

Tightbeam 358

July 2024



Appointment in Sammara

Alan White

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What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

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Anime

You Don't Need a Map to Know Where You're Going By Jessi Silver



“Laid-Back Camp” lets us soak up pleasant feelings without really having anywhere to go.

I think a lot about anime (obviously), and also about the way in which I consume it, as should be evident by my earlier post regarding my totally-not-superhuman ability to watch a lot of it in a short amount of time. Years of reading reviews and lurking on message boards, as well as trying and failing to participate in message board dis-

cussions without getting into weird, unintended arguments, has told me that my way of thinking about anime (and other storytelling media, by extension) is probably kind of strange and a little contrary to the norm. This isn't a “look at me, I'm such a special snowflake” statement, just an acknowledgement that I recognize my critical eye has some... astigmatism.

I hear people chatting all the time about an anime's “plot.” Where the plot is going, what should happen next in the plot, is this or that thing that happened indicative of a plot hole (don't get me started on that one)... examining this structural aspect of an anime series is very important to a lot of people, and certainly one broad way of discussing and interpreting media in general. In the modern anime fandom, this type of discussion is a huge part of participating in that fandom, and writers ranging from amateur-level bloggers (for example, myself) to professional staff writers for bigger anime and fandom websites post recaps and dissections of weekly episodes from their favorite (or occasionally obligatory) series all the time. This is awesome for people like me who are put off by certain things and might want to seek out more details about certain kinds of content (for example, I needed to be sure that *After the Rain* was not actually a romance between its two protagonists before I was willing to invest the time to finish it).

However, speaking as someone who's written them, the downside of weekly recaps is that one can feel compelled to pick at every last detail with a fine-toothed comb and analyze every single action of the characters and movement of the story, because otherwise a half-hour episode of your typical anime series can be exceedingly difficult to write about at length. With a word count to reach and a deadline to meet, what's the easiest thing to write about? What happened, who it happened to, and where they might be going, that's what. There are writers who are definitely better than I am at this, but I only read these types of reviews piecemeal and occasionally so I can't really call out the “good” ones. I personally have a lot of trouble with that format because it's just not the way I feel comfortable interacting with media and I don't gain much pleasure from it. At best, it can be a satisfying way to go back and examine something I've already watched or read once I'm familiar with it.

It wasn't until fairly recently that I got a better handle on my beef with this line of thinking. Maybe this is more a function of being a woman in internet fandom circles, or maybe it's that I tend to be emotional and sensitive in general as part of my nature, but I've had several run-ins with people during which I've been criticized for having a strong feeling about something, instead of basing my opinions on some sort of measurable "logic." Man, almost nothing rankles me like someone telling me that pure, unfeeling logic is somehow superior to emotion-based reactions. Never mind the fact that "pure logic" almost always seems to actually mean "cherry-picked realities that align with my own emotional investment in the topic that I refuse to acknowledge as being emotional," the simple truth is that our lives are informed every single day by the facts and realities of daily life and emotional fallout from our many ways of perceiving them. And sometimes the things that people say and do, or the things that happen, just don't align with some nonexistent grand logical scheme running the universe. Our lives are full of dead-ends, poor decisions, standalone moments of extreme elation, fruitful conversations, wasted time... we're a mess. Society is a mess. The stories we tell are sometimes (always) just an extension of that.

That's why I don't really care that much to pick apart a plot. It's true, there are some stories that are entertaining to me just because they're what I'd call "page-turners" (each episode ends in a cliffhanger, and the show doesn't seem to have a super-deep message – Attack on Titan is one of these types of series I've really liked), there are so many more I find enjoyable because they provide a window into a character's life, or create a fascinating new world, or speak to some truth about being human. Sometimes these series might initially imply a certain story arc but start to turn in a different direction, or sometimes there's not really a grand story to tell in the first place. I'm more than willing to let a show with a fascinating premise carry me where it wants to go and I'll then consider the whole package, even if it's not where I expected to be going. I'm also on-board when an anime exists to cultivate an emotion, rather than drag me along to some concrete destination where a person does a thing because of reasons.



"The Perfect Insider" is as much Nishinosono's story as anyone else's.

Whenever I start mulling over this topic, I inevitably start thinking of examples of anime that I really liked for the above stated reasons, which anime fandom as a whole was cold towards. The Perfect Insider is one of those shows that I really loved (and wrote weekly recaps of... whoops), but which the larger fandom and many other re-

viewers just did not like at all. The series is a tough nut to crack, not only because of some of its subject matter (murder, statutory rape, the nature of genius, etc.), but because it (wrongfully, in my opinion) markets itself as a murder mystery tale. Contrary to first impressions, the point of story has more to do with deciding whether the type of intellectual existence Saikawa-Sensei and Dr. Magata strive towards has any value and less to do with figuring out the identity of the murderer. It's also a snapshot of the consequences of nourishing and celebrating a gifted, precocious intelligence without also encouraging (or insisting upon!) normal, age-appropriate emotional development. There were a lot of critics and fans who seemed to be frustrated over the series as they watched its final few episodes, not just because of the ways in which the "mystery" resolved itself, but even more so because the enigmatic figure at the center of it all, the striking young genius Dr. Magata, was ultimately motivated by a set of rules and standards that were perceived as illogical and ridiculous.

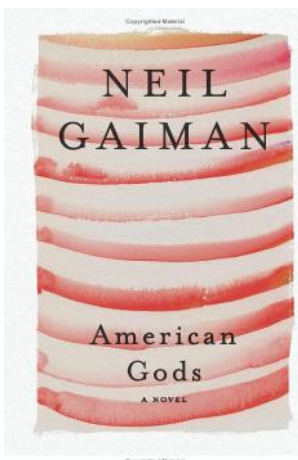
To me, *The Perfect Insider* was a real punch in the gut, though I'd be hard-pressed to provide a concrete reason. I think I connected with it because it reaffirmed for me that, as much as humankind worships the notion of transcending the limitations of its basic meat-based form and reaching some higher plane of mental existence (as Dr. Magata ostensibly has done and Saikawa-sensei wishes like hell he could figure out how to do), what defines them is their infallible passion, pain, joy, feeling as represented by Nishinosono Moe, who is highly intelligent, but not an intellectual the way that Saikawa or Magata are portrayed. I didn't care so much about the details of how the perpetrator overwrote the lab's security camera footage (though that was neat, too!), or how a second person arrived in Dr. Magata's locked room without anyone realizing it (that was easy to figure out after a certain point). What I connected with was the story of Nishinosono's past and her passionate devotion to bringing Saikawa back to reality time and again (two things that are actually related), as well as Dr. Magata's truly tragic life, the sadness of which I don't think many people must have realized.

I have too many examples of these types of anime experiences to list here, but I hope this one helps to at least explain what I look for in a viewing experience. Watching anime, to me, isn't like clutching a map in one hand and a compass in the other, marking off landmarks as I make my way from A to B. Watching anime is more like hiking to the top of a tall hill and breathing the crisp, clean air as the sun warms my face, or a summer storm drops rain suddenly, or fog drifts by below. If I decide I'm where I want to be, then I can be open to almost anything that happens (unless it's that one-in-a-million time that a bird flies by and poops in my mouth – I'm looking at you, Gangsta.). As my husband likes to say, some of the best series out there are those with the lowest stakes; shows in which no demon king needs defeating, no items need to be obtained, and no damsels/dudes/cute animals need rescuing from the clutches of evil. Sometimes it's better to stop anticipating the next step and just enjoy the way that life unfolds around us. Or to just accept that anime series don't always cater to our own expectations, and maybe being passive and open in the face of the unexpected is okay, too.

Comics

American Gods: Shadows Review by Thomas E. Simmons

Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* novel came out back in 2001. It won a Hugo, a Stoker, a Locus, and a Nebula. Then it spawned a Starz television series. Next, it inspired a comic.



American Gods: Shadows contains the first nine Dark Horse comic books which adapted the novel. This first volume hit the book stands in 2018. (There is also a *Complete American Gods* collecting all three volumes [comprised of 27 comics] published in 2023.)

Like Gaiman's *Sandman*, the story opens with a hero's long-awaited release from imprisonment. This hero's name is Shadow Moon. Like the Sandman, the world he discovers upon his liberation is a broken one; Shadow is penniless and his wife, Laura is dead. Or at least she seems dead. Then Shadow meets the one-eyed Mr. Wednesday, who, it turns out, is the Norse God Odin. A pact is sealed over some mead in a scuzzy bar and off they go, driving across America, from one adventure to the next; robbing banks, stealing cars, choking down



vinegary borscht, riding the carousel inside The House on the Rock in Iowa County, Wisconsin, and so on.

It's sort of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* meets Kerouac's *On the Road*. The first few chapters serve as orientating frames; gradually answering the question, 'What's this book about, exactly?' and introducing the major characters (gods, mostly), one by one. Gods are something in the nature of shared cultural objects worthy of veneration and awe – whether long ago gods of fertility and providence or today's digital entertainment and consumer greed. The showdown to come will likely be fought between the personified ancient tropes and the crafty, less appealing, pixies of the 21st century.

One particularly charming aspect of *Shadows* is its recurring use of scents (an old car, for example which “smelled faintly of bourbon, tobacco, and ... bananas”) and melodies (music references from obscure Velvet Underground songs to Strauss waltzes). They give the story a solid grip. Gaiman is a confident, but not overbearing storyteller. He makes the reader feel secure; the writer's art is practiced and filigreed.

Reading Gaiman, one has the sense that there will be surprises, romance, wonders, heroics, and ideas worth considering long after he brings the story to a conclusion. Gaiman has a light touch, but he attends to every detail with the care of a craftsman. If there is a reference to Herodotus in the first chapter, rest assured its significance will be magnified as the plot unfolds. By the end of *Shadows*, the reader finds himself eagerly anticipating the next installment.

Fannish History

All Our Yesterdays by Harry Warner Jr.

Review by Heath Row

The STFnal Amateur

This history of sf fandom in the 1940s originally published in 1969 ranks pretty closely with Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* among the best books about our genre that I've ever read. It's high time I cracked its covers! An “informal history,” the book is occasionally hampered by gentle disorganization, but overall, Warner's book is an amazing work and an indispensable reference—as well as a strong introduction to the earliest days of fandom.

The structure and approach reflects the challenge facing most fan historians who seek to document global, national, or regional fandom activities: the availability of adequate documentation—perhaps improved at this late date, though Warner clearly had many primary sources at hand—declining first-hand knowledge of the time under consideration (which Warner definitely did not suffer from; he was there for much of this time period and shows up often as a participant and source), and whether to approach the subject chronologically or thematically.

Warner decided to consider the topic thematically, and then chronologically within each section, and the book is loosely structured chronologically overall, with a few chapters serving as milestones. Those include the opening section (“It is a Proud and Lonely Thing to Be a Fan,” which considers the earliest days of sf and fandom, including precursors to fandom, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, dime novels, H.P. Lovecraft, and other representative fen), a mid-text consider-

All Our Yesterdays



an informal history of science fiction fandom in the 1940s
by Harry Warner, Jr.

ation of World War II and its impact on sf and fandom, and postwar prospects — serving as a vector toward Warner’s subsequent volume, *A Wealth of Fable*, which focuses on the 1950s.

Otherwise, Warner explores various aspects of fandom, addressing its participants, their characteristics and behaviors; the role collecting, collectors, and collections played in fandom; the relationship between fen and pros; the first Worldcons and other conventions; controversies that occurred within fandom involving the National Fantasy Fan Federation, the Shaver Mystery, and the Cosmic Circle; amateur press associations; organized fandom—in the form of clubs—around the country and world; and fanzines of the 1940s.

It’s an awesome document, capturing the decade in broad strokes while offering multiple rabbit holes deserving additional exploration, occasionally as passing remarks. Los Angeles is well represented throughout the text, as are its leading personalities, clubs—including the LASFS—fanzines, and notable locations. I was most impressed by how Warner documented so many local communities to some extent, not just around the United States, but also in England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and other countries. While the book largely focuses on the United States—see Rob Hansen’s book *Then* (<https://fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN.htm>) for a parallel consideration of fandom in the United Kingdom or Leigh Edmonds’s recently released *Proud and Lonely: A History of Science Fiction Fandom in Australia 1936-1975—Part One: 1936-1961*—Warner does well to consider the topic globally, including discussion of the Big Pond Fund and other efforts to connect fen around the world.

The informal, loose structure, tangents, and occasional meandering feels very fannish and doesn’t interfere with the book’s purpose. It might very well be the best document we have of this decade in fandom—and one would be hard pressed to do any better 50-plus years later. And because the book is an introduction, the opportunity remains to focus on one particular aspect in greater detail—as represented by Hansen’s *Bixelstrasse*, (<https://ae.ansible.uk/?t=bixel>) which focuses on Los Angeles, or Mike Ashley’s multiple volumes about sf magazines.

Films

The Amazing Transparent Man

Review by Heath Row

The STFnal Amateur

Director Edgar G. Ulmer filmed this 1960 movie in close conjunction with *Beyond the Time Barrier* in Dallas. He shot the movies in just two weeks. Despite that demanding schedule, the result of *The Amazing Transparent Man* is actually a pretty good flick. The movie combines elements of crime features with science fictional aspects. A safecracker is sprung from jail in order to become the subject of a series of experiments involving an invisibility ray. The scientist is involved against his will, his daughter held prisoner. And a former military leader hopes to enable an invisible army to upend the balance of power.

There are two basic plotlines. One includes the balance of power among the criminals. The woman who picked up the safecracker after his escape might be loyal to him, or to the military



leader. The scientist is involved against his will. The safecracker is loyal to no one and dislikes being manipulated, when he could use his newfound invisibility for his own ends, his usual trade. That combination of tensions results in most of the drama of the picture.

The other plotline focuses on the invisibility ray and a series of crimes undertaken by the safecracker to fund the military leader's work. That part of the movie offers basic special effects, as the criminal disappears in part or in whole after the beam is trained on him. What he doesn't know is that the beam becomes less effective over time, and that its radiation is deadly.

That results in an awkward situation while the criminal robs a bank to fund his escape from the military leader. Similar to how he fades out when first made invisible, he prematurely becomes visible again—his face, his shirt—while leaving the bank. Once he realizes that the beam's radiation is killing him, he turns his attention to the military leader. (That takes us back to the first plotline and its relational tensions.)

The movie is filmed well despite the tight schedule, and there were no production gaffes that I noticed. Douglas Kennedy is particularly compelling as safecracker Joey Faust, but the rest of the cast is largely forgettable—even Marguerite Chapman, in her final feature role. I was struck by the idea that this might be a crime picture with sf elements rather than an sf film proper, but that's open for debate

Monsters Crash the Pajama Party

Review by Heath Row

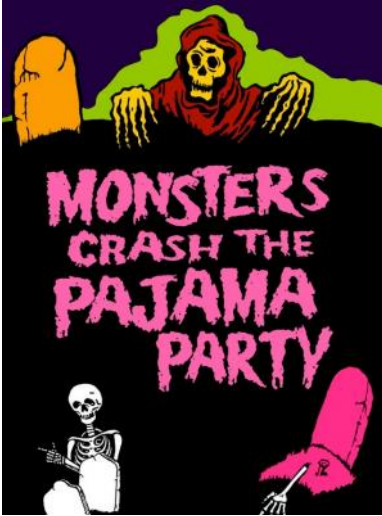
The STFnal Amateur

If you've been curious about any of the spook show advertisements that have appeared in recent issues, this short 1965 movie might be as close as we can get to one at this late date. It tells the tale of a group of college students, perhaps sorority sisters, who plan to spend the night in a haunted house as part of some sort of initiation.

Their boyfriends plan to return, to frighten them while wearing monster masks, and neither group knows that the house is already inhabited by a Mad Doctor—it's embroidered on his lab coat!—a gorilla; Igor, his assistant; and a svelte dark-haired beauty reminiscent of Elvira or Vampira. The gorilla is actually a person who's been transformed using some sort of contraption, and the 31-minute movie feels primarily made up of chase scenes as the gorilla abducts each sorority sister individually to chain them up collectively in the basement.

The Mad Doctor transforms one of the girls into a gorilla, and then the residents of the basement realize they need One More Girl. So he sends emissaries out into the audience to get one. This is the spook show part of the proceedings. On screen, the film is either blacked out or punctuated by lightning flashes. In the movie theater hosting the screening, several costumed people—perhaps the Mad Doctor, a gorilla, and Igor—would leave the screen or stage area to move throughout the crowd, secure a volunteer, and return to their hiding place backstage.

Simple costumes might have been shipped with the film reels, or easily procured locally by those screening the flick. Once back on screen, the emissaries return with a struggling girl in



tow, to strap her to the examination table. The movie ends abruptly. The Sinister Cinema DVD transfer (originally on VHS) I watched was accompanied by trailers for other movies—Lightning Bolt (Operazione Goldman), The Prime Time, and Gun Girls—as well as other examples of spook shows, including Dr. Sin Presents House of the Living Dead (featuring an in-person appearance of Dracula), the Huston’s Hallucinations stage show, and Dr. Rome the Ghostmaster’s chamber of horrors show.

Monsters Crash the Pajama Party was reportedly screened after The Time Travelers. The former isn’t much of a movie—in length, content, or quality—but it’s a fun oddity indicating what a spook show might have been like. One could even screen it today. The in-room shenanigans would be delightful.

The Thief of Bagdad

Review by Heath Row

The STFnal Amateur

Turner Classic Movies recently aired the 1940 *The Thief of Bagdad*, which I’d DVR’d, so I watched it last weekend, as well. The fantasy adventure primarily focuses on the trials and tribulations of Ahmad (John Justin), once the young king of Bagdad and now a blind beggar, having fallen victim to the machinations of Jaffar (Conrad Veidt, from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Man Who Laughs*). He is joined by an astute dog, who is in reality Abu (Sabu).

Highlights include the mechanical toy-collecting Sultan of Basra and two tricky gifts from the sorcerer Jaffar: a wind-up flying horse and a many-armed dancer who slays the sultan. While trying to return to Bagdad, Abu frees a genie (Rex Ingram) from a bottle, earning three wishes that he uses to near their goal to free the princess, with whom Ahmad had fallen in love before losing his sight. The search for and reclamation of the All-Seeing Eye is also visually excellent.

At the end, there’s the Old King of the Land of Legend, a flying carpet, and a magic crossbow. Filmed beautifully in Technicolor, the movie won multiple Academy Awards, including for Special Effects (Lawrence W. Butler and Jack Whitney). The film was the first to use the manual bluescreen technique. After production was moved from England to Hollywood, exterior shoot locations included the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Bryce Canyon, and the Painted Desert. At 106 minutes, the movie occasionally feels a little long, but it’s gorgeous and very well done.



On the Facebook, in response to a selection of lobby cards, Bruce Richard Gillespie recommended that I watch the first, silent 1924 version of *The Thief of Bagdad*, starring Douglas Fairbanks. He described it thusly: “As brilliant as the later version, because of the amazing special effects that had to be invented for the film. . . .”

Game Report: Storm Weavers

Review by Heath Row

The STFnal Amateur

I didn't support this story-driven solo tabletop game during its Kickstarter, but plenty of people did. More than 2,500 backers pledged €130,686, funding the project in four hours. I bought my copy from Noble Knight Games just more than a year ago and finally got around to playing it over Father's Day weekend—and again on my vacation day recognizing Juneteenth.

It's a great idea, but I'm not quite sure how I feel about it. At its base, Storm Weavers (<https://otherworlds.games>) is an English translation of a Polish effort. Joanna Rozycka's translation of Pawel Dziemski's gamebook is pretty decent, though there are a few translation oddities rather than errors. I haven't yet encountered any translation challenges that lead to awkward game mechanics, but it did take my son and I a few reads to understand the difference between injuries and points of damage—there isn't any; the translator should probably have focused on points of damage rather than using the term “injuries,” especially because if you take more than three points of damage, you are pushed. At one point, we were wondering if you were automatically pushed after the third time you took damage, the third injury. That is not the case.

The game combines a relatively hefty gamebook—pages unnumbered because of the numbered gamebook sections—that seems to be about an inch and a half thick with tactical components: a handful of map cards numbered to relate to appropriate sections in the book, punch out game figures and stands to represent enemies, and a metal miniature depicting your hero, Thymin, a dwarven warrior. If you face one enemy in combat, no tactical elements are needed, but if you face more than one, you use the map cards and figures.

A few of the mechanics are somewhat frustrating. You—and enemies—can only move horizontally and vertically, not diagonally. And an enemy in an adjacent space that's diagonal to your character isn't actually adjacent, so you can't attack them. The combat mechanic is also interesting. You can take damage if you're hit—with armor class serving as a damage sink—as well as if you attack, but miss. That also occurs for enemies. It speeds combat along a little bit, but makes attacking occasionally risky. If you miss, you might take damage, and the enemy still gets to attack you the next round.

Thymin is pretty lightly designed in terms of character generation. You have two abilities: dexterity and wisdom. Each starts with a base of five during character creation, and you have four points to split between them. When my son Jonah first played, he prioritized wisdom (8) over dexterity (6) and suffered for it. When I first played, I split the difference for a dexterity and



wisdom of 7 and fared slightly better. The second time I played, I adjusted Thymin to a dexterity of 8 and a wisdom of 6. That worked well for combat, which is dexterity driven, but my saving throw-like rolls suffered with the lower wisdom. (You need to roll 2d6 equal to or less than your wisdom to succeed.)

The book is broken into several sections: An introduction that serves to model game play and combat mechanics, and three distinct portions of the adventure—“Northern Border,” “Eirinn go Brach,” and a very brief epilogue before a World Guide. The game comes with three character sheets, and there’s one in the book. The pencil that comes with the game has a very good eraser and the paper is of softer stock, so erasures are easily made, allowing for reuse of the character sheet.

How’s the story? It’s okeh. At first, the gamebook felt a little overwritten, and I was struck by how lengthy some of the text sections were, punctuating the combat scenarios. But as I proceeded, the writing became more gamebook-like. Thymin starts off serving in the Free Dwarf Company supporting King Ernan. Fomorians and wyles—which throw flame from their staffs—attack the company, and even if you slay the enemies before you, you are substantially injured and sent to the city of Udgard for healing. There, you receive a message from your friend Zagorthor, who’s imprisoned in his tower by a warlock three days north of the city. You can choose to head out to rescue him, but even though I’ve played the game for more than an hour or so now, I’ve yet to locate the tower.

I have engaged in several wilderness combat encounters as I try to make my way north through the snow and storms. I’ve fought wolves, Azazel the goat-horned guardian (who killed Thymin that session), werewolves, and hussies in a gully (“The Gorge”)—perhaps the most interesting combat encounter. I’ve even rescued a portly merchant from several wolves at a dark tower, which allowed me to return to Udgard, where I could buy some armor (improving my damage-sink armor class) and a better weapon (giving Thymin a weapon bonus). But I failed to explore the underground tunnels beneath the tower because I missed my wisdom check and got frightened.

The game is fun enough that I’ll likely play again, but I expect to die next session when I fight a couple of ice trolls. Their dexterity is so much better than Thymin’s, even with the boost to 10 after successfully defeating the werewolves. I’m not sure the writing—or story—is interesting enough to want to explore the entire book, and the characters you encounter are pretty two dimensional. Regardless, Storm Weavers is an intriguing gamebook/tactical hybrid, and I’m glad that Dziemski sought to translate it from his original language.

Short Stories

Reviews by Heath Row

The STFnal Amateur

In recent months, I’ve been thinking about the first published examples of science fiction. I was recently inspired to read the first issue of the first sf magazine in America, *Amazing Stories*, which then led to reading the second. While I’d recently become aware of sf stories appearing in the story papers that preceded pulp magazines, I was surprised to learn that Hugo Gernsback

had published sf in two other magazines before the advent of *Amazing Stories*. “For many years stories of this nature were published in the sister magazines of *Amazing Stories*—‘*Science & Invention*’ and ‘*Radio News*,” Gernsback wrote in the April 1926 first issue’s editorial “A New Sort of Magazine.”

Additionally, the first issue ends with a pullout box inquiring of readers: “Those who read the famous Dr. Hackensaw’s *Secrets in Science and Invention* magazine, may be interested to know that we have on hand a great many of Dr. Hackensaw’s manuscripts which have never been published hitherto. Before publishing these in *Amazing Stories*, however, we would like to have an expression from our readers as to just how they feel about these stories, and whether they would like to have more of them.”

The Internet Speculative Fiction Database lists sf stories appearing in *Science and Invention* dating back to August 1920 and in *Radio News* dating back to December 1920. That gains us six years of published sf in periodicals predating *Amazing Stories*. Examples of Dr. Hackensaw stories include Clement Fezandié’s “Dr. Hackensaw’s Trip to the Moon” and “What Hackensaw Found on the Moon”.

The first issue of *Amazing Stories* was largely reprints. It included the first of two parts of Jules Verne’s “Off on a Comet,” a translation of the novel *Hector Servadac, voyages et aventures à travers le monde solaire*. While an interesting tale of adventure and exploration, it’s based on dubious science. A comet collides with the Earth, removing a sizable section of land to create a new planetoid that continues on an elliptical orbit. Quite a bit of text is given to various calculations of the planetoid’s size and weight, so mathematicians might rejoice.

H.G. Wells’s “The New Accelerator” also inspired an episode of the 2001 television miniseries *The Infinite Worlds of H.G. Wells*. In that story, a scientist develops a serum that can accelerate the human experience a thousandfold. The results include a surprised dog, burnt clothing, and quite an appetite.

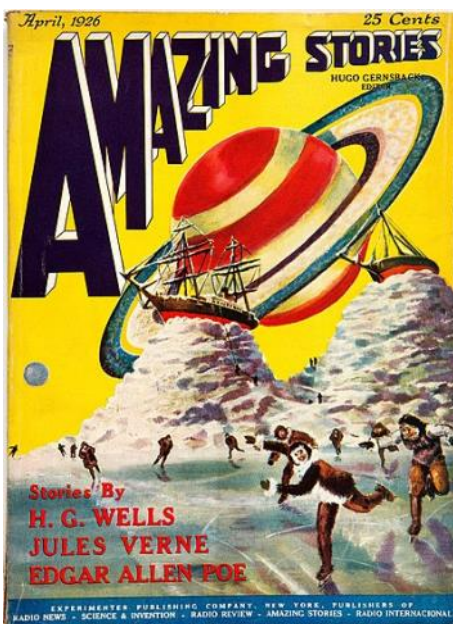
“The Man from the Atom” by G. Peyton Wertenbaker features a vacuum-sealed protective suit that will grow or shrink with whomever wears it, equipped with buttons that enable them to

grow very, very large or very, very small. The story is notable for its proposition that the makeup of the universe mirrors that of the subatomic realm.

George Allan England’s “The Thing from—‘Outside’” is a pleasant example of the outre. An invisible creature (or creatures) terrorizes a group of people in a remote cabin, resulting in disfigurement, insanity, and memory loss.

“The Man Who Saved the Earth” by Austin Hall is a little more straightforward. A heroic scientist on Earth sacrifices himself to determine how and why Martians are punching holes into the Earth, occasionally removing land mass—an entire mountain!—in a way not entirely dissimilar to “Off on a Comet” above.

And Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” concentrates on mesmerism and the role it could play in communi-



cating with an individual after they have died. The ending is delightfully surprising—and a shade outre similar to England’s story above.

It’s not at all a bad first issue, even to be read now, and you can’t really go wrong with Poe, Verne, and Wells. The less familiar stories were originally published in 1919 and 1923, appearing either in *All-Story Weekly* or *Science and Invention*. The inclusion of England and Poe’s stories adds a touch of the horrific, which surprised me.

Because only the first part of “Off on a Comet” was published in the first issue, I quickly read the second issue, as well. Dated May 1926, the edition includes Poe, Verne, and Wells again—clearly indicating where the genre originated.

Frustratingly, Verne’s “A Trip to the Center of the Earth” is also serialized, so read the third issue I must. A translation of the novel *Voyage au centre de la terre*, the first part is partly an Indiana Jones-like adventure story—the entrance to the underworld is in the volcano upon which a mountain’s shadow falls—and an example of a geological exploration fiction. There’s little of the fantastic in this first portion.

“Mesmeric Revelation” by Poe seriously echoes the previous issue’s “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.” In this story, too, someone converses with someone in a mesmerized state, offering a transcript considering life, death, the afterlife, and the different “bodies” human beings might inhabit.

Wells’s “The Crystal Egg”—also adapted for *The Infinite Worlds* of H.G. Wells, quite wonderfully—features a crystal that can be used to see and study an alien planet, perhaps Mars.

SerCon

Henry Hasse Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

Henry Louis Hasse (February 7, 1913 – May 20, 1977) was a Los Angeles science fiction (SF) fan and later pro author, active from the 1930s through the 1970s. He was born in Indiana.

Hasse began participating in SF fandom by writing letters to his favorite magazines: *Wonder Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales* and *Astounding Stories*. His first professional sale was to Hugo Gernsback at *Wonder Stories*. In 1942, he described himself as being of “the Gernsback school.” Later in his career, *Planet Stories* became the regular home for most of his space opera fiction.

Publications

He is best remembered today for co-authoring Ray Bradbury’s first published SF story (“Pendulum” in the November, 1941, issue of the prozine *Super Science Stories*). Hasse later published other stories with Bradbury (see list below).

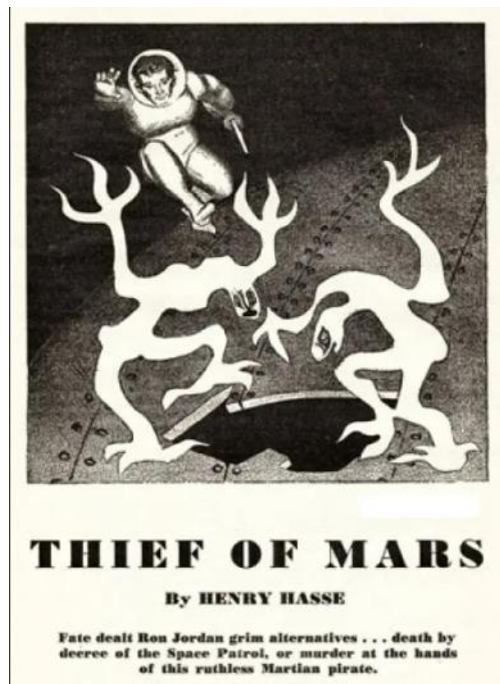


He was a frequent contributor to Bradbury's fanzine, *Futura Fantasia*, in the 1930s, and was listed as a Contributing Author in the Fall, 1939, issue.

Short Fiction

He Who Shrank (1936)
 The Guardian of the Book (1937)
 A Miracle of Time (1940)
 The Man Who (1940) [with A. Fedor]
 Mission Unknown! (1941)
 Proktoles of Neptune (1941)
 The Star of Satan (1941)
 Farewell to Fuzzies (1941)
 Pendulum (1941) [with Ray Bradbury]

Thief of Mars (1941)
 Out of This World (1942)
 The Missing Day (1942)
 City of the Living Flame (1942)
 Mars Warning (1942)
 Gabriel's Horn (1943) [with Ray Bradbury]
 Star of Panadur (1943) [with Albert dePina]
 Alcatraz of the Starways (1943) [with Albert dePina]
 The Angular Stone (1943)
 Revenge of the Vera (1943)
 Horror at Vecra (1943)
 Passage to Planet X (1945)
 Final Victim (1946) [with Ray Bradbury]
 Dread-Flame of M'Tonak (1946)
 Final Glory (1947)
 Walls of Acid (1947)
 Trail of the Astrogar (1947)
 Eternal Zemmud Must Die! (1949)
 Tomb of the Seven Taajos (1950)
 Survival (1950)
 Don't Come to Mars! (1950) [with Emil Petaja]
 The Eyes (1951)
 The Secret of Satellite Seven (1952) [with Emil Petaja]
 Purple Hope! (1952)
 And Return (1952)
 Three Lines of Old Martian (1953)
 Ultimate Life (1953) [with Albert dePina]
 Subject for Today (1954)
 Via Paradox (1954) [with Albert dePina]
 Clansmen of Fear (1957)
 We're Friends, Now (1960)
 The Violin String (1961)
 The Beginning (1961)



SF Novel

Hasse's only published genre novel was *The Stars Will Wait* (Avalon, 1968). Plot: The spaceship "Agfalon," lost in space while searching for desperately needed fissionable materials, finds a planet rich in fissionables. The planet turns out to be a nearly-destroyed Earth in the distant future, and the two peoples must find common ground to solve their problems.

A German edition of the novel was published in 1974.

Collaborations/Pseudonym

He collaborated with other genre authors, including A. Fedor, Albert dePina, and Emil Petaja. He shared the pseudonym of E. Theodore Pine with Petaja.

Personal Life

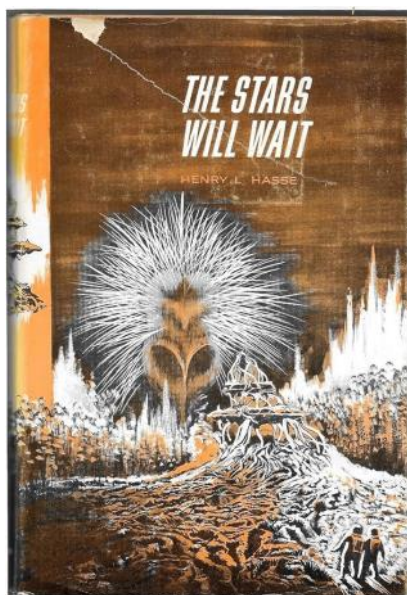
For a time in the 1940s, he was married to second-generation LASFan, Dorothy Finn, daughter of the club's Helen Finn, the first woman to be elected president of LASFS.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

Hasse's novelette, "He Who Shrank," was anthologized in both the classic 1946 collection, *Adventures in Time and Space*, edited by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas, and in Isaac Asimov's memoir of 1930s SF, *Before the Golden Age*.

Hasse received a Hugo Honorable Mention for his short fiction in 1962.

SF fans Walt and Virginia Daugherty dedicated the July, 1945 (2nd issue) of their fanzine, *Fan*, to Hasse; the issue featured four Hasse short stories, a summary of his career up to that point, and the news that he was done with writing "till further notice." Nevertheless, stories by Hasse continued to appear in various prozines after this 1945 statement.

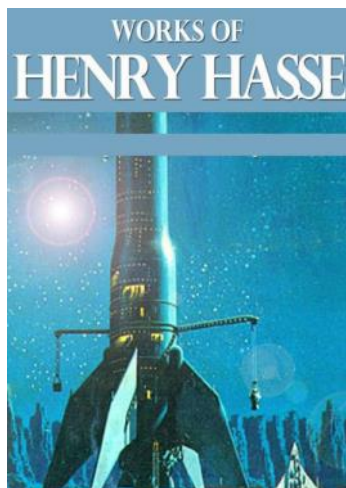


A brief autobiographical statement by Hasse appeared in the Spring, 1947, issue of the SF prozine *Planet Stories* (that also had stories by him and Bradbury). In his brief sketch, Hasse made humorous remarks about himself and his fiction, and listed his many part-time jobs; but he then wrote: "Writing of any kind is work, hard work. But there's nothing I'd rather do. Sole ambition is to learn to write."

Some Concluding Comments

Hasse was a member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS).

At one time he unsuccessfully tried to champion "sfn" as an abbrevia-



tion for the term scientifiction, but most fans of the time stuck with “stf.”

Hasse wrote amusing skits on SF with his friend, A. Fedor.

Sources

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Stableford, Brian. Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature, 2004.

Tuck, Donald H. The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 1: Who’s Who, A – L, 1974.

Tymn, M. B. & Mike Ashley (eds.), Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines, 1985.

Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

N3F Gourmet Bureau

Assemble the Tarts Cedar Sanderson

We do a Saturday supper almost every week. There are five or six of us that take round-robin cooking turns, but a three course meal to feed a dozen or more is a lot. I try to help, and because I’m the baker of the group, it’s often with a loaf of bread, or a dessert. This week was a dessert. I wanted to give them something different, and I wanted to have some fun with it, being possessed of a little extra energy and a clean kitchen. Funny how having an empty nest changes things! I decided that I would go to the Farmer’s Market, and let that dictate what I was going to make.

Peaches, and plums. The peaches I wasn’t surprised by, as I knew the big produce grower should have them about now. The tiny booth with baskets of plums was a joyful surprise that I took full advantage of. As it’s early in the season, neither basket of fruit was fully ripe. I didn’t have enough of either to make a deep-dish pie (although that was never the plan with plums).

Cedar’s whimsy extends to recipes, so follow along to play with food!

I started with a pâte brisée rather than a pie crust. While the pastry is similar, it’s richer, and tends to be more delicate.

pâte brisée
2 c flour

1 c (two sticks) cold butter
1/4 tsp salt
scant 1/2 c ice water

Cut the butter into pieces, then cut into the flour and salt. Don't work it fully into the flour - you should still be able to see small pieces of butter. Slowly pour the water into the dough, mixing, only until the dough has just started to come together. Form the dough into a ball, wrap with plastic wrap, and chill.

If you have a large food processor, this is much easier in that. Put the flour and salt into the bowl, cut the first stick of butter into roughly 1 tbsp pieces, dropping them into the flour apart from one another, then pulse once. Cut the second stick in the same way. Cover, and run the processor for about 5-6 seconds. Then drizzle the water through the feed hole while the processor is being pulsed before finally running it just until the dough ball forms. This will take a matter of seconds. Shut the processor off and remove the dough to wrap and chill as in the manual version.

While the dough is chilling, process your fruit. If you are using peaches, you want to blanch them in order to easily remove the skins. Bring water in a large pot to a boil. Carefully drop in the whole peaches, allow to boil for about a minute, then turn off the heat and drain the peaches. Allow to cool before peeling. In theory, the skins will slip right off. In reality, you'll still want a paring knife or peeler to assist in places. Cut peeled peaches in half and remove the stone.

Cut plums in half, twist, and then cut the half with the stone in half again (effectively quartering it) and twist. At this point the stone can easily be pulled or cut away. Cut the first half into half, so you wind up with plum quarters if you are working with smaller plums. Larger plums can be cut into slices.

Preheat oven to 400F

Assemble the Tarts

Prepare a floured board for rolling, and have your rolling pin handy.

Remove the dough ball from the refrigerator, unwrap, and cut into halves. Re-wrap the half you aren't working with and return it to chill. Roll the other half out until it is about the right size to fit into the pan you are using - one of mine was a 9" deep dish, the other was a 12" shallow, but you can of course make the dough thicker for smaller tarts. Have your pan nearby and place it on the dough to visualize how it will fit if you need.

Place the rolled dough into the pan, pressing it into the edges, and chill while you prepare the second half of the dough. Keep dough chilled until time to fill it.

Peaches and Cream Tart

This will need a deep tart pan, or a deep-dish pie plate if you don't have tart pans

Cream filling
4 oz cream cheese



1/2 c sugar
 1 c whole-milk yogurt
 1/2 c cream
 2 eggs

Cream together the cream cheese and sugar, then beat in the eggs, yogurt, and cream until a smooth batter is formed. Pour the batter into the deep tart pan that has been lined with unbaked *pâte brisée*, and arrange the peaches gently on it (they will sink a little). If you like a sweeter dessert, you can sprinkle a little demerara sugar on the peaches before baking.

I used about ten small peaches in this, but you may have the big commercial peaches, or more ripe than I had... just remember to leave a little space as the filling will rise a bit in baking!

With a cookie sheet to support the tart pan, move this to the oven and bake at 400F for about an hour, until the filling is firm and does not jiggle when the pan is gently moved.

Allow to cool before serving.

You'll see that I left space for the rise, if you compare this to the photo of the baked result.

Plum Tart

So quick and simple, this is one dessert I make as often as I can.

1/2 c finely shredded coconut (traditionally this is almond meal, but I was serving a group that included nut allergies, either will work)

1/2 c sugar
 Quartered plums
 Demerara sugar

Mix together your coconut (or almond) meal and sugar. Spread this out over the bottom of the unbaked tart shell you had been chilling. This is to absorb most if not all the juices as the plums bake.



Place the plum quarters or slices in the tart shell. I like to arrange them neatly, but it really doesn't matter if you don't feel up to it.

Sprinkle the coarse sugar over the plums evenly.

Bake at 400F for about an hour, until the fruit is soft.

Serve ever-so-slightly warm. Serve with a little vanilla ice cream if you like - depending on the plums, this can be very tart, indeed!

I didn't tidy up the edges of the dough, just folded them over on top a bit.

These are perfect for summer! Juicy, fresh, and not too sweet. I really need to make more tarts. You can fill them with almost anything - berries, ground cherries, and even savory onion tarts are a thing. The *pâte brisée* is close to pie crust, but it is more flaky and decadent with butter. I don't use it all the time as it is more delicate and prone to break on serving. Worth it, though, even if the slices are not picture-perfect, as the flavor is wonderful.

The peaches-and-cream was a whim, born out of too few peaches, and ingredients handy that needed to be used up. It came out nicely, with the tartness of a cheesecake filling, but more a smooth custard texture. I may have to try something with ricotta sometime as well.



Alien Landscape by Artist Fish



Last Flight
by Tiffanię Gray