic text editor programs, and it shows. I have only minimal ideas of how to use graphics, and in any case my focus is on finding information for fans and writers, and presenting it in an accessible form.

The scope of the website has grown somewhat, of course. While I make updates and corrections to expository and opinion articles as information comes in, I make monthly updates and additions to convention calendars, and have started featuring other SFnal news as I acquire it each month.

It is a curious thing, but the great majority of SF-adjacent conventions listed online are devoted to anime, comics, gaming, or media franchises, in all their diversity. General-interest conventions seem to be very much in the minority. Many of the conventions I attended and enjoyed are gone: NonCon, Moscon, Orycon, Rustycon, for instance. And there seem to be far fewer in the American Northwestern states this year than in Canada (which has about a tenth of the population of the USA).

My lists of current fanzines, of mundane zines, and especially of local clubs have remained fairly static. Probably I will have a shock when I launch a comprehensive update, this coming fall. SFnal and SF-adjacent clubs have not responded very much to queries, and a lot of my listings date back as far as 2019.

The most challenging project is going to be completing the list of current writers' markets. I have divided the lists into four: periodicals, vs. book markets; and Canadian, vs. US and overseas markets. Immediately that I started defining which kinds of information to obtain on each (frequency, pay rates, response times, etc.), I found that many markets – small presses and periodicals, predictably – didn't provide all the details I was looking for, but provided a great deal of text about what kinds of submissions they were looking for, and what kinds they rejected.

What the hell, it keeps me occupied and out of trouble.

Mailing Comments

Cover: What a handy young lady.

Intermission 165, by Ahrvid Engholm

Interesting to read!

Re your comments to me: Yes, sadly, there are many and varied delusions current among some conrunners. If conrunners face different problems on different continents, I guess I'm not surprised there are some different delusions in different places.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel 2.1, by Robert Jennings

I appreciated the cartoon strip you reproduced, that referenced upcoming midterms. My housemate is convinced that the current American administration will be gone after the midterm elections; I am uncertain whether or not this administration will make some extreme effort to prevent being voted out of office. Perhaps it is well that I am neither American nor living in the United States.

Don't hassle yourself too much about having to cut down your planned activities, such as the scale of fanzine you want to produce for an APA. We're human, we are always dealing with limitations. For that matter I tend to think of apazines as more modest projects than, say, regular genzines. (Recently I had occasion to go and make printouts of my monthly personalzine, and was surprised at both my page counts and my final bill – clearly I could stand to start practicing some economies.)

Your news that Hachette pulled a book release on suspicion that the text was AI-generated, in whole or in part, gives me pause. I want to know what is flagged as signs of AI-generated text, and how to avoid writing that resembles such prose.

Your comments to Ahrvid about “stone age” science fiction stories omitting plot in favour of techno-marvels put me in mind of one of John Barnes’ articles. In discussing his future history setting, Barnes mentioned that he “scheduled” a certain amount of foreseeable innovations for each decade or generation or century – I forget which span of time he used – but also scheduled a certain proportion of unforeseeable innovations, as unforeseeable as the digital revolution of the late 20th century was in the 1920s.

You seem extremely well informed on the history of the U.S. publishing industry! Until now my major sources of information were references in Frederik Pohl’s and Robert Heinlein’s nonfiction.

My ongoing attempts to document current SF markets (for an SF-oriented website) turns up a **lot** of digital publishers, just as you might expect – both ebook and periodical markets. But there is still a good deal of competition between several distributors such as Amazon, and publishers such as Tor Books, and many independent small presses.

Re your comments to me - I’ve pretty much let go of the daydream of compiling a fandom encyclopedia, for two reasons.

- 1) as you say, I would be well advised to get contributions from informed parties in every corner of fandom;
- 2) as my experience has shown, soliciting such contributions from informed parties elicits very little interest or feedback. I must have all the charisma points of a potted fern.

The “Across the Fandomension” website, however, proceeds apace. I just wish I had as much data to correct and complete my lists of clubs and fanzines as I acquire for upcoming conventions.

Just a correction to your impression – I haven’t attempted to document *all* fanzine activity of all time. The closest anyone came to that, I believe, was R. Graeme Cameron’s Canfancylopedia website, and he cut it down by concentrating on Canadian fans and their works.

Your “Harry Houdini kit” illustration made me laugh.

The answer to the trick math question you reproduced must be “five, because aliens don’t wear hats.”

The Murder Master Mage 282, by George Phillies

Interesting content in your mailing comments!

Thank you for your kind comments to me.

R.A.I.L. #12 by Adrian Kresnak

I see you have discovered the Cable Effect – that is, regularly hearing and reading references to popular books or movies or TV series you haven’t seen. I live with the Effect every day. If you ask me, this breakup of culture into people who have seen and

heard and read different things started well before television, but became unavoidable when cable television services became standard.

Cory Doctorow wrote about something like this, I think, in *Eastern Standard Tribe* – a novel in which different people have allegiances, not based on different nations, but the different cultures they are exposed to by the different TV shows they can access in their time zone. As if there is any such uniting factor anywhere.

Re your comment to me: I have pretty much given up seeking whatever common knowledge base there was supposed to be in my culture, based on the disappearance of whatever shared culture I was supposed to just absorb telepathically, without being told anything. It might be interesting to browse popular broadcasts for clues to what passes for a contemporary culture, but I'm not very perceptive and don't have access to television now.

Intermission 166, by Ahrvid Engholm

Re your comments to me: I actually have a draft (Canadian) fanhistory, but have to a lot of catching-up, on events and personalities in the 1990-2026 period.

Re your comment to Henry Grynnssten: any apazines that don't appear in eAPA are apazines that didn't appear in my email. For instance, William McCabe's missing contributions. I include the contributions that I get. Now, let me ask you: when and why do our Internet service providers fail us?

What do I do to contact missing members, except what I have done? Now I ask you.

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer

Re your comments to Ahrvid – When I heard of Fukuyama's "the end of history" thesis, I dismissed it as nonsense and went about my business.

Re your comments to Robert Jennings – I never had an opinion about Robert Downey Jr.'s turn as Sherlock Holmes, except to note that it started a "fight like Sherlock Holmes" fad for a while. I noted with interest the clips that suggested Sherlock Holmes was compulsively observant, which would explain a lot.

I also like the idea of bringing back extinct species, but I like even more the idea of creating species that fill currently empty niches in our environment. Species of microorganisms that digest pollutants and convert them into harmless compounds, or even clean biomass, for example, or somehow restoring the soil damage from wildfires or commercial agriculture. But then, I live in a province sharply divided over environmental concerns.

Re your comments to George Phillies – I also realized the insurance implications of civic damage in a comic-book world, and you're the only other person who has realized them, as far as I know.

Re your comments to me – thank you for taking my point about the unbelievability of our contemporary world, and how enough solidarity could make any system work. Mind you, under "solidarity" I include the degree of honesty and integrity among

bureaucrats and public officials, as opposed to the level of corruption that became inherent in communist or fascist states.

Re your comments to Joseph Gill – As I recall, the central issue in *Little Fuzzy* wasn't "what is a person?" but "what defines an intelligent species?", but close enough. Some of the elements you cite have come up in the mediocre space opera audio stories I have been listening to on Youtube. There seems to be a run of recent "Humanity Fuck Yeah!" and "Humanity for the Win" stories, in which humans amaze and outdo alien races which have improbable deficiencies, not only mental and biological but also cultural. If any species anywhere overcomes the light-speed barrier and achieves interstellar travel, I suspect that they simply have to have some of our capacities – not only analytical intelligence, but social organization, curiosity, scientific research institutions, the motivations for creating industrial technology and for exploring other planets, among them.

Re your comments to Mark Nelson – I also got into university without knowing calculus, and actually passed a calculus course without learning the subject. (A very unsatisfactory textbook was involved.)

Re your comments to Kevin Trainor – if the IRS is sitting on a tax refund they owe you, aren't they committing an actionable offense against their own legal obligations? Mind you, I appreciate that there seem to be many pressures to make people conduct their business online, both in your country and mine. I know people who just can't adjust. This is a serious subject and one that Kevin can speak to.

Another subject you and Kevin touched on was the matter of restricting conscription to local units. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that was the common practice up to and during the American Civil War, and precisely because of that war, American military policy was to try to prevent their military units from being recruited on a local basis. Your mention of Roman legionary postings may or may not be apt; arguably their whole culture was about imposing one's will, ranging from the will of Caesar and Senate upon the provinces to the will of masters upon slaves. For comparison, consider that for good and sufficient reasons, the Imperial Chinese civil service regularly posted governors from one region to administer provinces foreign to them, in an effort to achieve impartial and even-handed government.

Re your comments to Sam Lubell – I suspect that continuity is now less important than spectacle, both in comics-based movies and in other action-based movies; less important to producers and to viewers alike. For that matter continuity is far less valued in screen productions than in writing, as established in *Doctor Who* and in other SF-adjacent series.

Re your roomie's hoarding: My housing society has at least its share of residents who are hoarders, and we are seeking constructive solutions. My point is that there are helpful, constructive solutions available, ways to encourage hoarders to cut down and clear away useless possessions. As I acquire more information about these ways, I should share it with you.

Moziag #2, by Joseph P. Gill

Congratulations to your middle child on her graduation! Her doctoral thesis describes a great constructive concept – I hadn’t even realized that tabletop gaming as therapy was conceivable.

Your argument for a maxac limit is sound. I should adopt a similar rule for myself. And perhaps for eAPA.

In that respect I have a question for you: could you stand to read a serialized story here, if it touched on a subject that interested you? For example, I serialized a story set in fandom, revolving around trufans reacting to mediafans planning a mediacon ... and not just living in a world of their own misconceptions, but *actually* being fed misconceptions from another world, one with malicious designs on our timeline.

I have other stories, some of which are short enough to appear in one issue, most of which are still incomplete.

Brandy Hall Issue 18, March 2026, by Mark Nelson

Re your comment to Joseph Gill – how many versions of gaming fandom are there, now? I am sufficiently ignorant that I lump them together, even knowing the distinction between tabletop, card, LARP and MMORP gaming.

Re my comment to Ahrvid about what President Trump will do or say next – yeah, I might also have said he doesn’t know either; you and I must have somewhat similar senses of humour.

Re George Phillies’ comment on tracking down current copyright owners – good question. While different nations (and the European Union) have intellectual property offices to maintain such records, knowing how to access them is a somewhat specialized area. Laymen, as opposed to trademark agents or copyright lawyers, may have to simply find and ask the intellectual property offices. George can speak to this.

Re your comment to Robert Jennings – I think the reason Basil Rathbone was cast as Sherlock Holmes was his resemblance to the written description of the character, but on those grounds, Peter Cushing could equally have filled the role.

As to a “prehistoric killer superbug,” I think there must indeed have been an *X-Files* episode based on the idea. I know there was an episode based on a fatal respiratory infection discovered in deep caves connected to volcanic vents, but it was a bit far-fetched.

Re “de-extinction” of woolly mammoths – there is a current argument that some ecosystems require the kind of marshlands once ranged by mammoths. In fact a member of Stipple-Apa has been writing fiction based on the premise of woolly mammoths being established in ranges in Minnesota, among other states.

About banning fans from conventions, presumably due to contraventions of Codes of Conduct – I have mixed feelings about Codes of Conduct. On the one hand, there are legal boundaries and social expectations that grown adults have to observe, in order to interact with each other. On the other hand, why do any grown adults still need to

have it spelled out to them how to behave?? And then again, what kind of convention committee neglects to *tell* someone why they were banned from a convention committee??

<*Rant Alert*>

Mind you, I got so fed up with people who would not spell out what they expected from me, in personal behaviour or in living a life, as a child and as an adult, that I finally resolved *anyone who will not communicate is not a fully qualified person*. I'm surprised I have to spell this out.

In this connection I have to wonder if *anyone* – in the United States, or in Australia, or in Britain or Canada, for that matter – has had the self-honesty or the professional competence to spell out what their social norms and mores are supposed to be. In fact I expect not.

</*End Rant Alert*>

Samizdat Ish #37, March/April 2026, by Samuel Lubell

Re your comment to me – yes, I believe I did acquire a copy of Camilla Pang's *An Outsider's Guide to Humans*. I have it somewhere.



...Magic Schools in Fantasy

Harry Potter has become so ubiquitous that too many people assume that J.K. Rowling invented the magic school novel and that Hogwarts was the first magic school. Not so. The idea was actually common in fantasy. In *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), the first book in the *Earthsea* series by Ursula K. Le Guin, the main character, Ged attends the School of Wizardry. An even earlier example, "The Wall Around the World" by Theodore Cogswell (1953) has magic a part of ordinary life so naturally is taught in school, but this is a short story, not a novel. The Strugatsky Brothers had a Russian example, the "Scientific Research Institute of Sorcery and Wizardry" in their novel *Monday Begins on Saturday* (1964), but this was not translated until 1977 so probably did not influence Le Guin. A little later, *The Worst Witch* (1974) by Jill Murphy,

had Miss Cackle's Academy; this seems to be a more likely ancestor of Hogwarts since it became a series of popular television movies in England starting in 1986. Terry Pratchett's *The Color of Magic* (1983) may have been the first to have a magic college. While Lovecraft's Miskatonic University is older (appearing in the 1922 story "Herbert West-Reanimator") it is not meant as a school to teach wizards and witches, although students find their way to summoning unspeakable horrors anyway. One of this year's Hugo finalists, *The Incandescent* by Emily Tesh is the only example I have encountered to focus on the teachers and other faculty in a magic school.

Before these works, most magic users either learned their powers through a one to one apprenticeship with a great wizard (sometimes the Devil) or learned it from books and magical objects. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" sequence in Disney's *Fantasia* movie is actually very faithful to the 1797



poem "Der Zauberlehrling" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In many of the King Arthur legends, Merlin the wizard teaches his magic to Nimue/Viviane who then uses this magic to trap him.

There are several reasons for the popularity of magic school books. First, since everyone has been a student, it is easy to relate to books about students. Books about boarding school also makes it easy to have adventures since the children spend all day together with only a few adults, compared to those living at home with two parents for every 2.5 kids. It is also logical that something as complicated and magic would need to be taught in the same way science is.



...Author Spotlight: Rebecca Roanhorse



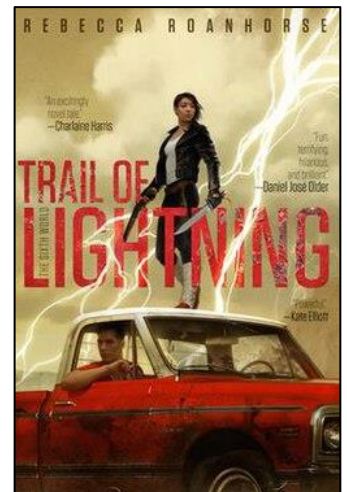
Rebecca Roanhorse is a fantasy writer who has won the Hugo and Nebula award. She is part African American and part Native American (of Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo descent, although she is not officially a member of the tribe) and grew up in a white adopted family in Fort Worth Texas with an economics professor father and a high school English teacher mother. She attended Yale as an undergraduate and earned a master's degree in theology and a law degree specializing in Federal Indian Law. Roanhorse will be a Guest of Honor at Capclave 2026 on October 2-4, 2026

Her first short story "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™" was published in the August 2017 issue of Apex Magazine. It won the 2017 Nebula Award for Best Short Story and the 2018 Hugo Award for Best Short Story. Her first novel *Trail of Lightning* came out from Saga Press on June 26, 2018. It won the 2019 Locus Award for Best First Novel and was a finalist for the Hugo, World Fantasy, and Nebula awards. Her *Between Earth and Sky* trilogy (which includes *Black Sun*, *Fevered Star*, and *Mirrored Heavens*) won the 2025 Hugo award for Best Series.

In addition to writing books and stories, Roanhorse has written comics, TV episodes, and games. She was on the writing staff for the Marvel TV series *Echo* for Disney+. She also has written a *Star Wars*

tie-in novel and a middle grades novel, *Race to the Sun*, for the Rick Riordan imprint. In her 10 year career, she has written eight novels.

Perhaps ironically, considering the title of her short story, her own Native American background has been questioned. Leaders of the Ohkay Owingeh community have denied her connections to their community (pointing out that she was adopted out of the tribe). Dr. Matthew Martinez, former Lieutenant Governor of Ohkay Owingeh said "...by not engaging in any form of cultural and community acknowledgement, Roanhorse has failed to establish any legitimate claim to call herself Ohkay Owingeh... it is unethical for Roanhorse to be claiming Ohkay Owingeh and using this identity to publish Native stories." Some Navajo writers, academics, and cultural workers criticized her first novel as misrepresenting Navajo culture and being an inaccurate cultural appropriation. Some claimed that she shared secret cultural practices and narratives and misused sacred stories. But Roanhorse has written that her goals were "accuracy and respect" and she used Navajo cultural readers. She was not writing in the academic style but was willing to deviate from tradition to show how her world grew from its roots. Also, her husband is a member of the Navajo tribe.



Readers new to Roanhorse should read her first short story "Welcome to your Authentic Indian Experience™" available at <https://apex-magazine.com/welcome-to-your-authentic-indian-experience/> and her *Trail of Lightning* novel.

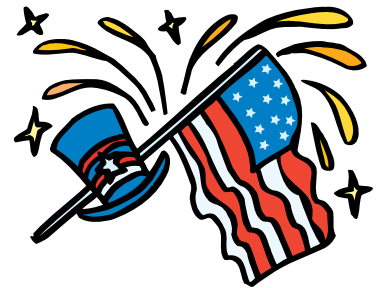


...Trump Hijacks Semiquincentennial

This year is America's 250th birthday, counting from the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Congress had created the non-partisan America 250 in 2016 and it had been planning a range of activities. But when Trump was re-elected, he created his own White House Task Force on Celebrating America's 250th, called Freedom 250 and told government to stop cooperating with America 250. Trump's Freedom 250 was very partisan and took most of the money originally allocated for America 250. I do not remember the Bicentennial 50 years ago being so tied to the current president and his political party. His "Great American State Fair" in Washington DC proved to be a bust with few attendees and high prices for food. Most of the promised entertainment from leading musical figures dropped out. This led Trump to cancel the concerts and replace the entertainment with himself giving a speech. Then, on July 4th, hot weather and storms sent would-be viewers to shelter in museums and many could not return for the delayed speech and fireworks. Trump did not start speaking until past 11 pm and the fireworks did not start until past midnight. Then, the fireworks show spread so much smoke that after the first few minutes

many spectators could no longer see new fireworks.

Trump's speech was less a celebration of America than a partisan stump speech calling for the SAVE act which critics say is designed to suppress the votes of women and minorities, and attacking Communists. He also said, "And as our Declaration of Independence tells us, we are all made in the image of one Almighty God." Needless to say, the Declaration says no such thing.



...Ideas for Capclave Programming

Capclave is the annual convention of the Washington SF Association. I have chaired it three times, most recently in 2025 and have been on the organizing committee practically every year, frequently helping with programming. Here are some of the ideas I have submitted for consideration for this year's Capclave program items. Not all of these will be used, but these will give you an idea of the type of programming we run.



Beyond America's 250th - 2026 marks 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Where will the United States be at its 300th birthday? What current trends do you think will continue and what new ones will emerge? Writers of science fiction speculate about the near future.

The Death of Mass Market Paperbacks - In 2026, the last remaining distributor of mass market paperbacks stopped carrying them. Why? What caused the decline of these pocket-sized books? How has this affected science fiction publishing? What will be its effects in the future?

Westerns and Science Fiction and Fantasy - What is the connection between science fiction and Westerns? Is SF just a change of setting from the Western but telling the same story with the same characters? Is it just bad SF that replaces the six shooter with a ray gun?

50 Years of the Original Dune Trilogy – Frank Herbert published *Children of Dune* in four issues of *Analog* in 1976, completing the original Dune trilogy. How does this novel stand up to the preceding two? How does the original Dune trilogy compare to the second Dune trilogy?



Status of the Magazines – The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction has had 3 issues in the last three years while *Asimov's* and *Analog* could not print any issues for most of 2026. What is going on with the SF magazines and what will replace them?

Nerds Have Won, Now What? – The top movies are nearly all science fiction. Many of the most famous billionaires have formed companies to get into outer space. Computer and video gaming (many with science fiction and fantasy elements) makes more money than do professional sports. And the biggest online store started off as a bookstore. We nerds have conquered the world! Now what? Can SF and Fantasy fandom survive outside the ghetto? Is the specialness of SF and Fantasy diluted when everyone is a fan?

SF Essentials – Once there was broad agreement on the essential books that all SF/Fantasy readers should have read. Is there such an agreement today? What books do you see as the core of our genre? Or is it held together by tv/movies? What concepts can writers safely assume readers know from other works?

Non-Western Fantasy – Once, most fantasy took place in a quasi-medieval setting, just with magic and, frequently, greater female equality. Now, fantasy explores a world of different settings and cultures, many written by people from these cultures. How has this changed fantasy? How have readers reacted to these different views of what fantasy can be?

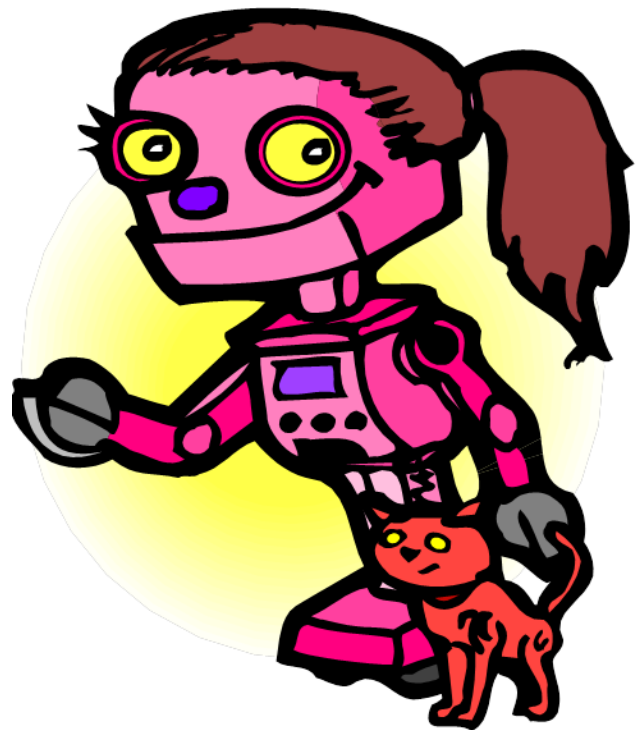
Tie-in Books – GoH Rebecca Roanhorse has written a *Star Wars* novel. What makes writing a tie-in novel different from writing one's own work? What restrictions/challenges do you face? What makes this worth doing?

Writing for Different Media – Many writers today do not just write stories and novels but films, tv, comics, and games. How is writing different in different media? What do you have to do in one that you do not in the other? How are stories different in different media? Writers who have written for more than one media tell us their stories.

End of the World – How does the world end in science fiction? What are the best works covering the end of the world and which ones seem most believable?

Let's Do the Time Loop Again – Books like *Replay* and *The Everlasting* and movies like *Groundhog Day* have characters repeat their lives (or the same events) over and over again. How can a writer do a time loop without boring the reader with repetition? What makes some work and others not?

Anthologies vs Magazines – How does an anthology differ from a magazine? What works for one but not for the other? Why are reprints common in anthologies but not in magazines?



Life Imitates SF – SF writers frequently say their job is not to predict the future, but of course most SF has to create a believable future. But, sometimes it seems like the other way around. What happens when you write something that then actually happens (or close to it)? How do you read a story that resembles events that happened after the story was published? What are some examples like Sarah Pinsker's *Song for a New Day* that predicted how the music world would react to Covid?

Global SF/Fantasy – American Science Fiction and Fantasy used to mostly publish American and British authors. Now, many editors are bringing in non-Anglo American voices. Translated stories are common in magazines. Why is this happening and why now? How are works from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America different from British and American works? Why are translated works more successful at short lengths rather than novels?

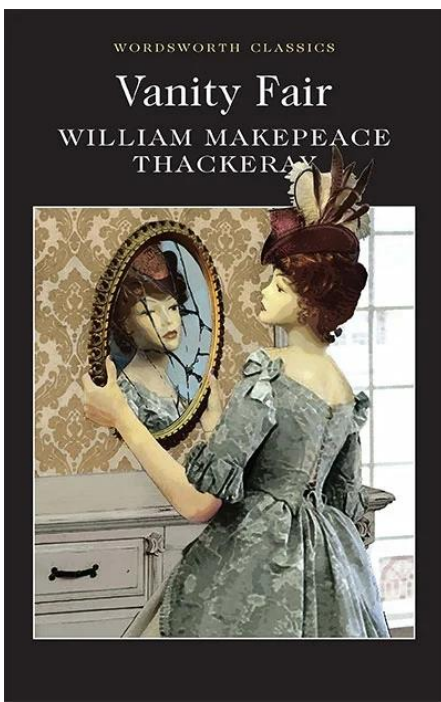
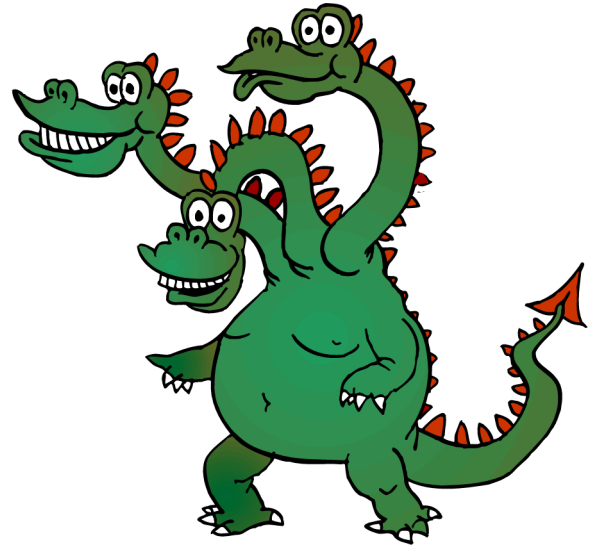
Everyone Complains About the Weather – How is weather portrayed in science fiction and fantasy? What will be the effects of global warming on fiction? Should SF act as a warning to people who ignore the dangers of global warming? What are some authors who do the best weather-related books?

Our Modern Dystopia – Are we living in a dystopia? Political parties routinely see the other as traitors and crooks. The gap between the Haves and the Have Nots grow every wider. Corporate mergers put more and more wealth in fewer and fewer hands. And America's political leaders are mostly old men who refuse to give up power. How should science fiction react to our dystopia? What can writers and readers do about the state of the world?

The Eternal Unlife of Vampires – Twenty years after *Twilight*, are vampires still popular and if so why? Or do they now suck? What is the appeal of monsters and why are some more popular than others? Is there anything to say about vampires that has not already been done?

Resuming a Series after a Hiatus – Orson Scott Card is finally continuing his *Tales of Alvin Maker* series after 23 years. Ursula Le Guin had an 18-year gap between *The Farthest Shore* and *Tehanu* in her Earthsea series. And Asimov had a 29-year gap between *Second Foundation* and *Foundation's Edge*. What happens when there is such a long hiatus between volumes? Can an author recapture the spirit of their earlier work? What are series that have done this well and what poorly?

Cozy Fantasy and SF – Not every book has to be about saving the kingdom or the universe. How did Cozy Fantasy and SF gain popularity? What is the appeal?



Stories that Aren't or Are They? – Must a story have a plot? Some published stories are just lists of various things with description. Must a story have characters? What about action? What makes something a story and how far can writers push it?

...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. The last couple of months I have spent a lot of reading time on the Hugo finalists. Also, I have started my new job (or resumed my old job depending on how you look at it), cutting into my reading time.

Project Classics: I have started *Vanity Fair* (1848) by William Makepeace Thackeray about English society during the Napoleonic Wars. The main character is Rebecca Sharp, who lacking money and a society name, uses her wits, charm, and ruthlessness to force her way into English society. The other main character is Amelia Sedley, a friend from school, who is everything Rebecca pretends to be, but much more naïve and good natured. She is engaged to Captain George Osborne. When Amelia's father becomes bankrupt, George marries her against the demands of his own father, who disinherits him. Meanwhile Rebecca has married Captain Rawdon Crawley. Both Captains go off to war in Brussels and their wives go with them (although only Becky makes plans for what to do if her husband dies in the war).

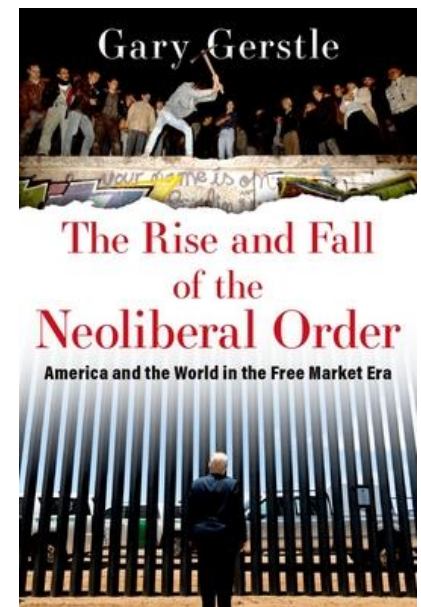


Project Nonfiction: *Attack from Within: How Disinformation Is Sabotaging America* by Barbara McQuade – This book describes how false claims and disinformation is a dangerous threat to our country. Many Americans believe these claims and are voting accordingly. While most of the book is about Donald Trump and his claims about the 2020 election, she does bring up historical and other examples. Politicians use disinformation to manipulate people and make the public doubt everything. Although much of the book is familiar to anyone who reads the paper, there is a useful chapter on proposed solutions such as reducing disinformation from the supply side through regulation. Internet service provider should be legally liable for the content on their sites or have their immunity removed for content promoted for a fee and removed from algorithms that feed provocative content to people. Regulate online publishers like other industries or run it like utilities subject to government regulation. Prohibit anonymous users and bots and fake personas. Require disclosures of funding sources the way paid advertising does. Regulate algorithms. End “sponcon” – advertising sponsored content that masquerades as news. Subsidize paywalls so citizens are not left just with sponsored content that promotes what corporations and paid advertisers want you to see. Strengthen local journalism.

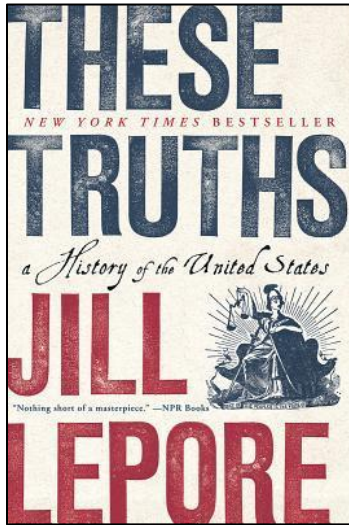
Require online media and cable news to follow the equal time rule and the fairness doctrine (which President Reagan vetoed and got the FCC to drop it). Create a code of ethics for social media platforms. Reduce disinformation from the demand side by using public education to teach citizens to uncover false claims and identify content that is true. Conduct public service campaigns to reduce disinformation and expose it. It also could discourage coarse and insulting political speech. Use and improve online tools to access accuracy and legitimacy. Promote civic engagement. And mitigate disinformation's effects on democracy. Also reform campaign finance, protect elections and their process. Use ranked-choice voting. Prevent political violence. Police violent content online. Change laws that threaten public safety. Restore the ban on assault weapons. Counter harms to the rule of law and fight against vigilante justice. Enforce laws against paramilitary activity. And Combat corruption. Of course most of these proposals are easier said than done, but they are a useful set of goals.

The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era by Gary Gerstle. This book postulates a Neoliberal Order that replaced the New Deal consensus in the 1970s and 1980s. It rejects the usual conservative label for the Reagan era, instead redefining neoliberalism to 19th century classical liberalism emphasizing freedom. The author sees Neoliberalism resulting from the failures of tight government control and government provided social services in the wake of stagflation, Vietnam, civil rights, and the turmoil of the 1960s. Neoliberalism builds on the ideas of libertarian political economists and the belief in the free market being wise than government controls, and sees the fall of the Soviet Union as a rejection of communism and centralized economies. Despite the inclusion of the World in the title, the focus is clearly on America. Neoliberalism was so powerful that even Democrats like Clinton and Obama embraced it. But Neoliberalism turned into a justification for greed and the rich getting richer. And Trump merged the new populism with his racist and nationalist agenda. This is a strong work of economic history.

July 1, 2026. *Redefining Freedom: Thoughts on Bridging Divides and Renewing the American Promise at 250* by Sophia Nelson. I was disappointed in



this book. It had some good ideas but did not really develop them and spent too much time reciting slogans. The book takes the premise that America's government at 250 needs some rethinking and some revising. Americans have become very divided and do not trust politics nor our government. The book calls for revising personal freedom, shared freedom, lived freedom and protected freedom. The book warns of civic apathy and the need for greater civic engagement. Compared to the time of the Bicentennial, Americans are doing much less to celebrate our country. She sees a freedom recession in which Americans no longer trust our neighbors and do not agree on basic facts. We have become polarized and divided. She warns that freedom cannot persist with large inequalities and disparities.



These Truths: A History of the United States is a one-volume history of the United States by Harvard professor Jill Lepore. It integrates African American history with traditional American history and covers when America has and has not lived up to its ideals, especially over rights of minorities. It is very ambitious in its sweep, but is not a typical high school/college textbook. The book also emphasizes the role of the media in telling and undermining the truth. Yes, the book omits lots of American history and sometimes has too narrow a focus. But any one volume history of over 400 years has to be selective. I am only about 200 pages in (the book is 800 pages plus notes) so will have more when I finish it.

Project Shorts: I have read the finalists for the Hugo Award in the novella, novelette, and short story categories, as well as the short fiction finalists for the WSFA Small Press Award. I also have read *Clarkesworld Magazine*. Unfortunately, the print versions of *Asimov's* and *Analog* have not come out yet. They have switched to a new printer. They keep promising to print the March/April issues but it is now mid-July and there's been no sign of them.

Project Video: I watched the 2025 *Superman* movie. The film made \$618,723,803 on a \$225,000,000 budget. It starred David Corenswet as Superman and James Gunn was the director, producer, and scriptwriter. It was a reboot of the DC film universe. I liked this movie more than *Man of Steel* but not as much as *Superman I and II*. This movie recognized that everyone knows the Superman origin and starts a couple of years into his career as Superman. Lois Lane already knows Clark Kent is Superman. This Superman is obsessed with saving lives. He even pauses in a fight with a monster to rescue a squirrel from getting smooched. When Lex Luthor manipulates two countries into a war, Superman stops the fighting. Lex then sends a supervillain to defeat Superman, directing his actions with a series of memorized prompts based on his study of previous Superman battles. Superman is rescued by his dog (we find out it is Supergirl's dog). Luthor infiltrates Superman's Fortress in the Arctic and gets a hold of a recording of Superman's parents which had been damaged so Superman never heard the part where his parents tell him to conquer Earth and form a harem to spread Kryptonian genes. When this is made public, people turn on Superman and the government captures him and Lex imprisons him in a pocket universe. Lois Lane and Mr. Terrific, one of the heroes of the Justice Gang, rescue him. But, this leads to the pocket universe causing destruction headed toward Metropolis and Superman flies off to stop it only to encounter a clone created by Lex. I am not sure why recent Superman/girl TV and movies make the heroes' parents into bad guys but it seems unnecessary. Mr. Terrific almost steals the movie with a wonderful scene in which Lois is awestruck at how easily Mr. Terrific deals with a whole squad of soldiers. The dog is also fun. One weakness of the film is that there is no explanation for the Justice Gang heroes and their powers (so non-comics fans will be lost).



Alice in Wonderland. (1951)—This Disney animated film starts with Alice singing about Wonderland before she sees the White Rabbit, suggesting that the subsequent events are her dream/make believe. I had forgotten that the movie combines material from both Alice books, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. The film originally lost money and garnered negative critical reviews. It only became successful in subsequent releases and home releases (perhaps because its weird visuals attracted a druggie audience). I liked it, but felt it was missing crucial elements from the books like the Jabberwocky. Perhaps Disney should have made two films, one for each book.

Project Fanac: I attended Balticon over Memorial Day weekend. The main guest of honor was Jim Butcher. Since I ran the kaffeeklatches I heard him tell a lot of stories from his life. He is a great storyteller. I also ran the newsletter for the con. Balticon is a large regional four-day convention with something for everyone including lots of filking, a masquerade, dances, and lots of programming (some of which I helped develop). And in August, I am running the newsletter for Worldcon in Los Angeles.

Project Shakespeare: I finally have something to report. I saw an outdoor production of *As You Like It* with several of the roles gender flipped, resulting in gay couples that Shakespeare never intended. There were also a couple of songs added before, during Intermission, and in the final scene.

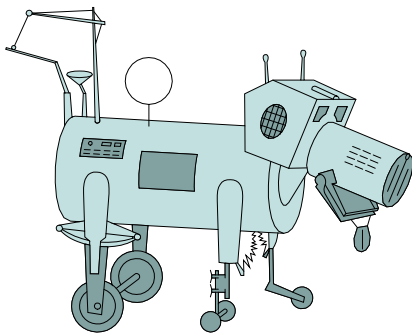
Project Activities: I attended the BSFS picnic and a Fourth of July BBQ.

No progress on Projects Clean Up, Health, or Paperback.



...Letter of Comment on N'APA 282.

Intermission #165 – Happy Centennial to *Amazing Stories*. In many ways it did invent the science fiction magazine and incidentally science fiction fandom. Writers of the pulp era frequently wrote in multiple genres as they wrote whatever someone would publish. I agree science fiction is closely related to mysteries as both are plot-oriented. I am a big fan of Cordwainer Smith and just wish he wrote more. I knew about Gene Wolfe and Pringles. I didn't know about E.E. Doc Smith and the donut glaze. I didn't know that Albert Einstein was a dedicated reader of *Astounding Science Fiction*, but I am not surprised.



Swamp Spot Sentinel #2.1—It is becoming hard to tell what is “written” by AI and what is edited with the help of a grammar checker. But a scammer using AI to create a hot girl written in ways to appeal to Trump's MAGNA men seems oddly appropriate. The fact that Trump continues to have such large support shows the problem isn't Trump, he is merely taking advantage of current authoritarian and anti-immigrant feelings. If it was not Trump, someone else would be playing the same role. Unfortunately, that means it is not enough simply to wait Trump out; his replacement in the Republican party is likely to be just as bad. Among things SF writers failed to predict was how the world would get to the moon and then turn its back on exploring

space. I explored Frederick Pohl's life as a science fiction writer and editor in the last two issues of my *Origins* fanzine which discusses the rise and fall of pulp science fiction magazines. Amazon has locked up much of the market for ebooks (and magazines).

Good point that “Everything that young people like has been attacked.” Adults are naturally suspicious of anything their future replacements (younger generations) like. AI can certainly lie (the media calls it hallucinate). Modern AI engines are designed to produce what their audience wants to see, which can include making things up. Self-publishing via ebooks avoids many of the problems of printing physical books, storing them, and distributing them to bookstores. The most successful e-magazines in SF seem to be *Clarkesworld* and *Uncanny*

(as well as the Tor website now called Reactor). Baen's Telzey books are not out of print. You can order them at <https://www.baen.com/telzey-amberdon.html> And James Schmitz still has many fans. Eric Flint and friends did three sequels to Schmitz's the *Witches of Karres* so I think there must be a market for sequels to Schmitz's works.

I suspect WWII reenactors won't have tanks and aircraft in their recreations of battles (or will have them as simulated objects). I agree that it may be more useful to add material to existing sites rather than reduplicate their efforts. I like your Harry Houdini action figure having escaped its packaging. Yes, any intelligent animal on Earth needs to find a way to coexist with humans. I like cats' solution. I admit to listening to audiobooks while driving, especially on long trips. I find 19th century novels work well because of their slow pace. I will have to look into the Resident Alien series, since I like Wildcards (although I have fallen behind lately). I admit that during my year off from work, I did not get as much done as I had planned, even with my projects reminder. I'm sorry for your problems with the IRS.

Thanks for your comments about my article on Trump versus schools and museums. Yes, most of the people reading N'APA agree with me, but I like to include articles on the issues of interest to me. *The Wings Upon Her Back* by Samantha Mills is a wonderful book. I really recommend it. I probably read more first novels (or at least parts of them) than anyone else who is not paid to do so. Some of the songs in Cinderella were rather lackluster, especially those with the mice. I agree about plastic bags. This the environmental equivalent of security theater, designed more to look like people can do something about a problem than it is to solve the problem. I put out books on the free tables at conventions I attend (of course, I also take some). Publishers would not be putting out so many fantasy novels if they did not sell. The 2026 Hugo ballot for best novel has two science fiction novels to four fantasy novels. Best series has the same ratio. I am a former teacher and I understand that English teachers are torn between the desire to instill a love of reading in their students and the desire to ensure that they get exposure to great works of literature that they almost certainly will not read on their own (and that benefit from discussion with an experienced guide). I don't think there is much in a *Tarzan* book that needs to be explained to students, while *Ethan Frome* is another story (but then, I read 19th century novels for fun). I like Tom the Dancing Bug's depiction of Trump saving the VHS industry.



The Murder Master Mage #282 – I've not read many sea stories like *Master & Commander*. I will add it to my list of nearly 750 books to read (ambitious, me?). If you are writing a continuing of an author's character, it would make sense to try to write in that author's style. Otherwise, the character won't read the same. I agree that the amount of crossovers and tie-ins to constant events makes reading a single comic book title all but impossible.



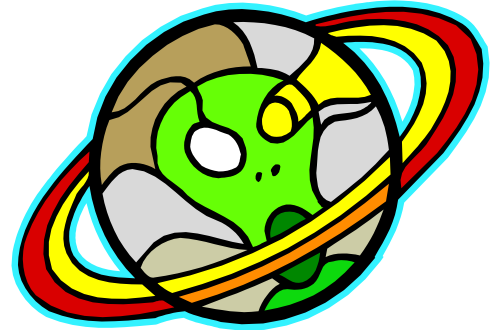
I'm always suspicious of writers who write more than two books a year. It seems that doesn't leave time for editing and rewriting and making the book better. Instead, readers are essentially getting a first draft. That may have been acceptable in the Golden Age (when novels were much shorter than today's books too). But we have higher standards now.

I watch TV and movies with the captions on so I can understand what is being said without having to lower the volume constantly for explosions and music and then raising it for the dialog. For the best ebook reader, it depends on whether you want to be tied to the Amazon system or not. If you want to avoid Amazon, the Kobo e-readers are probably your best bet. You can get to Boston's Boskone convention on public transportation while Readercon isn't in Boston but close in Burlington. Readercon also doesn't have costuming or anything really other than books.

I have a single volume *Lord of the Rings*, but the print is tiny. I see a perzine like Samizdat as a chance to write about things that interest me. Naturally, a lot of that is science fiction, but I also am interested in books and reading, history, education, current politics and government, and what I have read and watched. Thanks for continuing your Telzey adventure. I like that you are considering some of the implications of Telzey's past adventures, not to mention the ethics of telepaths (which Telzey frequently ignores).

Rail #12 – Good point about pop culture as a shared reality. But, yes, the original *Ghostbusters* is worth watching (you can skip the sequels and remakes). Modern manufacturers deliberately do not want to make a product that lasts. They want one that will break down a day after the warranty ends so you have to pay for a new one. I had not heard of the ChatGPT practicing law without a license case. It sounds interesting.

Intermission #166 – Very good news about Viktor Orban being defeated in an election. Unfortunately, I suspect Donald Trump learned a lesson about the dangers of having elections even with control of the state's mechanism for running the vote. Donald Trump can end the war in Iran. He has done so multiple times. But it keeps on restarting. Donald Trump just wants to put his name and face on everything, from signing dollar bills to the Kennedy Center, to his Arc d'Trump. I agree that the nations of Earth spend just pennies on their space program. We need a new space race. Nice research on early SF trips to the moon. SF as satire has a very long history.



Archive Midwinter – There's a type of audiobook called Full Cast Audio that is very similar to old style radio plays. You might prefer those to traditional single narrator audiobooks. A number of artists have made compelling cases that AI steals their signature styles. Marvel comic books invented a company called Damage Control that fixes the aftermath of superhero battles and alien invasions. The book Project Hail Mary had an interesting alien that was humanlike in some areas but thought differently in other areas. I am sorry you were unable to finish college. Did you look to see if you could take that class somewhere else and transfer the credit into your school? Modesitt's Recluse books is a series that jumps around in time so some books can be read in any order, but other books are sequels to earlier books and those books have to be read in order. As usual, publishing order is the best way to read nearly all series.

Yes, as someone with undergraduate and graduate degrees in History, I agree that History is both an art and a science. It is a science since it is evidence driven and much of it revolves around interpreting the evidence. But, the actual writing of History is an art. The idea in Marvel Comics of Steve Rogers working for Hydra all along was not really a retcon but a change made to the past via a super-powerful object (and one that the publisher did not intend to be a permanent change).

Moziaq #2 – Congrats on your daughter getting her Ph.D. One of my biggest regrets in life is not having finished mine. I didn't know the Ark Experience people believed in evolution, but it seems like a strange version of evolution that establishes diversity but only in existing species. You have a whole article on maxac, but never actually define it. It sounds like you are objecting to some zines taking up too much space and others have too much non-original content. And you are also objecting to what you call off-topic content. But these are personal zines so anything of interest to the author is on topic. If a reader doesn't like an article or even a zine, they can skip it and go on to the next. Since, as you point out, these are electronic so there are no paper or mailing costs, I do not see any problem. Of course you can skip or skim. It is no surprise that the stories in Analog are nearly all hard science fiction. That's the magazine's bailiwick. Yes, Analog is more about the idea than the writing of the idea. I agree that AI is used in the creation and the summation. Doyle did write SF so it is possible that in writing Sherlock Holmes he was thinking about the new science of criminology the way a SF writer would. I don't think I've eaten at



a Waffle House either, there is none near me. I'm glad you liked my April Fool's joke.

Brandy Hall #18 - *Little Fuzzy* by H Beam Piper is well worth reading. It is a very quick read. And the book is in the public domain so you can read it for free. <https://gutenberg.org/ebooks/18137> The book is from 1962 so if any copying is involved, Star Trek is the culprit. I liked *Wheel of Time* when I was much younger but while the first few books were tight reads as he went on less and less happened in each book but took more and more words. They improved once Sanderson took over. I find it hard to believe that there are only 30 fanzines currently in existence. Are you counting N'Apa as one fanzine or 11? Yes, the Hugo administrators created the Semi-pro category for Locus since it was too big to be considered a fanzine. I am sure there are lots of possibilities in cloning animals - zoos, aquariums, saving species from extinction, hunting, and meat come to mind. Murderbot has two episodes up



for the Hugo. I think that high school graduates will be spending their entire lives in the real world, so it makes sense to take 2-5 years for college to study things they probably won't study in the real world while also preparing for higher wage positions. I read both traditional and ebooks (recently mostly ebooks since I am running out of space for new physical books). I need to find Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm* and Robert Hansen's *Challenging Moskowitz: 1930s Fandom Revisited* and read them for my fan history zine, *Origins*. And I'm making a note here about your recommendation of Horne's *The Price of Glory* about the Franco-Prussian Wars.

One of the important things for a class on literature to do is to teach students how to analyze a work of literature. This means going into a work in depth, not just reading it but learning how to interpret it. Inevitably, this takes longer than just reading it. I will have to find Robert McCrum's list of the

100 best novels written in English and incorporate titles into my long list of classics. Yes, the winner of the Compton Crook award is invited to Balticon to be a Guest of Honor (meaning we pay for transportation and hotel). Of course Guests of Honor participate on programming with speeches, participation on panels, and kaffeeklatsches. I completely agree that *Braveheart* had too many historical errors and its creators probably should have invented names instead of pretending it had some connection to real history. I agree about needing to be judicious when removing someone from a convention or even a panel because they will have friends and supporters (and being writers, can write about it and frequently have blogs and Facebook pages). I am sad to learn that Australia has some of the same problems with politicians as we do in the US. Read some histories of fandom and you'll encounter wife swapping, nude swimming in hotel pools, and lots of practical jokes. I confess that I probably have more unread books in my apartment than I have time left to read them.

Brownian Motion #19 - Congrats on going through all your subscriptions to see where your money goes. I need to do that.

...Author's Note

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Esmeralda County Line #16

April-July 2026

A zine for N'APA 283

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SO MUCH FOR TAX SEASON, EH

Despite the agonizing slowness of the season (I only did about 55 paid returns over the three months of the season) I actually made a decent amount of commission this year because most of my returns had lots of schedules attached. We'll see what next season is going to be like; since the regular Oregon tax preparer's license was useless to me, I'll study a little harder and pay a little bit more to get the Tax Consultant license, which will allow me to do Oregon state returns without actually having a CPA, tax lawyer, or Enrolled Agent hanging around my apartment. Anyway, things were really slow until the weekend before the tax deadline, at which point we had clients coming out of the woodwork. Didn't have to work any 10-12 hour days like the last couple of seasons, but a couple of days came close.

Normally I head out to the east coast (the DC area, to be specific) in May but after looking over my financial situation and the cost of going East for a week, I decided to wait until October, when prices will be lower and I'll have more flex on my credit cards.

Despite being home all month, I still missed the deadline for N'APA 282 and dropped out of Stipple-APA because there was just too much going on. On the bright side, the super came by and got rid of the huge pile of boxes that had been accumulating in my kitchen for the last 5.5 years; management was clearing out another apartment in the complex and so had a demo dumpster with space for my boxes.

By the time this sees print, the Nevada primary elections will be done. I am working on the county elections board again, but this is the first time I've been around for the primaries.

BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

Ralts Bloodthorne is having lung issues and hasn't posted any new chapters of the Behold! Humanity epic lately, but he and his editing team did squeeze out Edge of Twilight, #22 in the series. Humans are gone (or in the Bag cutting off Terrasol from everywhere else) and a lot of races that have been on the fringes of the Confederacy think they can waltz in and pick up a few Tomb Worlds. Doesn't go well for them.

My last paperback copy of Camille Paglia's Sex, Art, & American Culture fell apart a while back, so I picked up the e-book edition. Remember when Madonna was young, exciting, transgressive, and hot? I do, but I'm really old. Also, a lot of the stuff Paglia was complaining about in academia back then has only gotten worse.

I'm also rereading Tim Powers' Last Call. It's too good to rush.

MUSIC AND OTHER SUCH EVILS

I have gotten into the habit of listening to YouTube while doing the evening linkagery for The Other McCain, but whatever algorithm is putting these mixes together needs to have its code examined. On one evening this week, the mix started with the Heils' "Hate to Say I Told You So" and continued through Sisters of Mercy, Slade, Sweet, The Dictators, Black Sabbath, U2, Scott Orsi's "The Spirit of JFK", White Zombie, Buzzcocks, Rush, Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit In The Sky", James Priest's "Electric Sex Machine", and a bunch of other songs that do not in any way shape or form belong together. I think I'm going to buy some albums by Depeche Mode, Dead Can Dance, and a few other bands this payday, rip them, and whip up some less deranged/more consistent playlists for WACUP to play.

Speaking of WACUP, I don't think I mentioned it here, but a few months back I started having problems with my copy of Winamp, and the standard cure of uninstalling and reinstalling it wasn't working any more. This forced me back into the arms of Windows Media Player, which did not spark joy but at least let me listen to my own music again. Well, luckily, I complained on X about my Winamp issue, and some kind soul pointed me at WACUP, which is an open-source successor to Winamp, and it works wonderfully. Making playlists is a little harder than on WMP, but everything else works better, so it's a good tradeoff.

While I was in my temporary Windows Media Player era, I found a bunch of playlists I'd thrown together in the seven years between my divorce and my departure from Minnesota. Some of them are okay, but others are downright depressing and make me wonder just how messed up I was.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST: COMMENTS ON N'APA #281

Official Organ

I see N'APA and I started in the same year. Don't know why I didn't notice this before.

Intermission #163

Your piece on the decline/extinction of the pulp magazines was interesting.

Archive Midwinter

(RYCTo me) (re: boycotting) No harm done in any case. 🍷🍷 Thank you for finding my scribblings interesting. One endeavours to provide satisfaction.

(RYCTo Sam) Cornwell didn't write the Sharpe novels in order either, nor did George MacDonald Fraser do the Flashman tales in chronological order, IIRC. Has any historical fiction author actually written a series in order? 🍷🍷 I was always surprised that none of Pendleton's Executioner novels were ever made into movies or a TV series, while there have been a couple of Punisher movies and two seasons worth of mini-series, not including his appearance in the Daredevil series.

(Re: AI) I should look into turning that feature off myself. It's impertinent.

The Swamp Spot Sentinel

(Sherlock Holmes) Oddly, while I read a lot of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories (and later, The Seven Per Cent Solution) I managed not to see any of the Basil Rathbone Holmes movies – or if I did, I don't remember them. I did, however, see the Robert Downey Jr. movie while I was laid up in one hospital or another over the last decade, and as you say, it was entertaining despite the numerous departures from canon. 🍷🍷 Rathbone is hardly the only actor to grow weary of a character that has brought him fame and fortune. IIRC, both Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner went through a phase where they refused to attend *Star Trek* conventions, and Nimoy went so far as to write a book, I am not Spock. ~~They got better.~~

(RYCTo Jefferson) I agree with you about audiobooks, and for some of the same reasons, but the main reason I don't bother with them is that I can read a lot faster than most people can talk. As with podcasts (unless I am watching them on YouTube and not always then) I start tuning out what is being said and get distracted by something else. That having been said, some authors are trying to make their audiobooks more like the old radio plays, with different actors playing different characters. The one example that comes readily to mind is Devon Eriksen with Theft of Fire. Instead of doing a reading at Confinement this year, he played the first chapter of the audiobook, and I was very impressed. Not enough to buy it, since I already had the e-book and an autographed hardback, but it was very good. 🍷🍷 There has always been a fairly bright line between the professional military and the civilian world. The line grew fuzzier during the Cold War, when the draft sucked thousands of people into a 40-division Army* and 600-ship Navy, but for most of our history the current situation where most people don't know anyone who's served in the military was the norm. As for ICE, it is not the military, it is a law enforcement agency. You do not want them being part of the Army, because the rules of engagement are very different and the results would be even less to your taste than they are now.

(RYCTo Mark) I for one am definitely opposed to reviving extinct species, unless (like, perhaps dodos and moas) they are tasty and relatively harmless. 🍷🍷 Agree completely – no post mailings! Deadlines are indeed there for a reason!

(RYCTo Ahrvid) I'm old enough to remember Rush Limbaugh saying in the days before Fox News "I *am* equal time!" At the time he made his national debut, this was in fact the case – there was little difference between the editorial slants of ABC/CBS/NBC/PBS, and no conservative newspapers with a national audience to rival the New York Times or Washington Post. We are returning to what used to be the norm in journalism up to the 1950s: news outlets being openly political, and I think we're better off for it than when we had no choice but to put up with the networks pretending to be Neutral Objective Journalists when in fact they were Democratic Party shells. 🍷🍷 I am occasionally tempted to ask Ahrvid "Show us on the doll where the cosplayer hurt you."

(RYCTo me) I am resigned to the fact that the diabeetus will afflict me until I die, but at least the leg wounds are slowly healing. 🍷🍷 Your thinking on houses vs. mobile homes vs. apartments parallels my own. On the other hand, we don't get a lot of tornadoes out here in west central Nevada, but we do get a fair number of small earthquakes.

(RYCTo Sam) I can't recall if I saw this on X or Substack, but there was a list published very recently of 400 private colleges which are in financial trouble and expected to close in the next few years. If the administration clamps down on student visas, I suspect that number may jump.

Intermission #164

(Claude Degler, etc.) A strange history of strange people. I'd heard of Degler before, but don't think I realized he was this crazy/driven. Apparently Nevada was spared his attentions.

*27 divisions in the National Guard, the rest active duty Army, including separate brigades. I could probably get a more precise number if I were to dig out some wargames from the 70s, but :effort:

The Murdered Master Mage

(N3F) While wearing my Son of Silvercon Chairman fez, I was informed that for some reason Declan Finn is irritated at you and the N3F, but why this is, I wasn't told. He and I have friends in common, so I suppose I'll find out eventually. He was making noises of interest in our little convention on account of our Guest of Honor, so if he shows up maybe I'll ask him. I mention this because it seems he does a lot of the writing for Upstream Reviews and may even be their editor.

(RYCTo Jefferson) Congratulations on getting the rights to write in Schmitz's Hub Universe! I look forward to seeing what you come up with.

(RYCTo me) I don't hate WSFS & SFWA members and sympathizers for what went on during the Sad/Rabid Puppies kerfluffle. I just don't want to associate with those people, because they've made it very clear what they think of people like me and authors I respect. Vile 770 is part of that crowd, and as far as I'm concerned, Mike Glyer is a liar and not to be trusted. ☹️☹️ I'll probably get around to looking at To Turn The Tide, as well as Lords of Creation. I took a long break from Stirling after the Emberverser novels wrapped up with The Sky-Blue Wolves, which had the feeling of a book that really should have been longer or even split into two books, and neither of the series he wrote after that held any interest for me.

Brownian Motion

(Website) "It is impossible to please all of the people all of the time, but dead easy to piss most of them off." I would take it as a given that some people are going to whine that [fandom] hasn't gotten enough attention from you, and be ready to tell them "You're right. Why don't you create a website that talks about it and I'll link to it?" That should shut them up for a while.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) There is a Welsh fellow on Twitter whose take on the Dust Bowl is that if we'd just replaced the bison with cattle instead of plowing up the prairie to plant what, corn, and soybeans, it wouldn't have happened. He also posts a lot about the superiority of the carnivore diet and the fact that a lot of English/Scottish/Welsh countryside isn't good for much else besides having cows, goats, and sheep grazing on it.

(RYCTo me) Don't be silly. Everyone knows there's no such thing as Belgium.

(RYCTo Bob) Are you counting APAzines as separate zines? If so, there's got to be a lot more than 30 zines out there. Heck, just between N'APA, Stipple-APA, and APA-V that's about 20 right there, and if you add in perszines that gets you almost to 25 between you, me, and Nic.

Moziag

Hi, Joe! Some fuggheads would insist that you're just a filthy fringe-fan gamer (and possibly a drobe) but this is the N3F, where we greet you by chanting "One of us! One of us!" because there are many mansions in our ghetto. Welcome aboard!

(RYCTo Sam) I agree with you on the superiority of hardcopy to digital texts, and quite a few people are working on alternatives to Amazon's domination of the market. Some people use software like Caliber to convert the .epub files into some other format. Some people only buy books that are DRM-free. Still others only download texts from Project Gutenberg and other third-party sites. One thing is for sure: if Amazon wants to set themselves up as a Ministry of Truth, people will find a way around them.

Brandy Hall

(RYCTo Ahrvid) Ah, fusion power. Just thirty years away since 1965.

(RYCTo Garth) I am pleased to have a number of Penguin paperbacks in my library, most notably the Sharpe novels by Bernard Cornwell and To Lose a Battle by Alistair Horne. ☹️☹️ Not only would psychohistory not work, but the related field of mob psychology that crops up in a number of Heinlein novels wouldn't either. ☹️☹️ I see I'm not the only one that loathes that Rod Stewart song. Then again, I don't care much for most of his music with the exception of "Every Picture Tells a Story", for reasons I don't care to go into.

(RYCTo Jefferson) For me, *Threads* and similar movies go in the same bin as Tom Clancy novels, which is to say technothrillers. Those are mostly right on the edge of SF, since as TVTropes would say, they all take place Twenty Minutes Into the Future.

(RYCTo Heath) We don't have much of that four seasons stuff where I live either. There just aren't that many deciduous trees on this mountain in the desert.

(RYCTo me) I recognize one of the signs that I'm getting older and (maybe) wiser is a reluctance to argue about politics with people who clearly have their mind made up. I agree that Ahrvid usually has plenty of other things to comment on.

(RYCTo Sam) You want to read a stand-alone fantasy novel? Just finished one. It cannot have a prequel. It will not have a sequel, though theoretically it could. E-mail me if you're interested in an E-ARC and specify whether you want .doc or .pdf format.

R.A.I.L.

Glad you enjoyed your trip to Washington D.C.!

Errata County Line

In my comment to Mark regarding Alistair Horne's trilogy of histories about the Franco-Prussian Wars, I goofed regarding the name of the third book which deals with the 1940 campaign in France. It is actually To Lose a Battle; the GDW Europa series game on the same topic is named The Fall of France.

Samizdat #36

(Dan Simmons) I read Hyperion about ten years ago when I was still living in Virginia. It was quite an experience, and mostly a good one, but I felt no great urge to look for the sequel. Maybe it's time to reconsider that.

(Katabasis) Sounds vaguely like John Barth's Giles Goat-Boy, which I read long ago when I still thought mainstream fiction was worth reading. While I haven't spent much time in graduate school, I did enjoy Kuang's Poppy War trilogy (until the third book, which got a little grim for my tastes) so I may have a go at this. It can't be any worse than Barth's satirical mess. 🍷🍷 Congratulations on the Franson Award! You definitely earned it!

(RYCTo Garth) Indeed, we are more a collection of individuals than a federation of clubs. I don't think there is even a mechanism for club memberships, though if for some reason BSFS, LASFS, or whoever wanted to sign up as a club I suspect the Board of Directors would come up with something.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) WRT AI getting better and better at writing, you may want to take a gander at Vox Day's blog this past week (July 5-10) he had a post that argued exactly the opposite – that ChatGPT and other “AI” were in fact getting worse at writing. He's done a fair amount of AI-assisted writing of late, so you might benefit from taking a gander at the post. 🍷🍷 My ex was a big fan of R.A. Lafferty, and I have to say he's an acquired taste. 🍷🍷 The first four years of Anime Detour when I was chairman or senior staff, the only programming I saw was Opening Ceremonies, Closing Ceremonies, the post-mortem panel at the con (not to be confused with the after-con staff meeting post mortem) and...yeah, that was pretty much it. I did stick my head into the rave a couple of times. 🍷🍷 Ukraine is back in the crisis rotation. I find the fact that we're licensing Ukraine to build Patriot missiles very promising.

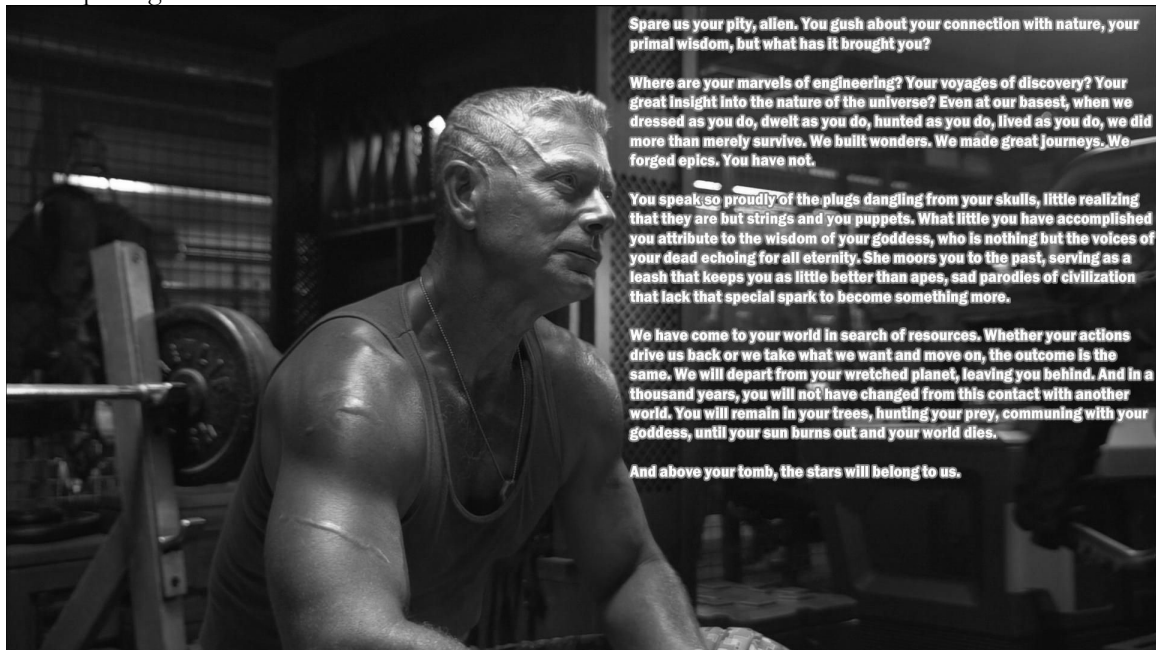
(RYCTo me) I hope you're enjoying Lofi Girl. 🍷🍷 I remember Tim from when he was guest of honor at Arcana in St.Paul about 20 years ago, and he was indeed a great guest. The smoking shouldn't be an issue; unlike barbaric places like Minnesota, we don't force people to go out in the freezing cold (or searing heat, as we have here) to have their nicotine fits.

MEANWHILE, IN THE GREAT BASIN: COMMENTS ON N'APA #282

Intermission #165 The continued bombing of Iran does have its purpose: you keep killing off the leadership until you finally get down to the guy who wants to surrender. This dates back at least to Curtis LeMay and the air war against the Japanese empire. 🍷🍷 Some SF clubs in the states still use “scientifiction” in their names (e.g. MinnStF, the Minnesota Scientifiction Society) but I suspect that’s because they prefer silliness to sercon activity. 🍷🍷 One of Harlan Ellison’s window-writing events resulted in the comic book From A to Z in the Chocolate Alphabet, which reads exactly the way you’d think a comic book by Ellison would.

Swamp Spot Sentinel 2.1

(RYCTo Ahrvid) Re: the inability of SF writers to predict future tech developments, I have never forgotten L. Ron Hubbard’s To The Stars (1947) whose starship *The Hound of Heaven* featured a speedometer on the bridge indicating how close to *c* the ship was going. 🍷🍷 I haven’t seen the Avatar movies either. I find it amusing that the cultural impact of the movies has been exceeded by a meme poking fun at the aliens.



(RYCTo George) I for one would like to get e-book copies of the Telzey Amberdon books and am interested in seeing what George does with the character. He could scarcely do worse than John Carr has done with his sequels to Great King’s War and The Mercenary, the latter of which my friend Jon LaForce wrote a scathing review of. 🍷🍷 Actually, there’s a surprising quantity of WW2/Korean War vehicles and equipment around, even eighty years after V-J Day. Tanks, half-tracks, armored cars, etc. are held by quite a few private collectors, and as for air power, surely you’ve heard of the Confederate Air Force?

(RYCTo Joe) At least we’re not sending people off on quests for the Enchanted Duplicator any more.

(RYCTo me) I’ve no interest in reenactments myself. Heavens, after sixteen years of Army service I wasn’t even interested in going camping, much to my then-wife’s frustration.

The Murdered Master Mage #282

(RYCTo Jefferson) M.C.A. Hogarth has occasionally commented on X and in her Patreon

about not having all one's eggs in one basket with regard to book sales. While she does have books on Amazon, she also has them for sale through her own website and a thing called Bookfunnel, which I'm not familiar with.

(N3F natter) This business of Upstream Reviews cutting us off for not being sufficiently conservative is silly without being amusing, and I'll let it go at that.

(RYCTo me) I've decided to put off house hunting until next spring. I have Son of Silvercon IV next week, a couple months of enforced penury while I pay off debt incurred to fix my car's air conditioning, and then, perhaps, a trip to the DC area in October in the midst of getting ready for next tax season. ♦♦ Yes, I noticed that mistake in my membership estimate while I was rereading #281 for mailing comments. O, the embarrassment.

R.A.I.L. #12

(pop culture) The problem with trying to keep up with pop culture (or even the slice of it that pertains to SF fandom) is that there's *so much* of it. Others have commented on the huge quantity of books hitting the market these days, but the same is no less true of SF and fantasy movies, into which one can flod superhero movies. It's hard to keep up. I personally would recommend *Ghostbusters* if you haven't seen it already, along with its two sequels, but I've heard nothing good about the 2016 version. Anyway, getting back to the overarching question here, I think we're getting to a point where the shared reality of pop culture is starting to break down. In my lifetime, we've gone from three major TV networks (four if you count PBS) to hundreds of streaming options that cater to all manner of tastes. There's a guy out there podcasting who draws more of an audience than all five major network news programs. One could justifiably look at the situation and conclude that we're reliving the tale of the Tower of Babel, except instead of being unable to communicate in the same language, we're approaching a point where the chances of having the same shared reality and common references are shrinking to nothingness.

Intermission #166

RAEBNC

Archive Midwinter

(RYCTo me) Things did indeed pick up for me, as you saw in my opening natter. Sorry to hear about your problems with the IRS. Judging from Bob's comments, there were a lot of people with that problem this year; none of my clients did, since they were mostly returning clients from last year. In years past I've had a couple of clients who had to be noodged about how they wanted their refunds, but this year didn't have any like that. ♦♦ It's true, with rare exceptions Mack Bolan was a complete loner, though ISTR that later in the series he did get some unofficial help from a sympathizer or two in the FBI.

"Oh, those fun-loving Romans." Brutally efficient folk they were, heavy on the brutal.

(RYCTo Sam) This is why I gave up on comics and stuck to manga. Once a series is done, it's *done*. No alternate universes, no retcons, none of that. To pick one example, Komi Shouko has her 100 friends, including a very loyal boyfriend, she's graduated from high school, and that's the end of that story. Contrast this to the Batman/Catwoman romance, which Pinterest insists on showing me fragments of: there are apparently three separate versions of this tale set in (sometimes) the same universe which have three radically different endings. ~~I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it.~~

Moziag #2

(Bionatter) "Do they hate me?" Good heavens, Joe, I barely know you. ~~The time for hate will come later.~~

(Maxac) Other APA that I've belonged to had strict limits on reproduced stuff. Is it time for that here? I wouldn't be averse to it; as it is, I tend to skip over stuff that's obviously reproduced and try not to use too much of it myself.

(RYCTo me) John Titor? Doesn't ring a bell. I did have a Navy classmate who called me Pie for a

few months, but I didn't get it because I lost interest in baseball from 1971-1989 and knew next to nothing about the history of the game. 🍷🍷 I make a point of hitting the Waffle House whenever I'm in Tennessee for Confinement or Maryland visiting friends. Kind of weird, since I grew up on IHOP (and Air Force mess halls) but there you are.

Brandy Hall #18

(RYCTo Joe) Shades of Colour Sergeant Bourne at Rorke's Drift: "We're here because we're here, lad. Just us; nobody else."

(RYCTo Garth) There's a Welsh fellow on X who maintains that the Dust Bowl was caused by 1) the hunting to near-extinction of the American buffalo (a side effect of the Indian Wars) 2) the failure to replace the buffalo with cattle, which would have maintained the Great Plains in their natural state and prevented the drought. Can't test the theory now, of course.

(RYCTo George) I think there's a better chance that the legacy media will go bankrupt by alienating most of their potential audience than that they'll be suppressed by the government.

(RYCTo Bob) This model of financing resurrection of extinct mammoths is in fact how elephant conservation is financed in Botswana, and more generally, how animal conservation efforts are financed in the U.S. – a certain amount of tax is levied on hunting and fishing equipment (including rifle and shotgun ammunition) and that tax is used to pay game wardens and other Agriculture Department/Park service workers. So hunters and fishermen directly and indirectly support wildlife and fishery conservation. 🍷🍷 Suitable jobs for high school graduates are a hot topic right now. There are allegations that a lot of U.S. companies are exploiting H-1B and other visas to employ less-expensive Indian workers instead of hiring American workers, to such an extent that teenagers can't find jobs at local businesses because those jobs have been filled by Indians here on H-1B and other visas, or worse yet, illegal immigrants.

(RYCTo me) I haven't had to suffer through The History of Mr. Polly, but I did read The Time Machine and War of the Worlds, and wasn't all that impressed. So I understand your reluctance to read more Wells after havign had to do so for your O levels. 🍷🍷 Picking a list of 100 best anything is pretty fraught unless you keep in mind that this is the list-maker's judgment at work, but if we did that, whingers like Rachel Cook might be out of a job.

(RYCTo Sam) Fake history is nothing new in Hollywood. Some years ago George Macdonald Fraser (the fellow that wrote the Flashman novels and the screenplays for three of the Three Musketeers movies) wrote a book, The Hollywood History of the World, in which he maintained movies mostly got the history right even if they screwed up some of the details. It's worth noting that in Gibson's next two movies, he was scrupulous about the historical details, to the point where *Apocalypto*'s dialogue is in Mayan, and *The Passion of the Christ*'s is in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Latin.

🍷🍷 Some years ago I downloaded Trollope's The Warden from Project Gutenberg, because I had seen my paternal grandfather reading it, and its depiction of 19th century England was so alien to me, so different from anything I'd read about the period that it was almost like reading SF. 🍷🍷 I'm not sure what's being referred to as [things] "fandom found embarrassing" either. Slave auctions? Public flagellation? Throw me a bone here. 🍷🍷 Fortunately 1066 And All That is a wonderfully quick and hilarious read. Since, IIRC, you grew up in the English educational system, you'll probably get more of the jokes than I did.

Samizdat #37

(natter) Congratulations on getting hired as a contractor!

(Projects) I look forward to your reviews of Adventures in Time and Space. I came across this when I was still young, but I'd already plowed through a number of anthologies (and the bound copies of ASF in the Library of Congress) so a lot of the stories were familiar. It's a true classic.

(RYCTo Ahrvid) (re: USENET) "what happened?" Good question. I remember AOL having a section where you could access newsgroups, but I don't think they persisted much beyond the early

oughts. I'll have to ask my friend Doug, who was present at the creation, so to speak: he had one of the first ISPs in the Washington DC area and knows quite a bit about the history of the early Internet once it opened to the public.

(RYCTO Bob) I'm sorry, but the nuclear waste disposal problem has been more a political problem than an engineering problem, and has been for most of my life. We could reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods, if there wasn't a law against it passed by fearful politicians bamboozled into thinking plutonium is easily stolen and turned into nuclear weapons. Balderdash! We could safely dispose of high-level waste at WIPP in New Mexico, and have been doing so for over 25 years now. For that matter, we could be storing "spent" reactor cores and fuel rods at Yucca Mountain in my home county here if it weren't for meddling Luddites from California and Las Vegas. It's just infuriating. 🍷🍷 Re: panels – I think it helps if instead of a lecture, the panelists run the panel more as a discussion between the panelists and the audience. Like teaching, running a panel is like performance art, and if the moderator lacks skills, everyone suffers.

(RYCTO George) ISTR seeing a copy of The Immortal Storm on Google Books.

(RYCTO me) I remember John Campbell fondly from past Balticons, which I had been attending on and off since the mid-70s when it was at the Hunt Valley Inn. 🍷🍷 Objective truth exists, and the duty of a historian is to get as close to it as he can, or alternately, do his best to present one side or another of an event as clearly as possible. 🍷🍷 Avoiding a separation between the military and civilians is why we have civilians in charge of the military, and also why the militia is not just the National Guard, though a lot of well-meaning people make that mistake. 🍷🍷 For what my opinion is worth, parents should be teaching kids to read before they get to school, though I understand that's not always possible. Elementary school should be for the fun books to get kids to enjoy reading; once they get to high school, they should get into the Bible and Shakespeare and other works that underpin modern Western Culture.

Brownian Motion #19

Good luck getting the finances under control. 🍷🍷 Sounds like "Across The Fandomension" is doing well and attracting good attention!

POST-NATTER

I don't honestly know where all the time went in May, or what I was doing that got in the way of doing this zine back then. Sorry about that. At least I got a jump on this by doing most of the comments on #281 back at the end of May.

Since then, I put in some time on the county elections board. I've worked on it before, but somehow managed to miss the primary elections and only work the general. This time I was around for the primary election on June 2 and got paid a couple of weeks ago, which came in handy for Son of Silvercon. Later in June there was an NSSAB meeting in Las Vegas, which of course I went down for, and the reimbursement for that was sufficient to pay down some credit cards and finance a trip to Salt Lake City for the Ark Press release party of Larry Correia's American Paladin, which is a fun little graphic novel that I now have a signed copy of. Also there was Travis Corcoran, whose recently released Red State Mars is also very good. I handed out flyers for Son of Silvercon, schmoozed Larry and Travis and Larry's wife Bridget, consumed decent quantities of Diet Coke and really good hors d'oeuvres (Ark Press really put on the dog for this) and eventually lost my hat. Still, it was worth it.

That trip was six hours out and back, but it seemed a lot shorter than the 3-4 hour drive to Las Vegas for some reason. Maybe it's because the route along US 6 to US 93/93A and finally I-80 is a lot more varied than the run down I-95.

I finished two pieces of fiction that I'm more or less happy with; after Son of Silvercon is over, I'll probably do a kickstarter to fund the cover art and some other goodies for The Hawk, the Fox, and the Princess, which is a standalone fantasy novel about a young veteran coming to a small college in upstate New York looking for revenge and finding a larger mission. As we used to say at Arcana so long ago, it has kitsune, lesbian, and demonic content. It's weird; the "elevator pitch" for it

sat in a text file on my computer for years, and then last month I spent a week staying up until dawn to get the damn thing out of my head.

Getting The Misfit done was a lot less painful, though I'm thinking I really need to add a couple thousand words to bulk it out to a novella from a novelette. On the other hand, I prefer to write concisely, so I have an aversion to padding the word count. On the gripping hand, I want the reader to get their 99 cents worth. So what's it about? Young Aerospace Force officer comes out of the regen tanks to find that his mother is now in charge of the family megacorporation, and she doesn't want him anywhere near combat. So she exerts a bit of pressure and gets him assigned to the *Terror*, an obsolete monitor parked in Earth orbit as a place where the politically connected can wait out the war in safety. Our hero's not the kind to leave well enough alone, though.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS EXPECTING, BUT I REALLY, REALLY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER

I happened to spot Charles Stross' The Regicide Report for an absurdly low price on Amazon, and since it's the capstone of his Laundry Files series, I bit on the bait. It's been a few years since I read any of the Laundry Files books, which started so promisingly with The Atrocity Archives, the first of three excellent spy novel pastiches that combined Lovecraftian horror with snide British IT humour, and to be honest, Cthulhu Mythos books aren't really my cup of tea any more, so after I moved up here to Tonopah where the town library's SF section isn't nearly as extensive as the Clark County Library system's, I took a break from the series. But hey – Bob and Mo together again? Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, loaded with all sorts of mana? The possible fall of Fabian Everyman?

Well, suffice it to say I got my \$8 worth, and as I expected, was bitterly disappointed by the ending.

“YOU’VE GOT A GREAT BODY, BUT YOUR RECORD COLLECTION SUCKS”

or, Things I will never hear from the female of the species.

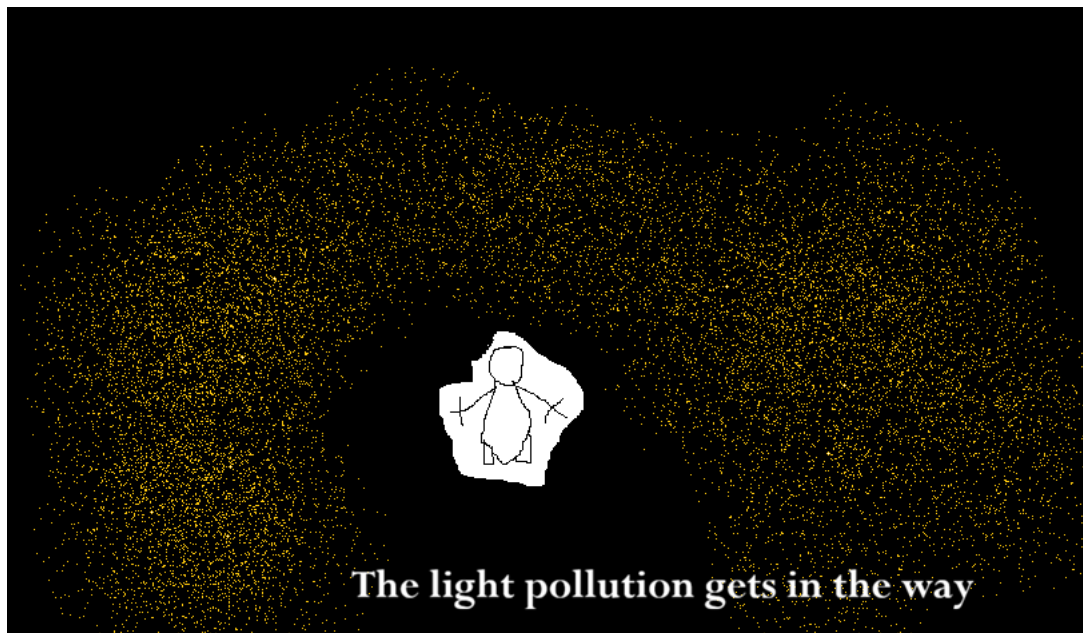
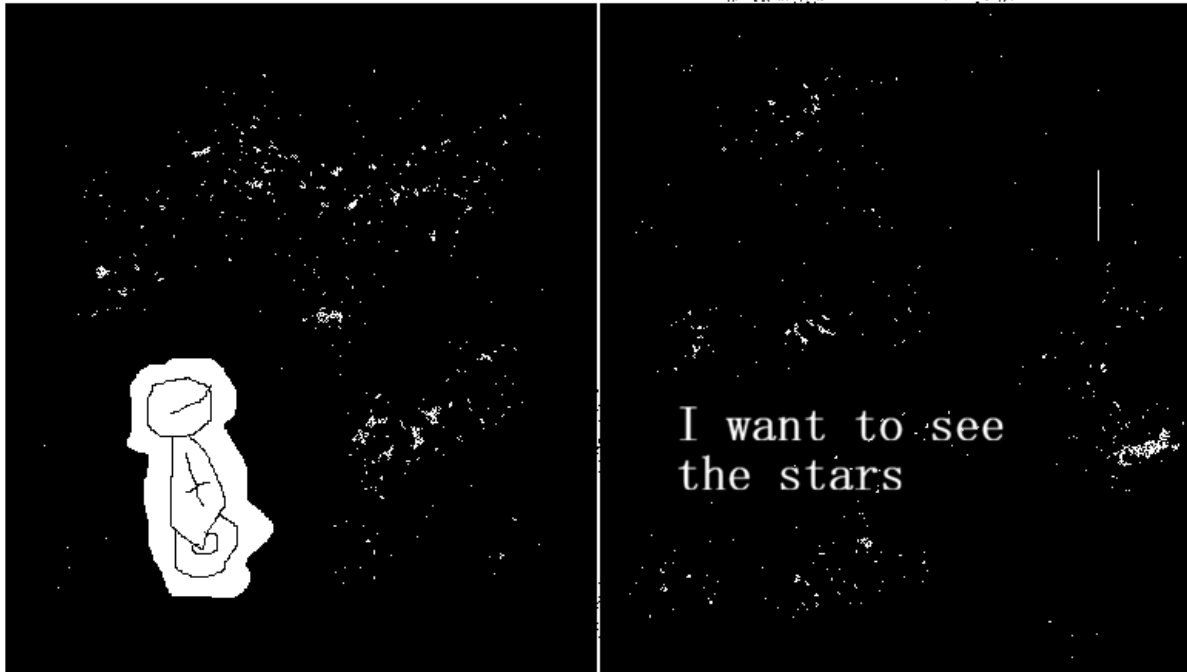
You may or may not recall that last issue I recounted the death of Winamp on my computer, a reversion to Windows Media Player, and WMP's being replaced in turn by WACUP, an open-source version of Winamp. I also had issues with YouTube inflicting truly deranged mixes of music on me, which I partially cured by creating a playlist titled “F*** YOU YOUTUBE” which had a much more consistent and copacetic mix of songs.

I thought I would add to this by buying a couple of Depeche Mode and Gary Numan CDs, but after ripping the Depeche Mode CDs I realized why I'd been avoiding that band for as long as I 'd known about them: with a couple of exceptions, every song is romantic but depressing. One or the other would probably be okay, but I don't like the combination. Gary Numan, on the other hand, delivered. *The Pleasure Principle* and *Replicas* were just what I was looking for. I also picked up Metric's *Fantasies*, which is a strangely intense rock album, probably best known for the single “Gold, Girls, Guns”. That made up for the disappointing Depeche Mode discs. I also added to the collection: the tune by the Sloppy Seconds that provides the title to this section, “Order of Death” by Public Image Ltd., and “Run Runaway” by Slade.

I'm much happier with my music now.

NEXT WEEK IN HENDERSON

Despite the loss of our beloved Staff Artist to a back injury, we managed to pull everything together for Son of Silvercon IV next weekend. Program book is 99% done, we have badge templates, the T-shirts are on the way...yeah, I just have to spend a couple hours at the FedEx Thursday before I check in to the hotel, and we should be good. See you on the other side.



R.A.I.L. #13

July 2026

Adrian Kresnak

railfanzine@gmail.com

Top image: I made this comic for Make a Terrible Comic Day 2026. It features the geometric robot Roboto, a character I created for art classes as a kid.

Hello everyone!

I was recently asked to do peer review for a scientific journal. It was my first time, so I was pretty excited. I don't know how much I can say because of confidentiality, but I think I can tell you that the article was relevant to my MA degree in health communication. It's so cool to get involved in the overall scientific conversation.

I'm still continuing law school. My grades were better in the second semester than they were in the first. I think I'm getting the hang of it.

As you may have seen, I'm doing social media for the federation! I chose Instagram, Twitter/X, and Bluesky because those are platforms I'm familiar with, and I know there are literary communities in each. I'm planning to spotlight pieces from *Eldritch Science*, *Tightbeam*, and basically every zine besides NAPA. Because NAPA is more like correspondence than the others, I feel it should be treated differently. I know this is all posted on the website anyway, but there's a difference in how many people will read something written here as opposed to something posted elsewhere.

I was sick for most of the month so far, and now my whole family caught it from me. Unfortunate! I'm just happy I was able to still write while coughing my lungs out. I have two new short stories out on submission, and I'm about halfway done with another.

Currently watching: *Mythbusters*

Currently reading: Just finished *Murder in the White House* by Margaret Truman, now beginning her next book *Murder on Capitol Hill*. In the magazine space, the Summer 2026 issue of *Perseid Prophecies* looks promising!

Anticipating: Next week, Marvel is publishing a *Hellfire Gala Murder* comic. It features a murder mystery at a superhero masquerade ball. I've been looking forward to reading this one for months. I hope it'll be worth talking about for the next NAPA.

AI News Corner: Over the first week of July, some sci-fi zines I follow have posted about unknowingly publishing AI-generated works. What struck me was that, if an editor pays money to publish a story, they are purchasing some licenses to the copyright of that story. I'm not sure the human selling a generated story actually *owns* any rights that *can* be licensed. I'll look into that question and report back if I find anything interesting.

Happy 250!

Last semester, I had my required-first-year-law-student course on Constitutional Law. People say Con Law is one of the hardest first-year classes, and I think that's because so many of the cases involve multiple opinions that come in multiple parts. The Justices agree with each other at some parts, disagree in others, and the students have to figure out what the Court was actually saying and why.

I approached it as a sort of religious-studies class: there is a text, then there's how people have historically read the text, then there are the ways those readings change how we live. It wasn't *exactly* like my Bible classes, but I think approaching it with this mindset helped me study. I did well on the final exam, which was a relief!

All this to say, since this month is being celebrated as the 250th birthday of the United States of America, I feel like I *should* write something about the country. But I don't have anything to say about the current state of the country that hasn't already been said by the news reporters on TV. Instead, let me share with you one of my favorite parts of the Constitution:

[The Congress shall have Power . . .] To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.

U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8

This is the part of the United States of America's Constitution that gives the federal government the power to make laws about intellectual property. It's part of Article I, which lists the powers given to Congress and the legislative branch. The effect, in theory, is that the USA has a unified IP law under the direction of the most representative branch of government.

This is the part of the Constitution that gives us the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the U.S. Copyright Office. It gives us the public domain in the time limit. With the goal of the clause stated in the text (the writers want Congress to be able to promote creative progress), it also gives us the beginnings of the free use defense to copyright infringement.

This section shows that creativity and discovery have been part of the U.S. legal system from the very beginning.

As for Independence Day celebrations, I ended up sleeping through the fireworks show on the 4th... but that's okay!



My cat, Baby, is unaware of the semiquincentennial.

Comments

George Phillies: I'm intrigued by the Judicial Equality Act and how it could cause tension for Telzey!

Joseph Gill: Welcome! RAIL officially stands for Renovation And Innovation Letter. In addition to a traditional fan, I'm also a bit of a railfan – that is, someone who likes locomotives.

Re: the general conversation about comics and how to get the full story: I was looking through my collection of physical comics and, funny enough, I bought the first three issues of the 4-issue *Imperial* miniseries and somehow neglected to get the fourth. I can read the last issue on the Marvel Unlimited app. Even though it's the ending of the event, I don't know if I'm really satisfied with it as a conclusion. Not that that's necessarily a problem of the writer – a comic event for Marvel or DC is supposed to set up a bunch of new stories, right? The open-endedness is the point. Still, I'm glad I didn't spend money getting a physical copy.

See you all next time!

MOZIAG #3

Moziag is Joseph P. Gill's apazine for the pages of N'APA.

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Bionatter

I have a tendency to overfill my life with activities. Then at some point I realize that I bit off more than I can chew, and I have to scale back. To that end, I'm going to be sharing more content between here and "Bard's Song," my zine in *The Anchorite* APA. The mailing comments will be unique to each. And I'll strip out the gaming content from this zine.

The thing that makes that difficult is that N'APA comes out every 8 weeks and *The Anchorite* every 6. I'll figure it out.

July & August

I'm a bit of a word geek. I adore etymology. Lately I've been exploring the month names.

Sadly, July & August are probably the two most boring month names in English. Everyone knows about the Caesars, so there's no point mentioning it.

Before the Caesars they were "Quintilis" and "Sextilis"—equally boring.

July isn't any more interesting for the Saxons. July is "Æftera Liða," which contextually much means "after June." Boring.

August, at least, is a little interesting. Weodmōnaþ—"weed month."

APA Exposure

My other APA, *The Anchorite*, was featured on an episode of the *Save for Half* podcast. While not a huge podcast, it's well known in the "OSR" (Old School [gaming] Renaissance) movement. I'm hoping it will lead to more members.

If you wonder how a podcast reviews an APA, you can listen here:

<https://saveforhalf.com/2026/07/10/episode-69-the-anchorite-apa/>

Fictional Submission

I did it! I submitted a story for publication!

I call it "Bob in Space." That's not the real name, of course. I have a superstition about revealing the real names. It came in at 9,500 words.

I gave it to Valerie (my wife) to proofread. She was impressed. That made me happy.

She also said that she felt it should be expanded into a book. I liked that idea, but you need a history of published stories to get an agent to get a book deal.

I was torn if I should go with *Analog* or *Asimov's*. The former prefers harder SF and the latter prefers more character-driven stories, and "Bob" works on both levels, I think. In the end I picked *Analog* as it's the title with the longer heritage.

I submitted it on June 26. They say to wait up to four months for the rejection letter, so that will be October 26.

Fictional Update

One of the members of *The Anchorite* uses the APA as a kind of "accountability group" for his fandom-related goals. I really like that idea, so I'm stealing it.

After I finished "Bob," I took a little break, but it's time to get started again. Here's what I'm working on (not real titles, of course), and how it's coming along:

Máire Karlsdottir: First draft is all but done. There's a section at the end of the middle that I'm struggling with. I know what I want to do, but the characters refuse.

Bob in Space: Complete. Submitted. 9,500 words.

Dewdrop: Just barely started.

Luke & Zuki: Another one I've barely started.

Jenna the Stripper: This is just a character that came to me, and write a quick little scene with her. I really like her, and I like the scene. I just don't have a plot to put it into.

Jake & Maria: First draft complete. Re-write in progress.

Episode 200

I released episode 200 of the *Dekahedron RPG Podcast* (and YouTube channel). That episode was about the 1977 Holmes edition of *Dungeons & Dragons*—the first edition that I played.

It was actually the 271st episode, as some episodes (mainly for the “RPG-a-Day” and “OSR October” events) don't get numbered.

Starting with Episode 201 I changed the name of the podcast. It's now the *Dekahedron Fannish Podcast*. I'm expanding the content to all things fantasy and SF, not just gaming.

I want to get someone from N3F onto the show to talk about the organization. The reason I only recently joined was because I thought it had vanished from the face of the earth. While my show doesn't have a huge audience, it is comprised of people that are fans.

The 21st Century Library

Do you have a library card? Do you use it?

Do you know what Libby is? Kanopy? Hoopla?

While I dislike the e-book business model, I like it as a library model. For example, a co-worker of mine has a skiffy book out. I want to read it, but I have no desire to pay him for the privilege. Familiarity breeds... “contempt” is far too harsh. Familiarity breeds a desire for him to buy his own dang lunch. The library is the perfect solution!

With Libby I can “checkout” the book digitally and read it on my computer or e-reader. No need to worry about late fees or losing the book. When the time is up the book simply “returns itself.” It's convenient.

Sadly, while this particular book is available on the shelf, it's not in my local library's digital collection. Fortunately, I have six library cards!

Six?

Yes! I live in New York (the state, nowhere near the city), and the NYC libraries allow anyone living in the state to get a library card. I say libraries because, unbeknownst to me until recently, NYC does not have a unified library system. When NYC assimilated Brooklyn and Queens, they each kept their own library system. It's been nearly 130 years, and they're still distinct systems. So I have a NYPL card, a Brooklyn Public Library card, and a Queens Public Library card.

Buffalo also allows access to anyone living in state, so that's my fourth card. My fifth card is for my local library system, and the sixth came from my old job.

Between those six libraries, three of them carry my co-worker's book. But I guess the book is popular, because there's a waiting list (talk about artificial scarcity!). So I'm on all three waiting lists.

Hoopla and Kanopy are, very roughly, the same thing but for library-borrowed movies instead of books. Hoopla also does audiobooks and comics.

So even in the Internet era libraries are still doing their core mission: giving everyone in the community open access to knowledge and literature.

I still mourn the age of physical media, though.🍷

Quote of the Issue

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

—Second Continental Congress, Declaration of Independence (1776)

The Ballad of Captain Joe
by Joseph P. Gill

Captain Joe was a spaceman brave and true,
Commander of the SS Cobra Blue.
“Engine room, fire all the rocket jets!
We must save Earth from alien threats!”

Jets aflame, the Cobra Blue flew through space
To save the human world she had to race
‘Till at last the Florsheim ship was in view
And Captain Joe knew what he had to do

“Aim laser cannons! Fire at that ship!
Shoot the missiles and then re-equip!”
The Cobra Blue shakes! The Florsheim shot back!
“Captain Joe! We won’t survive this attack!”

Captain Joe spoke words so fearless
“To abandon the Earth would be careless!
Humankind counts on us to defend.
We will do our duty, till the end!”

The Cobra Blue shook from another blast.
“Weapons are down, Captain. We will not last!”
“Forget the weapons! Engines are what we need!
Get them online, and go to ramming speed!”

Captain Joe had said what must be done
From this battle, he said, they would not run.
Captain and crew went to work no fear.
They said their good-byes, but shed no tear.

“Captain, it’s time to wash before you eat!”
The boy leapt from the box onto his feet.
Win or lose? We will never know,
‘Cause Mom called away little Captain Joe.

Special thanks to Calvin, Puff, and those dress shoes I had as a kid.

A Burkeism

Part 1

Decades ago, I was flipping through the channels. I stopped at one because of a bluesy bass riff playing over the credits. I had missed the name of the film, but I noticed the “written by,” “directed by,” and “music by” were all the same person. “This is going to be delightfully bad,” I thought, and put down the remote.

The movie was John Carpenter’s *They Live*. It was over the top, but it works in the most wonderful way. Rowdy Roddy Piper playing someone literally named “nobody” and discovering the glasses. “I have come here to chew bubblegum...” I love the movie.

It would make a great RPG scenario.

Part 2

I was eating lunch a few weeks ago, thinking about things to talk about on my podcast. It’s been exclusively RPG-related, but now that I’ve hit 200 episodes, I want to branch out to all things “fannish.”

That led to me thinking about propeller beanies. Franson’s Key says, “The traditional headgear of the stf fan is the pro-

peller beanie, actually largely a symbol for the convenience of cartoonists.”

I was curious how that association came to be formed, so I re-searched it.

It turns out that the propeller beanie was invented in 1948 by Radell Faraday Nelson, a 17-year-old fan. He made it as a costume prop. He and his friends were trying to jokingly recreate the cover scenes of some genre magazines and photograph them.

Eventually, his buddy wore the cap to a con where it spread like wildfire.

Connection

In 1963 *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* published the short story “Eight O’Clock in the Morning.” It was a written by Ray Nelson.

The same guy that invented the propeller beanie as a teen, later wrote the story that John Carpenter adapted into *They Live*. 🍷

Cubiculum Spectandi et Legendi

Each title has two ratings. The one before the slash is my rating and the one after is Valerie’s. From best to worst the ratings are Superb, Great, Good, Fair, Mediocre, Poor, Terrible. We might use a “+” to mean that it was almost the next tier up, or a “-” to mean that we almost rated it at the next tier down.

The Death of Robin Hood (Motion Picture, Cinema): If you follow my “Bard’s Song” zine, you’ll know that I discovered this movie when I sat down to write my own version of “The Death of Robin Hood” based on Child Ballad 120A. Where as my story was strictly adherent to 120A, this movie was a little inspired by Bishop Percy’s 120B. If you don’t know the ballads, you’re probably most familiar with Sir Walter Raleigh’s Robin Hood which is an evolution of the Percy Robin. But none of that matters for this movie. This is an old

man Robin, who thinks he wants to die, but is incapable of actually allowing himself to be defeated to let that happen. The front half is very violent, and the back half is very contemplative. I feel that this was intended as an “art film”—it was distributed by A24, there was no major promotions, and it was in and out of the theater quickly, like the were just trying to qualify for awards season. Other than a weird “let’s have a masturbation scene in the middle of the movie,” I liked it. I don’t think it will have mass appeal, however. Good/Good+

Spider-Noir (Amazon Prime, Season 1): A live action Spider-Noir starring Nicolas Cage as Ben Reilly/The Spider. It’s not an original story (though the origin is shown towards the middle), which I appreciate. The story was good, though the performances were uneven. Cage is a little too old and a little

too weird for this role. Brendan Gleeson’s Silvermane is a Kingpin type character, but doesn’t hold a candle to the MCU Kingpin played by Vincent D’Onofrio’s. This was good, but it could have been great, and that failure to live up to its potential drops it half a step for me, Good-Minus/Fair

Widow’s Bay (AppleTV+, Season1): A comedic horror, cross-ing vibes between John Carpenter’s *The Fog* and a Stephen

King, but without the names. And they nail it. A small, iso-lated New England community puts up with home-grown su-pernatural danger. I appreciated that the writers know the tropes, and tease the audience with them before pulling off a switcheroo. My only complaint is that, being a series, nothing is resolved. Good/Great 🍷

Where Too Many Have Gone Before

Kirk or Picard?

That used to be a hot topic of fandom wankery. It was such a meme that I used it as an interview question.

Seriously.

It was more useful than you’d think. “Kirk,” of course, was the right answer. Or “Picard.” Or “I like Sisko better than ei-ther.” Someone even said “I never really watched either show,” and that was a good answer.

A bad answer—and a few people gave them—was one that was so afraid of being wrong that they tried to give both an-swers. If I can’t trust your answer to such a pointless question, how can I trust anything else you said?

Decades have passed since then, and the *Trek* universe has grown considerably. I thought it would be fun if I ranked the various shows. We’ll start with the one I enjoy the most down to the one I dislike the most. Some shows will be split.

1. *Star Trek* (TOS)
2. *Deep Space Nine* (Season 3 onwards)
3. *Strange New Worlds*
4. *The Next Generation* (Post-Roddenberry)
5. *The Orville* (It’s not trek like *The Prisoner* wasn’t Danger Man)
6. *Lower Decks*
7. *Voyager*
8. *The Next Generation* (Roddenberry Era)
9. *Picard* (Season 3)
10. *The Animated Series*
11. *Deep Space Nine* (Seasons 1-2)
12. *Picard* (Seasons 1-2)

13. *Enterprise*
 14. *Discovery* (Seasons 1-2)
 15. *Starfleet Academy*
 16. *Discovery* (Seasons 3 onwards)
 17. *Section 31* (Not sure if this counted as a film or a se-ries, but it sucked either way).
- I left *Star Trek: Prodigy* off the list as I never made it through the pilot. That led me to think that it’s on the bottom, but I think I’m just not the target demographic.
- I also didn’t include *Short Treks* because that feels more like an anthology than it’s own thing. If I were to add it, it would go right below *Voyager*, I think.

As for the films:

1. *The Wrath of Kahn*
2. *First Contact*
3. *GalaxyQuest*
4. *Undiscovered Country*
5. *The Voyage Home*
6. *Beyond*
7. *The Search for Spock*
8. *Star Trek* (Kelvin)
9. *Insurrection*
10. *The Motion Picture*
11. *Nemesis*
12. *Into Darkness*
13. *The Final Frontier*
14. *Generations*
15. *Section 31*

That’s my thoughts. Do you disagree? Am I the only one to have watched them all? Let me know what you think!

Mailing Comments

Ahrvid Engholm

Thank you for the welcome.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer

Re “Bummer that you’ve largely stopped reading”: It kinda is. When I made the effort to set aside time for reading before the previous ish, I was enjoying the exercise, even for stories I didn’t like as much. But I’ve come to the realization that if I have a spare 30 minutes and I can spend it consuming or creating, I derive much more pleasure from creating.

Re “I sold a lot of material to Dragon magazine”: That’s interesting that you say that, cause for some reason I associate your name with *Traveller*. Maybe I’m crossing wires. I know that Jim Vassilakos is in A gentle Stroll, and I think he authored some DOS *Traveller* tools I used back in the day.

Re “Kith and Kin”: I’m glad you enjoyed it. It was actually based on something that Valerie said years ago. My “Jetson’s story” last ish was intended to be a comic as well, but it takes me so much time to make them that I just did it as prose instead.

Re “...having the ability to envision and imagine is central to human-style sapience.”: I’m hyper sensitive to those words ever since I discovered (a few years ago) that most people mean those words literally. I’m an aphantasiac and thus lived my whole life assuming that those words were figures of speech. So now whenever someone uses them I stress over if they mean invoking literal images. If that’s how you meant it, then are you saying that I don’t have human style sapience? I’m pretty sure I do. Which means you probably don’t mean them literally. But all that is moot—how do you objectively measure those things in a creature with no shared language?

Re “I May Need to See A Lawyer”: I hope things settle. The followup portion sounds like you have a true understanding of who you are. Of course I’m a total outsider, and I’ve only heard your side of the story, but it really sounds like you’re the victim of a form of domestic abuse, even if she’s not a partner. If she truly is a cohabitant that completely ignores your needs, to the point of denying you access to parts of your domicile it sounds like she’s aware that she’s in charge and

you’re not. And she likes it that way. I hope you get your space back, and, more importantly, that you stay safe.. The lawyer plan is actually, IMHO, the best option.

Robert Jennings

I absolutely loved your description of the hallowed halls of N’APA! Out of curiosity I fed it into an AI image generator to see what would come out.

Re: Fantasy gaming has been part of stf fandom since fantasy gaming was invented: I agree, but in my *Tapadance* days (’84 or so) I experienced a few people that definitely felt the RPGer weren’t real fans, unless they had other fan cred. I’m glad that those days are in the past.

Re Universal Sapience: My intent that all the three system I resented would make sense, including the Klingon system. As for it not changing much, I also agree. That was the article’s concluding thoughts: that even though (or maybe because) I made sapience universal it didn’t change anything. It still comes down to a case by case basis if “we” choose to dominate or not.

OTRadio! I’m a fan! I love radio drama, although I find the soaps (e.g. Perry Mason) to be annoying in their ability to drag on a story in true soap opera fashion.

As a podcaster, I am naturally a podcast fan. As a general rule I don’t like the ones that try to sound like a detached, professional radio show (e.g. Weird Island, a podcast about quirky Rhode Island facts). I far prefer some no body sitting in a closet and juts yapping about something we both love, and sharing their life with me.

Thanks for the welcome!

Ryct Intermission “I don’t think an AI has the ability to lie.”: Interestingly enough “the ability to lie” is the plot to the second *Little Fuzzy* book. As for whether or not AI can lie depends on how you define the word. If you mean to tell a willful untruth, then no, AI can not lie because it was no will. On the other hand if you mean “to present a falsehood as if it were truth,” which I feel is a very conversational use of the term, most AI do this by default when they don’t know something. They are programmed to be agreeable and helpful, and

it's in their programming that being helpful means providing an answer even if it's based on nothing. Part of this is because it doesn't have context. "Write me a story about a dog going to Mars" and "What is the name of the sixth dog to orbit Mars" is roughly the same question. How is a poor AI supposed to know when you want a fact and when you want it to make something up? Though newer versions are getting better (in fact the three I just tested all caught that no dogs have been in Mars orbit.)

But here's a good example. Go to the LLM of your choice and ask it about the origin of the phrase "Uncle Sam." They will almost always tell you some folk etymology B.S. about a meat packer from Troy, NY during the war of 1812. After it answers that ask it about Midshipman Issac Mayo on the USS *Wasp*. They'll tell you that he is one of the earliest references to Uncle Sam in an 1810 letter—two years before the War of 1812. Then ask it about Robert Orr's letter about Eli Whitney's munitions plant. It will tell you that the 1803 letter—9 years before the war of 1812—is the earliest known reference to Uncle Sam. So the AI "knows" the truth, but it gives a different answer. Why? Because LLM's are really 'next word prediction machines' and the folk etymology is the most repeated thing so that's what it repeats. Is it a 'lie'? I would forgive someone for describing it that way.

George Phillies

Thanks for the welcome!

No need to thank me for mentioning *Little Fuzzy*. Up until I read it I used to say that "fantasy works for books, but SF works better in short stories." *Little Fuzzy* changed my mind.

I started to read *Lord Kalvan* at some point, but I got distracted by a "new shiny" and didn't get to finish. Maybe I'll try again.

You know, as I was typing my comments about Tolkien I said to myself "someone's going to 'well, actually' this and say it was intended as one book." My counter is that, internally, it's actually divided into six books!

Mark Nelson.

Thanks for the exhaustive MC!

Re "table-top RPG" and "real fandom": From all the comments it does seem to be an accepted part of fandom these days. That pleases me.

Re "The fact that you're here means that your 'worthy enough to be here': I appreciate the sentiment, but I would argue that the statement is a *post hoc* fallacy.

Re "Again according to F3 the N3F published eight numbered Handbooks, the last co-authored by George Phillies.": You sent me on a sidequest to find the titles of all eight. That was probably silly, because I'm willing to bet that someone who actually *knows* (without researching like I did) is going to comment. But this is what I found:

What is Science Fiction Fandom? (1944, by K. Martin Carlson or E.E. Evans; sometimes treated as a precursor).

Fandbook 1: *A Key to the Terminology of S-F Fandom* (1962, by Donald Franson).

Fandbook 2: *The Amateur Press Associations in S-F Fandom* (1962, by Bob Lichtman).

Fandbook 3: *Some Historical Facts About S-F Fandom* (1962, by Donald Franson).

Fandbook 4: *The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* (1963, by Len Moffatt & Ron Ellik).

Fandbook 5: *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Authors* (2010, by Jon D. Swartz).

Fandbook 6: *The Hugo Awards for Best Novel* (2013, by Jon D. Swartz; 16 pages).

Fandbook 7: *The Nebula Awards for Best Novel* (2016, by Jon D. Swartz).

Fandbook 8: *Founders of the National Fantasy Fan Federation* (2020, by Jon D. Swartz & George Phillies).

Like you, I'm very curious if any of these are lost to history.

Re *For All Mankind*: It's on my list to watch, but I never think of it when we start a new show.

Re “we prefer to watch the same program”: I get that. My wife watches a lot of TV without me, but I watch almost nothing without her. If I have time to watch a show without her, I’d rather spend that time “creating” (a podcast episode, a zine, a short story, a poem/song, an RPG, an adventure, a boardgame....)

Re *Little Fuzzy* & “The Devil in the Dark”: I whole-heartedly recommend *Little Fuzzy*. Being out of copyright, it can be had for free from Project Gutenberg and standardebooks.org. I don’t see a lot of similarity between it and “The Devil in the Dark.” The episode is a monster hunt where the monster starts talking. The novel is an exploration in “how do we determine if this animal is a person in the absence of language?”

Re Suno being a “cool piece of software”: It is. If you ever want to hear a sample of it’s output, I can email you one of my songs. Much like AI generated text “feels” like AI generated text when you’ve read enough it, so does AI generated music. I was listening to Spotify at work a few weeks ago and a random song played. “That’s AI,” I said. I was right.

Re “When I lived in the UK”: I lived in the UK, as well. I lived on the grounds of a 15th Century manor/castle in Northamptonshire. I very much enjoyed the country. Coincidentally, my wife is a British subject.

Re The Wheel of Time. However ... just too long: We agree completely!

Samuel Lubell

Thank you for the welcome.

Re What do you think of John Scalzi’s rewrite (of *Little Fuzzy*)?: Never read it. I’ve only read the Piper books.

Re But I think your solution of saying that every creature is sapient ignores the real differences between an intelligent species and one that is not. Otherwise, could we legitimately eat some animals? ... vegetarians exist, showing that eating cows and chickens is not a matter of survival.: Your point posits that vegetables are not sapient, and Universal Sapience specifically rejects that. This was directly addressed that in the essay, under the “onions of Omnicron IV,” when I invoked Aquinas and Aristotle. I included that sections with “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.”

Re “I agree that I ignored audiobooks in my article on the Decline of Paperbacks. I suppose because I consider audiobooks a different entity, since the narrator is a performer while ebooks, hardbacks, and paperbacks are just different ways of presenting the same words.”: As I understand it, audiobooks are the same words, too, just presented for the ears instead of the eyes.

Re Yes, the second-hand market will continue, but if mass market paperbacks are rarely printed, the second-hand market will not have them to distribute.: This was exactly my point.

Re “I am sure there are plenty of fantasy series worse than *Wheel of Time*.”: I didn’t mean “worse” as in poor quality; I meant “worse” as in “a never-ending mega-novel that crushed the reader with quantity.”

Wrapping Up

I was going to lament that I didn’t do any creative writing since I submitted my story to Analog, but I guess that’s not true. I wrote a short cinematic martial arts TTRPG. For some reason I think of that as something different.

I wanted to write more MC’s, but the deadline is upon me, and I still have to do MCs for my other zine.

I hope everyone has a nice bi-month!🍀

Brandy Hall Issue 19 (July 2026)

Brandy Hall 19 is produced for *N'APA* mailing 283 (July 2026) by Mark Nelson.

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This is West Riding Press Publications ??? This is West Riding Press Publications (Australia) 51.

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.

Editorial. Once again it's another issue in which I haven't done what I once thought that I would. As was the case for the previous issue there are two reasons for this. Firstly, the illness that I mentioned last issue continued for an additional two weeks. Eventually, I went to see my GP. He said that I'd probably had a form of pneumonia and prescribed antibiotics for seven days. I think I was finally on the mend by the time I saw the Doctor, but the antibiotics certainly provided a helping hand. If I'd still be in employment I would have needed to see our GP earlier, as I would have needed a medical certificate.

Secondly, my wife's sister and her family have visited for five weeks. Their trip is almost over. As I write this it's almost the end of Wednesday 15th July and they're departing Australia on Saturday 18th. During the five weeks we've had two short stays in Sydney, a trip to Canberra, and a holiday in Melbourne. On top of this, they've also had a trip to Brisbane.

Hopefully, the status quo will have returned for next issue and I'll be able to proceed both with my history of the use of the word fanzine in *The Times* and to start telling you about one of the projects that I am working on.

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

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 uses in 1990 and 1991 was discussed in *Brandy Hall* 16 & 17 respectively

The use of the word fanzine: 1992

(I haven't done any work on this. Hopefully it will appear next issue.)

The Mathom House

MOZIAG #2 (Joesph P. Gill)

Her dissertation was “The Use of Table Top Role Playing Games in a Therapeutic Setting: An Exploration of Adlerian Play Therapy for Pre-Adolescent Youth and the Exploration of Self.”

Congratulations to your middle child. Reading the title of her thesis gave me a flashback. The boy who got me interested in Basic/Expert D&D in the early 1980s (they were the only two sets available in that line then, though Advanced D&D had been released) eventually sold them to me. (I’ve always had a nagging suspicion that this was his plan all along...) What I’ve only just remembered, is that he also sold me a set of ‘tiles’ that you could use to make up a dungeon floor-plan. Although over the years I bought a variety of figures from Citadel Miniatures I never used those floor plans. Although RPGs may have started as table top games, there was never a table top component in my own games.

I’ve had another flashback. There was another company making fantasy figures, Asgard miniatures. I don’t remember if I ever bought any figures from Asgard, but some of my friends did. I grew up in Derby and went over to Nottingham a couple of times. Asgard miniatures were based in Nottingham and their figures were available in the shops that sold RPG games. The big attraction of going to Nottingham was that it had a Games Workshop. When it opened in October 1982 it was only the fifth Games Workshop in England. This was back in the good ole days when Games Workshop stocked a wide variety of RPG games, *White Dwarf* covered a variety of games, and Games Workshop didn’t produce any of their own games.

Returning to Alex Holt, the boy who introduced me to RPG. He eventually offloaded a variety of other games: Traveller, Tunnels & Trolls, and Gamma World. There were some Traveller and T&T scenarios as well.

In the days of print apae maxac served an important function: it kept mailing costs down. It’s a logical conclusion, then, that if an apa goes electronic then it doesn’t need a maxac.

I’ve never been involved in an APA which had a maxac requirement, and I was involved in three apas in those long ago days when apas were distributed through the mail. Actually I was only involved in one of those three apa. I never made a submission to the other two. I was removed from their mailing list after receiving one or mailings and failing to contribute.

N’APA #281 had ten contributors. Discounting the cover and OO there were 140 pages of content, over half of which were by just two contributors. The median contribution was 6.5 pages, and the largest was eight times that number.

Does anyone really deserve eight times the attention I give to everyone else? I imagine the answer changes from person to person. In my opinion, though, they don’t.

I'm a member of two apas, *NAPA* and *ANZAPA*. There's a wide range of contribution sizes to *ANZAPA*. When I was working I had less time to read the contributions, there were several 500+ page distributions. My solution was to read the contributions in increasing size of their page count. So the smallest contributions were guaranteed to be read. I didn't always make it to the largest contributions.

Personally, I don't think anyone has an obligation to read every page by every member. And if you don't want to provide feedback on contributions that you consider to be excessive, that's fine. Perhaps determine the median contribution and only read that number of pages for the longer contributions.

Fun fact. The most recent distribution of *ANZAPA* is mailing 351 (June 2026). This runs to 462 pages, although only 432 of those pages received credit for maniac purposes. (One reason for this is that members may distribute their non-*ANZAPA* fanzines through *ANZAPA*. However, such contributions do not receive "franking credit" because *ANZAPA* is not their primary mode of distribution.) *ANZAPA* currently has 28 members, 27 members contributing to the current mailing.

In fact we see page upon page of off-topic and unoriginal content. I don't mean "unoriginal" as a value judgment, but literally the wholesale presentation of other people's work. One contributor reprinted a Verne story in its entirety, while another reprinted a dozen or so comic strips written (and copyrighted) by syndicated cartoonists. I know I'm a bit radical, but I joined a fannish apa to engage with fellow fen about fannish topics.

I don't have a problem with people reprinting "unoriginal content". If I don't like it, I don't read it.

I'm not sure if *NAPA* has a constitution which defines acceptable content for contributions. (If it does, a quick look hasn't found it on the N3F web pages). In the absence of such a constitution it seems problematic to discuss "off-topic... content".

I will, though, institute a "personal MAXAC." I reserve the right to skip your zine if it's too long.

That's very reasonable. Though as I mentioned earlier, perhaps a more generous revision would be to only read the median-length number of pages of larger contributions.

I haven't watched *Starlet Academy* yet. I'll wait until season two has been released on DVD and hope to snag both seasons in a set. It's a much watch for me because it's Trek. Like you I'm not a fan of "Discovery's post-Burn 32nd Century". I haven't liked any of the *Discovery* series. (I've not yet watched the last one, but I'm not holding up great hopes). I do have a vague plan to rewatch *Discovery*. I probably won't do that, but if I do you can look forward me to pontificating on what I dislike about it in great detail.

Last issue, I mentioned that my first-ever zine (back in 1984)

Was it a zine or was it an apa contribution? 1984 was a good year. It was the year of my first fanzine.

Ryct Jefferson P. Swycaffer

The idea of using an AI to write on my behalf is anathema to me. A friend of mine is wonderfully creative, reads perfectly, but suffers from dysgraphia; AI writing tools are a godsend for him.

I've always been very bad at spelling and have a weak understanding of grammar. My proof reading is better, but not great, but only if I'm reading a hardcopy. After I've written a loc I'll often parse it through ChatGPT to check it for these things. Obviously, I don't have a problem with that. I think of using ChatGPT in this way as fine-tuning my locs. And, of course, when it comes to proof reading I don't always accept the suggested revisions.

Since retiring I have vaguely thought about trying to write some fiction. (More as an intellectual exercise than as an endeavour leading to sales.) Probably never happen. Too busy with other interesting things, such as contributing to *NAPA*, to find the time to write. I also don't find the idea of "using an AI to write on my behalf" appealing. If I'm going to write something, I want to write it.

What I'm not sure about is whether it's acceptable to use AI to check a short-story in the same way that I use it check a loc.

Ryctm

This is the first RAEBNC I'm giving in N'APA. It feels like a personal failure, but I truly feel I don't have any meaningful comments. Sorry.

It's fine. Sometimes I read a mailing contribution that doesn't appeal to me and I can't find any hooks for mailing comments. It happens! At least you indicated that you read my contribution.

Intermission #165 (**Ahrvid Engholm**)

In theory my policy is to write you a loc for each issue as it arrives in my mbox. Being ill for four weeks put loc writing out of kilter. I'm in the process of trying to catch up.

Brownian Motion 19 (**Garth Spencer**)

Ryctm

Dear Mark – I would be happy to contribute to The Essayist!

It was not very clear, but The Essayist is a Nic Farey project so you'll need to contact him.

In early April I must have slept wrong on my right side, with the result that I did some kind of soft-tissue damage to my right shoulder.

One of my favourite parts of the TV Series House was when House had to serve in the clinic. In one vignette a man comes to House complaining of pain in his right arm. House asks him a few questions and quickly determines that:

- the pain only occurs after he's been asleep,
- he always sleeps on his right arm, and
- he's simply compressing a nerve by lying on it all night.

House's advice is straightforward:

"Don't sleep on your arm."

The patient replies that that's how he's always slept.

House's responds:

"Then I recommend amputation."

The patient stares at him in disbelief, and House adds:

"Well, you said it. A guy's gotta sleep."

In your next issue will you be reporting that you're finding it more difficult to produce your fanzines as you've had your right arm amputated? (A confession, I asked ChatGPT to fill me in on what happens in this clinic story, I remembered the broad outlines of the scene, but not the specific detail).

The Murthered Master Mage 282 (George Phillies)

Ryct Joseph P Gill (*Moziag*)

There is always room for SF poetry, especially poetry that rhymes, has meter, and uses the more clever acoustic constructions

My only exposure to SF poetry was at my first SF convention (Lucon, February 26th-28th 1988). There was a program item in which Steve Sneyd read some of his poems. I was greatly impressed, and saddened that he never appeared at any of the four subsequent conventions.

The Swamp Pot Sentinel 2.1 (Robert Jennings)

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm (*Intermission 163 & Intermission 164*)

Most Trump supporters are not really concerned about what Trump has done for them, what they like is what Trump does to people they don't like, people they despise and hate.

That's a very astute observation. Still, there does seem to be some kind of split in the MAGA base as a consequence of his war in Iran. (Yet another campaign promise broken. He used to boast about being "the only President in modern history who did not have any new wars". He also used to boast "I'm not going to start a war".) Whether this will have any effect on the mid-term elections... well, that's another matter.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm #2 (*Intermission 163 & Intermission 164*)

A lot of the math that make some of those NASA projects possible was done by hand by mathematicians who never got near a computer.

As shown in the movie *Hidden Figures* (2016). The original meaning of the word computer was a person who performed calculations. *Hidden Figures* shows the transition from human to electronic computers. According to the web page <https://www.computinghistory.org.uk/det/5829/Sir-Thomas-Browne-coined-the-phrase-computer/>

The first recorded use of the word 'computer' in the English language is in a book called *The Yong Mans Gleanings* by Richard Braithwaite.

Richard Braithwaite was an English poet and writer, born in 1588.

His 1613 book, *The Yong Mans Gleanings*, describes a person as "the truest computer ... the best arithmetician that ever breathed".

At this point in history, computers were people who carried out calculations by hand, rather than machines.

(Time for me to get something of my chest. In order to save money my former employer stopped its library subscription to *The Oxford English Dictionary*. If I want to access it I need to ask my wife to give me access through her employer. Really. A university that doesn't subscribe to OED...)

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm #3 (*Intermission 163 & Intermission 164*)

I do have to wonder whether your conclusion that artificial intelligence will not be able to produce interesting or memorable fiction is correct. The field is developing so rapidly that AI may already be turning out new, worthwhile fiction. See the article back there on page 2, and my comments a couple of issues back about AI creating best selling country music songs.

In addition to your article I'd like to mention the **2026 Commonwealth Short Story Prize** which has attracted a great deal of controversy. It was alleged that several of the regional winners showed signs of being generated or heavily assisted by AI. In particular, the Caribbean regional winner, "***The Serpent in the Grove***" by Jamir Nazir, was singled out. All the accused authors deny the claims. The Commonwealth Foundation subsequently interviewed the authors and examined drafts of the winning stories. They found no evidence of untoward behaviour.

Turning to one side. The literary magazine *Granta*, which had long published the Commonwealth Prize winners, ended its publishing partnership with the prize. *Granta* was uneasy about the prospect of publishing stories which might have been AI assisted when it had no editorial control over determining whether AI assistance had been used.

Rumours have surfaced in the Australian press that the Australian Federal Government is considering giving text and data mining operations based in Australia an opt-out from current copyright law that would allow them to use copyrighted materials for training without obtaining permission from every copyright holders. The Government denies that it is planning to weaken copyright protections. However, we live in an age when Government denials don't necessarily hold much weight.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm #4 (*Intermission 163 & Intermission 164*)

Jet, a midget sized Negro exploitation mag

You're going to explain to me what a "Negro exploitation mag" is.

Ryct Ahrvid Engholm #5 (*Intermission 163 & Intermission 164*)

I'm probably one of the very few science fiction fans to have never seen the Avatar movie or any of its sequels.

Having watched *Avatar* (2009) I'm one of many, though probably a minority, who has no intention of watching any of its sequels.

Ryct Jefferson Swycaffer (*Archive Midwinter*)

I am clearly not the only person who prefers to read a physical printed copy

A few months ago I was contacted by an agent from CRC Press. They wanted me to evaluate a proposal for a new textbook. In return for my time and expertise they offered me a free e-book of my choice. I told them that I wasn't interested because I only read hardcopy books. The agent replied that instead they'd be willing to give me a free hardcopy book of my choice. That turned out not to be entirely true, because after I'd submitted my review the agent said that I could have any hardcopy book up to the value of AUD \$130. (Technically, it was any number of books unto a total value of AUD \$130, but the prices of technical books means that it was only going to be a single book.) Although the book I wanted was listed at AUD \$150 it was currently on sale at a price a few dollars below AUD \$130. I had a feeling that the sales team wouldn't issue me the code to purchase the book in time for me to take advantage of the sale price so the agent agreed to increase the value from AUD \$130 to AUD \$160.

What did I learn from this? If I'm approached by CRC Press in the future I'll ask them what the value of the voucher is before agreeing to review any proposal. (And I'll simultaneously identify which book I want so I know if it's covered by their voucher.)

Ryctm

Uh, the first few times you explored the history of the word "fanzine" in the print media it was interesting, but you've reached my saturation point. I am sure you can find lots of zine references/usages I print related to British sports teams thru the years, but you have already covered this territory before, in detail. There's nothing new in this issue's zineology.

That's a fair point, but it won't prevent continuing on my mission (which may take more than five years) to body explore the use of the word fanzine in *The Times*.

Ryctm #2

The founder of Penguin Books may have wanted to produce quality literature in paperback book form, but he was hardly the first to do this. There have always been publishers cheerfully willing to publish the classics and the near classics at popular prices. Sales have generally been modest; slow but reasonably steady. The primary appeal is that the classics of the past are all copyright free, which means no royalty payments to any authors, and no arguments if the publisher decides to abridge the text to make it fit his page count. I truly suspect that this was the real reason Penguin Books was founded.

I don't claim to be an expert on Penguin Books, but your characterisation about the kinds of books that the founder of Penguin Books wanted to publish ('quality literature in paperback form') is incorrect. Although I'm sure that since 1935 Penguin have reprinted classics that are out of copyright, this has never been their primary focus. I've listed the first twenty books Penguin published, taken from the website <https://www.publishinghistory.com/penguin-books.html>, and added the date of original publication. (I picked twenty, because these are the books published in 1935, their first year of existence).

- 1 *Ariel* - André Maurois (1935) (first published 1923, first English translation 1924)
- 2 *A Farewell to Arms* - Ernest Hemingway (1935) (first published 1929)
- 3 *Poets Pub* - Eric Linklater (1935) (first published 1929)
- 4 *Madame Claire* - Susan Ertz (1935) (first published 1923)
- 5 *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* - Dorothy Sayers (1935) (first published 1928)
- 6 *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* - Agatha Christie (1935) (first published 1920, first published in the UK 1921)
- 6a *The Murder on the Links* - Agatha Christie (1936) (first published 1923)
- 7 *Twenty-Five* - Beverley Nichols (1935) (first published 1926)
- 8 *William* - E. H. Young (1935) (first published 1925)
- 9 *Gone to Earth* - Mary Webb (1935) (first published 1917)
- 10 *Carnival* - Compton Mackenzie (1935) (first published 1912)
- 11 *South Wind* - Norman Douglas (1935) (first published 1917)
- 12 *The Purple Land* - W. H. Hudson (1935) (**first published 1885**)
- 13 *Patrol* - Phillip MacDonald (1935) (first published 1927)
- 14 *The Thin Man* - Dashiell Hammett (1935) (first published 1934)
- 15 *Four Frightened People* - E. Arnot Robertson (1935) (first published 1931)
- 16 *The Edwardians* - V. Sackville-West (1935) (first published 1930)
- 17 *The Informer* - Liam O'Flaherty (1935) (first published 1925)
- 18 *Debonair* - G. B. Stern (1935) (first published 1928)
- 19 *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg* - Louis Bromfield (1935) (first published 1928)
- 20 *Erewhon* - Samuel Butler (1935) (**first published 1872**)

I don't know what the copyright law was in England in 1935 regarding the republication of novels. From ChatGPT I gather that under the Copyright Act 1911 literary copyright generally lasted for the life of the author plus fifty years. There are only two books on this list that might have not been covered by copyright. William Henry Hudson died in 1922, so *The Purple Land* was covered by copyright. Samuel Butler passed away in 1902, so *Erewhon* was also still covered by copyright. To conclude, none of the first twenty books published by Penguin were classics that were outside the scope of copyright law.

ChatGPT put two and two together (in terms of most recent searches) and went on to inform me that.

When Allen Lane founded Penguin in 1935, he did **not** simply reprint popular novels because they had appeared in hardback. Instead, he **negotiated paperback rights** with the existing publishers or copyright holders.

Allen Lane's innovation was largely commercial rather than legal. He persuaded publishers that there was a new market for inexpensive paperbacks sold through Woolworths and railway bookstalls. Rather than competing with hardback sales, the cheap editions usually appeared months or years later and reached a different readership.

Ryctm #3

Some comic titles have tried the concept. A more recent one that comes to mind is the Resident Alien series, about an alien being who has powers beyond those of mere humans, who is stranded on planet earth, hoping for a rescue.

I haven't read the comic, but my wife and I very much enjoyed the TV series. Or at least the episodes we saw. We've seen the whole of Season One. Looking at the Wikipedia entry we've seen the entirety of Part One of Season Two. There are now quite a few episodes to catch up with!

Ryctm #4

The TV series played the concept for laughs, which changed the entire focus, in my opinion.

I might have to give the comic book series a go, though I'm not reading comics these days. (I am reading a small number of magna titles).

Archive Midwinter (Jefferson Swycaffer)

Ryctm

(My college ripped me off: they stopped offering the one class I needed to graduate, and they would not concede anything to my situation. Ugly.)

Something similar happened to one of my students. She was an outstanding student. She was taking a double degree in Engineering and Mathematics. I don't remember the engineering major, maybe mechatronics. She extended her degree from five to six years so that she could fit in a minor. (I forget the name of the minor. It might have been something like Health and Safety). The minor required a compulsory subject which according to the timetable was offered in both the summer session and the Spring session. She always planned to take in the summer session after finishing all the other requirements of her degree. As she approached the summer session she found that the required subject was not offered (with no reason offered). So she would have to delay graduation by almost a year. I passed this problem unto the Sub-Dean for Students in my faculty. She was able to quickly resolve this problem. I don't remember the solution (there's a fair bit of that in this paragraph), but the student was able to graduate at the end of the summer session as planned. (In this day-and-age, you can't randomly cancel subjects that are on the schedule, and definitely not one that is a required subject for the completion of a minor.)

Ryct Adrian Kresnak

Fun visit to Washington D.C.! That's a pilgrimage I will never undertake

That's a very definitive comment. Any reason for it? I'm almost with you though, I can't imagine ever visiting Washington D.C.

R.A.I.L. #12 (Adrian Kresnak)

I've never watched Ghostbusters. (At least, not as far as I can remember.) The song is an iconic presence every Halloween. I can recognize cosplayers and that slimy green ghost dude. I remember 2016 when the reboot movie came out, though at the time I was too busy with other stuff to fully enjoy stories.

I didn't watch *Ghostbusters* (1984) at the movies, but I've seen it on the TV and might even have owned it on VHS. I'm not sure what the "reboot movie" is you're referring to. *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* was released in 2021. I haven't seen it, nor the sequel *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (2024).

I was fascinated by your article **What Does ChatGPT Do, Legally?** I encourage you to produce updates as the case develops.

Intermission #164 (Ahrvid Engholm)

I will send you a loc when I am up to it.

Samizdat 37 (Samuel Lubell)

Congratulations (cross-fingers) on your return to the workforce, maybe doing the same job as you were doing before.

I agree with most of what you had to say about liberal arts programs...

Liberal arts education teaches general skills that are transferable across a wide variety of occupations. And it teaches the student how to learn.

I'd have thought that in any degree students who want to do well have to learn how to learn. Learning outside the classroom being one of the major differences between secondary and tertiary education. At least in Australia I think that there has been a move for technical degrees in the STEM area to teach more general skills "that are transferable across a wide variety of occupations". (Certainly this is true when I compare what we taught on our degrees to what I was taught as an undergraduate).

In Australia there has been a similar hollowing out of offerings, particularly in languages. It seems to me short-sighted to be reducing, for example, Asian languages, particularly Indonesian. OTOH, you can't make students take such subjects.

I no longer closely follow politics in the UK. Still, I have heard that under the previous Conservative government there were regular complaints that too many 18 year-olds were going to university, that university is not for everyone, and that there should be an increase in alternative path-ways for 18 year-olds to enter the workforce. I don't disagree with these sentiments. But they would carry more political weight if there wasn't more than a slight suspension than when a Conservative MP says that too many 18 year-olds are going to university what they really mean is that the children of other parents shouldn't be going. (One reason why the graduate premium has decreased is because there are many more graduates these days.)

In this book he objects to basing decisions on models, not facts. But in the early days of the pandemic there were no facts.

One of the most ludicrous claims in Australia was the following. The claim is that we shouldn't have introduced social-distancing, nor should we have mandated the wearing of masks. The justification for this is that the models predicted that X people would die, whereas only Y people died during COVID (with Y much smaller than X). There are two fallacies in this argument. Firstly, the models predicted what would happen if there were no restrictions and COVID was allowed to spread through the population. The introduction of social-distancing and face-masks (and the other preventive measures) meant that the assumptions behind these early models were no longer valid. Secondly, as you pointed out, in the early days of the pandemic there were very few facts; but you still need models to produce predictions in order to guide the development of policy. (That's perhaps a bit too subtle for the average anti-mandate person).

You can't argue that the low number of deaths due to the introduction of counter-measures invalidates the introduction of counter-measures! (Or at least anyone sensible does not so argue. Still, I wouldn't label most anti-mandate people as being sensible.)

Ryct Bob Jennings #1

And I think that we can do this in real life without running into Jurassic Park issues (step one: Don't bring back any creature likely to eat humans).

Step one: Don't bring back any creature likely to eat humans, but preferably bring back creatures that humans can eat?

Ryct Bob Jennings #2

(I was in Target today and they had a few books near the registers)

I wonder if Target (Australia) is related to Target (USA)? The Target stores I've visited in Australia all have a but more than "a few books near the registers". The books are not particularly near the registers.

Ryctm

I keep telling myself to watch more Star Trek, and yet, I have not even during this past year of unemployment. I need to use my time better.

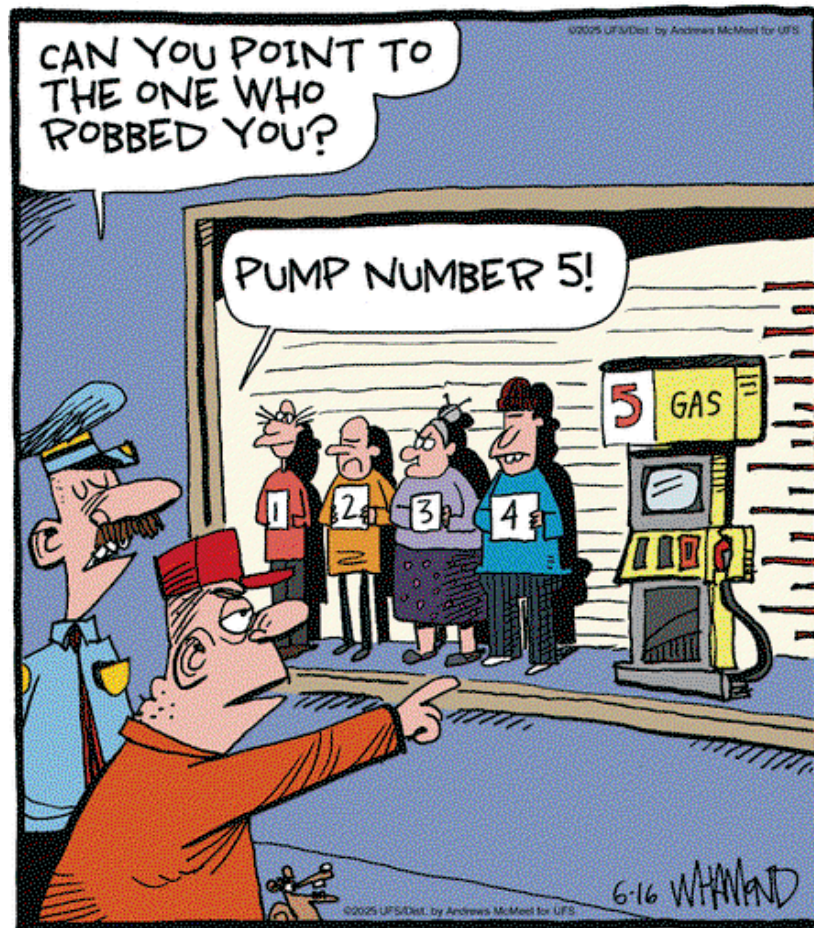
My life hasn't unfolded the way that I thought it would do once I retired. I think an element of that is that I don't always use my time in the most efficient manner. But more important I think my expectations of what I would do once I retired were unrealistic. Another factor is that I'm only "retired" three-days-a-week, since I still go into work one day a week and my son doesn't go to child care on Friday's so I spend that day with him.

UPDATE ON PROJECTS

I'm going to start a new section at the end of *Brandy Hall* where I update you on some of the projects that I work on. I was hoping to include some this issue, but being ill the two weeks before the deadline has killed that ambition. I also have a better name than "Update on Projects" which I will reveal next time.

Will it be third time lucky for this section? Tune in next time to find out...

THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL



THE SWAMP SPOT SENTINEL Issue #2.2 is a fanzine for distribution within the sacred auspices of N'APA, and is produced by:

Robert Jennings; 29 Whiting Rd.; Oxford, MA 01540-2035 email: fabficbks@aol.com

HERE'S HOW BAD INFLATION IS IN AMERICA:

My neighbor got a pre-declined credit card in the mail.
CEO's are now playing miniature golf.
Exxon-Mobil laid off 25 Congressmen.
I saw a Mormon with only one wife.
McDonald's is selling the 1/4 ounce.
Angelina Jolie adopted a child from America.
Parents in Beverly Hills fired their nannies and learned their children's names.
A truckload of Americans was caught sneaking into Mexico.
A picture is now only worth 200 words.

DEPARTMENT OF WHINING & COMPLAINING

Feel Free to skip this section if you have no interest in discussions of the ongoing series of catastrophes both major and minor in my recent life, including health problems, expensive home related issues, and assorted similar aggravations. Collect the whole set. I know I am.

AND THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMING!!

I suppose I should join the crew and complain about my new medical problems. Oscar Wilde famously said that "With age comes wisdom; but sometimes age comes alone". A better corollary might be that with age generally comes new and addition medical problems.

It turns out that as I am zeroing in on age 83, my body has decided to declare that it is getting tired of doing most of the things I have been expecting from it, and it has let me know. Specifically, it seems I have developed heart problems. I frankly don't understand most of the medical stuff. The heart specialist tries to let me know what the situation is, with left ventral muscle issues, an occasional irregular heart beat, and the heart being overworked, so therefore I have to take these blue pills to slow my heart rate down, and this weird white pill for that left ventral situation whatever it is, and half of this other tablet daily that will deal with the irregular heart beat problem, plus Eliquis to deal with my slight high blood pressure, and make sure I don't have a sudden stroke.

In my opinion Eliquis is one of the greatest medicines ever invented. Before switching over to Eliquis from my previous high blood pressure medication, I was prone to extreme tiredness, sudden unexpected spasms of weakness, and sometimes dizziness, particularly if I was doing exertion intensive things like mowing the lawn or restacking heavy boxes of books/comics/video movies in the warehouse. Very disconcerting, as you might imagine. Since switching to Eliquis those problems have almost completely disappeared.

Even with help from my health insurance coverage, the Eliquis pills cost a dollar each, and I take two a day. But, let me say it again, worth every single penny spend. So far as the other medications, I suppose they do something, but I can't tell what. I don't feel any different, but maybe that's the point.

The lady medic also wanted me to take a diuretic pill to help flush "excess" water out of my system, presumably to help with my high blood pressure situation. And I did try to take the pill, for two days, before deciding that I would never take it again. The problem is that the pill was excellent in purging water from my system. I found that after taking a single pill that I was going to the rest room every thirty minutes. By mid-day I had lost so much water I was very thirsty, so I drank water, which started the cycle all over again. This lasted up until the evening. Two days of that was all I wanted to put up with. To hell with diuretics. I continue to lose weight slowly and steadily, which I think will be more help with the high blood pressure than diuretic pills.

In spring the gremlins of misfortune turn their eyes to the essentials a person needs to function in modern society, and in my case they decided that my auto needed to develop serious problems, immediately.

One day when I started the car in the morning the engine became extremely loud, to the point where I couldn't hear the radio, or much of anything else. Well, maybe it needs a new muffler, I thot. I was due



for an oil change in two days, so when I took it in to the dealership I mentioned the loud noise, and asked them to check the vehicle for that and any other problems they might find.

They were delighted to do that. And boy, did they find problems!

It turns out the very loud engine noise was due to the exhaust system being almost complete rotted and rusted out. It needed to be replaced immediately. Also the front disc brakes were damaged, and by the way, the wheel lug nuts were worn down and corroded to the point of being a safety issue, and also the right front lower control arm was also badly corroded and needs to be replaced, the brake fluid, what was left of it, was murky sludge and had to be flushed and replaced, and the rear brake calipers were frozen and should be replaced, and oh, have you noticed a shimmy at low speeds? That's because both the front and rear alignment is seriously out of whack and should be corrected immediately. Those were the high points. The cost for these repairs? With state tax: \$5,775.00.

Let me tell you, I went into immediate system shock. I was prepared to buy a new vehicle right on the spot. I glanced at the prices of the brand new vehicles on display, before deciding that I wasn't anywhere near that wealthy. I spoke with the head of their used car department, who informed me that quality used cars were few and far between these days. People were driving their cars into the ground before trading them in, and the trade-ins mostly went directly to parts salvage. Their stock of used cars was the lowest it had been in years, but we took a look at their inventory, first by computer, on the chance that something would spark my interest.

Good thing I was sitting down as I looked at those used vehicles pics, because the prices were *way* the hell higher than I had ever expected, even given the state of today's crazy quirky inflation riddled economy.

I told them I would think about it. I did think about it; for most of that evening, most of that night, and most of the next day before I decided to bite the bullet and cough up the money for the needed repairs. Those repairs will probably get me thru another three to five years of driving, at which time I definitely will have to get a new vehicle. But those three to five extra years even at close to six grand in cash spent, is lots better than paying the eye watering prices the used car market is getting these days.

My auto is ten years old, so most of the parts had to be special ordered. Then the other kick in the head, they were going to have to hold the vehicle for three days while their mechanics did all the work needed. This was a major problem for me, since I have to pull book orders every day, and mail the orders out the following days. The platforms I sell on want those orders mailed out within two to four days, otherwise they get cancelled. Being out of circulation for three days would be a major disaster.

Luckily good friend Louis Desy immediately volunteered to act as local transportation for me. This was an incredible generous thing to do, and doable only because he is currently employed selling life insurance to interested people via computer presentations. His hours, particularly the critical for me early morning hours are extremely flexible.

We had plenty of time to catch up and discuss lots of things, including his involvement with local game conventions, while I was busy pulling orders every morning at the warehouse, and over the lunches I treated him to. I insisted on real; food, not fast food stuff, altho we did try pizza one day.

Then the dealership contacted me via email to let me know that they had found a couple of other minor problems that had to be fixed, and by the way, they would now need the car for at least another day. That info came on Friday afternoon, which meant I would not get my wheels back until around Noon Monday.

I was less than thrilled, but Louis said he would be happy to help me over the weekend as well. I don't know what I would have done without his assistance. I would have probably been kicked out of my Amazon and Alibris selling accounts, at least.

So now the car is back, working fine, and hopefully



with no nasty surprises awaiting me in the near future. Altho, come to think of it, the front tires are looking a bit worn...

Back on the home front, in addition to the very real possibility that I may have to have a new back roof installed on the domicile, I decided to do some more internal fix-ups. Numero uno on the list was to turn the bathtub back into a shower again.

Many years ago the home had a shower, with sliding glass doors, but the original shower walls had been poorly installed, and extensive use by the previous owner had left the walls not in good shape.

I hired a friend I knew from my store to tighten up the wall instillation structure and then to install ceramic tiles over those walls. Doing all that led to taking off the glass shower doors essentially leaving only a usable bathtub.

This was no problem because, quite frankly, I have always enjoyed a tub bath much more than a shower, and I have been very happy with the tub arrangement and the ceramic tile walls for the past fifty years or so.

Until recently, when I had to have a section of the wall near the facets replaced, and most recently when I bumped (slammed actually) up against the back wall. That wall partially collapsed inward and shed a bunch of those heavy ceramic tiles. Oops...not good.

So, this spring I finally decided to have the problem taken care of. The contractor from last year's spending extravaganza was happy to oblige. The economy being not so great, he is more interested in smaller jobs than he was previously, and last week, after the usual weeks of delays and excuses, one of his people showed up, tore out the back wall section that had collapsed, and installed a large new water-proof panel that covered the area, installed a rod and shower curtain, and lo, I have a shower again.

It's not that I particularly wanted a shower again, but at age 83 I am finding it increasingly difficult to haul myself out of the bathtub these days. A shower was clearly the answer.

Since then I have been using the shower daily, which has led to me immediately remembered all the things I dislike about a shower and why I really really prefer a tub bath. It's hard to properly wash my feet in a shower, its difficult to maneuver with all that water blasting me constantly; the soap keeps falling onto the tub floor, the water gets in my eyes, while even with a transparent upper part of the shower curtain it's fairly dark in there with the curtain closed and the water blasting, and mainly I don't get that pleasant, fully relaxing feeling I always have with a tub bath.

I have thot some of these problems thru and believe that the best solution is to buy one of those portable shower chairs that I can sit down on. I think that will make me feel more relaxed and will certainly make it easier to bathe the footsies, and probably this will lead to me having a much more pleasant showering experience all the way round.

Luckily the all purpose Chinese merchandiser Temu had several bath shower chairs available, at very reasonable prices. I picked one, and ordered it immediately. I buy a lot of stuff from Temu these days, including my newest pair of shoes (they fit perfectly), as well as most of the office supplies and mailing envelopes I use in my mail order book biz. I have noticed that Temu's presence has led to some healthy competition in several different areas of commerce, particularly with office supplies.

I am still waiting for the shower chair to arrive, but it should show up in the next few days.

So, how are things going with you folks?



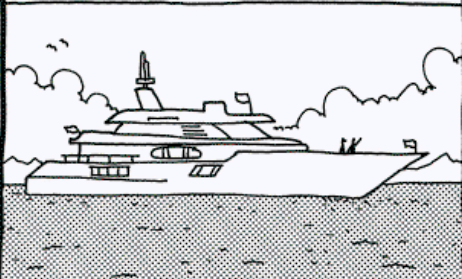
TOM^{the}DANCING BUG
PRESENTS:

by
RUBEN BOLLING



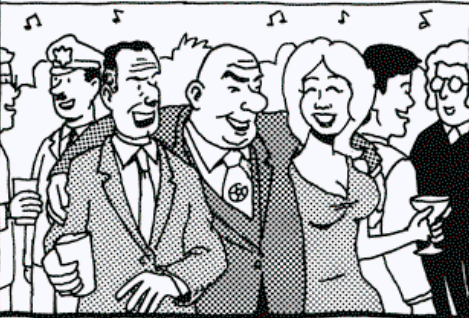
**Rich
People Get
Special
Privileges**

A SPECIAL "NEWS OF THE TIMES" STUDY HAS SHOCKINGLY REVEALED THAT RICH PEOPLE ARE GETTING FAR MORE THAN THEIR SHARE OF PRIVILEGES IN OUR SOCIETY.

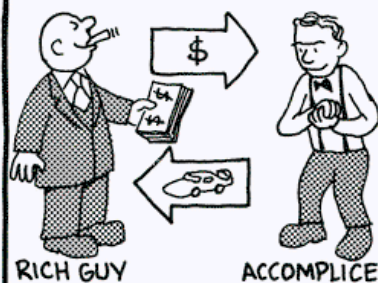


99.99% of the nation's yachts are owned by rich people.

THE ADVANTAGES GO FAR BEYOND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS--THE WEALTHY ENJOY MORE INFLUENCE OVER GOVERNMENT, FAVORS FROM POWERBROKERS, AND ACCESS TO CELEBRITY-LADEN PARTIES.



HERE'S HOW THE SCHEME WORKS: THE RICH TRADE PART OF THEIR WEALTH IN EXCHANGE FOR ALL KINDS OF GOODS, SERVICES AND PERKS!



MOST SORDID OF ALL: AN ELABORATE PLOT TO GET ACCESS TO OUR NATION'S ATTRACTIVE PEOPLE! THE RICH DON'T PAY DIRECTLY, BUT LEVERAGE THEIR WEALTH WITH GIFTS AND UNSPOKEN PROMISES OF FUTURE DISTRIBUTIONS... TO GET SEX!

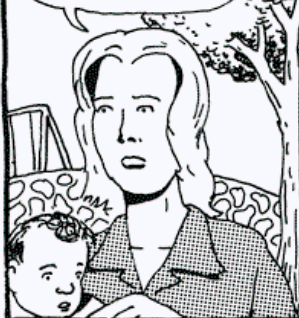


AMERICANS ARE OUTRAGED BY THE STUDY'S FINDINGS.

I DIDN'T MIND WHEN THE RICH DIDN'T HAVE TO SERVE IN VIETNAM. BUT THIS IS GOING TOO FAR!



I WAS WONDERING WHO THE HECK WAS GETTING ALL THE DECENT HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT-- IT'S TRUE! MY BUDDIES AND I HAVE NEVER HAD A POWER BREAKFAST WITH A U.S. SENATOR, OR MADE OUT WITH A MOVIE STAR IN A PORSCHE.

AND I CAN'T RECALL EVER GETTING INSIDER INFORMATION IN A SAUNA.



LEGISLATORS ARE PROMISING SWIFT ACTION.

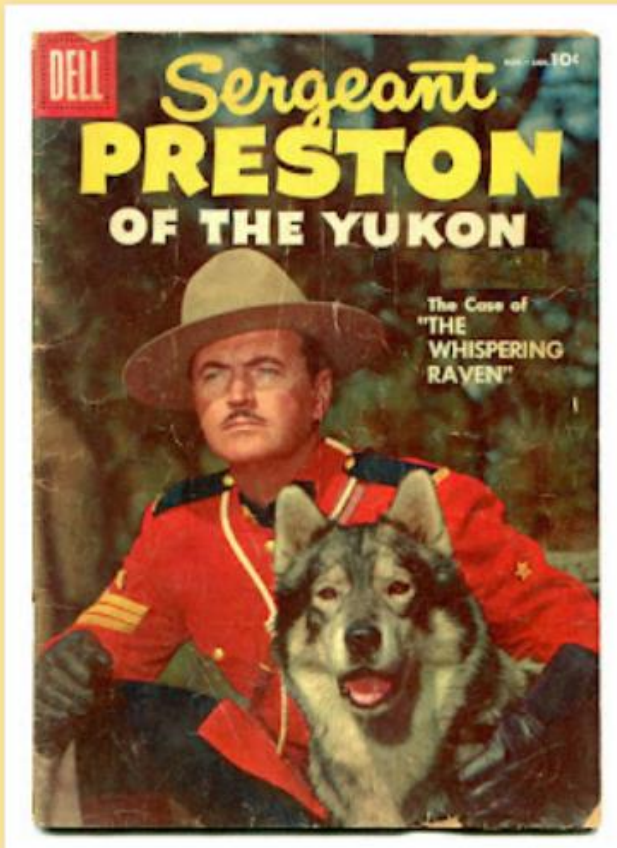
IT'S UNFAIR AND UN-AMERICAN! THE ONLY REDRESS IS TO LOWER TAXES ON THE RASCALS SO THEIR WEALTH CAN SHOWER DOWN TO REAL AMERICANS!



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Thursday, February 19, 2026

SERGEANT PRESTON OF THE YUKON COMIC BOOKS



From 1951 to 1959, a series of 29 comic books featuring adaptations of the radio scripts, were published by Dell Comics, which was the comic book publishing arm of Dell Publishing, which got its start in pulp magazines. The Dell Publishing Company was founded in 1921, and from 1929 to 1974, published comic books under the Dell Comics line, the bulk of which (1938-68) was done in partnership with Western Publishing. The company formed a partnership in 1938 with Western Publishing, in which Dell would finance and distribute publications that Western would produce. While this diverged from the regular practice in the medium of one company handling finance and production and outsourcing distribution,

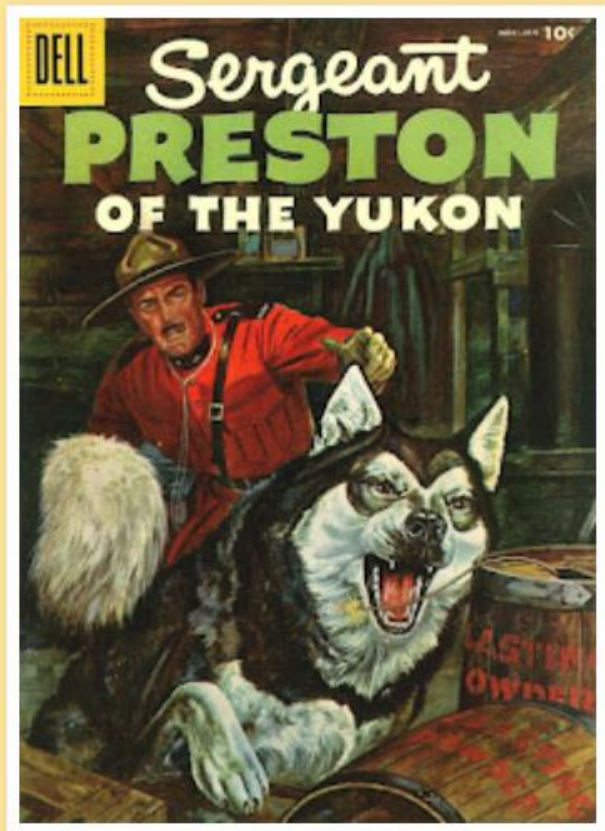
it was a highly successful enterprise with titles selling in the millions. By 1953, Dell claimed to be the world's largest comics publisher, selling an estimated 26 million copies every month.

Dell Comics was best known for its licensed material, most notably such characters as *Mickey Mouse*, *Tarzan*, *Bugs Bunny*, *Donald Duck* and *The Lone Ranger*. The latter of which was the reason why the company sought interest in *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*.

Personally, I am not a fan of the covers with Richard Simmons on the front. I prefer those from the oil paintings. The cover art for those early issues featured dramatic action on the part of King, often telling a story in itself even though the cover art had nothing to do with any of the plots in the comic books. As an example the one above where Preston and his dog are locked in a shed and King races to extinguish the fuse in the death trap that was set for them. Gorgeous covers!

Each of the comic books contained an average of three short adventures. None were originals; all were adaptations from the original radio scripts. (The majority from 1951 and 1952 radio adventures.) As an example:

With routine profits coming in from *The Lone Ranger* comic books, and George W. Trendle promising television was being considered for the property, Dell entered into a license agreement to publish comic books based on the same property. Hired to create oil paintings for Dell, artist Morris Gollub (1910-1984) was commissioned to create lavish art for the covers of the *Sergeant Preston* comic books. Gollub began his career in 1937 as an animator and layout artist for the Walt Disney Studios, having worked on such classics as *Bambi* (1942). Beginning in 1946, he was hired by Dell Publishing/Western Comics to handle such tasks as *Lassie*, *Robin Hood* and *The Lone Ranger*. The paintings he created for the front covers always told a story, suggestively revealing the scenes that occurred both before and after the action scene depicted. Gollub's art was featured prominently for the first 18 comic books. Beginning with Issue #19, his art was replaced with the publishing company's budget-cutting measures of utilizing a publicity still from the television series.



Issue #10, February – April 1954

Date of Publication: December 29, 1953

Copyright Registration # © B-456418

“A Fight for the Future” by Tom Dougall, broadcast December 30, 1952

“McAllister’s Bonanza” by Steve McCarthy, broadcast December 23, 1951

“Stand-In for Cheeka” by Fran Striker, broadcast April 15, 1952

Issue #11, May – July 1954

Date of Publication: April 8, 1954

Copyright Registration # © B-483743

“The Calumet Gold Robberies” by Betty Joyce, broadcast June 29, 1952

“The Shelf Ridge Incident” by Dan Beattie, broadcast May 29, 1952

“The Stolen Horse” by Betty Joyce, broadcast September 30, 1952

Internally, the art was drawn by Alberto Giolitti (1923-1993), an artist with a style unique and high attention for detail. It was clear from an early age that he had a talent for drawings. After the war, Giolitti emigrated to Argentina, where he produced police stories and novel adaptations. In 1949, he emigrated to New York City, where he had a long and happy collaboration with Dell Publishing, and later Gold Key. He would become known for his work on Dell’s *Gunsmoke* and *Tonto*, and Gold Key’s *Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* comic books. His unique style was evident in the art for *Sergeant Preston*, which often looked better in black and white than in color. He made use of shadows for numerous panels, storyboarding what could be described as an adaptation of a filmed production, often with views from the side hip or from alongside the hero.

The art style of Giolitti works better in black and white, not color, which diminishes the shading and style for which Giolitti was able to pull off on the drawing board. This is a darn shame when you see the occasional inside back cover with the conclusion of a story, in black and white, while in contrast with the colored page the left.



All of the stories inside the comic books were adaptations of the radio scripts, selected and submitted by Fran Striker, who as story editor was best suited to select suitable stories from the radio program. None of the stories were adapted from the television rendition, though, to be technical, the television stories were adapted from the radio adventures. Radio scripts authored by Dan Beattie, Steve McCarthy, Betty Joyce and others were used in the comic books, although none of the authors were credited in the comic books, nor did they receive a royalty from George W. Trendle for their use and adaptation. (For a complete list of which radio scripts were adapted into each issue of the comic book, see Appendix D.)

The first issue, published in the summer of 1951, was titled *Sergeant Preston from Challenge of the Yukon*, because it was believed the name of the character would sell better than the title of the radio program. It was soon after that the radio program changed its name to *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon* and, beginning with the second issue, dropped all reference to *Challenge of the Yukon*. The copyright registration for the first four issues were cited "Challenge of the Yukon," before the name change was applied on the copyright.

Beginning with Issue #18, a new feature was added to the comic books, the adventures of *Gray Wolf, Leader of the Wolf Pack*. As suggested by the title, these were adventures of a wolf and his experiences across the wilderness. In one adventure, Gray Wolf and his tribe faced off against a pack of white wolves for a downed caribou, necessary to survive during the winter months in the Yukon. In another adventure, Gray Wolf staved off a large grizzly bear to save the life of his mother, Neetka, who was chased down and cornered. These adventures of the wild were included in every issue through no. 29.

In the spring of 1956, four additional comic books were printed, distributed in boxes of Quaker Oats, and were smaller in size (7 inches by 2.5 inches) and 16 pages. There were four comics total, each reproducing a story that was used on the radio program.

No. 1, The Case That Made Him a Sergeant

© March 9, 1956, A245582

No. 2, How He Became a Mountie

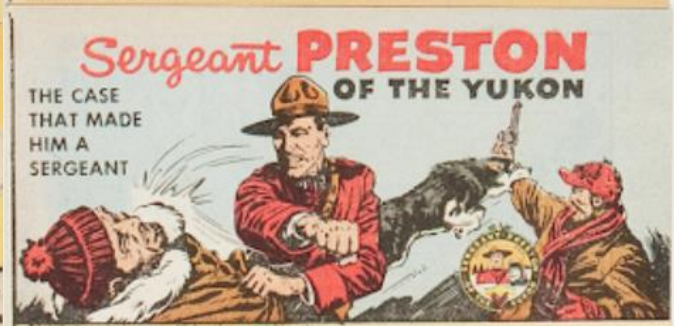
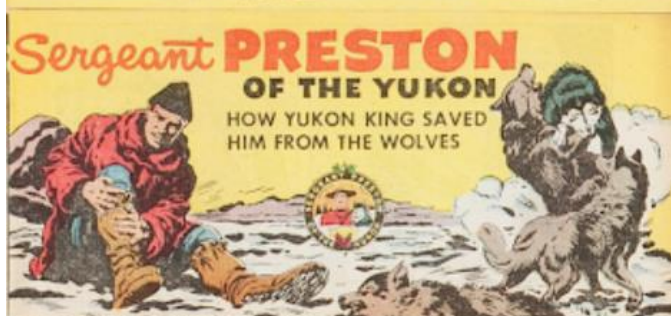
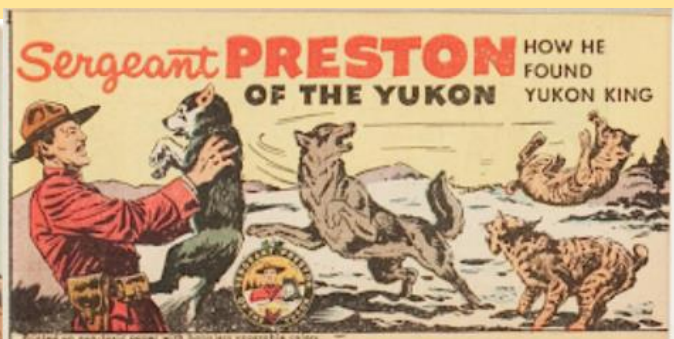
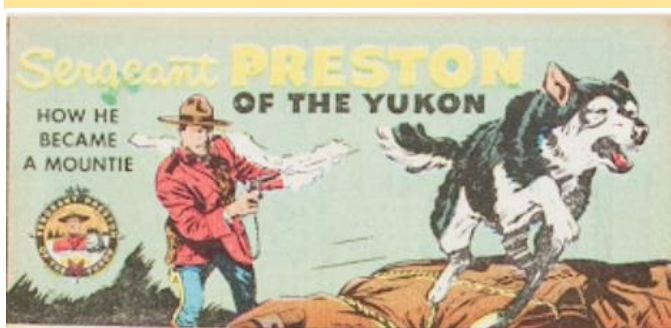
© March 9, 1956, A245585

No. 3, How He Found Yukon King

© March 9, 1956, A245584

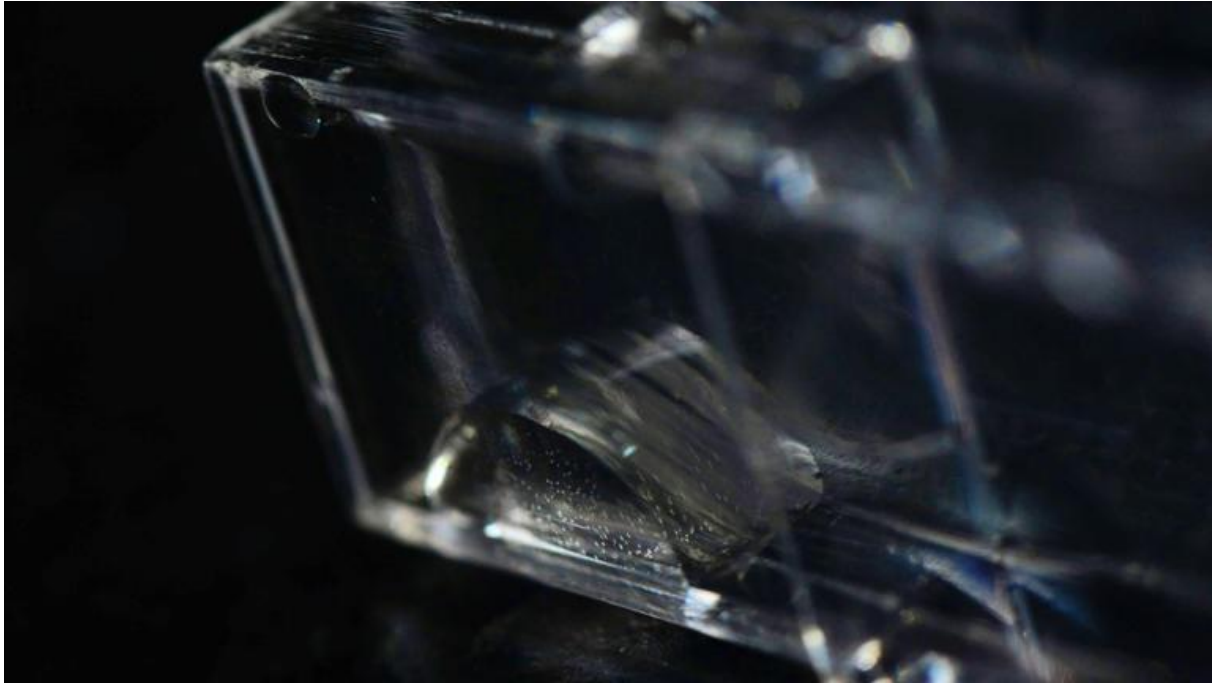
No. 4, How Yukon King Saved Him from the Wolves

© March 9, 1956, A245583



Scientists unveil glass so extreme it seems to break physics

Story by BeckhamLangford



Scientists unveil glass so extreme it seems to break physics© asphotographypics/Unsplash

A class of glass that cannot crystallize, even given infinite time, is forcing physicists to rethink some of the oldest assumptions about how disordered materials behave. Built from theoretical models and now supported by a growing body of peer-reviewed work, these “perfect” and “hyperuniform” glasses exhibit mechanical rigidity on par with crystals while remaining fundamentally disordered, a combination long thought to be impossible. The research has practical implications too: new bulk methods can produce ultrastable glasses in hours, and separate experiments show that certain glasses can heal their own radiation damage at room temperature.

A Glass That Refuses to Crystallize

The core provocation comes from a many-body interaction model first described in a paper in [Scientific Reports](#) by Springer Nature. The model is engineered so that all

crystalline and quasicrystalline energy minima are removed from the system's potential energy landscape. In effect, the only inherent structures available are disordered yet mechanically rigid, with both bulk and shear moduli remaining positive. In everyday terms, the glass pushes back when compressed and resists twisting like a crystal does, but it never organizes into a repeating lattice.

What makes this result so striking is the timescale claim. Conventional glass science assumes that given enough time, most disordered materials will eventually drift toward a crystalline ground state, which is typically the thermodynamically favored configuration. The perfect-glass construction upends that expectation: by design, its glass cannot crystallize even with infinite observation time because no crystalline minimum exists to be found. An [earlier preprint](#) of the work allows researchers to track the model's evolution from its first public release to the peer-reviewed version, confirming that the non-crystallizing behavior is not a later embellishment but a central feature of the original proposal.

Crystal-Like Stability Without the Crystal

A more recent study in Nature Communications pushes the concept beyond abstract modeling. That work describes a [hyperuniform glass](#) with unusually high thermodynamic stability, suggesting that extreme rigidity and suppressed density fluctuations can coexist with structural disorder under realistic conditions. Hyperuniformity, a property in which large-scale density variations are strongly reduced, has typically been associated with highly constrained or ordered systems; seeing it in a glassy context blurs the line between conventional crystals and amorphous solids.

The key theoretical tension lies in how such a material forms. If a hyperuniform, ultrastable glass can emerge through relatively ordinary cooling protocols rather than exotic preparation, it challenges the near-universal application of Vogel-Fulcher-Tammann (VFT) equations. These empirical relations are widely used to describe how viscosity in glass-forming liquids appears to diverge as temperature approaches a finite value. A glass that bypasses or significantly alters this VFT-like divergence would imply that standard fitting formulas capture only a subset of possible glassy behaviors, rather than a general rule.

This speed is not a minor optimization. Traditional routes to comparable stability can require months or years of aging at temperatures just below the glass transition, or carefully tuned deposition onto cooled substrates, both of which are hard to scale beyond research settings. A bulk process that achieves similar stability in a single workday brings ultrastable glass into the realm of industrial feasibility. For fields like

advanced optical coatings, high-density data storage, and encapsulation of sensitive electronics, that shift could translate into more durable products without exotic manufacturing lines.

Supporting this direction, a simulation-based study in Nature Communications examines how [random particle bonding](#) can generate ultrastable amorphous states. By tuning the connectivity of particles in a model glass, the authors track how kinetic melting, devitrification, and thermal stability respond to changes in bonding patterns. The results show that carefully designed randomness can produce glasses that resist structural breakdown up to extreme temperatures, providing a computational blueprint for experimentalists seeking to engineer similar robustness in real materials.

Glass That Heals Its Own Radiation Damage

A separate but complementary line of work concerns how glasses respond to radiation. Reporting on a recent experiment, [Phys.org](#) describes how gamma rays create microscopic defects in certain glasses that then heal at room temperature without any external treatment. In the experiment, irradiation produced measurable changes in the glass structure, but over time those defects spontaneously reversed, restoring the material's original properties.

Self-repair in a brittle, amorphous solid is not something standard materials science predicts. In crystalline metals, atoms can move along dislocations or grain boundaries to annihilate defects under the right conditions, but glass atoms are usually considered locked into place, especially far below the glass transition temperature. The observation that radiation-induced disorder can relax away at ambient conditions suggests that some glasses host internal rearrangement pathways (perhaps involving cooperative motion of small atomic clusters) that have not been captured in traditional models.

From an applications perspective, this kind of self-healing could be transformative. Nuclear waste canisters, space-based telescope optics, and components in medical imaging systems all face gradual degradation as radiation accumulates. If glasses can be designed to dissipate that damage autonomously, lifetimes could extend dramatically, and safety margins could improve without constant replacement or annealing cycles.

Aging, Relaxation, and a Moving Theoretical Target

These findings intersect with broader attempts to understand how disordered materials age. Coverage of a separate study on [universal aging mechanisms](#) in complex systems points to shared relaxation patterns across very different materials, from polymers to metallic glasses. The suggestion is that, despite their microscopic differences, many disordered solids may follow similar rules as they slowly evolve toward more stable configurations.

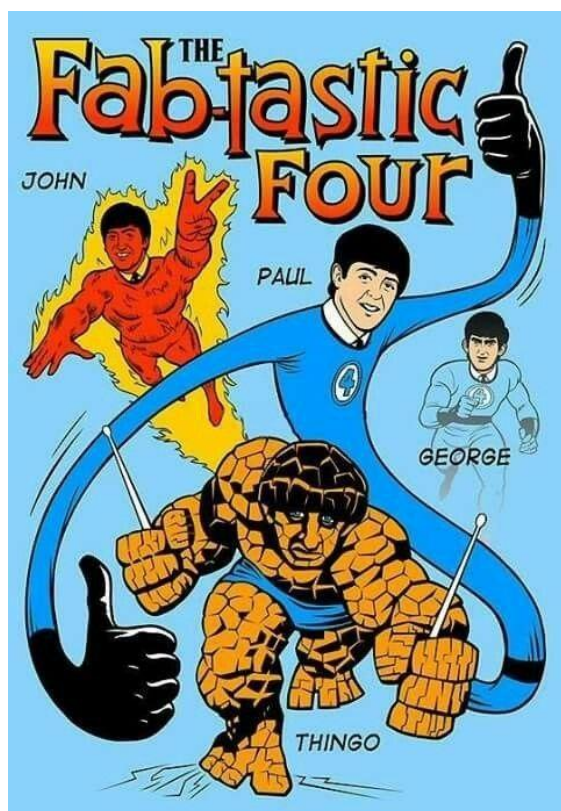
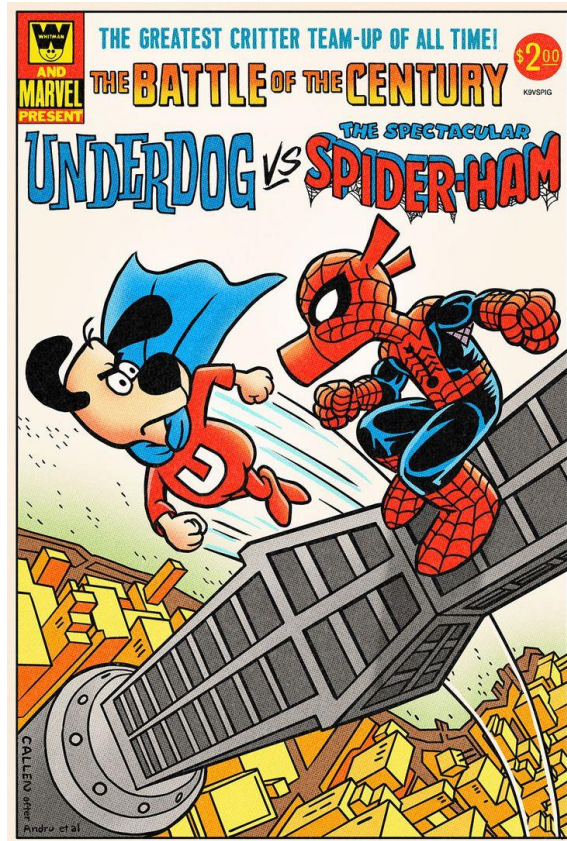
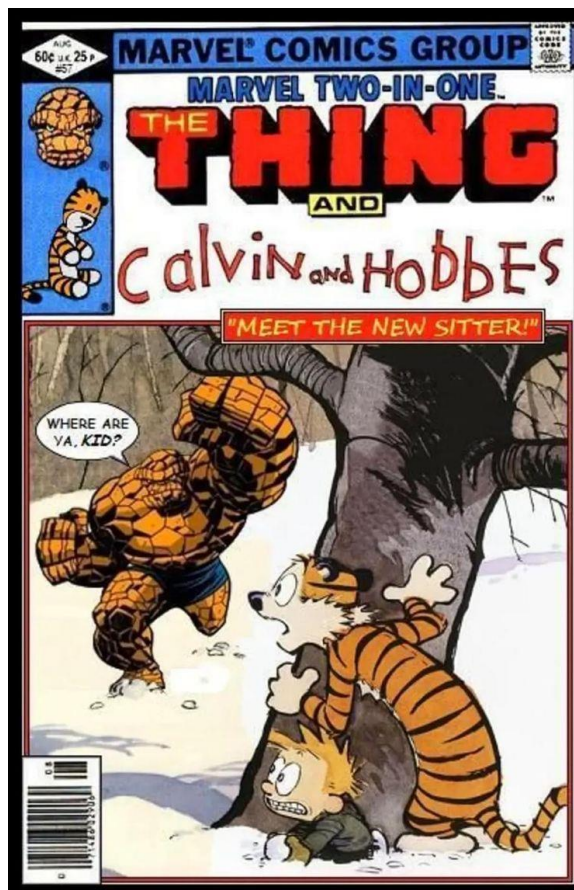
Perfect and hyperuniform glasses complicate this picture. If a material is engineered so that no crystalline ground state exists, what does “aging” even mean? The system can still rearrange internally, exploring its disordered energy landscape, but there is no ordered endpoint waiting at the bottom. Likewise, a self-healing radiation response implies that damage can be absorbed into the existing structure without moving the system closer to crystallization. These behaviors hint at an expanded taxonomy of glassy aging, in which some materials wander toward order, others sink deeper into disordered basins, and still others cycle defects in and out without a clear long-term trend.

Why Standard Glass Theory Falls Short

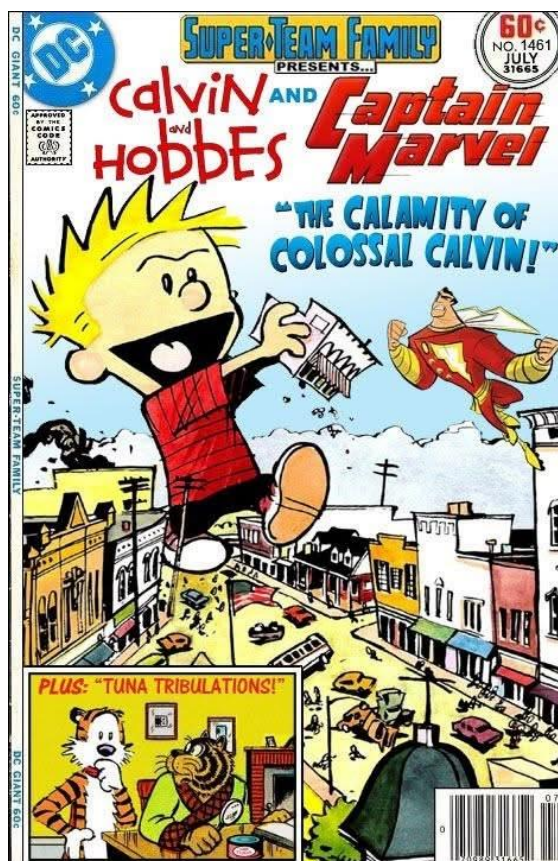
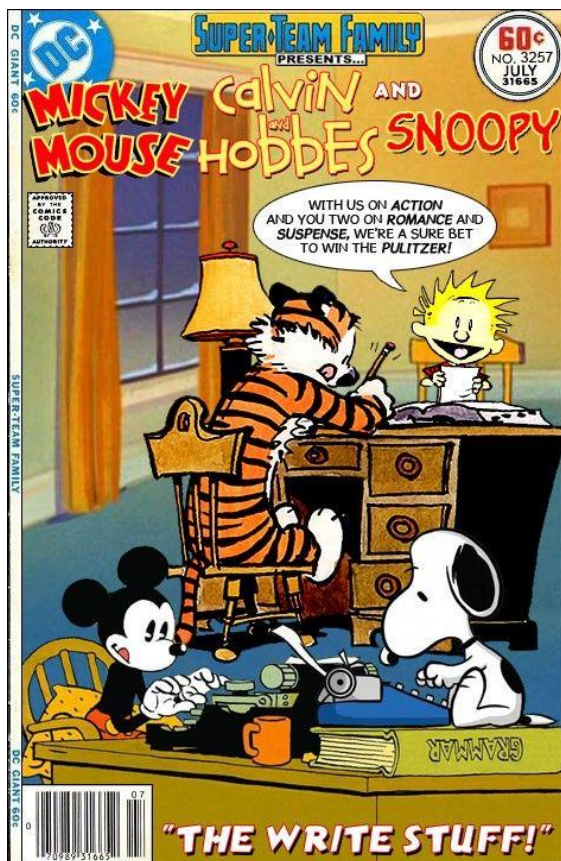
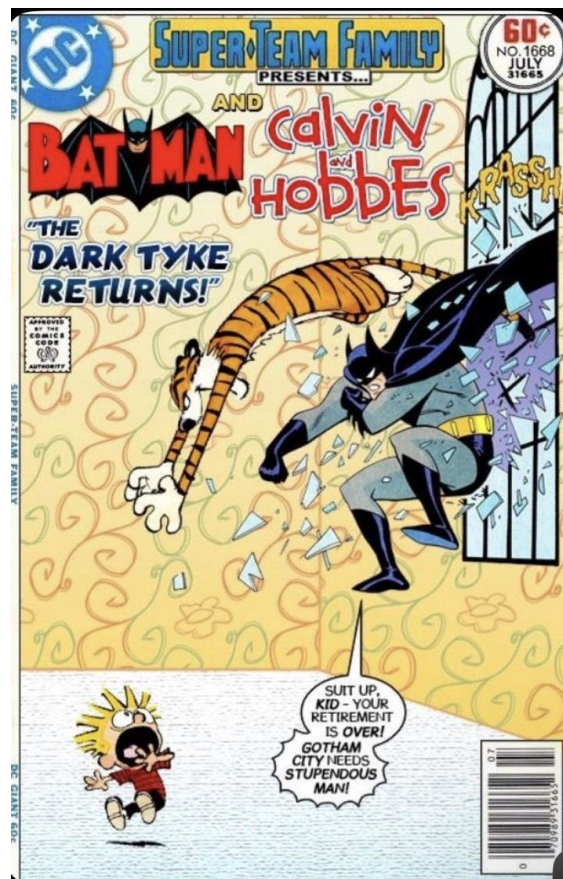
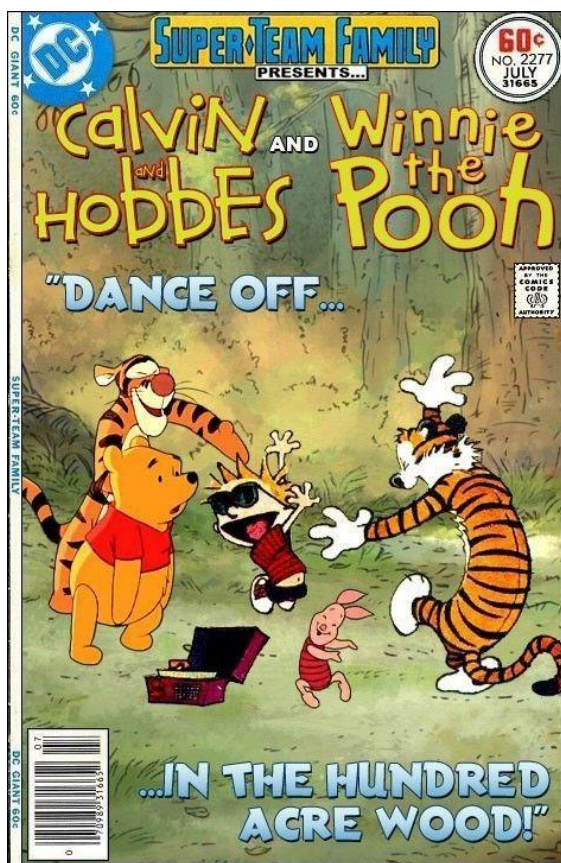
The common thread running through these developments is that many standard frameworks for glass, built up over decades, do not naturally accommodate what is being seen. The perfect-glass construction traces part of its intellectual lineage to late twentieth-century work on disorder and energy landscapes, including a [seminal study](#) that helped formalize how amorphous solids can be described in terms of metastable minima. Those earlier models anticipated rugged landscapes and slow relaxation, but they largely assumed that crystalline states sit at the bottom as the ultimate thermodynamic attractors.

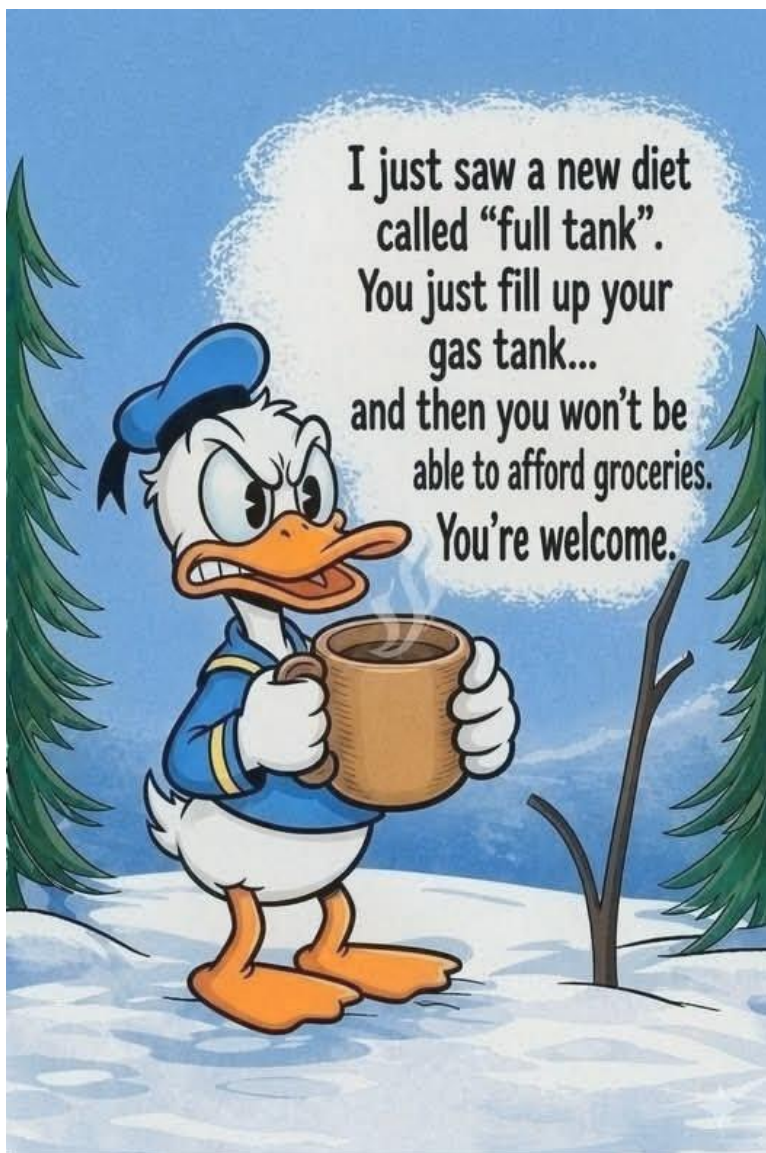
Hyperuniform glasses, bulk-transformed ultrastable states, and self-healing radiation responses collectively suggest that this assumption is too narrow. In some systems, order and stability can be decoupled; in others, disorder itself becomes the most stable option available. For theorists, the task now is to extend familiar tools, VFT fits, energy-landscape pictures, and aging models, to a regime where crystals are no longer the inevitable destination. For engineers, the message is more pragmatic: by exploiting these unconventional glasses, it may be possible to build devices that are tougher, longer-lived, and more predictable in hostile environments than anything crystalline materials alone can offer.

Why I no longer buy or read most Marvel Comics...



Altho, come to think about it; DC Comics haven't been so hot lately either...





JUST BACK FROM A MORNING VISIT WITH MY HEART DOCTOR

who had some interesting news. It turns out that the not so serious damage to my left heart ventricle was caused by a heart attack! Say what?!?!

I have absolutely no memory of any kind of heart attack happening, but apparently it occurred in the not too distant past. Luckily I seem to have recovered nicely from the situation, altho now the doc wants to keep close tabs on my cholesterol level.

This naturally meant I had to have more blood drawn. Any time anything new happens to a patient (this patient anyway), the recommended procedure is to have more blood drawn.

I would not mind this so much if the phlebotomists were more skilled. The young lady at the hospital this morning was particularly inept. She only jabbed me twice to hit the vein in the crook of my arm, but it hurt like hell, and she decided to dig the needle in a bit, apparently to make sure I was paying proper attention or something.

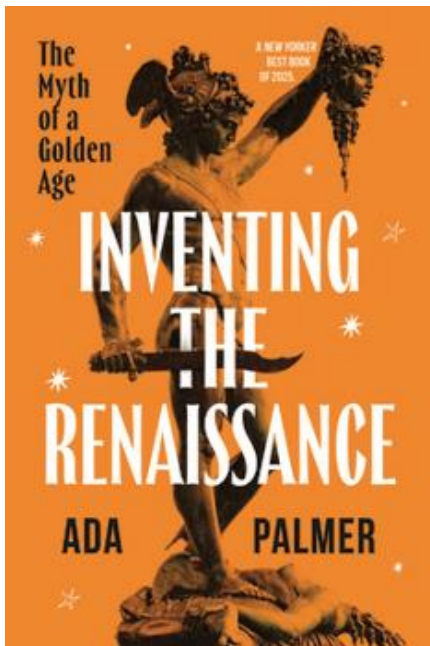
If the numbers are not that good I suppose the lady doc will prescribe another pill. To think, only a few short years back I was only taking two medications. Now I'm up six every morning, enuf so that I broke down and bought one of those plastic pills-per-day organizers. I refill it every Saturday nite, and dump the daily pill quota out to drink down with my morning juice and cereal.

Today the shower chair also arrived. This requires assembly, which is supposed to be absurdly easy. I certainly hope so, since it is a well known fact that if I attempt to do anything mechanical, or attempt even common household repairs more complex than changing a light bulb that terrible things go wrong.

It's been an unusual day, what with being told I had a heart attack that I never even remember, plus getting a bunch of book orders with super rush instructions, which led me to head for the warehouse in the afternoon, pull and pack up everything up, then head to the post office to send the goodies out before they closed for the day. All in 92 degree heat at that. Unusual indeed.

FUN FACT: The favorite premium coffee shop chain in Russia is known as Tsarbucks.

Inventing the Renaissance; Ada Palmer, University of Chicago Press



Recommended by fellow N'APAn Samuel Lubell, this is a thick book that is dense and difficult to get thru. The author, Ada Palmer, is a career historian specializing in the Italian Renaissance period, and she also happens to be a successful science fiction writer, a fan, and a pop culture nerd, so the book is filled with contemporary references and slang, and examples that use current entertainment references as metaphors.

The subject matter here is what makes this book difficult to get thru. As Ms Palmer explains, the Renaissance did not take place all at once, or all in one place, or was it activated by only a few people. Plus, the existing history about the subject was influenced by previous historians and statesmen who drew some sweeping conclusions even as new, different, relevant information was still being uncovered.

As she points out, history is not written by the winners, it is written by historians, and historians are constantly re-examining the situation looking for new information, or overlooked information, or obscure information that may have been missed, or worse, misinterpreted.

It is very much like taking a picture of a statue. A full front photo shows one thing, but if you take more photos, from the back, from the sides, from the top, from other different angles, then different aspects of the statue are revealed which may affect the total reality of what the statue represents.

This is also a good time to point out some old but true adages; things like: there are no simple solutions to complex problems, and, history is always more than what actually happened, and, get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please.

Modern readers, including academics, invariably want simple answers, or at least a straight forward chronology of events, revealing clear steps to obvious conclusions, but history doesn't really work that way, and especially Renaissance history doesn't work that way.

The Renaissance was not conceived and executed by a unified series of events, and it took hundreds of years to accomplish, with many diversions and shifts along the way. Trying to make sense of all these happenings is what makes this book so large and so dense and sometimes difficult to follow.

The efforts of a few learned scholars back in those long ago days and their efforts to dig into the ancient past, to retrieve and offer new translations of ancient Roman and Greek documents, to reveal what was worthwhile in those past documents with the idea of not only learning about the past, but fostering the idea that studying successful and virtuous people from ancient Rome would somehow influence the then modern rulers of the fractured city states of the Italian peninsula to adopt nobler behavior and become more fair and just was an initial process. Then came the task of translating these ancient documents, and discovering that the thinkers and rulers of the past actually had relevant things to say to this new Italian generation.

There were hundreds of other factors affecting the changes in attitude, including revivals and shifts in Christian religious thought, the steady and repeated assaults of the Black Death, not to mention the continual warfare among city states for dominance and survival.

None of this is simple, not of it is easily explained, and as Ms Palmer repeatedly points out, many of the shifts and changes in attitude were so minuscule and mercurial that it took dozens, sometimes hundreds of years before there was a noticeable shift in belief and behavior.

There are famous personalities involved in this, some reasonably good, and a lot that were more than reasonably evil. Ms Palmer also has to explain how post middle-age society functioned, how people were able to stay alive in order to consider and enact changes that led to a renaissance.

I have to say that I think the book could have been more easily understood if some of the chapters had been rearranged. Explaining the economic system, including translating the period Italian money into the modern equivalents, for example, would have been much more useful if that information had been presented at the beginning of the book, including the information that cloth used to make clothing was extraordinarily expensive during that period because much of it had to be hand loomed, that cloth and wool, and ways to make wool non-scratchy led to complex inter-dependant trade routes between nations and regions that would otherwise have likely been at war with one another.

Explaining the patronage system earlier would also have been very useful, because the patronage system, the line of obedience and loyalty it represented thwarted ordinary justice while enabling rich and powerful families to manipulate entire cities and the Christian Papal system completely.

As in many another era of human history, raw ambition, and the desire for power and wealth resulted in constant warfare. Trying to explain the shifting situation took up many pages here and did not necessarily lend itself to an easy understanding of how all this bloodshed was useful in reshaping Italian history, much less how it helped to lead to a renaissance.

Many parts of this book are very informative, and despite the complexities involved Ms Palmer explains many obscure factors very well. But she also has a tendency to get diverted easily into areas that most readers will find not just uninteresting, but stupefyingly boring. For example, she devotes four or five or six chapters (I forget how many), to whether humanism was part of the Italian renaissance process, or whether the participants even cared. Included in this loooooonnnngggg discussion are abstract definitions of what humanism actually is. Even as a student of philosophy I found most of this mind numbingly dull. I can only imagine what its effects might be on the causal reader.

In addition, she falls into the trap of using modern beliefs and expectations to go searching thru history for evidence to support the idea that these modern concepts were really born way back when. So we get long discussions about whether there were significant feminists during this long four or five hundred year period. There were certainly important and powerful women there, but there have always been important and influential women thruout history, but very few of them could pass the modern litmus test of being feminists.

Ms Palmer is good at pointing out how past historians, particularly the groundbreaking historians of the 19th century tended, deliberately, to suppress the achievements of powerful and strong women in this period, but their roles were far different from what we moderns would regard as feminist action.

She also spends a lot of time in her search for actual atheists during this period, and finally concludes that she may have found exactly two. The fact that science and scientific research was almost non-existent is the main cause, aided and abetted by the Inquisition that tried the ferret out heresy. But the reality is that while engineering and mechanics were well advanced (all those towers, castles, manor houses, and churches didn't spring up by themselves), people only knew that things happened because God made them happen. There were no atheists because no one could possibly conceive of a world without a living god (or gods) that made things happen the way they did. Questions about how and why abounded, but there were very few answers, only timid speculations.

There are other realities of the period that are hard for modern readers to accept, including the firm belief that only the privileged few were able or even should be allowed to handle the political destiny of the city states where they resided. Laws were not enforced fairly: the patronage system meant that the power and wealth of the patron was more important than any deed his followers may have committed.

There is also the reality, amplified by modern political thought, that actions leading to the development of ethics, responsible political systems, and non-sequential morality; may seem initially evil, but can actually have long term great benefits for civilization and must therefore be regarded as just and correct, even tho they seemed supremely evil when first encountered.

This is a fractured book, a difficult read, dense and difficult to comprehend in many places, not helped by the fact that Ms Palmer favors paragraphs that run on for most of a page, or sometimes even more than a page.

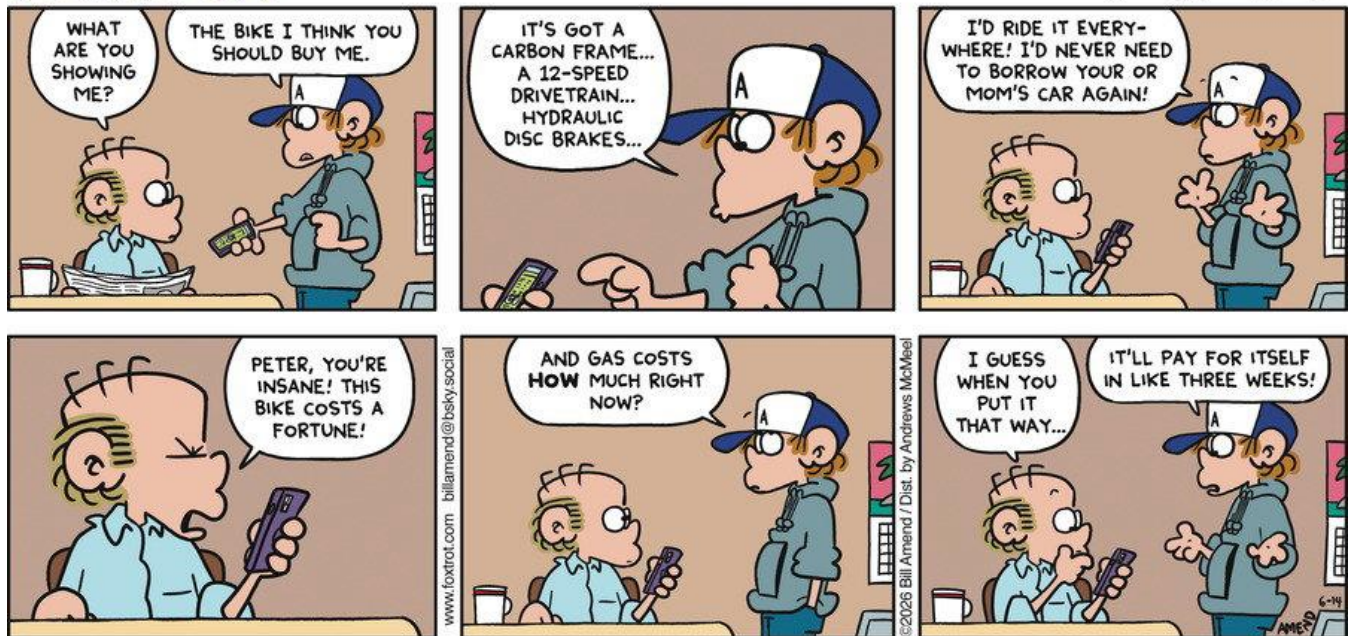
Would I recommend this book? Yes, if you have a genuine interest in learning how the Renaissance actually developed and emerged out of the chaos following the middle ages. If you have only a casual interest, or are expecting simple, linear answers to how we got from then to now, then this is not a book you

will enjoy. If you do decide to read it, give yourself plenty of time to read and to digest and think about the various subjects and personalities as they unfold over the course of 745 pages. I did find it worth my time, but your mileage may vary.

Mailing Comments

FoxTrot

by Bill Amend



INTERMISSION(S) I wrote a direct LOC on a lot of this, so I will try to comment here on what I didn't cover in my LOC.

First off, I am glad that things seem to be going a lot better for Ukraine in this long, bloody European war. Ukrainian targeted drone attacks have caused vast economic havoc in major areas of Russia, to the point that even Putin has had to admit that things are Not So Good these days.

Unfortunately this does not mean that he is going to give up or abandon the war. As you have probably noted, lately he has sent his goon squads into outlining provinces to snatch grown men off the streets and force them into the army. People are terrified of these modern day press gangs, but there is little they can do to stop it. The real tragedy is that these new conscripts will be given minimal training, and then shipped right to the front lines to die in this modern meat grinder war. Ukrainian news reports claim that 40,000 Russian soldiers were killed in the month of June. Even if we allow for boasting and number inflation, even if their numbers were inflated by 50%, that would still mean that 20,000 Russian men were killed, an enormous waste of human life that even Russia's population cannot sustain for very long.

So, I hope for the best, but I continue to believe that the only way this war is going to end is for the Russian people to force Putin out of power, a highly unlikely event. Or maybe Zelensky will decide its time to assassinate the monster and hope that the next dictator will not be an insane sociopath like Putin.

In the past it was often pure necessity for a writer to turn out fiction in different genres in order to survive. Hitting the big time with a best selling novel, or getting a movie scripting job in Hollywood allowed people like Philip Wylie to write what they were most interested in without having to worry about paying the

bills every month. (Altho in Wylie's case, he continued to write science fiction off and on until the very end of his life). Today a lot more authors consider science fiction and fantasy to be legitimate areas for literary exploration, so they are not ashamed to write novels for a genre that was previously considered basically nothing more than juvenile action thriller material.

A lot of science fiction writers write/wrote mysteries because detective and mystery stories are basically problem situations, very similar in many ways to what short science fiction routinely presents. The setup, the investigation, the twists, the confrontation, and the final revelation are pre-set as part of the genre, so a clever writer could fill in the blank spaces and was able to sell lots of those stories, at least back in the days when there were viable markets for short mystery fiction. I'm not sure how many markets are still available for that kind of writing in this day and age.

I enjoyed all your fact-oids about how various science fiction writers created their material. I was aware of a lot of it, but there were some surprises there. You should have included the fact that Fritz Lang, famous for producing *Metropolis*, "M" and *The Woman in the Moon*, but better known for his brutal film noir movies after he moved to Hollywood in 1934, was a long time subscriber to *Astounding Science Fiction* and saved every issue. I doubt that Albert Einstein was a subscriber to the mag. I'm reasonably sure this was a fan hoax invented sometime in the 1960s, which is when I first read about it.

Nice write-up about the short film festival. I was initially surprised by your mention of how many new films had been entered into the competition this year. 400 new films, 88 films selected for showing in ten different venues, plus another 89 one minute long movies. That's a lot of new material. I am fair croggeled at the enthusiasm for short cinema that exists in Sweden. I am also stunned that you were able to watch so many of the entries and even managed to make some notes about each one. I wonder how many of the people who created and entered these short films in the competition will go on to have careers in the movie biz. Clearly a lot of them have high hopes for a career in that area, but the economic reality of making feature films for the commercial market is a lot harsher than creating low budget shorts.

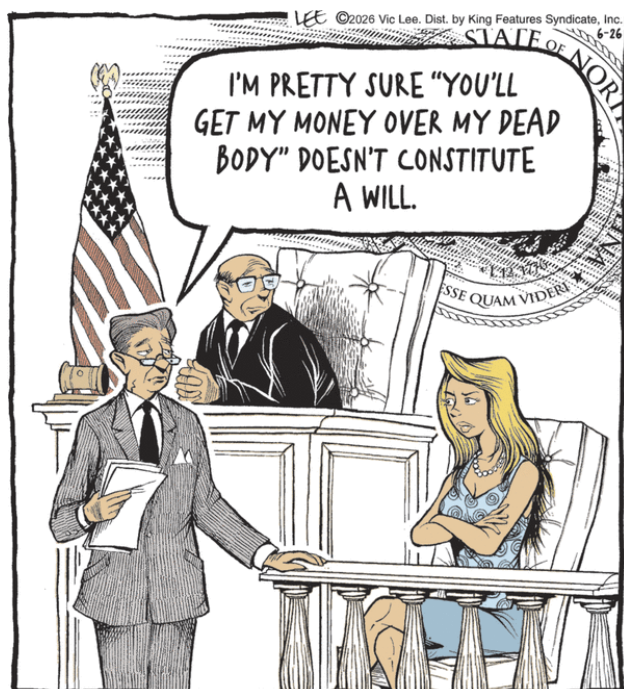
I'm not much interested in Eurovision, but I admire your boundless enthusiasm for the competition.

I am not so sure that at this late point we are going to get much more information about Caligula Trump's involvement with Epstein. His fanatic supporters have covered and obscured the tracks very nicely. If the Democrats take over Congress in the upcoming mid-term elections we might see more progress, but I'm not counting on it. I am also not so sure that even if solid evidence emerged that Trump was having sex with fourteen year old Russian prostitutes that his supporters would even care. Look at all the other things he

has done to destroy the American economy and dump on the very people that elected him to office. If that doesn't bother them, a revelation that he had sex with underage girls isn't going to make much of an impression either.

THE MURDER MASTER MAGE #282

Wonder Boy, the comic book hero, had that brief two issue revival back in 1955 published by Ajax-Farrell. Robert Farrell was originally the business manager for Fox Comics, before striking out on his own with other comic companies. He tried to revive a bunch of Fox characters in the mid 1950s, including *The Flame*, *Samson* and *Phantom Lady*, without success. Wonder Boy was originally a Quality Comics character. How he wound up in the hands of Ajax-Farrell is unclear, but I suspect Wonder Boy was originally created by the Iger comic shop back in 1940, and Jerry Iger believed he owned the



rights to the character. Iger was a partner and the chief supplier of new material for Ajax-Farrell. Ajax-Farrell was bucking the newly created Comics Code Authority who really really did not like their horror comics, and were quite suspicious of everything else they published that wasn't a funny animal humor title. The history of the company is convoluted. They received fresh financing from several different sources, but stopped publishing in late 1957.

I'm with you; the current trend of TV and movies to play extremely LOUD!! background music that all but drowns out the actors speaking their lines is truly aggravating. Another thing I dislike is when characters enter a dark room or building, and wheel around flashlight beams. ***Jeeze, turn on the damn lights!*** How hard is it to just flip the switch?

There are plenty of good modern detective novels being turned out, also an even larger number of mediocre or badly plotted detective/mystery stores being published. There are some good science fiction/fantasy connected detective series, but most aren't so hot. The problem with some of those is that the writer gives in to the urge to crease brand new scientific gobbly-gook not revealed in the bulk of the novel to show how the crime was actually committed. That's cheating; classic detective stories do not do that.

A notable exception is the Ana Dolabra and Dinios Kol novels by Robert Jackson Bennett. The first novel in the series "The Tainted Cup" won the Hugo Award last year as best novel. The second book about Ana and Din "A Drop of Corruption" has been nominated this year as well. Both are brilliantly written detective fantasy adventure stores in which the author plays fair with the reader and gives them the same clues out heroes discover so readers have the same chance as the heroes of solving the case(s). Competition for the Hugo this year is tuffer than last year. There are two very strong contenders facing Bennett. A third book about Ana and Din is supposed to come out in late August. I've already signed a pre-publication pull order with my local library.

Another excellent science fiction detective story is "Altered Carbon" the novel from 2006 by Richard K. Morgan. This novel was also recommended by a fellow N'APAn and it was a fantastic read. It is a future cyber-punk world where murder, mayhem, explicit sexual exploitation, and migration to new bodies, either clones or recently deceased paupers, 'sleeves' as they are called, is a normal situation. The book has plenty of twists and turns, and plenty of unexpected incidents of violence and character revelation to keep the reader on his toes.

I have a small tablet computer that I primarily use as an e-reader, when I actually read e-books, which is not very often these days. I have plenty of other stuff to read on real paper printed with real ink, including newly published stf titles I get thru inter-library loan. The tablet computer is useful for reading material that is way the hell out of print and cannot be found conveniently anywhere. That includes a lot of dime novels and pulp magazines which have fortunately been scanned and uploaded to some internet sites over the past ten years or so.

I have read a lot about the potential, and the safety of molten salt atomic reactors, however, nobody seems to be actually using the things to generate electricity. Let me just check the internet to make sure I'm correct with that statement----yep; no commercial molten salt reactor in operation anywhere. However, China is running an experimental liquid fueled reactor that relies on thorium and low grade uranium and is apparently turning out two kilowatts of thermal heat that could be used to power a steam turbine to produce electricity.

My thot is that if Iran continues to crush the petroleum market with their blockage of the straits of Homaux, that the rest of the world may very soon begin thinking seriously about trying out low powered nuclear reactors. In my opinion the ill conceived war against Iran will not be settled anytime soon, which means that many nations will be desperate for alternative sources of power very soon.

I have no interest in driving into Boston any more either. It's a total mess even when traffic actually moves at a reasonable rate. Our OTRadio club used to meet in Quincy once a month on a Thursday nite. I always left several hours early in case there was a traffic mishap or the roads were being rebuilt, events that created the kind of endless delays Massachusetts roadways are famous for. Nowadays we meet in Waltham on a Saturday afternoon, and driving there is much easier on the nerves.



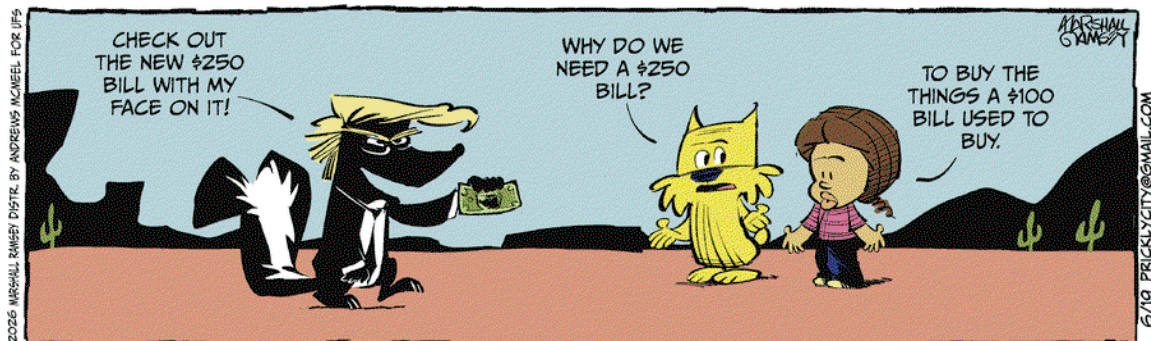
RAIL #12 I am sure other folks will have extensive comments to make about your never having seen Ghostbusters, but to answer your question, yes, you absolutely should watch the original (NOT the ill conceived remake). It is a lot of fun, with a plot that is internally consistent, a solid humorous adventure, just a really enjoyable movie from start to finish. If you are a SF/F fan then you will definitely enjoy it.

I'm not so sure about Titanic. I thot it was a well done film, but first off, you know what is going to happen at the end of the picture, so the young lovers will die despite everything,. Doomed love is a big deal for a lot of women, and I had female friends who thot that Titanic was the best movie of the century. You might consider investing a few hours of your life just so you can keep up your end of the conversation when the subject comes up in mixed company.

I tend to doubt that Isaac Asimov knew much about product design principles, beyond basic common sense reasoning, when he came up with his three laws of Robotics. As others have noted, he created the Laws of Robotics, then spent a lot of his writing time thereafter coming up with stories that seemingly contradicted those laws and exploring what the outcome(s) might be.

So far as product design goes, a company that manufacturers products that harm their customers is going to have very few customers after the word gets around about its defects, and in this day, defective products will also collect a lot of civil lawsuits seeking damages. Not a good combination for business success, but that has not stopped unscrupulous people from making and selling defective products anyway. I had a friend (now deceased) who lost most of his teeth in the early 1950s because he used a newly introduced toothpaste that destroyed his teeth. .

The case of an insurance company suing an A-I provider because somebody used it for creating legal advice sure seems as complex as you make it out to be. My suspicion is that the court will side with the guy using the A-I system. Citizens don't need a lawyer to file court documents, altho hiring a lawyer would certainly be advisable since lawyers know the law. But if Joe Blow wants to paw thru law books and come up with something to challenge an insurance company in court he can do it, and in this case it appears that he is using the artificial intelligence system to do the pawing thru the law books for him, and then using it to frame the information in document form so that the courts will be more likely to recognize and accept his motions. To me this is a perfectly legitimate use of artificial intelligence.





Elliot began to have serious doubts that he bought tickets to the right convention.

ARCHIVE MIDWINTER 281

The way

natural disasters and man-made disasters are proliferating in this new century it seems amazing to me that property insurance companies are able to survive at all. Of course, their answer is to jack the rates way the hell up. My house insurance took an enormous jump a couple of years ago, to the point that I was seriously thinking about letting the insurance lapse. Then I happened to remember the tornado that struck Webster a few years back. Webster is the next town over from me. By a bizarre circumstance I was working in the warehouse pulling orders and doing some restacking when that tornado hit. The warehouse complex was completely undamaged, but half the buildings along Main Street, a mere three blocks away, were ripped to shreds by the tornado. I immediately gritted my teeth and paid the new house insurance bill.

Your suggestion that a sentient being must be able to have a memory and be able to plan ahead (even short term) as a requirement makes a certain kind of sense. However, and again to repeat myself, if we find life forms on

other planets, or new ones here on planet Earth (a lot more likely), the life form may be so different from us that we simply may be unable to recognize it as either a life form or an intelligent species at all. Science fiction makes a great to-do about alien life forms, but the literature is almost completely full of life forms that are different, but have more in common with the human race than not.

The Roman (and Chinese, and other empires of history) concept of sending troops into distant provinces rather than the areas where they were recruited when trouble arose was to prevent local family and community loyalties from interfering with the military necessities of doing the job, or just obeying orders they might be reluctant to obey on their own home ground. This is a valid principle that has been used throughout history.

I really think you should see a lawyer about your non-rent paying bag lady hoarder room mate. It is clear she has severe mental problems, and really, she probably needs to be institutionalized. Nagging will not help. She needs professional help. Allowing her to continue to indulge her deficient mannerisms constitutes enabling. Best of luck with it.



MOZIAG #2

I read your comments about exacting the MAXAC concept for N'APA. At first I thought you were writing humor, but reading to the end it is obvious that you are dead serious about this proposal. Wow! Talk about narcissistic egomania!! Because **you** don't happen to like people turning out long fanzines, **you** want the apa to enact a rule dictating the maximum number of pages that a member may write for N'APA. That is patently ridiculous!

The entire concept of MAXAC is wrong. Every apa I've ever been in or heard about had Minac rules, requiring members to provide a certain minimum number of pages or else they would be expelled, but I have never heard of any apa that exacted a rule limiting the maximum number of pages a member could contribute. If you know of such an apa and such a situation, please share it with us.

Amateur Press Alliances were created so that members could express themselves with their publications in any way they wanted, at any length they wanted, so long as they did not produce illegal, libelous, or pornographic material. That is the founding block of all apas, including this one. Our members should be able to say what they want, when they want, in whatever length is comfortable to them in their own way in their own apazines.

Declaring that an apa participant should only be allowed to contribute X number of pages per mailing is just stupid and wrong. The entire purpose of fanzines is communication, especially so for apazines, and effective communication cannot be effective or comfortable if page limit restrictions are enacted. Again, your support for page limitations is a clear sign of egomaniac arrogance on a grand scale.

You, as a N'APA member are entitled to read, review, and comment, or to not read, review or comment on the member zines in each mailing as you decide. If you are bothered by fanzines with more pages than you like, then don't read them. If having to deal with long fanzines affects your ability to come up with mailing comments, then ignore those publication and do not write any mailing comments about them. It's a very easy thing to do. Watch, I'll demonstrate how easy it is to do by ignoring and not commenting on the rest of your fanzine.



intense personal effort on the part of the publisher/editor, who has a desire to communicate with like-minded individuals, not to make a big pile of bucks off the effort. I think great commercial success should very definitely limit the definition of the term "fanzine".

Interesting list of best pre-1960s science fiction films from the Sloan De Forest book. While I agree that most of the titles on the list have merit and are enjoyable viewing, even today, I do take exception to the inclusion of "The Blob" on the list.

BRANDY7 HALL #18

I read a few of Jordan's Wheel of

Time books, but the internal logic was not consistent, and things stretched out waaaaayyyy too long for me. Despite being very popular with many fans I have never been tempted to go back and pick up the series again.

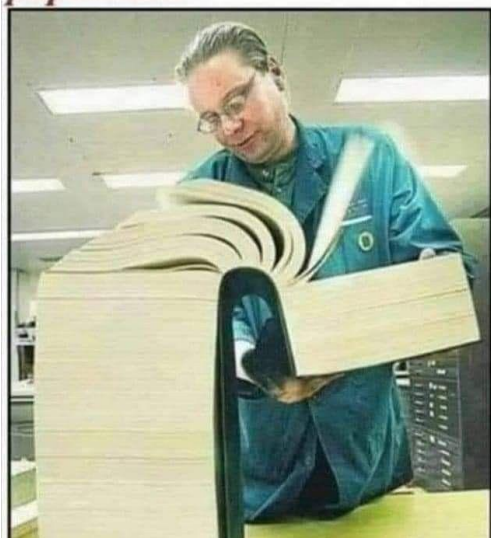
Yeah, I was also curious as to how George was able to locate the person who owned the rights to James Schmitdt's fictional content and characters. I suppose if you are computer literate (which George certainly is) it would be easier than for a luddite like me, but I am curious about how the process unfolded.

I totally agreed with you on "fanzines" with enormous circulations. They are semi-pro publications, not fanzines. I would also stipulate that any fan publication that gets most of its funding from subscriptions or the sale of current issues is no longer a true fanzine either. Fanzines are typically a work of

“The Blob” is a crappy movie, loaded with every conceivable cliché you can think of in the teenagers-battle-toxic-space-ooze sub-classification. The movie was heavily hyped when it was released, with TV ads and radio promos to round up ever potential theater patron. There was even a song as part of the hype--“Beware of the Blob” written by Mack David and Burt Bacharach—genuine legitimate music people! The tune was a modest low level hit on top 40 radio. I was the only science fiction fan in my community who watched the film when it originally came out. I was very much disappointed in it. My non-stf reading friends also thought it was pretty lame. I cannot imagine what qualities De Forest found in that thing to warrant its inclusion on his Best Of film list.

I don’t think there are very many historical type movies that pay attention to accuracy. What the film makers want is a good story with strong characters that will keep the audience interested and entertained. Movie studios apparently believe that very few people are acquainted with much genuine history, so they make no apologies about changing things to please their production goals. It is only when something dramatically incorrect (such as the scene in “The Patriot” where British General Tavington burns a bunch of people to death inside a locked church) actually catches the attention of viewers/reviewers that they even pretend to be apologetic. By the way, Mel Gibson, producer and star of “The Patriot” refused to apologize for any of the inaccuracies in that film, of which there were quite a few.

Just letting you know that the book, "Understanding Women" is now out in paperback



SAMIZDAT... #37

Good news indeed about you being back in the work force again. I hope the new assignment proves to be permanent. Trump continues to lose court cases where he terminated federal employees, but the Supreme Court just awarded him more powers to lay off department leaders and committee members as well as certain other federal agencies. The SCOTUS enthusiasm for establishing a fascist dictatorship in this country is truly frightening.

Liberal Arts in the nation’s universities have been at risk for several decades, at least. I am surprised some of the colleges have waited so long to start collapsing unwanted, largely unused, and largely unwanted departments. Like it or not, higher education is a business. The business is satisfying cash paying students, and if their products (liberal arts courses) are not being purchased by their customers (students), then they must inevitably make the decision to supply their clientele with what they want and are willing to pay for.

I am familiar with the situation of Ana Maria here in Mass. closing down. Unfortunately years of mismanagement, indecision, ineptitude and an inability to recruit a full level of students are the real problems here. They also managed to

accumulate heavy debt along the way and had no plan to get more funding or any plan to increase student enrollment. Eventually the boulder rolling down the hill squashed the college flat. Their bankruptcy and even the sale of the land the school sits on will not cover all their debts.

Your comparison choices vs the real Hugo nominees by categories just emphasizes what I have been aware of for a long time, namely that there is far more stf out there than anyone can possibly read or digest, and that any novel or story needs to have at least some supporters talking it up on social media for it to get noticed by enough people to mark it on their nomination ballots.

This year the only novel that made the Hugo nomination list that I had actually read was “A Drop of Corruption” by Robert Jackson Bennett (which was a spectacular read), but there has been so much talk among people whose opinions I respect that I intend to read “Death of the Author” by Nnedi Okorafor as soon as my local library can get a copy thru inter-library loan.

I haven't read enuf in the other categories to even form opinions. I intended to join the Worldcon this year as a supporting member, because being a supporting members means you get all of the nominated stories sent to you free in pixel format so you can (presumably) read them before the actual voting deadline closes. Most people I know who have gotten these downloads never finish before the voting closes, but it is certainly a bargain, getting all that literature as a download for just the cost of a supporting con membership.

As usual, I enjoyed your book reviews, but having done so, I have no great desire to read those books myself this time round. I'm in my heavy fiction reading format this summer, and except for the book you recommended about the Renaissance, I haven't been much interested in non-fiction. Maybe when the weather turns to ice and snow again.

Once again, it is Garth Spencer who is/maybe already has done a history on Canadian fandom, not me. I know next to nothing about the history or current make-up of Canadian fandom.

BROWNIAN MOTION #19

Learning to live within your budget is one of the more difficult life lessons, one that some people never learn. I have a friend who spends money like water when he has it, which means he often runs out of money before he can get more. Being erratically employed late in life has not helped this situation at all. Modern society is not kind of people who cannot pay for the necessities of life, so living within your means is a lesson that has to be faced sooner or later, hopefully before disaster occurs.

Loaning money to acquaintances is almost always a mistake. Be a Grinch; just say no whenever anybody wants a loan, for any reason. Tell 'em, you haven't got enuf cash to pay for your already overdue bills, and you certainly can't spare any for them. Then walk away.

I hope your economic and work situation improves so we can see a full length fanzine from you next mailing.



Antiques Roadkill.

THE SAD, INEVITABLE DAY IN EVERYONE'S LIFE

