



Procrastinations II

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Editorial.

First things (literally) first: the front cover artwork is a) a gorgeous fantasy representation of Iron Man and b) completely not representative of anything else in this issue. I saw it and I really wanted to put it on the front of the fanzine, and so I asked the artist – *theDURRRRIAN on deviantART – who kindly gave permission.

It's a short editorial this issue, since I've just been ill for a week preceding my trip to Chicon 7 (so excited!) and so I have a pretty packed to do list as a result. I also had to cut a page to make the page count divide by four, so the editorial seemed ripe for the cutting (especially as I never actually really know what to say here).

Thanks must go this issue to many people; Mark, for making me giggle and forcing me to come up with my own peanut butter/syringe artwork; Taral, for the horrific idea of voice-operated Photoshop; and Mette for her epic piece and accompanying images. I hope you enjoy her descent into cowboy fandom as much as I did.

See you in the bar!
John

Procrastinations is edited by John Coxon.
Issue #11 published on Wednesday 29th August, 2012.
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The Visibility of the Hugo Packet.

John Coxon (editor, Procrastinations; two time Hugo voter)

I'm sure that all us fan editors can agree that one of the most effective ways to find material for an article in your fanzine is to have a disagreement with your girlfriend on some point of fannish principle or lore. In this case, España and I have been discussing the Hugo voter packet and what it signifies to the Hugo Awards and to that slice of fandom that takes an interest in Worldcon. In particular, we had been discussing the availability of works in the packet and whether that should have a bearing on one's voting.

Prior to the release of the Hugo voter packet this year, I had decided that any works not in the packet would not receive my vote – excluding the dramatic presentation categories, obviously. I'd also decided that any works not available as ebooks (ePub/MOBI) would not be getting my approval, as I have no interest in reading PDFs on my iPhone's screen and reading novels sat at a computer sounds like one of the least fun things I can imagine.

This initial view of things was somewhat compromised when I saw that only one of the publishers behind a Hugo-nominated novel bothered to provide files in a decent format – Tor's *Among Others* – whereas the other four (Bantam Spectra, Macmillan/Del Rey and Orbit twice) didn't bother. This meant that, under my original logic, only one of the five would have been able to receive my vote; as such, I was forced to back down!



Whilst I'd already read three of the nominated works for best novel (*Among Others*, *Deadline* and *Embassytown*), I didn't read either *Leviathan Wakes* or *A Dance With Dragons*. I didn't read the latter because I haven't read any of *The Song of Ice and Fire* (given my poor memory, I think if I do read it I will do so *after* Martin has finished writing them). However, the reason I didn't read *Leviathan Wakes* was because it wasn't in the packet as a format I wanted to read. I didn't want to buy it, and my local library didn't have it, and so I didn't read it. As a result, it lost my vote, either because Orbit couldn't be bothered to include it in the packet properly, or because they were morally opposed to its inclusion. In both cases, it's a tiny little less likely to have 'Hugo Award winner' printed on the cover of the reprint.

España thinks this is harsh, and that you shouldn't limit your reading to just the Hugo packet if you know of other works that could inform your reading and, therefore, your choices on the ballot. However, I don't think that this is substantially different to how things would have been at the Hugo Awards' inception, before the introduction of the Internet. Back then, if you had missed a copy of a magazine that contained a nominated short story, it was presumably just hard lines – you missed it, better luck next time. Had I been voting in the Hugo Awards back then, would I have gone to much trouble to seek out the stories I'd missed? Probably not.

Is that different from how the present day would be without the voter packet? Perhaps. As an example, let's continue using the Best Short Story category. Of the nominated short stories this year, two are from *Asimov's*, one from *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, one from *Clarkesworld* and one on Tor.com. John Scalzi's snappily-titled 'Shadow War of the Night Dragons: Book One: The Dead City: Prologue' was published specifically for a website and has been freely available all along. *Clarkesworld* published E. Lily Yu's 'The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees', and all their content is available on their website for free, so that's another done deal. Mike Resnick, one of *Chicon 7's* Guests of Honour, has a story called 'The Homecoming' that *Asimov's* have put online. Nancy Fulda has made her short story, 'Movement', available as a

standalone work. ‘The Paper Menagerie’ is the fifth nominee, by Ken Liu, and the only one that can’t be read outside of its original publication. However, all of the short stories except Scalzi’s are available on Escape Pod, which always publishes readings of the nominees (why Scalzi didn’t get an episode, I don’t know).

It’s fair to say, even without the voter packet, we’d be able to listen to or read all the short stories that have been nominated. Does the same apply to other categories? I’d argue that the answer is ‘no’. Would I have sought out the nominees for Best Novelette, or read a copy of every editor’s anthology or magazine to see where I wanted to rank them? No, I wouldn’t; I would have read the ones that were easy to access, and not bothered with the others.

The Hugo voter packet doesn’t change that. People will still read the nominees that are the least hassle to get hold of, just as they always have done. All the Hugo packet does is make it a lot easier for authors and publishers to level that playing field. Instead of a situation in which the ease of encountering a work is entirely beyond control, the packet provides a way for authors and publishers to make sure their work is easily available to the fans who’ll be voting on it. The fact that publishers apparently don’t realise that fans will read the works that are the easiest to read is bewildering to me.

I find ePub files the easiest to read; if you’ve made it available as that, you’ve done the most you can to get my vote. MOBI files are okay, but not great; I can convert them and read them, but it takes effort to do so. PDF files are basically you saying “Don’t worry, John, this one’s not worth your time. Go have a biscuit instead.” I won’t read it, and you’ve definitely lost my vote. The one exception to this is the graphic novels, which work well in PDF format on a nice, high-quality display such as the one I use at home.

So, for the many high-ranking publishing execs that are currently avidly reading my wisdom on this matter, that’s how you get me to read your stuff. If you don’t, you run the risk of me not voting for you. Ditto to Randall Monroe, who didn’t include anything in the voter packet; I didn’t vote for you, either.



Confessions of a Cowboy Fangirl.

Mette Hedin (co-editor, Yipe!; proud owner, cowboy hat)

I had been expecting the two outlaws to show up on my doorstep for days. When a week had passed and they hadn't yet arrived, I decided to first contact the person who had sent them. When she claimed no knowledge of their whereabouts, I contacted the authorities. They informed me that the two men had last been seen arriving in Salt Lake City several days prior, for some reason. The home of the headquarters of the Mormons doesn't seem like a likely destination for two bandits whose foremost interests are bank robbery, whiskey swilling and poker playing. They were clearly very far from the trail, which should have taken them from Los Angeles, through California's central valley, and up to San Francisco, where I had expected them to show up on my doorstep. It seemed that, for unknown reasons, they were somewhere in Utah. Even more inexplicably, they had managed to stay completely out of sight for

days. The authorities would normally have tracked them closely but had apparently been lax for once, and I wondered why they would decide to go on the run when I was offering them permanent shelter in my own house. That was why I decided I had to call the United States Postal Service who, after some formalities, finally brought in the two wayward cowboys without even asking for a reward.

You may find it strange that I should be having lengthy conversations with postal workers about wanted outlaws, but these two fellows were arriving in a poster tube. They had been sent from a print shop in southern California that manoeuvres around the copyright laws with some creativity and sells poster-size reprints of 40 year old publicity photos. That's the thing about being a fan of semi-obscure things from the past: there is rarely much merchandise to speak of, and what is available has to be sought out with creative online searches. This time however, something had gone wrong and the package had been diverted. I never did find out why, but after a formal complaint my custom printed *Alias Smith and Jones* posters did finally arrive.

Why I should be searching for posters from a 1970s television Western in the first place is something that embarrasses me; almost as much as would harbouring real fugitives of the law in my house. It has taken me months to finally put this shame into words, but now my secret will be out. Had you told me a year ago I would be ordering cowboy posters and plastering my bedroom with them I would have probably said some not-very-flattering things about your ability to assess people in general.

At this point my eclectic collection of random collectibles and memorabilia has grown to a significant enough size that I am unable to lie to myself any longer (as if that was even possible, considering I have resorted to making things myself when the eBay offerings are too meagre). Yet I am too embarrassed to show most of it to anyone but my closest friends and when I do, it is still accompanied with a certain amount of nervous, red-faced giggling.



It all started when I ran into some continuing health issues: I find in retrospect that several of my obsessions have started this way. When I am too knocked out by fever or pain or immobility, I get a bit stir-crazy with boredom but don't have much energy to do anything constructive. This is when I am especially vulnerable to jumping feet first into the deep end of the fandom pool. In a sense, the mind will travel when the body cannot and the continuity of a television show becomes a much more satisfying mental journey than a series of unrelated movies, games or shows can ever be.

This time, I came across *Alias Smith and Jones*. I had watched it in my late teens and although I could barely remember more than 'it had something to do with a moustache', I did have memories of liking it. I figured I would just check out the beginning of an episode

to try to recall what it was that had appealed to me even though nothing had stuck in my memory. I immediately – hopelessly – fell back in love with the show. It is set in the West in the 1880s and follows two likeable and successful outlaws, Kid Curry (played by Ben Murphy) and Hannibal Heyes (played by Pete Duel). Kid was based on a real member of the Butch Cassidy gang who was supposedly the fastest gun in the West, both in reality and on the show. Hannibal was an entirely fictional character, relying more on wits than a gun.

When the show starts, they are still outlaws but with the progress of technology and increasing skill of the lawmen chasing them, their chosen profession of robbing banks and trains becomes progressively more difficult and they decide to try to go straight before they are caught. At the end of the pilot episode they have a conditional deal for amnesty with the governor of Wyoming, but the catch is they have to stay out of trouble long enough for the governor to justify their records being cleaned. Much trouble and hilarity ensues, as for the rest of the series they are trying to stay out of trouble and avoid the temptation of going back to a life of crime – all while being recognised at an alarming rate by the random people they encounter along the way.

That premise is interesting in itself, and the show had a great show runner in Roy Huggins. He knew how to churn out a large number of story ideas from a premise and knew how to do it quickly. A mid-season replacement for a failed show, they were behind schedule almost from the start – this skill became a necessity for the show to get produced on time and still maintain a decent standard. A good premise and interesting plots aside, there were other factors that kept me coming back for more. For one, the show feels relatively modern compared to some of its contemporaries in the hour-long drama category. Pre-1980 television often ages quite badly and one of the often overlooked reasons is the pace of editing.



When *Star Wars* was released in 1977 it had a relatively dizzying pace, affecting all subsequent productions and making earlier film and television seem sluggish in comparison. Try to make it through a single episode of *Bonanza* without feeling restless or falling asleep and you will see what I mean. Roy Huggins was unusually obsessed with editing and would frequently demand fine tuning of the cuts: as a result, *Alias Smith and Jones* has held up quite well.



As much as I can say for plot, editing, the impressive list of guest stars that appear through the series, or even the production values, to be perfectly honest, the main reason people still watch the show and remember it fondly is probably the two leads. Compared to other Westerns at the time, it had two relatively young and attractive leads who clearly had unusually good chemistry with each other. Huggins also made sure that, although the protagonists were outlaws, they always behaved like gentlemen. Compared to the rest of their gang, the Devil's Hole Gang (which makes regular appearances throughout the series), they appear to be smart, civilised and well groomed.

Altogether it makes the two criminals very easy to root for as they encounter one setback after another in their quest to stay out of trouble, preferably by somehow getting a large sum of money by legal means so they can hide out in South America. Finally but also importantly, the show has a lot of heart, and is at its foundation very funny and inexplicably just makes you happy.

My husband is a very understanding man but at the same time he hasn't exactly been helping. He's an enthusiastic sort of guy and was soon watching the show almost as much as me. Thus the show would come up in conversation but I was not ready to come out publicly as a fan of Westerns, so my ever helpful husband offered up the first codeword for the show: 'cowboy porn'. Before you jump to conclusions, the show is pretty clean. I would call it family entertainment in the same cross-generational category as *Doctor Who*, and there is certainly nothing sexually explicit about it. For the sake of fairness I will grant you that the second series has a particularly gratuitous and lengthy butt shot of the two protagonists, but it's plot related so let's just call it a nice bonus.

When I asked him why on earth he would coin the phrase 'cowboy porn', he said it had nothing to do with being pornographic, but because "It is weirdly enjoyable". After one late-night drunken tweet it became apparent that this was a horrible codeword. For the second attempt, he threw in a few extra letters in the standard abbreviation of the show. Thus, 'ASJ' was renamed 'ass joy'. I have stopped asking him for codewords and now just mumble the name of the show, hoping that no one is paying attention.

Here we were, two newly minted fans, co-dependently spurring each other further into the madness of fandom. As I was still bed-ridden I think the descent accelerated, as there were fewer outside stimuli to interfere and much greater opportunity to go a little too far. I will now outline the progression of our path into obsessive madness. The first month or two were relatively sane. We watched the show some days, sometimes two or three in a row, but nothing excessive. About three months in things decidedly changed. I had watched the first two seasons but scorned the third. At the end of season two, Pete

Duel had tragically committed suicide – his replacement was the actor who had played the most loathsome villain in the show. It just didn't feel right, so I did what any budding obsessive fan will do: I started over from the beginning. It was at this point that I started buying posters off the internet.



Five months into the madness we went nuts. We took a trip to a *Doctor Who* convention in Los Angeles as an excuse to do some ASJ fan activities on the sly. We plunked down the money for the rather pricey VIP tour at Universal Studios where the series was filmed, just so we could do a little more than whisk by the sets at high speed. The day started badly in the VIP lounge when the guide tried to gently let me know that one of the more iconic sets from the show, the town of Porterville from the pilot episode, had been torn

down only a few years before. This mainly managed to mark me as the freak of the tour in the eyes of the 10 other tour participants as the unexpected news got me a little bit emotional. Hey, it was early in the morning, okay?

In the end we cherished the day as we got to wander through some of the same familiar streets from the show and marvel at how much smaller everything looked in reality. The iconic ‘Six Points Texas’ – seen in many productions spanning several decades and so named because it had six streets converging on one point – was reduced to what I would coin "three points not-much-to-look-at", but some sections were remarkably intact. We ran around like idiots trying to capture every angle of the remaining buildings with our cameras while the rest of the tour watched in states ranging from befuddlement to annoyance. *[The photographs taken on the tour are dotted throughout this article – Ed]*



We also went to the hat studio that is run by the apprentice to the hat maker that made the original hats from the show and ordered our own hats: the Kid's hat from the first season for my husband and Hannibal Heyes' all-the-bells-and-whistles hat for me. Of course, this led to us making our own costumes about seven months in. I make a fair amount of costumes for fun and if I have learned one thing, it is this: if you spend a large amount of effort handcrafting a reproduction of a costume, you are forever incorporating the original into the image of yourself and the costume becomes a tiny part of your personality whether you want it to or not.



When they were done, it was unusually nerve-wracking to put them on at a convention and walk around in them, as it meant literally coming out of the cowboy closet. Most people were confused by it but what made it all worthwhile was the handful of people that got that childhood look of joy in their eyes as they professed their love for the show. Suddenly we were not quite so alone, nor so crazy.

The most embarrassing thing happened about four months in, when we started branching out. We started watching the occasional movie on the Western Channel. At this point I should have seen the warning signs, but instead we started enthusiastically quoting Slim Pickens, discussing varying holster designs and playing the 'recognise the actor back when he was young and skinny' game. This is when we were first properly exposed to Spaghetti Westerns. To continue the addiction metaphor, this has to be the heroin of the genre. There are some seriously bad trips to be had amongst the highs. For each *Sabata* (which I dearly love) there is a slew of really awful stuff. Italian film-makers of the 60s and 70s embraced the Western and made a vast quantity of films while not fully understanding the archetypes of the genre. This means that watching a spaghetti western is a lot like taking a picture, cutting it up in pieces and gluing it back together at random. The result is surreal, sometimes hilarious and sometimes disturbing. The titles are long and frequently ridiculous and the plot is often completely incomprehensible. An additional peculiarity is that they are almost always filmed without audio and all of the dialogue is subsequently dubbed over in post production, mostly with a different actor providing the voice. For example, if you have ever had a hankering to hear Klaus Kinski speak in a southern drawl, I recommend *If You Meet Sartana Pray for Your Death*.

In the end I have to administer the Italian substitute sparingly however, as they have inherited some of the most sexist attitudes and plot devices of many of the early Westerns and the 'rapiness' of the sub-genre can be quite overwhelming. Female protagonists are nowhere to be seen, and women often have no purpose other than to be a prostitute, sexually assaulted or murdered, thus giving their husbands/brothers/sons a reason to go out and be badass and kill a

bunch of bad guys. After every foray into that world I run back to my safe harbour of ASJ. Perhaps it's because it was filmed in the United States in an era of great advances in women's rights, but it has a far more modern view on the female character and the women are more likely to be found running a business than being a prostitute. When their sexuality is brought up it is almost always because they are using it to their advantage rather than because they are being taken advantage of.

That leads me to why I have been so embarrassed about the whole thing. Fans of Westerns are often associated with very conservative political views, which I certainly do not share. I don't listen to country music, I don't own a weapon nor do I drive a pick-up. I am also clearly not the target audience for the Western Channel, where some of their trailers for upcoming movies can be hair-raising and completely irrelevant to the film. For instance, lauding Gary Cooper for his testimony to the Un-American Activities Committee saying that he turned down scripts for being "tinged with communistic ideas". I have no desire to 'return to a simpler time', I don't have much interest in manly men, nor do I romanticise the era. I think the crux of it is that I am afraid that if I go public with my inexplicable obsession then some of the things associated with the Western will somehow be attributed to me, hence it is my deep dark secret.

My only comfort is that I will perhaps soon be considered ahead of my time. One of the episodes in the next season of *Doctor Who* takes place in a frontier town (albeit with a cyborg cowboy). Tarantino's much hyped next movie is a Western and Johnny Depp will be seen as Tonto in *The Lone Ranger*, a remake due out next year. I do fear that the apparent resurgence of the genre will kill some of the fun for me – it has been a weird little fandom world with few other people to talk to and shared moments to be cherished. In *Doctor Who* fandom there is a new T-shirt or piece of artwork every five minutes, so it has been refreshing to have to hunt down what little there is out there, or make my own things because there is nothing like what I want. It is also a peaceful fandom in that there aren't

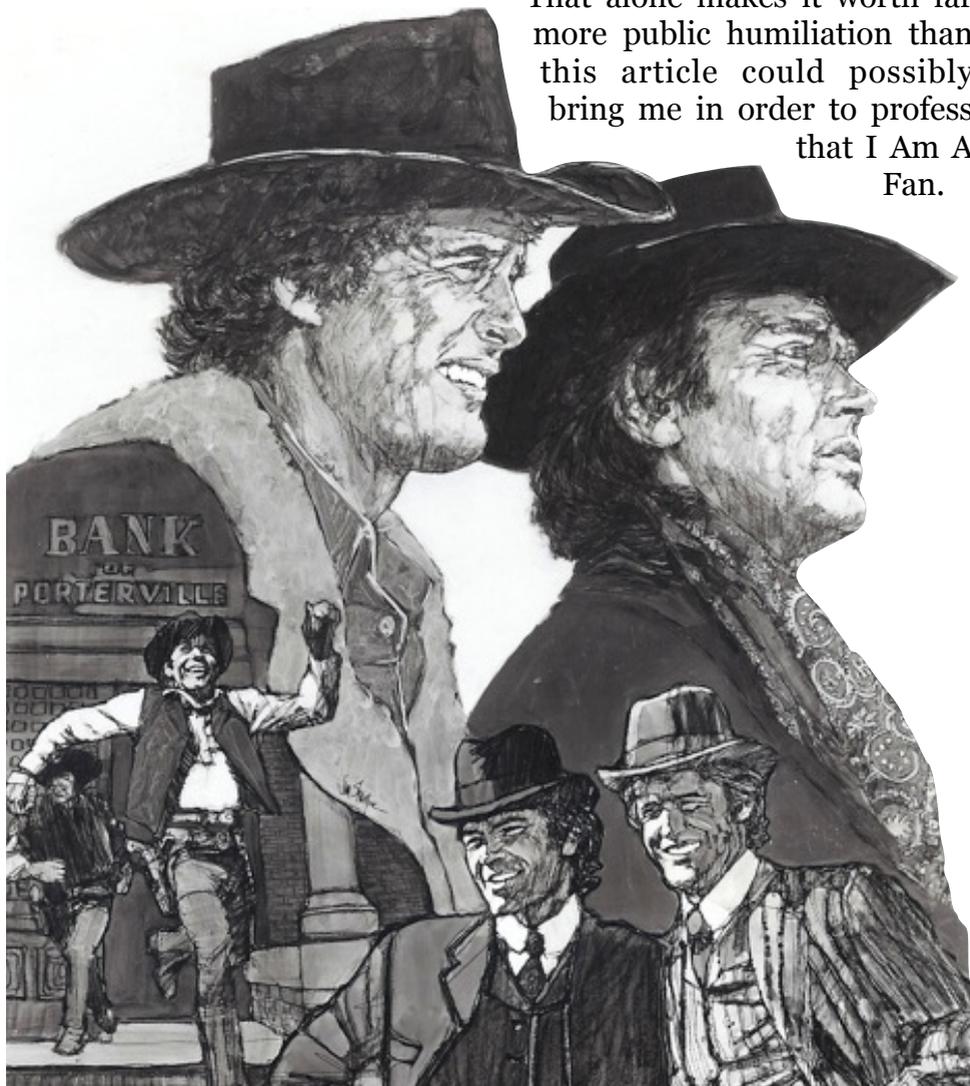
hundreds of podcasts about it, all clamouring to have a unique opinion on the latest episode.

It felt like my own thing that I could peacefully watch without someone spoiling a plot or pointing out the flaws. Ultimately though, with all my health problems it ended up being the one thing that kept me away from the anti-depressants. Watching the show made me truly happy when everything else was miserable, and for

that I will always be grateful.

That alone makes it worth far more public humiliation than this article could possibly bring me in order to profess

that I Am A
Fan.



So 20th Century...

Taral Wayne (nominee, 2012 Hugo Award for Best Fan Artist)

Do you remember *Star Trek IV*, the silly one where whales threaten the Earth? At one point, Scotty tries to upload a file for “transparent aluminum” to a 20th Century computer. “Computer!” he addresses it, until reminded that in this century we still had to use a mouse. Then he speaks to the mouse...

Very funny. In reality, we are likely to have universal voice-actuated home computers a lot sooner than Mr. Scott realised. The pundits at Apple have declared literacy obsolete. Soon, they have announced, people will no longer have to ask their desktops, laptops, and hand held apps to connect to the Internet, open a file or purchase a download by manipulating a keyboard or mouse. Future Apple tech will be free of such encumbrances. Instead, just speak to the hand. “Phone, text to boss, quote, won’t be in today, unquote. Connect to the TSX and sell Research In Motion Limited. Then bring up Game of Thrones, where I left off.” Like magic, it will all be so.

Well, maybe this is the future for some people. The same ones, perhaps, who are trusting enough to pay Google or Microsoft to store all their photos, favourite music and important personal documents without either a) losing everything in the next systems crash, b) selling the whole lot to snooping corporations who want to know about you, c) being hacked by a teenage kid in North Korea or Dubai, or d) going straight to Big Brother.

For most people, reading and writing are skills almost more esoteric than they really need. Simple instructions like “fire exit” and “no parking” can easily be reduced to ideographs – a silhouette of a car being towed, for example. Technology has made it unnecessary for people to be able to even sign their own names. Why bother, when an RF chip in your wallet, your car keys and even your pants will tell the entire world who you are, where you’ve been, what you earn, how you spend it and when your next payments are due. I imagine most people will get along fine in a world where their computers

have no keyboard or mouse, and the only means of manipulating the external world are voice-controls.

I am not most people, and, I strongly suspect, neither are you. I wonder if even most people are “most people?”

Take writers, for example. Most writers are accustomed to actually writing, using their hands to construct a text one word at a time. Whether they do this with a goose quill or a keyboard is immaterial. The technique is unambiguous, as well. Irrelevant gestures a writer might make, such as scratching his nose or cracking his knuckles, won't end up in the text. Speaking what you want written isn't at all the same thing. Some writers have gotten the hang of it, but I suspect few writers could make the transition easily. A typed or handwritten sentence allows you to backtrack to make changes as often as you want. Another important advantage is that you can pause part-way to consider the next bit. Finally, one can compare alternate texts by eye. There is virtually no likelihood you will misunderstand yourself, and write down anything you didn't intend.

Writers have written through dictation since the invention of shorthand, of course. Later writers spoke into voice recorders. But, while dictation should be as clear and complete as possible, in the end it doesn't matter all that much if you hem and haw, mumble, repeat words, vary volume or pitch, or anything else ... because it's all going to be typed up later by a human being.

A voice-controlled computer will be far more literal, however. The software will improve over time and learn to overlook the idiosyncrasies of human speech; but still, no voice program is ever likely to understand what it's transcribing. This is a huge disadvantage. While context may guide the software where to recognise “four” rather than “fore” or “for,” there's likely to be trouble in more abstract situations. For instance, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” What just happened here? Has the writer changed his mind and revised the first line? Or is this a deliberate parallel construction, showing contrast? How is a computer to know? Spellcheckers are notorious for making the wrong assumption, but when dealing with the spoken word instead

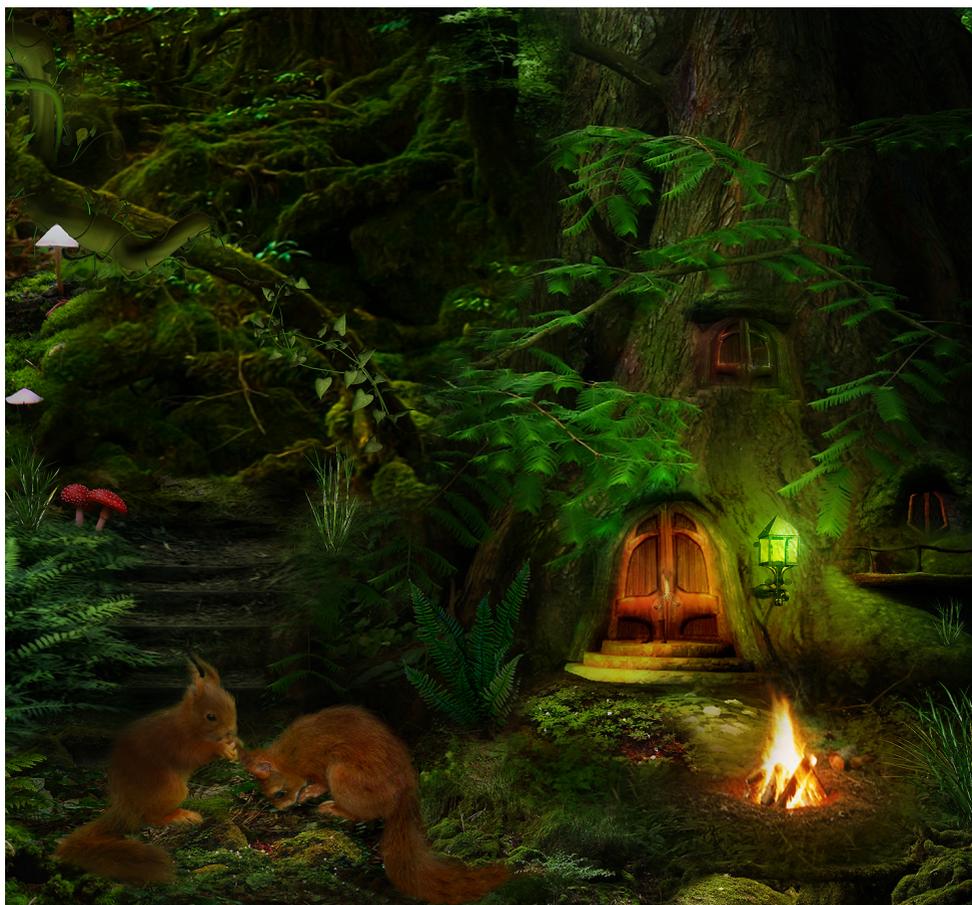
of keystrokes, the difficulty rises exponentially. A pause is apt to be misconstrued as a full stop. Revised phrases will be faithfully added, one by one, as run-on sentences. Other phrases will be mistaken for corrections, and stricken from the text.

For the computer to turn the spoken word into an acceptable text, it will have to be able to distinguish orders given to it from the actual words to be recorded. For instance, let's imagine the author at work is dictating the start to one of his most famous stories:

“To begin with... um... no... Morley was dead, let that be clear. Marley was dead, to begin with! Yes. There should be no doubt... uh, no... is no doubt, um... whatsoever... no... whatever about that. ...no doubt whatsoever about that. And... um... computer, play that back to me, will you? Um... not bad. The resister of his burial was signed by... oh for the love of God, who does sign those things, anyway? A clergyman, of course... the undertaker... um, um, um... how about a witness? No, the chief mourner, that's who! And who else? Why Ebenezer Scrod of course... No, that doesn't sound right at all. Ebenezer Squidge? Scudge? Scrooge! Scrooge signed it! Computer delete that. Pinchpenny signed it. And Pinchpenny's name was good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Morley or Marley or whatever was as dead as a doornail. Make that Scrooge, after all!”

Any computer that can make sense of that, and render the text of Dickens's “A Christmas Carol,” is bloody well capable of writing the rest of the story all by itself. A computer that writes its own fiction may actually be easier to program, in fact. There may already be one at Tor Books, writing under several pseudonyms – Brandon Sanderson, perhaps, Robert J. Sawyer or John Scalzi. Why not? Serious writing is just so, you know, 20th Century, anyway.

Don't even get me started on the unimaginable horror of voice-controlled Photoshop.



Through Space and Time with an Eastern Grey Squirrel called CHRIS.

Mark Plummer (co-editor, *Banana Wings*; nominee, 2012 Hugo Awards)

There were these three squirrels living in the garden of the Shirley Road fan household. Two of them had names that are impossible for humans to pronounce but by an odd quirk of intraspecies linguistics the third one was called CHRIS^Topher J Gar^Cia! – and yes, its name really was spelled with those intracapitalisations and an exclamation mark at the end, both being a common feature of squirrel names for historical reasons dating from the time of Queen Anne.

The squirrels were reasonably content with their lives. They knew there were two big people in the big house at the end of the garden, and one of them – the one with not much hair on its head – collected peanuts which it would store in a little box in the garden. The squirrels thought this was unwise, because if you were going to collect nuts then surely it was irresponsible to put them where anybody could find them. And as two of the squirrels collected nuts themselves they would periodically remove the big person's peanut collection to their own collections. The big person never seemed to notice and just put more nuts in the box and so everybody was happy.

The third squirrel – not CHrisTopher J GarCia!, one of the others – didn't collect nuts. It collected back issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and indeed had one of the best collections of the magazine in squirrel hands (or are they paws?). It had never been able to find a copy of issue #1, but that was because it had never learned that the first issue was called *The Magazine of Fantasy*, something which I think can be attributed to the team at the online third edition *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* who have really done very little to promote themselves to the squirrel science-fiction magazine-collecting community, although to be fair I think this is a legacy from the policies adopted by earlier editions.

This squirrel was also missing all the issues from the first half of 1964, volume 26, that being when there was still a British Reprint Edition and so the pukka US editions were a little less common in the Shirley Road environs. Oddly enough, one of the big people in the house, again the one with not much hair on its head, also collected back issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and was also missing the issues from the first half of 1964 – truth to tell, its collection was actually pretty spotty generally, especially for the 1950s and early 1960s issues – but the big person and the squirrel never appreciated that they had this point of commonality. If only there was some kind of national organisation, an association as it were, which could bring together everybody in Britain who was interested in science fiction... but now I'm drifting into the realms of fantasy.

Anyway, the summer of 2012 wasn't much of a summer really. It rained a lot. Nearly all the time. And this was a problem for the squirrels, because the ones who had peanut collections found some of their holdings were going mouldy, and I surely don't need to spell out why rain is a bad thing if you live in a tree and collect old digest science fiction magazines. One afternoon, as the magazine-collecting squirrel was examining its copy of the November 1966 issue of *F&SF*, the one with the wrap-around Bert Tanner cover illustrating Thomas Burnett Swann's 'The Manor of Roses', and wondering whether it could be dried out or would have to be replaced, CHrisTopher J GarCia! said it had an idea.

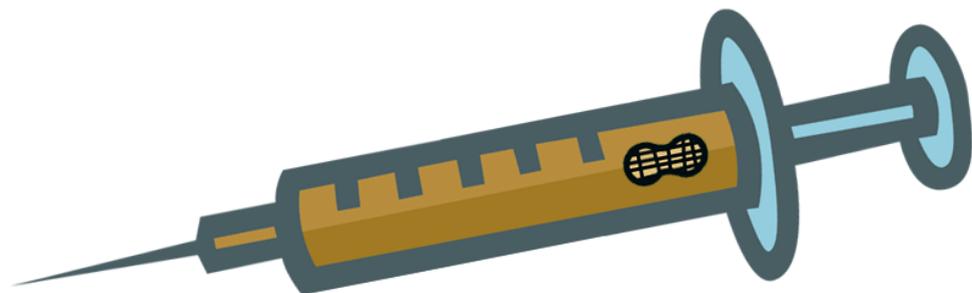
There's this place, CHris said, not too far away, where it never rains. It's called Hayling Island and it's populated by a few big people who are all related to each other and who leave tons of peanuts lying about all over the place. There are loads of squirrels living there too, and all of them either collect peanuts or back issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and sometimes even both since the trees on this island are large and spacious, more like loft apartments really. There is a true community spirit about the place, CHris explained. The squirrels write amateur magazines about their hobby – 'fanzines' they're called – and trade them with one another, and they get together for weekend social events called 'conventions'. At least the peanut collectors do, and who knows, perhaps the magazine collectors might in the future. It is a squirrel paradise. Plus, CHris continued, it'd be good to get out of the London area what with the Olympics and the attendant travel disruption. The security theatre is all getting a bit much, isn't it? And as for that whole thing with McDonald's and the chips...

So the three squirrels went down to the docks and got on a boat which took them to Hayling Island. However, it wasn't quite as described. Rather it was populated solely by cows, all of whom were (entirely inexplicably) obsessed with talking about the scientific plausibility of stories that had appeared in *Analog*. They weren't even interested in the earlier issues when it was still *Astounding* and arguably a lot better, especially if you talk about Poul Anderson in a Birmingham accent. These cows also listened to Neil Young records

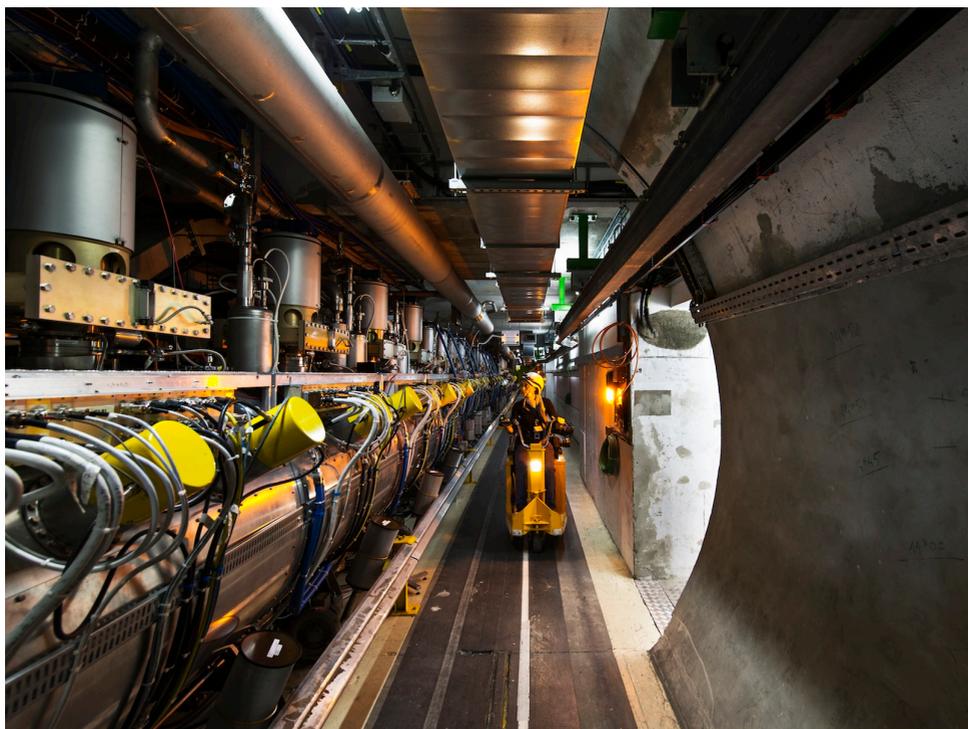
incessantly, and seemed to have a particular fondness for *Trans*, you know, the 1982 album with the vocoders.

The three squirrels couldn't stand Neil Young – oddly this was another point of undiscovered connection with one of the big people in the Shirley Road fan household, this time the shorter one who wasn't balding – so they got back on the boat and went in search of another island. The next place they stopped was called Jersey and that didn't quite work for them either. Tobes Valois (of the St Lawrence Valois) was very hospitable, but then he introduced the squirrels to his mate Mad Dog Rob and when it became apparent that Rob was so named not because of any personal manic tendencies but because he owned a dog that was a bit mad... well, Jersey didn't seem like such a good idea, even more so when the squirrels learned that all of CHrisTophers J GarCia!'s luggage including its peanut collection had accidentally been sent to Iceland.

But the squirrels weren't downhearted, oh no. They all got back on the boat and after leaving forwarding directions for CHrisTophers J GarCia!'s luggage they set off in search of another, better island which turned out to be Ireland where everybody is called James except for the people who aren't and even they're called James. Only it was a version of Ireland which was very similar to the Ireland we all know but with subtle differences. James Bacon was still resident in this version of Ireland and there were other points of divergence, mostly relating to the legal status of peanut butter, and so...



[This is the first piece of fan art I've done for Procrastinations myself. I am ridiculously proud of this. – Ed]



... and so the truth is that I don't know where I'm going with this. The truth is that I wanted to write about the Higgs boson. However, I'm slightly handicapped because I don't really understand it. I've read some of the stuff in the media recently, about the announcement on 4 July from CERN that they'd discovered a new boson which *could* be a Higgs boson and what it might mean if it were, and I heard a scientist on Channel 4 news explaining that in a hundred years' time people will be talking about this day because of the work they've been doing at CERN and nobody will even remember who bloody Bob bloody Diamond was, and I thought, wow, this is a big deal – and a real opportunity to write something for John Coxon's fanzine in which I have a genuine reason to use the word 'awesome' completely in context and with no sense of irony, if we set aside the detail that I don't understand the Higgs boson.

So I wrote about squirrels instead. And of course they do travel in time so it's not wholly irrelevant. Brian Cox mentioned it on *QI*. Or was it Jim de Liscard? It's so difficult to tell.

Letters of Comment.

Eric Mayer writes:

Somehow or other I missed *Procrastinations* 10 when it hit Bill Burns' cyber shelves but once you pick a title like that you've given all laggard loccers a golden excuse. Nice looking issue. Good cover. Also, as I am discovering, it is not easy to find suitable Creative Commons material. Very time consuming.

The theme was especially interesting because one of the main things I wanted to do with *Revenant* this year was talk about some alternative fandoms I've participated in, like mini-comics/small press. Next issue I will probably feature games, however I never got involved with role-playing games. Old fashioned board games, war simulation games and modern computer text adventures was what I dabbled in. Some of the latter do bear resemblances to role-playing. I'm always puzzled when I read accounts of role-playing however. You talk about the personalities of your characters and specific adventures they undertake and I have never been sure how much such stuff derives from the actual rules, or the Dungeon Master's imagination, or the player's imagination.

It's a mixture. The character comes from an initial concept, and then statistics and characteristics chosen from game mechanics and the Game Master (GM)'s guidance. As a result, the rules influence how you play a character (a high Charisma is likely to mean you enter more social situations, whereas high Strength means punching first and asking questions later). However, once you've been playing a character for a while you begin to get a feel for what your reactions will be beyond the rules, and then the character becomes something much greater than the sum of their parts. A good GM will sometimes be able to let the characters generate their own adventures and plot, since everyone will have their own motivations and desires.

I feel fortunate roleplaying games were not around when I was a teen because I am certain I would have become addicted to them. I was addicted to Strat-O-Matic baseball which is rather like a roleplaying game. Each player has a card (or did back then before computers) reflecting his strengths and weaknesses as a hitter, fielder and runner and teams of players are on a long quest to win the championship. You rolled the dice continually and referred to the player cards to see how the players performed in the different game situations that arose. It was like being a part of an unfolding story.

That sounds like a cool idea, and not dissimilar to Dungeons and Dragons.

Oddly, I stopped reading much sf back in the mid-seventies. Since then my reading has wandered all over the place. Probably I read more mysteries than anything, but even mysteries don't amount to a majority since I take a scattershot approach. So verbally oriented as I am, literary fandoms have never attracted me.

I think, if I didn't read sf, I'd probably read crime fiction; I love Jeffrey Deaver and most of the television I watch seems to be in that genre, too.

Before my back went bad I got very involved with both road running and – better yet – orienteering. Although I may skip writing about those even in my own zine because I can already see readers' eye glazing over at the merest hint of anything to do with sport. Strange how I pick hobbies I'm not suited for. As for running and orienteering, I am miserably unathletic. Mini-comics were great fun but I can't draw much. And as for computer text adventures...my programming skills weren't even up to the box-of-crayolas-level that the dedicated game languages represent. Maybe that was part of the attraction. I had no expectations for myself so I could relax.

I like sport, so I'd read it! The Olympics, cricket, F1, rugby, even some soccer. Although the more American sports confuse me, and I never really understood the point of American football.

As James Bacon points out many groups consider themselves "fandom" which is fine. I can't help noting, though, that these days some aging fen like to call their circle of friends "fandom." Which is also fine, if they'd only not try to convince everyone else that fandom consists only of them and their friends. Which may be something of the sort España Sheriff is getting at to start her article.

The social-group-as-fandom thing is almost exemplified by re-Repetercon, which was a reunion of fans that had attended the 1964 Eastercon held in my home town. Is that a fannish endeavour, or is it old friends meeting up to remember the good old days?

One little thing though...I started to read Mike Glycer's loc and thought, wow, he and I are really in agreement. So I kept reading and thought... man, we must be clones! Either that or his name got stuck to my loc. Well, it doesn't bother me in the least to see a well respected fan like Mike endorsing all my views and heroes but I hope he isn't embarrassed!

Apologies must go to both Mike and Eric for misattributing that letter; but it wouldn't be one of my fanzines without some howling error in it.

Lloyd Penney writes:

Here's a printout copy of Procrastinations 10, many thanks for that. A great España illo on the front, and we can see where you are, she sure captured you in the tie-dye shirt. Comment hooks are within, no doubt...

I'll be sure to pass these comments on to her; I'm sure she'll be glad to know it's obvious which one is me!

I hope that Jacq Monahan enjoyed her TAFF trip. We had floated a trial balloon about Yvonne and I running for TAFF, but we have now decided not to...we fully expect that a trip to London will be our last overseas trip, and we want it to be what we want, not what the fan fund requires of us. Yvonne tires so rapidly these days, and I want

her to enjoy her trip, not count the days until it's done. Oh, well, the trip to London is the main thing, and we are saving for it, hope we save enough.

Jacq seemed to have a great time and was enjoying herself whenever I saw her. TAFF's a commitment, no doubt about it – it's weighing up the brilliant opportunity against the amount of work and expectation that becomes your responsibility.

I remember there being a crossover between modelling, gaming and SF fandoms in Toronto, but as far as I can tell, that's long gone. Any group of modellers today are probably the same modellers from back then, only in their 50s, and probably making models of WWII tanks.

It's weird that there isn't more crossover, especially given how many systems have a preponderance of sfnal and fantasy elements. I suppose it takes a certain mind to want to be a gamer and a different mind to want to read, or watch – consumption vs. creation, in a way.

Claire Brialey has a listing on IMDB? So do I. I provided the voice of a certain chief engineer in a *Star Trek* fan film called *Bastards of Kirk*. What fun...

When it comes to SF fandom, I always figured that there was something there that kept people involved as much as 60 or 70 years. This December, it'll be 35 years for me. I do find areas of fandom exclusive, and few areas all that inclusive. I have been involved in Holmes fandom, and while we were members of The Bootmakers of Toronto for a year, we were largely ignored, and received only a couple of issues of the society newsletter. We often didn't find out about events until after they had happened, so we did not renew.

Some societies really do need to pull their finger out of their arse and actually work for what their members want.

Ah, I've just educated myself on the origins of Inspector Spacetime. I don't watch *Community* (there's a lot I don't watch), so I wouldn't have known. It looks like the parody is becoming as popular as the original.

I love Community, it's one of my favourite television shows of all time (and definitely my favourite currently running show). I was thrilled to get Chris to write such an erudite article on the theme, and I hope that he'll consent to write another eventually.

For many years, I was a literary convention fan, too. Still am. We also helped out a lot with conventions, especially in running con suites and green rooms. As with España, my first foray into fandom was through media, a *Star Trek* club in Victoria, British Columbia in 1977. I may not share the fannish interests of many of my friends, but I understand why it interests them, and that's why we helped out at filkcons, Trekcons and Whocons. This weekend, I premiere a steampunk costume at a steampunk high tea, I know what she means when she says the hobby consumes a good portion of the wallet.

It's one of the things that puts me off costuming, and indeed LRP – the effect on my wallet would be huge, and I already have a couple of pretty expensive hobbies. Those toy soldiers won't buy themselves, y'know.

Corflu on the Beach? Sounds great. How would we keep Ted White's Diet Pepsis cold, though?

I am probably done here now, and will get this to you asap, or as fast as the e-passenger pigeons will take it. I have seriously dated myself now, but that's not new. Take care, and with some luck we'll soon be calling you Doctor John.

That's the goal! It's always good to hear from you Lloyd.

Credits.

ISSN: 2049-1859 (Print) / 2049-1867 (Online)

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This fanzine is unstapled because I have a million and one things to do and no time in which to do them.