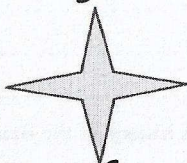


ConVentus

ConTreaty 2006



27th Beneluxcon

*24 - 26 November 2006
Grand Hotel de l'Empereur
Maastricht, Nederland*

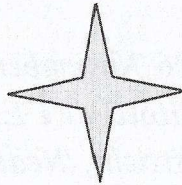
Guests of Honour:

*James P. Hogan, Alastair Reynolds,
Tais Teng, Thomas Olde Heuvelt*

Souvenir Book

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Welcome/Welkom/Wilkommen/Bienvenue/Bienvenidos/Velkommen

Welkom op *ConVentus*, de 27e Beneluxcon, en natuurlijk ook welkom in Maastricht. We zijn weer terug op de plaats van een voorheen succesvolle Beneluxcon, *ConTreaty*, en we hopen dat je ook deze keer zult genieten van alle activiteiten.

Dit Souvenirboekje kun je gebruiken om iets meer te weten komen over onze eregasten en Beneluxcons in het algemeen, hetzij tijdens de conventie (in een schaars rustig ogenblik), dan wel naderhand, op de terugweg naar de gewone wereld van alledag, of eenvoudigweg om je herinneringen aan een fantastische conventie nog eens op te frissen.

Welcome to ConVentus, the 27th Beneluxcon, and of course welcome to Maastricht. We've returned to this location of a previously successful Beneluxcon, ConTreaty, and hope you'll enjoy all the provided entertainment again.

This Souvenir Book can be used to find out a little bit more about our Guests of Honour and Beneluxcons in general, either at the convention (never a dull moment...) or afterwards, on your way back to Mundania or indeed just to refresh your memory of a wonderful convention.

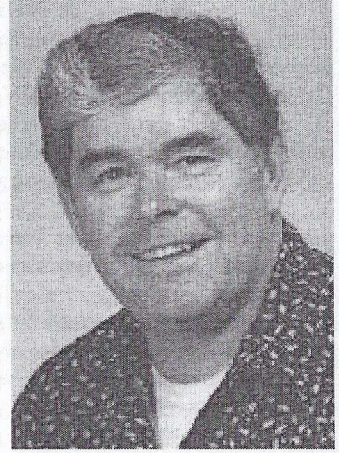


Guest of Honour: James P. Hogan

James Patrick Hogan (1941) was al jong gefascineerd door wetenschap, waarmee (bijna) alles in het leven op een heldere manier kan worden verklaard. Zijn eerste boek kwam uit in mei 1977, *Inherit the Stars*, vertaald als *Ruïnes op de maan*, het eerste deel van de Giants serie waarvan vorig jaar het vijfde deel verscheen, *Mission to Minerva*. Het begon als een weddenschap om iets begrijpelijker te schrijven dan het einde van de film *2001*, maar inmiddels heeft Hogan een indrukwekkend oeuvre opgebouwd dat ook non-fictie omvat.

From a young age James Patrick Hogan (1941) was fascinated by science, that could clearly explain (almost) everything in life. His first book was published in May 1977, Inherit the Stars (also translated into Dutch), the first part of the Giants series, of which last year's Mission to Minerva is the fifth part. It all started from a bet to write something that would be more understandable than the ending of the movie 2001, but by now Hogan wrote an impressive number of books, including non-fiction.

(<http://www.jamesphogan.com>)



Murphy's War

© 2006 by James P. Hogan

The hillbilly with the bath tub was what finally did it. A prominent Beijing morning newspaper ran a cartoon showing the United States President in Appalachian garb and setting, aided by caricatures of his administration, gleefully ladling from a vat labeled "Moonshine" to an eager throng of bearded, toothy, cup- and bucket-proffering yokels tagged with the collective label, "Gullible American Public." The rest of the Asian press took it up with chortles and gusto, and by evening it was being reproduced worldwide and had spread all over the Internet.

That in itself would probably have been insufficient to precipitate the crisis, had it not been for the changes that had been evident in President Byrne's demeanor and manner ever since he attended a White House showing of the movie *High Noon*. The presidential staff should have been alerted when he began cultivating a hands-on-hips gait, talking about "facing down" villains on the global Main Street, and was caught several times practicing narrow-eyed, squared-jaw stares in front of the hallway mirrors, but their attention at the time was focused on scheduling spontaneous photo ops with the media and rehearsing the Press Corps for *Question Time*.

Even so, the matter of this new personal peculiarity would likely never have spread beyond the bounds of Washington cocktail-party-circuit gossip if the Secretary for State hadn't alluded to it in an interview with a fashion magazine as a concession to the distaff side of the first family's early frontier origins. Although the remark came as a reflex feminine tactic of opportunity directed at a social rival, it was received among members of the predatory sex as intimating the unforgivable transgression on the part of the First Lady, of snaring a catch that was worthy of better talent. Retaliation was clearly called for, but since the First Lady's image did not permit descent to the level of personal involvement, a leak contrived via one of the tabloids disclosed the State Secretary as having changed her name from a one Samantha Ramsbottom, born in Cleveland and a one-time croupier in Las Vegas known as "Ditzzy Mitzi." Her rise to sudden eminence and an honorary degree from Vassar had apparently followed rumors that a weekend political strategy planning conference by the party currently controlling the Senate had been held in what a Nevada tour guide described as an exclusive "gentlemen's club."

Even then, such an eruption of feline infighting over pedigrees would not normally have led to

repercussions of international dimensions. However, the subject of ancestry happened to be one of extreme sensitivity to the Chinese Premier, Hao-Li Neng, who was acutely conscious of having risen to power via sleazy capitalist dealings involving Mongolian real estate and price-fixing cartels, at a time when popular reactions against Western cultural invasion were avalanching into demands for a return to more traditional values and ways. Somehow, in the logical acrobatics that bedevil East-West communication, the insinuations and innuendo being relayed around the Western media became linked to foreign affairs commentaries. The results were interpreted in Beijing as questioning Neng's ancestral lineage, and hence a calculated challenge to the basis of his political authority at a time when his position was precarious, which in Chinese eyes amounted to a personal insult before the world. A directive from the Chinese Foreign Ministry called upon the state-managed Press for a riposte in kind, and the notorious hillbilly cartoon was the result. Thereupon, supporters and opponents, new political contenders, and uncommitted opportunists who never let any chance for visibility go by, piled in from all sides.

The U.S. Defense Secretary, who had gained fame and fortune as a TV evangelist, 'Elias Maude, Sword of the Lord,' pushed Biblical literalism, and believed in a six-thousand-year-old Earth, made a fiery speech in which he implied affinity between Asiatics and monkeys – which was his standard form of gibe to infuriate Darwinists. The escalation to religious proportions drew in the Chinese Minister of Culture, a closet hard-line communist who had been engineering groundwork for a revolution along Maoist revival lines, and Maude in return declared China's a godless society, war against which would fulfill the prophecy of "yellow hordes from the east," bringing on Armageddon as the prerequisite for the Rapture. Corporate America backed any prospect of ending foreign competition now that Chinese labor rates were comparable, while the unions welcomed the prospect of an across-the-board boost to wages and employment. The Pentagon's analysts and simulations predicted that the conflict would be a cakewalk, as they had for every war that had been lost in the previous half century, citing intelligence reports that everyone had forgotten were manufactured on order to justify increased military funding in the first place. President Byrne appeared in a rousing address to the nation, which he ended narrow-eyed and square-jawed, buckling on a pair of ivory-handled, Patton-style six shooters and declaring, "It's time for men to walk tall!"

#

Alexander Sullivan had begun his nefarious career as a software hacker at an early age in high school by breaking into game-hosting servers and rigging the results. It wasn't so much from any need or desire to see himself high on the lists of tournament winners. In fact, in a gesture toward what he supposed would count as observing a higher moral principle, he seldom intervened to favor his own playing interests at all – although others whom he judged deserving or otherwise would often find their luck and fortunes affected in mysterious ways, as if by strange, inexplicable forces. He did it purely for the satisfaction that comes from beating challenges that require diligence, skill, and tenacity. In addition, it played to the exuberance of youth at finding ways into forbidden territory and crossing any bounds set by authority – especially the kinds of authority that operate through force and intimidation. By its nature, the business of mastering computer software means accepting and conforming to a world prescribed by rules that others have devised. Breaking the rules at a higher level provided that freedom for creativity which to any innovative spirit was as essential as air.

Later in life, when he was developing a political awareness, Alex became incensed by revelations, passed around his circle of computing cognoscenti intimates, of remotely accessible tampering mechanisms written into the programming of voting machines. However, as befitted his emerging style, rather than add to the babble of accusations and denials that were achieving nothing in the public domain, he staged his own rebellion by leading a small, trusted group in exploiting that same vulnerability to reverse the intended result at the next election, with repercussions that sent heads rolling throughout the more sordid reaches of the IT underworld for months afterward. Endeavors of that nature are seldom without risk, however, and some enterprising investigative work commissioned

on open budget resulted in the culprits being tracked down, and the commencement of charges being prepared against them. But the case had to be dropped when the material it was founded on inexplicably vanished from the records of the agency in charge of the proceedings, and the backups were found to be corrupted.

News of such a feat does not take long in the modern world, and regardless of superficial reactions voiced for form's sake, the bids to recruit such potentially invaluable talent quickly followed. The next few years saw Alex Sullivan's spectacular rise through the ranks of the industry's technically gifted, leading to a senior appointment with the prestigious but low-profile firm of Multimex Systems Developments and Integration Inc., headquartered in Maryland. A busy schedule of international travel brought a quality to the social side of his life commensurate with its professional advancement, all of it culminating in an announcement to delighted friends and colleagues of his engagement to be married the coming fall.

However, despite having much to be pleased with in his all-round situation, and the ordinarily buoyant and imperturbable disposition that came with his nature, he was in a somber mood today as he sat in the work cubicle at one end of the System Test Area on the third floor of the Development Wing. Although he had been assigned one of the executive offices on the penthouse floor of the main office building as befitted his position of Technical Development Director, he was still young enough to prefer working in the coffee-and-shirtsleeves environment among the programmers and engineers, down where the action was. And just at this time, quite a lot of action appeared to be in the immediate offing indeed.

The screen above the litter of charts and manuals covering the desk was displaying the response *Abel 15*, that had come in minutes before to a query Alex had sent out earlier, denoted by the one-time code word *Cain*. Although his otherwise hard-set mouth conceded slight upturns at the corners, they were not due to any cryptic humor hidden in the message. He was thinking of Joe Koler, the person who had sent the response – known among the group who had scammed the election scammers and who still kept in touch as 'Tapperware' – and the time Joe had taken a job with a cleaning company to get inside the offices of the software contractor retained by the then-incumbent administration and install a keystroke capturing device to obtain the passwords for enabling their decryption algorithms. Joe was on the West Coast now, with one of the prime contractors responsible for maintenance of the Air Force's Ground-Based Strategic Launch System. His response to Alex's query meant that the missiles had been primed with their target codes fifteen minutes previously.

The return from Maeve Ingleman came in while Alex was still staring at the screen, wondering just how far this was likely to go. Maeve had devised the trapdoor code that made their tampering with the vote-tampering routine invisible to regular software checking procedures. These days she headed a section concerned with cryptological security in the Defense Department. Her input, responding to Alex's prompt, *Mutt*, was *Jeff-4*: "Arm Authorization code transmitted from the War Room four minutes ago."

One space remained unfilled in the format displayed on the screen, opposite the final query code that he had sent out: *Laurel*. That had been to his one-time drinking buddy and rock-climbing partner, Mike Welby, who could change the microcode to get a computer to do anything but make toast. Mike was now a team supervisor with the War Room Close System Support Office. A response from him would indicate that final Launch Enable had been issued. Alex bit his lip apprehensively. At the bottom of the screen, the sequence initiation command *Murphy* glowed red and primed. Time had run out to let the risk run any longer. The moment had come that would decide between years of work yielding dividends beyond calculation, or coming to nothing in an instant's premature panic. He took a long breath and steeled himself, yet was unable to suppress a tremor as he extended a hand. The last thought to flash through his mind before he pressed the key to activate the command was that maybe there wouldn't be any wedding day at all. The link changed from red to gray; at the same time, the confirmation *Issued and Acknowledged* appeared alongside.

Moments later, the empty space a few lines higher up filled suddenly to deliver the response *Hardy-2:30* from Mike.

#

Professor Orstein Orvington Orst, senior scientific advisor to the White House, was noted among other things for his theoretical studies developing the concept of the neutrino bomb. While providing an image and terminology capable of terrifying the public, the potential to absorb unlimited funding, and novel strategic implications that would keep planners occupied and pundits talking for years, it suffered from none of the drawbacks of threatening to kill anybody or damage property, thus making it in the eyes of many the ideal advanced weapons system. Orst had also authored the interesting theory that the decrease of entropy brought about by living things was due to local time reversals on a molecular scale, and shown statistically why statistics can never prove anything.

But things like entropy and statistics were far from his mind as he stood with Oskar Eissensatt, a computation director with one of the Pentagon's task groups, just outside the flurry of aides and officials surrounding the President in the underground War Room twenty-five miles in an undisclosed direction from the center of Washington D.C. Not that Orst had given any great amount of detailed thought to the likely effects on tomorrow of the events resolved upon today and about to be unleashed. But there was a distinct probability of the world's weather patterns being disrupted, which would invalidate the computer models that he had obtained generous funding to advise on, which would cause no end of demands for explanations and budget allocation reviews. It was all very inconvenient.

President Byrne emerged ahead of his coterie, effecting a swagger, still wearing the Patton-style revolvers. "That's right, we're going to do it!" he told the array of uniforms and suits. "Who do they think they're calling a cowboy? Those slopes have gone too far. It's time to stand tall and deliver the reckonin'. Where's the muh hat?"

General Elmer Craig, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, heavy with paunch and braid, was close beside him. Orst had little time for Craig. If it hadn't been for military mentalities and their obsession with megatons and pyrotechnics, a viral or other biological solution could have been far more efficient, without all the messiness and disruption. Besides that, Craig was a mathematical Neanderthal, who had once instructed an adjutant to look up General Relativity in the staff lists. "Just let us at 'em, Sir," Craig enthused to the President. "With the new ECMs and decoys, our birds will be hitting them before they even know anything's left the roost."

"God will reserve us a special place in Heaven for today," Elias Maude promised from Byrne's other side. "Smiting His enemies with death, vengeance, and destruction. Laying waste the land. Bringing tears, anguish, and grief. All as the Good Books say. Good Christian values."

"I know," the President replied. "He talked to me this morning." On the edge of the group, Eissensatt wrinkled his nose in response to Orst's frown. Orst had always harbored reservations about this kind of thing as a guide to shaping national policy. He didn't trust prophecies and assertions that couldn't be expressed in numbers. There was no better way of carrying an argument than showing it as the necessary outcome of manipulating symbols that nobody else could understand.

"Teamwork," Eissensatt murmured. Orst nodded sourly, causing wisps of thinning hair to wave about his birdlike head. They were always being reminded of the importance of keeping up a unified public image.

Byrne turned and drew himself up to a dramatic pose in the center of the floor, hands resting on the butts of the pistols, head high, chin thrust forward, legs apart and loosely bent. "Gentlemen, today we're about to become history. Nobody here knows better than all of you how I've busted my... that is, how hard I've tried in these days of trial and error to do an intelligent thing and act like a statesman. But we are left with no choice other than the course I have decided. An evil power thinks it can bring our great country to its knees by aggressive, unrestrained, military power. Well, we'll show the world that we can do it better."

"Damn right!" Craig agreed darkly.

“Hallelujah!” Maude intoned.

President Byrne paused a moment to let the ripple of approving nods and murmurs subside. “They brought this on themselves when they elected a tyrant who doesn’t let them have democracy. Let it be a lesson to all the others who hate us for our tolerant and peaceful way of life... General, issue the order to commence the attack.”

Craig turned imperiously toward his second-in-command, General Filbert, one star down, who was waiting several paces back. “Order General Launch, Fire Plan A, Phase One.”

Filbert relayed to the Fire Control Commander, seated at a supervisory desk in the center of a row of consoles on a raised dais at one end of the room. “Immediate, to all sector flight controllers. General Launch, Fire Plan A, Phase One.”

Despite the President’s stirring words of a few moments before, a solemn hush fell as the commander entered the codes into his console and validated the requests for confirmation, broken only by the voice of Burton Halle, the Vice President, muttering into a cell phone somewhere in the rear. “... and schedule a meeting for tomorrow morning to discuss assigning the reconstruction contracts.” All eyes turned expectantly toward the large Situation Display dominating the room.

It presented the world in regular Mercator projection, with hostile territories shown in red, U.S. in blue, its assortment of allies, recruited through bribes, corruption, political manipulation, or threats of annihilation, in varying shades of beige through burnet brown, depending on the assigned level of dependability, and the remaining neutrals in gray. Principal targets were indicated by icons according to category, along with ground launch bases and the present positions of submarines, bombers, and orbiting attack satellites. The display’s design was the work of Eissensatt’s people. He looked toward Orst invitingly as a side panel added itself, providing a legend of icon identifiers and symbol descriptions.

“It needs more numbers,” Orst murmured in answer to the unvoiced question.

“We’ve been upgrading it,” Eissensatt told him. “Wait.” Even as he spoke, new lines began appearing, superposed on the general display.

S2/5C, 8 x 10 Megatons, Coordinate cluster 6, ETT 22 min, 30 sec

Success prob’y 88%; $\alpha/\phi = 2.76$; $\Delta\tau_0 = 27$; $(\theta_A/\theta_B - \gamma) = 0.25$; Status = Green 3

Orst nodded happily and was about to express approval, when the unrolling data froze suddenly, and the map behind dimmed. Eissensatt’s expression just had time to change from a satisfied smile to a frown before the entire display blanked out, to be replaced by a blue background and the message:

THIS PROGRAM HAS PERFORMED AN ILLEGAL OPERATION AND WILL SHUT DOWN. ERROR ANALYSIS NOT AVAILABLE. PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE.

President Byrne blinked and looked at General Craig. Craig mustered his most demanding glare and turned to General Filbert. Filbert spread his hands. “I don’t know, Sir. It’s totally irregular. Nothing like this has ever...” He looked helplessly across toward the Fire Control Commander, who was already snarling instructions at a technician manning a monitor console below and in front of him. Eissensatt hurried across, followed by Orst.

“Forget that. Revert to direct manual override.” The FCC’s voice came from above. The technician hammered in a command string, which elicited on his screen the response:

PROGRAM NOT RESPONDING

and buttons for the options:

END TASK SHUT DOWN TRY AGAIN

Byrne and his entourage arrived as a medley of bemused expressions and angry scowls. “What in hell’s going on?” the President demanded. The FCC could only shake his head as his gaze darted over the console displays, looking for clues. Nothing in the exercises and operation manuals had prepared anyone for this. Beside him, the Operations Supervisor was tapping in befuddlement at a keyboard beneath a screen reading:

Page Not Found. Try clicking Refresh or select one of the following options...

“Get whoever’s in charge of IT,” Craig snapped. His neck and brow were turning purple. The FCC

hesitated, not seeming sure who that would be.

“Try Sigmund Velorski at the Pentagon,” Eissensatt suggested.

The FCC nodded to the Operations Supervisor. “Use Priority Channel Red.” Above the War Room floor, the main Situation Display had reverted to showing wallpaper consisting of bouncing smiley faces. Somewhere in the background a phone started ringing. An Air Force officer picked it up and answered in muffled tones behind a raised hand.

The Operations Supervisor looked up with the uncomprehending expression of a human cannonball watching the net slide blithely by below. “It says, *Invalid Password. Request Denied.*”

Byrne jerked his head impatiently from side to side. “What is all this shit?”

“This is ridiculous!” General Craig blared. “Somebody get him on the phone. Put it on speaker. I’ll talk to him myself.”

General Filbert accepted a handset proffered by an aide and thumbed the number that was highlighted. A ringing tone sounded from the speaker, followed by, “*We’re sorry, but the person you are calling is not available just now to take your call. If you would like to –*”

General Craig snatched the phone savagely and cut the connection. “What’s their main number?” he yelled. Filbert obtained it from an aide.

“*If this is for a military operational matter, press One. For matters of national domestic security, press Two. For all other –*” Craig cut the call again and stood gaping at the room, evidently at a loss for how to continue.

Orst stepped forward, took the phone from Craig’s unresisting fingers, and looked inquiringly at Byrne. “If I might suggest, Mr. President, I recall there was someone with the main systems integration contractor who seemed to have a good grasp of just about everything. Multimex – in Maryland, not far from here. A young man called Sullivan, I think it was.”

Byrne nodded numbly. “Why not? Anyone who can make some kind of sense out of anything. It’s not as if things could get any crazier.”

Orst copied the phone to one of the console displays and got through to the company. The operator who answered said that Alex Sullivan’s line was busy right now, but she would put the call through to that department. A bearded, bespectacled youth in a baggy sweater that gave him somewhat studentish look appeared on the screen and announced himself as the “Support Desk.” Was Orst calling to report trouble with a Multimex system? Orst confirmed that he was.

“Have you checked that the machine is plugged in?”

“What? ... Well, yes, of course it is.”

“Which operating system and version are you using?”

Orst was momentarily too disoriented to give a coherent answer. “Which... ? I really don’t know. That isn’t what I do. Look, I can assure you that the problem is nothing of that nature. My questions have to do with the applications that your company installed and integrated.”

“Do you have a support contract? If not I may have to charge at a rate of sixty dollars and hour. Would that be okay?”

General Craig exploded. “*Gimme that goddam phone!* ... You look here, Mister whatever your name is. See this uniform I’m wearing? Do you know what these medals mean? You are talking to the highest level of the United States government. The President himself is here with me, and this call concerns topmost matters of national security. Now if you don’t know your own ass from a hole in the ground and can’t help, then get somebody on the line who can. Is that clear enough? I mean now! Immediate! This moment!”

If the youth was impressed, it failed to show in the view coming through on the screen. He glanced away for a moment, then came back without missing a beat. “Oh, I think you were asking for Alex Sullivan,” he said. “It looks as if he’s free now. I’ll put you through.”

The new face that appeared was of a man perhaps in his early thirties. He had sandy colored hair, cut conventionally in a shaggy but neat and easy style, the suggestion of casualness enhanced by the

three-day matching growth softening his features, which were lean and angular, framing a narrow nose and chin. His eyes were sharp, with creases at the corners hinting at a mirthful bent. The part of his upper body that was visible showed a dove gray jacket and navy shirt worn with a tie sporting a silver and blue abstract design.

Craig squared up to face the screen directly. "Are you the person in charge of whatever goes on there?"

"My name is Alex Sullivan. I'm the Technical Development Director."

"General Elmer Craig, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Military."

"Yes, I recognize you from media pictures." The general's glare, which had never failed to command and intimidate, drew an affable smile that seemed to form naturally. "What can I do for you, General?"

"I take it you're aware that the government uses some highly complex and extremely sensitive computer systems that were put together by your company? Specifically, I'm talking about a system that goes by the code designation *Symphony*. It cost four billion dollars."

Sullivan nodded. "Yes, the strategic launch command sequencing and control network. In fact, I was responsible for coordinating a large part of it."

Consternation was breaking out among the presidential and Pentagon staff. General Filbert appealed to Craig. "Sir, this is an open line! We need to switch to a secure circuit."

Craig nodded. "Do it." As an operator intervened to make the adjustment, the general glanced back at the President, who was looking lost and as if trying to appear in charge at the same time. "Well, at least we seem to be onto the right guy."

The reconnection was made, and Sullivan reappeared. While Craig launched into a diatribe of woes and threats, Eissensatt moved closer to where Orst was standing. "You know what this is?" he said, keeping his voice low. Orst lifted his chin and eyebrows. "For years I have been telling everyone how stupid it was to use the Chinese for procurement. They tempted us with low prices because they knew we never see anything beyond a bottom line, and we walked right into it. We let them supply everything – hardware, maintenance, training... Even many of the software contracts!"

"What are you getting at?" Orst was only half listening. He was wondering why simulations and testing hadn't picked up these faults long ago.

"*They built it all in!*" Eissensatt whispered. He gestured to indicate the screens, consoles, and electronics cubicles all around them. "Can't you see what is happening? The Chinese buried special functions in their chips, that they could activate remotely. It is they who are doing this. It's a Trojan horse!"

Orst registered what he was saying, finally, and stared at him incredulously. It was preposterous, of course. Yet it had to be! What else could explain why all the testing had detected nothing?

"But it gets far worse," Eissensatt went on. "Don't you see?"

"What?" Orst found his voice but was still too much in shock to fully think the implication through.

"*They know!*" Eissensatt moaned. "Do you think they'd sneak something like that into our launch system without making it capable of reporting back to them?"

Orst gulped. "You mean they've got Spyware in there too?"

"Of course, Spyware! So it means they *know* we've attempted to launch. And what do you think that means? Do you think they'll just sit there?"

Engineers and programmers had crowded around a nearby console, and were taking turns to try various stratagems and offer advice. The one currently in the operator's chair sat back and threw up his hands. "I give up. It doesn't like anything I tell it. No version of anything is compatible with anything else."

Orst looked back bleakly to where the President and his group of senior officials had moved closer behind General Craig. Sullivan was speaking from the screen.

"It appears that the project manager quit and didn't update his documentation. It will probably take some time to figure out what the programmer was trying to do, I'm afraid."

Craig's color deepened. "*Didn't update the documents?* What kind of main contractor do you call yourselves? Four billion dollars! Don't you have anyone there who knows how to manage supervision?"

"Er, with respect, General, it appears to have been one of your own supervising officers assigned from the Pentagon."

"Hmph."

General Filbert interceded to rescue the situation. "I think I know who he means. I might be able to trace him and get a cell phone number." Craig nodded mutely in a way that said they might as well try exorcism if there was a chance it might do any good.

President Byrne stood in the middle of it all, looking dazed. "I don't believe this," he mumbled to Vice President Halle. "The mightiest war machine that the world has ever seen. And we can't do a thing with it because of a bunch of..." he broke off, seeing that Orst was trying to get his attention. "What?"

"Mr. President, there is a further ramification that doesn't seem to have been considered," Orst said gravely. "Since it's not functioning, it can no longer be considered the mightiest anything. So how long do we have before the sky turns black with incoming enemy hardware?"

The color drained from Burton's face, while the others around who were within earshot froze. "*Holy shit,*" somebody whispered.

Burton almost choked. "My God! We're wide open. There's nothing to stop them!"

"Exactly," Orst agreed.

And now they would probably never find out if the neutrino bomb would have been feasible. It was all very upsetting.

#

The Chinese underground War Room, twenty-five miles in an undisclosed direction from Beijing, was a disaster area of crashed computers and stalled programs when Tsien-Tsu was led in after being rushed across from the adjacent Defense Ministry building and given special emergency clearance to be admitted. The senior of the two officers who had been sent to fetch her – polite enough, but oddly robotic in the way the military conditioning tends to instill – indicated for her to wait, then moved to stand respectfully behind a gray-haired, heavy-set man in a dark suit, whom Tsien knew from her work to be Xen Lu Jiang, principal scientific advisor to the National Security Cabinet.

"So why isn't the sky already black with incoming American warheads?" Xen was saying, vainly trying to gain the attention of a stern, heavy-joweled figure in a field marshal's uniform, who had to be the Chief of Staff, Yao Ziaping. Technicians scurried among the cabinets and consoles, while on every side engineers and supervisors babbled into handsets, with more phones ringing and lights flashing incessantly. Above it all, the huge mural panel that was supposed to have presented a blow-by-blow portrayal of the end of America was displaying a series of pop-up ads for magazine subscriptions, adult web sites, and software products that nobody, apparently, had found a way to stop.

"What do you mean, the Submarine Launch Designator isn't a recognized system device?" Ziaping screamed at a man in a blue tunic, cringing behind a desk on which stood a name plate bearing the words *Command Director*.

The Director showed his hands helplessly. "That's what it's saying."

"Restart the command executive," an engineer in white shirtsleeves said from where he was standing behind a console operator wading through what looked like a labyrinth of *Disk Copying Error* and *File Not Found* error messages.

"We've already tried. It says the User Name is invalid."

"*This is insane!*" Ziaping wheeled upon a general behind him, wearing a lapel badge with the name Piao, who was watching anxiously over the shoulder of another operator. "Haven't you managed

to raise that Head Designer yet?"

"We're still trying, Sir," Piao replied. "But we keep getting connected to some kind of help desk in India."

Hao-Li Neng, the Chinese Premier, was standing amid a gaggle of military staff officers and civilian high officials, looking bewildered. Even though she had been expecting it, Tsien found herself mildly awed to find herself in such a presence. The doctor of philosophy who had made such an impression on her at university in his discourses on reason and imperviousness of reality to human passions, and the political science professor who had held off-campus debates at his home in which students debated things like a social order based on individual freedom and merit, would probably have scoffed at such acquiescence to tradition. But reactions cultivated through years of cultural exposure and social pressures couldn't be forgotten entirely. Tsien enjoyed meeting visitors from the West. Life there sounded interestingly different in many ways – challenging and stimulating in some; uncertain and insecure in others. She hoped to live there one day. The experience would be an invaluable complement to the form of upbringing she had known. The result would surely be to shape a more complete and fully aware, all-round person.

A woman in Air Force uniform, who had been following events at an adjacent console, looked up at Piao. "We have something coming up here via the backup system, General," she said. Piao moved over to join her, with Ziaping stumping testily behind. By edging a little closer, Tsien was able to get a glimpse of the text appearing on the screen. It read:

Dear Friend,

My name is Ido Mayanga, and I am Financial Operations Controller of the First National Bank of Nigeria. You have been referred to me as a trustworthy person who might be able to help in a most important matter. I urgently need to move \$10,000,000 (TEN MILLION US DOLLARS) currently held in a private account that is threatened with confiscation by unscrupulous and illegal agencies...

Premier Neng had also come forward to see. He took in the first couple of lines, stared nonplused for several seconds, and looked around for an explanation. Xen Lu Jiang, the scientific advisor, seized his opportunity to address the Chief of Staff. "Field Marshal Ziaping, the systems coordinator who was recommended from the Strategic Technical Directorate is here as commanded: Specialist Tsien-Tsu."

Ziaping turned to look her up and down. His expression didn't conceal a trace of disdain. She lowered her eyes and inclined her head demurely as protocol required. "We've been trying to contact the head of the design group," Ziaping informed her. "But either his phone is not working, or he's not answering. I'm told you know something about the system here."

"I was involved in formulating the original conceptual approach, and contributed to producing some of the implementation and proving software," she replied.

Ziaping made a contemptuous gesture, indicating the chaos around them. "Nothing works. It hasn't managed to get a single thing off the ground. Nobody can make sense of anything. What do you have to say?"

Tsien looked up but stopped short of meeting his gaze confrontationally. "Honorable sir, some of us tried from the beginning to advise against the adoption of technical procedures modeled on decadent Western methods. Their concern is always for immediate returns and considerations only, with no provision for the longer term. My surmise would be that the inevitable consequences of such practices are now manifesting themselves."

Ziaping glowered from side to side with a look that would have stopped an attacking lion dog. "Did you all hear that? They gave good advice. Who overrode them?"

Heads turned toward one another uncertainly. Nobody was going to volunteer this one. Xen Lu Jiang looked inquiringly at a woman in a gray business suit who seemed to be a secretary or assistant. "I, er... think it might have been Director Wou-Pang Lee," she offered hesitantly. Ziaping jerked his head around to confront General Piao.

"If you remember, Sir, he was removed to Mongolia some time ago," Piao responded.

Premier Neng raised his hands protectively, evidently having heard enough. "This isn't the time to be thinking about recriminations," he declared. "We have more pressing concerns to attend to. Wouldn't you agree?"

"Of course, Excellency," Xen Lu Jiang acknowledged. Ziaping conceded with a dip of his head. Only Tsien continued holding the Premier's eye. The appeal written across her face conveyed an urgent desire to say something.

"Yes, what is it?" Neng asked her. "You may speak."

"Your Excellency, the honorable member of the Security Cabinet was saying it when I arrived," she replied, glancing at Xen Lu Jiang. "We have been powerless for almost an hour, yet there has been no move by the other side to exploit the situation. Why isn't the sky black with incoming American warheads?"

Chinese strategic planning took little stock of trying to keep a General Launch order secret, since such an event would hardly be something that could be concealed. Even if the American warning system of satellites and radars failed by some miracle to detect the physical evidence, the whole business was so riddled with spies, bugs, communications taps, and informers, and so many people would be involved, that the news would probably have found its way to Washington before the first missile entered U.S. air space. Yet they hadn't retaliated. Such had been the panic around the War Room that it seemed only Tsien and the scientific adviser had seen it.

"They must know that we are defenseless," Xen-Lu Jiang said, making the point.

Ziaping shook his head. The mental momentum that he had accumulated was too much for any abrupt change of direction. "They know they have us cold, yet they do nothing? They have the chance to take out a billion people? Why wouldn't anyone in their right mind go for it?" Baffled looks went this way and that around the War Room. Premier Neng looked from one to another of the faces. None of the generals or ministers of state had a suggestion to offer.

Tsien cast her eyes around and bit her lip hesitantly. When the silence persisted for several more seconds, she said, "Maybe they are trying to tell us something."

Xen Lu Jiang looked shocked and opened his mouth to speak, but Premier Neng stayed him with a wave of his hand. "Hear the young lady." He looked at Tsien curiously. "Trying to tell us what?"

Tsien took a deep breath. "The situation reminds me of a philosophical problem that I was once required to study," she replied. "It demonstrates how seeming antagonists can both prosper more from cooperating instead of seeking to destroy each other."

Neng's eyebrows arched upward in surprise. He looked around his retinue of officers and advisers again, but they seemed equally puzzled. "What an extraordinary notion!" His gaze came back to Tsien, betraying a hint of amusement. "Do tell us more," he invited.

There could be no going back or extricating herself now. Tsien swallowed and nodded timorously. "If it pleases your Excellency, the problem is one known among logicians and students of human behavior as the Prisoner's Dilemma. As originally formulated, it describes two suspected accomplices in a crime who are arrested and questioned separately. Each is given the following offer, and is made aware that the other has been told the same. He can betray the other by confessing in return for a reduced sentence. But if both confess, each confession is less valuable and the sentences will be harsher. However, if they cooperate with each other by refusing to confess, the prosecutor will only be able to convict them on a minor charge." She paused to let everyone think about it. Ziaping had a look on his face that seemed to be asking, *What does this have to do with anything?* The expressions on the others ranged from blank to violent contortions of intense mental struggle. Tsien explained, "If there is no trust between them, it is to both their immediate advantage to confess and betray the other first. However, they would both fare better if they did trust each other and were resolute in refusing to confess... But it requires equal nerve and reasoning ability in both of them to arrive at that conclusion."

Neng's brow furrowed. "Do you really believe the Americans would expect anyone to read it that way?"

"I cannot say," Tsien answered. "But the notion of Chinese wisdom does have a strange mystique in the West..." She took a moment to choose her words in a way that would avoid sounding disrespectful, while at the same time remaining pointed. "Perhaps, by some quirk of fate, an opportunity has presented itself for our esteemed and honorable leadership to extricate the country from the predicament that it is at this moment facing." Which was as near as she dared come to saying that the West could wipe them out as soon as it got tired of waiting for them to catch on.

Ziaping's suddenly stunned look, and the deflation of his posture, said that this time even he had gotten the message. An expression of slowly intensifying horror was creeping across General Piao's face as the full meaning of the predicament that Tsien was talking about seeped in. Somebody to the side began gibbering incoherently, while others in the room looked apprehensively up at the roof as if expecting it to vaporize at any instant.

"Perhaps our decision to assume the offensive was a little hasty, after all," Xen Lu Jiang said, licking his lips dryly and directing the words at Neng. His face creased into a toothy grimace that seemed to be the closest it could manage to a smile.

Tsien amplified the point. "This administration could go down in history as one led by the greatest philosophers and statesmen that China has ever produced," she said. "Architects of a new world dedicated to peace and prosperity."

All of a sudden the prospect seemed to have more appeal to Neng than having gone down or up, as the case may be, as a great war leader. "Dare we compromise and risk being seen as backing down now?" he asked, looking at Xen-Lu Jiang.

"Dare we?" the scientific advisor echoed. "The girl is right, Excellency. What other choice do we have? Go for it."

Neng looked across at the Communications Director, manning a console beneath the main wall display. "Open the Hot Line to Washington," he instructed.

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From the privacy of his office on the penthouse floor in the headquarters of Multimex Systems and Integration Inc. in Maryland, Alex Sullivan sat before the screen still connected to the War Room. A very different mood had taken hold there. Nobody was talking about facing down black-hats or standing tall anymore. President Byrne stood in the middle of the floor among the rows of consoles and panels, wearing the sick look of a boxer who had just learned that the champ who was supposed to throw the fight was reneging on the deal. The figures around him had expressions that varied from stupor through consternation to the kind of disbelieving, frozen look that accompanies an unexpected wet fart.

Elias Maude, the former evangelical Defense Secretary, was the first to recover. He looked down to brush an imaginary wrinkle from his suit, then turned his head and eyed Byrne uncertainly. "It, er, occurs to me that perhaps aggression isn't in keeping with the kind of Christian tradition that we should be upholding," he said. "Our duty is to be compassionate and tolerant, and spread the Word." To one side, Professor Orst, the scientific adviser, emitted a visible sigh of relief.

Vice President Halle picked up the theme. "It would be good for corporate America, too, Mr. President. There's no need to send the other guy down. We've always welcomed and thrived on honest, healthy competition."

"For the good of the American people," Oskar Eissensatt of the Pentagon endorsed, from where he was standing next to Orst.

A light of sudden hope had come into Byrne's eyes. He swung his head around questioningly toward Craig. The General nodded emphatically.

"I've always said that the Chinese threat was exaggerated. This kind of overkill isn't necessary. And it violates the principles of honor, magnanimity, and fair play that have always constituted the hallmark of the United States military."

Byrne shifted his gaze jerkily from one to another. "The President should be a Lawman and a

Peacekeeper. That's what you're telling me, right?"

"Blessed are the peacemakers," Maude intoned.

"Our policy has always been Rule of Law," The VP agreed.

"Deterrence is the purpose of strength," General Craig affirmed.

Byrne drew himself up into a posture of a man feeling back in control. "Open the Hot Line to Beijing. Get me the Premier, what's his name?"

"Neng," an aide muttered.

"Neng."

The atmosphere of a new lease on life spread across the War Room like air freshener. Everywhere, figures were mopping brows and exchanging relieved looks, while the controller at the communications desk turned to his panel and began entering commands. Then, as Byrne began moving toward him in anticipation, he sat back in his seat suddenly with a surprised look.

"What is it?" Byrne asked.

The controller gestured at the screen. "There's already a call coming in the other way, from them."

General Filbert moved into the viewing angle of the screen, stopped suddenly, and turned to stare at the camera. "An unauthorized person is still connected through on that channel," he said to someone off screen. "Kill it." Moments later, the screen in Alex Sullivan's office blanked out.

Alex smiled to himself, leaned back in his chair, and stretched long and luxuriously while the accumulated effects of the last half hour dissipated. He hadn't realized how much the tension had affected him. His limbs felt as if they had been released from lead weights. He picked up the untouched cup of coffee that he had set down when he came in, and tried a sip. It had gone cold and insipid, but the taste triggered an urgent need for caffeine. He half rose to get a refill from the pot in the outer office, but on second thoughts lowered himself back into the chair and leaned forward to the keyboard. There was one more thing to do first...

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Back at her section in the Defense Ministry building, Tsien Tsu checked for any urgent messages that might have come in while she was away, then took a moment relax and compose herself. As the strain that she had been under gradually abated, her breathing eased, and the pattering in her chest returned to normal. She opened her eyes, and a tired but happy smile came over her face. Incredibly, it had worked!

She pulled the keyboard closer and entered the code to unlock and reactivate the screen that she had been using when the two officers arrived to take her to the War Room. She'd just had time to confirm command initiation on receipt of the incoming code *Murphy* before hastily hiding it and having to leave. *Murphy* was still there, glowing in red at the bottom of the displayed exchanges.

Two years ago, when she and her friends met the visiting Americans at the cultural exchange weekend organized for young computer people, she wouldn't have believed it possible. But the kids had all agreed that the business of international affairs was getting too serious to be entrusted to the likes of politicians and generals. And what had started out as a crazy joke by the lean, laughing-eyed American with fair hair at the party they all ended up at on the Saturday night, had, piece by piece, transformed itself into a reality... Except that now she knew him better, Tsien was not so sure it had been a joke at all. He had a strange charisma that inspired and motivated people.

As she watched absently, absorbed in her thoughts, the icon that indicated another incoming request started flashing. Tsien touched a key to accept, and a new line appeared, accompanied by the same originating identifier as the one attached to *Murphy*. It read:

Operation Defuse completed 100 percent. Nice work, guys.

Tsien Tsu clapped her hands softly in silent elation. She had to admit there had been moments when she'd found herself wondering, but there were no doubts now. Their wedding would take place after all. And she would have her chance to live in the inscrutable West, and look forward to getting to know him even more over the years. The older generation, with all its talk of wisdom and experience,

had had its chance to build and shape a livable world – and look what the result had been! It was up to the young people, now, to take charge of the one that would be theirs.

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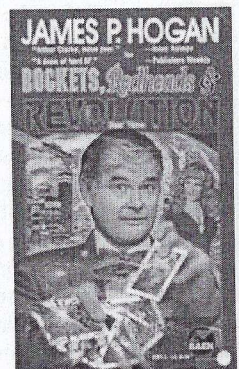
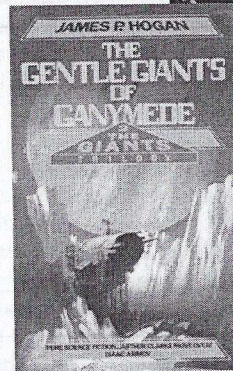
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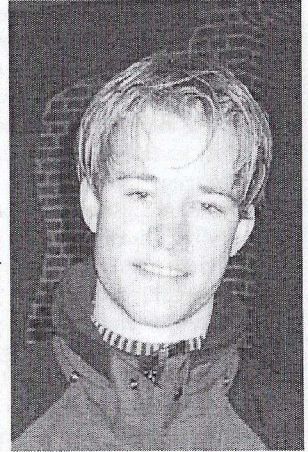
Eregast: Thomas Olde Heuvelt

Thomas Olde Heuvelt is al op jonge leeftijd een bekende naam geworden in horrorliefebiedend Nederland. De Nijmegenaar debuteerde in 2002 op achttienjarige leeftijd met zijn roman *De Onvoorziene* bij uitgeverij Intes International. Twee jaar later volgde het zeshonderd pagina's tellende *PhantasAmnesia*. Daarnaast zijn verhalen van zijn hand in diverse magazines verschenen en won hij de debutantenprijs in de Paul Harland verhalenwedstrijd.

Na zijn gymnasium vervolgde hij zijn studie op de Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht (schrijven en vormgeving), de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen (Amerikaanse literatuur) en de University of Ottawa in Canada (witchcraft en horrorfictie). Naast zijn studie werkt hij aan diverse schrijfprojecten, waaronder bijdragen aan verhalenbundels (zoals het pas uitgekomen *Horrorarium*, met een voorwoord van Dean Koontz), een filmscenario en een trilogie, waarvan naar verwachting het eerste deel in 2007 zal verschijnen.

At a young age Thomas Olde Heuvelt is already well-known among the Dutch horror lovers. He debuted in 2002, aged eighteen, with the novel De onvoorziene (Intes International publishers). Two years later the sixhundred-page PhantasAmnesia followed. He also published short stories in various magazines and won the prize for best newcomer in the Paul Harland Prijs short story competition of 2004.

After high school he studied at the Utrecht School of Arts (writing and composition) and the University of Ottawa in Canada (witchcraft and horror-fiction). He also works on various writing projects, including contributions to story collections (such as the recent Horrorarium, with an introduction by Dean Koontz), a film script, and a trilogy, the first part of which is expected in 2007.
(<http://www.oldeheuvelt.com>)



De gave van irrationaliteit: elementen van effectieve horrorliteratuur

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Beware the beast but enjoy the feast he offers – Nightwish, Beauty of the Beast

Het horrorgenre is het zwarte schaap van de moderne literaire wereld. Critici en intellectuelen beschouwen het dikwijls als minderwaardig ten opzichte van 'serieuze' literatuur. Vaak wordt het zelfs genegeerd omdat het genre te makkelijk en te oppervlakkig zou zijn, simpelweg omdat het handelt over zaken die zich niet in de realiteit kunnen voltrekken. Maar dergelijke oordelen zijn gebaseerd op vooroordelen, oogkleppervisie en verdraaide definities. De horrauteur wacht zelfs een nog zwaardere taak: het schrijven van effectieve horrorfictie is op een bepaalde manier zelfs moeilijker dan het schrijven van andere vormen van conventionele literatuur, omdat er buiten de normale facetten van goede verteltechniek, nog andere zaken bij komen kijken die onontbeerlijk zijn voor het welslagen.

De talloze discussies die zijn gevoerd over een acceptabele definitie van het horrorgenre, hebben geleid tot een banalisering van de term. Veel van de voorgestelde definities spreken slechts over bloederige en gruwelijke elementen als slachting, moord en verkrachting. Persoonlijk classificeer ik dat soort elementen liever onder de genres thriller, suspense of slasher. Ik zal de definitie hanteren dat het horrorgenre is bedoeld om een emotionele reactie van angst, ontzetting of verontrusting te wekken en dat het een element van het bovennatuurlijke moet bevatten. Volgens deze definitie bevat een film als Wes Craven's *Scream* wel huiveringwekkende elementen, maar kan het geen horrorfilm genoemd worden, omdat het bovennatuurlijke element ontbreekt. Hierop volgend vereist effectieve horror naast het wekken van angst onder het publiek, de acceptatie van het onmogelijke.

Horrorfictie schrijven is nog steeds gewoon een verhaal schrijven. Dus om te beginnen gelden alle regels van een goede verteltechniek. Veel slechte horrorromans falen omdat ze simpelweg slecht zijn geschreven. Schipladingen boeken zijn geschreven over de kunst van het schrijven, te veel om in één – of duizend – essays te behandelen. In een notendop zijn de sleutelementen karakterontwikkeling, conflictsituaties, een plotlijn die alle set-ups afrondt, en spanning. Maar er is natuurlijk meer: elk karakter moet authentiek zijn, met zijn eigen unieke individuele gesteldheid. De auteur dient veel aandacht te besteden aan zintuiglijke waarnemingen als gehoor, reuk en smaak, om de geschapen wereld tot leven te brengen. Enzovoorts, enzovoorts: dit is een eindeloos verhaal waar ik me niet eens aan zal wagen.

Het spanningselement spant een brug naar het horrorgenre. De in 1999 uitgekomen film *The Blair Witch Project* draait volledig om spanning; het publiek weet niet eens waar het bang voor is. Deze suggestiviteit maakt het erg effectief. Om H.P. Lovecraft, een van de grondleggers van de moderne horrorliteratuur, te citeren: 'De sterkste emotie der mensheid is angst. De sterkste en meest oorspronkelijke angst, is de angst voor het onbekende.' Een goed horrorverhaal creëert voor zijn publiek een omgeving waarin alles kan gebeuren. Er is een oneindige mogelijkheid, zelfs voorbij de grenzen van de natuurwetten. Dit is waar het bovennatuurlijke om de hoek komt kijken.

In het najaar van 2005 bestudeerde ik aan de Universiteit van Ottawa in Canada een erg interessant naslagwerk getiteld *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic and Witchcraft*. Volgens dit boek 'overstijgen bovennatuurlijke entiteiten en handelingen de normale wereld van oorzaak en gevolg zoals wij die kennen'. Het handelde over de manier waarop het bovennatuurlijke sinds het begin der mensheid al een enorme rol heeft gespeeld in het menselijk geloof. De essentie van religie zelf is gebaseerd op een systeem van geloof en gedrag dat onlosmakelijk is verbonden met de relatie tussen de mens en het heilige bovennatuurlijke.

In de 21^e-eeuwse materialistische, technologische westerse maatschappij, hebben we het contact met en het geloof in het bovennatuurlijke goeddeels verloren. Ik beseftte dat het hierdoor voor de moderne horrorauteur moeilijker is geworden een omgeving te creëren waarin de lezer het bovennatuurlijke element accepteert en er in gaat geloven. De schrijver faalt onherroepelijk als het verhaal geen geloofwaardigheid heeft en de lezer zijn manipulatie kan zien. Dit is waarom het volgen van een perfecte verhaaltechniek zo belangrijk is. Als het verhaal de plank mislaat als zijnde een verhaal, zal het publiek nooit in de bovennatuurlijke elementen gaan geloven. Het horrorverhaal faalt dan per definitie.

Als de auteur eenmaal zijn eigen realiteit heeft opgezet, moet hij daar ook trouw aan blijven. Eén van de meest bekende romans die op die manier zijn potentie heeft gemist om een klassieker te worden is Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* [*Dodenwake*], uit 1983. King bouwt het verhaal op door zijn publiek het idee voor te schotelen dat als de doden begraven worden op een oeroude, Indiaanse begraafplaats, ze tot leven komen en alle verborgen, smerige geheimpjes van de mensen uit de gemeenschap kennen. Dit is een griezelig gegeven, omdat het op subtiele wijze de hele maatschappij ontwricht. De verontrustende pogingen van de vader om het lichaam van zijn overleden zontje op te graven en de dramatische spanning van zijn echtgenotes onzekerheid over wat er gaande is, behoren tot de beste scènes die King ooit heeft geschreven. Maar nooit was ik zo teleurgesteld in een climax. Het verhaal slaagt er niet in de opgebouwde verwachtingen waar te maken en de zoon komt terug als een moordende maniak, zodat het gewoon een slasher als zovele wordt. Ik haatte het boek omdat ik het zo geweldig goed had kunnen vinden.

Er zijn twee belangrijke elementen die bijdragen aan de acceptatie van het bovennatuurlijke in een verhaal. Het eerste is de aanwezigheid van subtiliteit en ambiguïteit die de lezer doen twifelen aan wat eigenlijk nog werkelijkheid is en wat niet. Als realiteit en fantasie op een subtiele wijze in elkaar overlopen, zal het publiek bijna alles accepteren wat de verteller zegt. Een opening voor een rationele verklaring, al is die nog zo klein, kan daartoe helpen. Onzekerheid is wat mensen het meest verontrust.

Het tweede element is het gebruik van de techniek van defamiliarisatie: een alledaags object of

ervaring nemen en dat veranderen in iets ontzettends, zelfs angstaanjagends. In onze moderne, westerse cultuur is het voor de lezer nog heel moeilijk te geloven in een bovennatuurlijk monster dat te ver buiten de realiteit staat. Vampiers, weerwolven, het monster van Frankenstein, demonen uit de hel en soortgelijk gespuis zijn stereotypen van het genre geworden en worden nauwelijks meer serieus genomen. Een groot deel van het genre is formulewerk geworden. Helaas is dit de bron van de oogkleppenvisie van veel critici, die het horrorgenre niet anders meer zien als een man met scherpe tanden en een lange cape. Het geeft echter wel aan hoe moeilijk het is nog over dergelijke creaturen te schrijven en toch origineel te zijn. Veel vampierverhalen bijvoorbeeld nemen alle conventies over uit Bram Stoker's *Dracula* en veranderen alleen de namen. Defamiliarisatie bevordert originaliteit, omdat de mogelijkheden ineens eindeloos worden.

Buiten het bovennatuurlijke, heeft het horrorgenre ook nog dat andere kenmerkende element: angst. Elke vorm van literatuur poogt emoties te wekken als plezier, hoop, verdriet, geluk of angst. Wat horror betreft is dit nogal ironisch. Het is voor de hand liggend waarom mensen een gevoel van plezier en hoop willen ervaren, maar waarom wil men doelbewust en onnodig angst bij zichzelf opwekken?

Dat doen we om dezelfde reden waarom we in de achtbaan gaan zitten. De spanning is stimulerend, en dat in een veilige omgeving. Het is wat Aristoteles *catharsis* noemde: het ervaren en bevrijden van krachtige emoties reinigt de ziel. Tijdens de era van de vooral in Groot Brittanië populaire gotische roman in de 18^e en 19^e eeuw, is men zich veel gaan verdiepen in de vraag waarom we ons zo graag bang laten maken. De romanticus Samuel Coleridge sprak van een *willing suspension of disbelief* (letterlijk: 'vrijwillige opheffing van ongeloof') als we een verhaal lezen. Het vrijwillige aspect daarvan is van belang, omdat we weten dat ons niets kan gebeuren: we zitten veilig thuis op de bank een boek te lezen. Dit is de esthetische afstand waarover schrijfster Anna Letitia Aikin voor het eerst spreekt in haar essay 'Objects of Terror' uit 1773: als we slechts de toeschouwer zijn van angst, kunnen we daar genot uit putten. Naar mijn mening weet de meest effectieve horror zelfs dat gevoel van veiligheid te doorbreken... zodat we als we 's avonds gaan slapen, toch nog ons licht aanlaten.

Maar wat voor angst kan zo'n sterk effect bewerkstelligen? De angst die wordt opgeroepen door een goede horrorschrijver is verontrustender dan de angst voor iets slechts als een overvaller in een donker steegje of een moordende maniak. Nietzsche en Lovecraft brachten angst naar een nieuw level met hun nihilistische visies dat God dood is en de mensheid slechts een oneindig onbelangrijk en doelloos ongelukje in het universum. Maar nihilisme is een intellectueel begrip gebaseerd op observeerbare realiteit, compleet rationeel en niet noodzakelijk een bron van angst – behalve als de mens, dit aanvaardend, zich laat verpletteren door het gewicht van zijn eigen sterfelijkheid. De 19^e-eeuwse Deense existentialist Søren Kierkegaard noemde dit principe *fear and trembling*: het besef onherroepelijk en moederziel alleen te zijn in je eigen sterfelijkheid. Of, om de briljante film *Donnie Darko* uit 2001 te citeren: 'Every creature on this earth dies alone.' Maar zelfs die angst kan worden uitgelegd als zijnde simpel de angst voor de dood, die iedereen wel enigszins deelt.

De ultieme angst van de mensheid gaat verder dan rationalisme. De primaire, irrationele angst van het horrorgenre is niet simpelweg de angst voor het onbekende of de dood, maar de angst voor het *geheel en al verdwijnen in het niets*. Sigmund Freud noemt dit in zijn essay '*Das Unheimliche*' het wekken van het onderdrukte onderbewustzijn naar het bewuste, wat het Ego's idee van zichzelf bedreigt. Voor een kind is het niet meer dan normaal, en zelfs noodzakelijk, dat onze knuffelbeer of lappenpop leeft, want de geest van het kind kent, omdat deze niet gekleurd is door ervaring en ratio, de puurste, meest irrationele emoties. Maar de bezielde wereld die we in onze kindertijd ervoeren, wekt op latere leeftijd, wanneer we die 'gave van irrationaliteit' zijn verloren, juist de angst van de herrijzenis van de niet-levende wereld. Als dat gebeurt wordt het Ego bedreigd met vernietiging, met oplossing in de ondifferentieerbare dieptes van het onderbewustzijn, met verdwijning. Deze angst is meer magisch en diepgaand dan de angst voor de dood, want sterven is slechts een fysieke realiteit. Het sterven van het Ego is psychologisch meer atavistisch en angstaanjagend: verdwijnen is falen te bestaan, verdwijnen is niet zijn. En het is een primaire angst die we onbewust allemaal delen.

Ik ben dolblij dat ik die gave van irrationaliteit niet volledig ben kwijtgeraakt bij het volwassen worden. Het kind in mij leeft nog en stelt mij in staat soms nog iets van de ziel van niet-levende dingen te kunnen proeven. Het maakt mijn leven rijk, omdat mijn kinddeel stellig kan geloven in het bovennatuurlijke, en mijn volwassen kant tegelijkertijd de consequenties daarvan kan ervaren. Ik denk dat iedere horrorschrijver dat in ieder geval ten dele in zich moet hebben, om effectief en uit eerste hand angst op te kunnen roepen en die over te brengen op de lezer.

Richard Matheson speelt effectief met de angst voor algehele verdwijning in zijn roman *I Am Legend* [*Ik ben een legende*] uit 1954, die een verfrissende en originele draai aan het vampiergenre geeft. Protagonist Robert Neville lijkt de enige overlevende te zijn na een epidemie van vampirisme. Het eens zo universeel menselijke Ego wordt getransformeerd in een legendarisch object van angst, in een wereld met ziel noch ethiek. De vampiers zijn zo griezelig omdat juist datgene dat ze menselijk en levend maakte is verdwenen, en toch lopen ze rond alsof ze leven. Hun boodschap aan Neville is: 'Jij bestaat niet.' Het angstaanjagende van de vampiers is niet dat ze het bloed uit de levenden zuigen, ondanks dat dat de onderliggende waarheid symboliseert. Het angstaanjagende is dat hun bestaan zelf de levenden in deze maatschappij nullificeert. Uiteindelijk kan Neville niet anders dan de dood verkiezen boven het sterven van zijn Ego, als alle hoop op menselijkheid is verdwenen.

Het beroeren van de snaren van de diepste emoties van de mens vraagt zowel talent als vaardigheid. Het is als het bespelen van een muziekinstrument: slechts enkelen bevooroordeelde snaarkunstenaars hebben de virtuositeit om mensen rillingen te bezorgen met hun muziek. Voor de horrorauteur ligt die drempel nog hoger, omdat hij eerst zijn publiek zover moet krijgen het onmogelijke te accepteren. Velen falen dan ook. Maar soms, soms vind je een glinsterende parel tussen deze verdoemden, wiens werk je emoties meer raakt dan welke andere vorm van literatuur dan ook, want angst is de sterkste der menselijke emoties. En deze werken maken het genre, dit duistere beest van de moderne literatuur, voor mij tot een van de meest diepgaande vormen van de geschreven kunst.

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Guest of Honour: Alastair Reynolds

Alastair Reynolds (1966) begon te schrijven tijdens zijn studietijd (natuurkunde en astronomie), maar zijn debuutroman verscheen toen hij voor ESA in Noordwijk werkte. *Revelation Space* is ook in vertaling verschenen als *Het Raadsel van de Amarintin*, maar helaas was dat ondanks lovende kritieken niet het geval met zijn volgende boeken in dat universum. Voor degenen die Alastair al van de voorgaande Beneluxcons kennen is het mogelijk toch nog nieuws dat zijn recente boeken weer een geheel nieuw SF-universum onderzoeken.

Alastair Reynolds (1966) started writing while studying Physics and Astronomy, but his debut novel appeared while he worked for ESA in Noordwijk. Revelation Space also appeared in Dutch translation, but despite good reviews that didn't happen for the following series of books in that universe. For those who met Alastair at previous Beneluxcons, it may be news that his recent books started to explore a whole new SF universe.

(<http://www.alastairreynolds.com>)



The Short and The Sweet

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Not all writers write short fiction, and not all writers continue to write short fiction once they've broken into the business of novel writing. Quite a few of us do, though, but not necessarily for reasons that are very easy to articulate. This autumn I've just had two collections of short fiction published, more than sixteen years after my first professional sale. I'm still writing short fiction, long after I really needed to. It seems as good a time as any to ask: why do I do it? What (if anything) have I learned since I started? Where do I go from here? What meagre crumbs of advice have I got for anyone else interested in writing the short stuff?

I began submitting short fiction to the magazines when I was in my late teens, by which point I'd already finished two unpublishable novels and had embarked on a third. At that time, I regarded short fiction as a kind of tactical necessity, a means of self promotion that would make it easier to sell the novels I regarded as my true vocation. I didn't even have a particularly sophisticated taste for short fiction as a form, with most of my reading consisting of novels. It pains me to admit that those stories I most responded to were often somewhat gimmicky, one-joke, twist-in-the-tail things of the kind that tended to pad out Asimov collections. My literary diet consisted solely of science fiction, but even then I was only reading from a very narrow slice of the genre: Asimov, Clarke, Harry Harrison, the occasional Silverberg, Dick or James White collection. It was only later in my SF reading career that I caught up on what might be termed the more "literary" end of the genre. Even now, I am woefully under-read in many writers, and strive to hide this ignorance as best I can, *especially* at SF conventions. You can go a long way with remarks like "I'm less familiar with Sturgeon's later work than his earlier output", meaning, "I've never read any Sturgeon, but I did see the TV movie they made of Killdozer".

Something changed, though, in that I did eventually develop an admiration for short fiction, one that's largely responsible for the fact that I'm still writing it. Much of this, I think, is due to the direct influence of *Interzone*. For those that don't know, *Interzone* is Britain's only professional SF fiction magazine, and – barring a few hiccoughs – has been running more or less uninterrupted since about 1981. Along the way it has been responsible for discovering many of the writers now associated with the British SF Renaissance: people like Stephen Baxter, Eric Brown, John Meaney, Liz Williams and

far too many others to mention. The existence of Interzone, however, was completely unknown to me until 1985. That was when the magazine put out an paperback anthology, collecting some of the best pieces of its first four years of publication. Luckily, the anthology turned up in my local library in Wales, and I borrowed it. I took it home and read it.

I hated it. Utterly, unreservedly. As far as I was concerned, they had a *bloody cheek* calling this a “science fiction” magazine. There was, I think, not a single story in the Interzone anthology set in space, or on a different planet, or in what one might think of as the default high-tech corporatist future I’d grown to expect from reading the likes of Haldeman, Varley and Benford. There were no cyborgs or supercomputers. There were no space habitats or Bladerunner-style future cities. There was a distinct absence of lovingly-rendered descriptions of starship drives, or the finer principles of terraforming or relativistic navigation. It was, in short, pretty unrecognisable as SF, as I thought I knew it. The rotters!

I returned the Interzone anthology to the library, and that might have been the end of it. But a few months later something motivated me to take it out again and have a closer look at the stories. Perhaps it was a realisation that, Interzone being very much the only game in town, I had little choice but to broaden my tastes – especially if I had ambitions of selling them a story. So I re-read the anthology, most of it anyway, and while I didn’t find it enormously more interesting the second time around, I did take the step of subscribing to the magazine. There was an address at the back of the book, and the fee for four quarterly issues was very reasonable. I sent off my cheque and a few weeks later a copy of Interzone popped through the letterbox. The cover story was JG Ballard’s “The Man who Walked on The Moon”. The contents were very much of a piece with what I’d already read in the collection: stories and writers, by and large, that wouldn’t have seemed out of place in the pages of New Worlds ten or fifteen years earlier. But no matter what you thought of the fiction, there was more to Interzone than just that. There were erudite book and film reviews, an editorial and letters page. Perhaps for the first time, I had a sense that there was a conversation going on, one that was more lively and argumentative, more impassioned, than I’d suspected. SF *mattered*.

It took me a little while to get to *like* Interzone, as opposed to just being slightly perplexed by it, but I don’t think it took more than two or three issues. Somewhere in the latter half of 1985 they published a couple of stories by Paul J McAuley, one of which (“Little Ilya and Spider and Box”) was exactly the kind of thing I’d expected to find in the anthology, in that it was unambiguously a story of the far future, with an implied backdrop of interstellar travel. Towards the end of that year Interzone also published an Ian Watson story (“When the Timegate Failed”) that was again very much my cup of tea, in that it dealt, in an oblique way, with the psychology of long-distance spaceflight. These two stories gave me license to submit something to Interzone and so over Christmas I wrote a very short story, entitled “Closing Contact”. It was set in the tantalisingly near future (2004, or something like that!) and concerned the arrival in orbit of an alien space probe, which appeared to be some kind of machine intelligence. (Think of Starglider, from Clarke’s “The Fountains of Paradise”). International astronauts are sent up to make contact with this alien machine, and they do so via a kind of telepathy facilitated by neural implants. The point of “Closing Contact” was that one of the astronauts had become addicted to the data flow from the alien machine, and could not stand the thought that it was going to break off communication with Earth and travel to another solar system. So the astronaut took it upon himself to sabotage the alien vehicle, rendering it unable to leave. That, basically, was the story. There was no additional twist, no surprise revelation or psychological insight which would have cast the astronaut’s actions in a different light. I don’t even recall how the astronaut expected to benefit from his sabotage – surely he’d have been found out and returned to Earth? Unsurprisingly, Interzone refused the story. The rejection note, which stated that the story “ends unsatisfyingly”, also pointed out that I’d made a number of unprofessional errors in the format of my submission, such as using single-line spacing. Well, we’ve all got to learn, haven’t we?

I don’t remember being too cut up about Interzone’s rejection. For a start, it took quite a while for them to get back to me. By the time they did, I was already working on something else and I think I’d

more or less realised that my first submission wasn't all that hot. This is my first crumb of advice to aspiring writers, and probably the most useful lesson I know: as soon as you submit something, start work on something else. It's a win-win situation. If the first piece is rejected, the chances are that you'll be more emotionally invested in the second by the time you find out about it, and the blow won't be too crushing. On the other hand, if the first piece sells, you'll be well on the way with a follow-up. I'd also encourage beginners not to put too much effort into reworking stories that have been rejected, unless the rejection is couched in very positive terms. Judging by comments I read on various internet forums, a lot of beginners become fixated on endless rewrites of a particular story, trying market after market in a cycle of steadily diminishing returns. In a way, I was fortunate when I started submitting stuff to *Interzone*: in terms of paying markets within the UK, there really wasn't a lot of competition. At the time I was only dimly aware of the existence of the American magazine market, and had little or no idea what kind of science fiction these venues were buying. My second crumb of advice, therefore, would be to polish your stories as best you can, workshop them if you are able (see later), but learn to recognise when a story just isn't a winner and should best be put down to experience. I have only resubmitted a handful of stories in my career, and never more than once for a given story.

Between 1986 and 1989 I submitted one or two stories per year to *Interzone*. Since I was studying for my degree during most of this period, I did my writing during term breaks at home, using a manual typewriter. I did, briefly, play with a Word Processor in my dad's office – but the freedom of the WP was such that I got bogged down in the quest for the killer opening, endlessly rewriting the first few paragraphs and never really progressing with the story. My third piece of advice, therefore, is to get the story down in a rough and ready form and *then* worry about polishing. It's like getting a rope bridge across a river: you have to throw a thin rope across first, before you can haul over the heavier rope that will take people. On a related note, there are risks in trying too hard when it comes to an opening. Despite what they might say, editors aren't necessarily looking for a first line or first paragraph that grabs them by the throat. I think they're far more likely to respond to quiet understatement, a sense that the writer is in control of language, character, mood, viewpoint.

Anyway, it took a while for me to get to grips with using a computer, and all my early submissions to *Interzone* were typed. Most of those stories were unexceptional: third-rate cyberpunk rip-offs for the most part. The problem was that, by 1987 or 1988, cyberpunk was really a done deal, and the writers most associated with the movement had moved on. I was imitating, not innovating, and I wasn't imitating with sufficient skill to compensate for the lack of originality in my stories. But I was learning, slowly, and my rejection slips became more detailed and perhaps a tiny bit more encouraging.

In 1988 I completed my degree studies and moved to Scotland to start work on a Doctorate. By now I felt in my bones that I was going to break into *Interzone* at some point. I was reading a lot, reading critically, and I could see evidence of improvement in my writing. Warmed-over cyberpunk was obviously not going to do it. I realised that I needed to inject an element of originality into my stories. I continued to be impressed with the short fiction of Ian Watson, and one of the things I most liked about IW's fiction was the utter unpredictableness of his stories, the way he'd use an off-beat approach to illuminate some "traditional" SF subject matter. I was particularly knocked out by a story of his called "The Emir's Clock", which was reprinted in one of Gardner Dozois's Year's Best SF anthologies. The story dealt with the emergence of artificial intelligence in the future, but did so in a completely bizarre and (to my mind) effectively chilling way. For some time, I'd been puzzling over an idea for a story that involved the runaway evolution of computer programs via a kind of Darwinian fitness scheme. The programs get so clever that they "tunnel" out of the computer architecture in which they've been evolving, infecting the deep structure of spacetime itself. I'd been playing with standard cyberpunk approaches to the theme, but they weren't going anywhere. I also had ideas for another story about sending messages to the past (providing a science fiction rationale for those weird stories you sometimes hear about fish or frogs raining out of the sky) and it suddenly occurred to me that I could jam the two ideas together. As luck would happen, I was browsing around the university library

when I found a series of books on Inuit culture. What about jamming some of *that* into the mix as well? I went ahead and wrote the story, called it “A Snowflake of Nunivak” and fired it off to Interzone. They didn’t buy it, but they were a lot more encouraging than they’d been to date – enough to make me think that, just possibly, I might be getting close. Since the rejection slip had given me some specific guidance as to how the story might be improved, I rewrote it. I gave it a new, leaner title: “Nunivak Snowflakes”. I submitted it in early 1989 and waited. Three or four months later I heard that they were taking it for the magazine – my first sale. I was pleased, but I can’t say I was ecstatic. The acceptance note basically said “this has still got a lot of problems, but we’ll take a risk on it.” I realised that I’d scraped in by the skin of my teeth, and that Interzone probably wasn’t going to be trumpeting me as the next big thing.

But I *had* scraped in. My story appeared nearly a year later, in 1990, in Interzone 36. I sold them another story, “Dilation Sleep”, which appeared in Interzone 39. PhD work slowed my writing down for a while, but I made another sale in 1991 with my story “Enola”, appearing in Interzone 54. I got my name on the cover with that one.

None of these stories set the world on fire, but they were important stepping stones. To my knowledge, none of them were reviewed. Nowadays, they’d probably get a bit more attention. Locus magazine now has two short fiction reviewers, and thanks to the internet, there’s a thriving critical apparatus on the web that simply didn’t exist at the time. But I don’t want to sound as I’m uncomplaining, or as if 1991 or 1992 was some kind of literary dark ages. It’s not as if I didn’t get paid for the stories, or have my moment of glory when they appeared illustrated in print.

At the time, I fondly imagined that I would write and sell even more stories once I completed my PhD work and got a proper job. However, that wasn’t to be the case. I moved to the Netherlands at the end of 1991 (not long after the publication of “Enola”) and things slowed down quite markedly. In 1992 a story of mine appeared in the anthology *IN DREAMS*, edited by Paul J McAuley and Kim Newman. It appeared as if I was maintaining a steady output, but the story had been written well over a year earlier.

It was to be another three years before I made a fourth sale to Interzone. I’m glad I didn’t know that at the time! Partly this was due to changed circumstances. I now had a full-time job, on top of which I had to find time for language lessons and associated homework, driving lessons, as well as some kind of social activity. I joined the local climbing club, which is where I met my wife, and later I took up horse riding. That was already three or four evenings out of a typical week. Nonetheless, I did find time to write and submit material to Interzone, but all of a sudden it wasn’t to their liking. At the time I was more than a little mystified – I felt I was improving, not getting worse – but in hindsight the stories I sent them in this period tended to be a bit plotless and rambling, and perhaps somewhat over-inflated with notions of their own importance. At least, that’s my rationalisation after the fact, but who knows? Even now, stories I think are great meet with a lukewarm reception, and ones I consider to be passable continue to be reprinted. What I can say is that the story that got me back into the magazine was a fast-paced, unpretentious thriller about a communications experiment in Antarctica that goes horribly and weirdly wrong. Prior to selling “Byrd Land Six”, my confidence had suffered quite a wobble, and I think that was one of the two or three times when I came closest to giving up on writing. It’s one thing to struggle to break into a market, but it can be even more disheartening to break in and then find yourself on the outside again, especially when you can’t see what you’re doing wrong.

In hindsight, the sale of “Byrd Land Six” was a positive turning point, because from that point on I became a regular contributor to the magazine, placing one or two stories a year right through the nineties and into 2000. I slowed down after 2000 when the novel writing began to eat up my time, but I continued to sell to other venues and I had a story in the very last issue of Interzone, under the editorship of David Pringle, in 2003.

My confidence suffered a second wobble around 1996-1997. By then I’d contributed a couple of stories to Interzone that I felt were genuinely good, rather than just being borderline publishable.

Reader response, judged by the Interzone letters page and yearly poll, wasn't entirely negative. But the stories still sank into relative obscurity as soon as they were published. I was conscious of the fact that some stories from Interzone were being picked up for reprinting in various best-of-the-year anthologies. Why weren't mine? Why weren't they being talked about, getting onto awards shortlists? Why weren't publishers beating a path to my door, to see the novel I was working on? It began to occur to me that maybe *this was it*; that I'd reached a certain level of success and was now doomed to remain at it. It was nice to get the sales, but I still viewed my stories primarily as calling cards, and nothing was happening. With my day job taking up more and more of my time, I began to wonder whether it wasn't time to put this writing lark away for a while – maybe for good.

As it happened, though, things began to turn around. By the end of 1997 I'd placed a story in one of the American magazines – it didn't appear until 1999, but the sale was secure. I also heard that one of my Interzone pieces was to be reprinted in Gardner Dozois's Year's Best SF. This was such a cause for celebration that my wife and I went out and had a pair of steaks at a favorite local restaurant in Noordwijk (now out of business, alas – maybe we didn't go there enough?). My next crumb of advice would therefore be one of quiet encouragement: just when it looks as if you aren't getting anywhere, doors can open, so be prepared to struggle on when your instincts are telling you otherwise, because it may make all the difference. On the other hand – mindful that some flogged horses really *are* dead – I'm fond of quoting the Scottish folk-rock singer Al Stewart, who once wrote "If it doesn't come naturally, leave it." The tricky part is to distinguish between the difficult task that requires an extra expenditure of effort, and the utterly futile endeavour from which nothing will ever come except misery and frustration. Enjoy!

Why continue writing short fiction at all, if the stories have already served their function as "calling cards"? Because, to state the obvious, there is very much more to short fiction than that! It did take me rather a long while to realise this rather simple truth. But at some point around the time that I sold my first novel, I realised that I'd become fascinated with the intrinsic nature of the short story as a thing unto itself, rather than a distillation of a novel or a form of disposable literary advertisement. One of the turning points was reading criticism of short fiction, by the likes of Damon Knight, James Blish, Robert Silverberg, among others. I also subscribed to *Locus*, largely because I'd heard that there was a reviewer in there that had covered one of my stories in Interzone. The more critically and deeply I read short fiction myself, the more fascinating and rich I found the form. I also found that it helped to attend a writer's workshop, the UK version of the well-known Milford workshop, at its then location in Devon. I enjoyed the workshoping process, made some new friends, and found it opened my eyes to the ways other writers think and operate, experience that's held me in good stead ever since, both as a workshop tutor and a competition judge. So I would recommend steeping oneself in good criticism (you don't have to agree with it) and participating in some form of workshop, be it face-to-face or via an internet group.

This still doesn't *really* explain why I want to keep writing short fiction, though, or why I don't feel like I'm in any danger of getting bored with the form. The truth of it is that I still feel like I'm only just starting out, only just learning the basic rules of a very complicated and deep game. Looking back over the fifty or more short stories I've published in the last sixteen years, I can see (I think) clear evidence of improvement in a number of areas. My prose is smoother, my dialogue is less painful on the ears, I place more emphasis on characterisation and voice than I did when I was starting out. But by the same token, I see deficiencies in my stories now that I don't think I'd have recognised, let alone cared about, sixteen years ago. Far from being depressed about this, I'm enthused that the form still seems just as challenging – just as difficult and frustrating and rewarding – as it did when I started submitting stories to Interzone. To me, an effective short story should act on the reader's imagination like a hammer striking a bell: it should leave the reader's skull ringing with the implications of the story; it should unsettle, it should disquieten and make the world look slightly askew. I love the idea that the reader's state of mind in the afternoon might be rendered slightly off-kilter because of

something they read in the morning. I aspire to achieve this effect. I know it's possible because I've had it done to me, by other writers.

What do I worry about? I'm concerned that the more refined it gets, the more it cleverly references other SF works and plays with the ideas in them, the more opaque SF becomes to the outsider. The SF short story seems to me particularly disposed to this condition, since – like modern poetry – short fiction is largely read by people who aspire to write it. As it happens, I like and enjoy “hardcore” SF – but I worry that it occasionally requires a set of reading protocols that are deeply offputting to outsiders. If SF is to flourish in the short form, I think it needs to open itself up to people who haven't been steeped in it their whole lives. If the SF short story could be as accessible as – say – a Stephen King short story – I think that would be a good thing. There are many writers already producing accessible SF, but not many writing SF that plays with real scientific ideas in a cogent manner. I'm as guilty as anyone of writing fiction that is largely incomprehensible to someone who hasn't been reading the genre for years, and I don't intend to abandon that strain of my writing. But I do want to explore other ways of writing. Exactly how one reaches an audience that isn't already reading SF magazines is another problem that needs to be addressed. It's very easy for the casual reader to pick up an SF novel on a whim, even if they haven't read one in thirty years. SF in the short form is rather less visible.

But there are encouraging signs. Interzone is still doing very well, and now boasts production values typical of mainstream glossy magazines. Without even looking for it specifically, I saw it on the shelves of a UK bookstore yesterday. Hopefully someone will have picked up a copy and taken it home to read. Perhaps they'll have been just as bewildered as I was when I first got my hands on the Interzone anthology, twenty one years ago. By the same token, though, perhaps there will have been something in that issue that makes them return to it, enough to keep an eye out for the next, maybe even to consider a subscription. One gladdening sign is that, as turbulent as it might be, the market for short fiction – serving both readers and writers – seems just as wide and diverse as it ever did. This year, there were no less than four “best-of” anthologies just for science fiction, and the overlap between the books was a lot less than you might think. Magazines are constantly folding, but new ones are constantly starting as well. There's always been too much good short fiction to keep up with, and long may that continue. I'm extremely pleased to be a part of this field, and grateful that there are enough readers out there to make it worthwhile.

Short Bibliography

'Revelation Space' universe

Revelation Space (2000) (vertaald als *Het raadsel van de Amarantin*, 2001)

Chasm City (2001)

Diamond Dogs (2001) (novella)

Turquoise Days (2002) (novella)

Redemption Arc (2002)

Absolution Gap (2003)

The Prefect (2007)

standalone

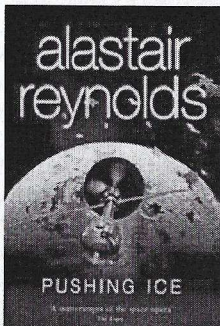
Century Rain (2004)

Pushing Ice (2005)

collections

Galactic North (2006)

Zima Blue and Other Stories (2006)

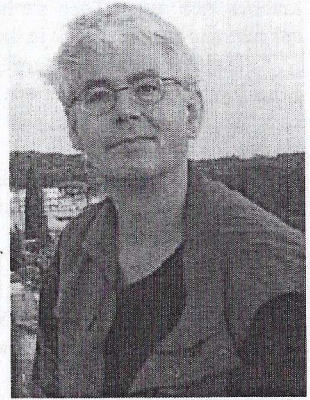


Eregast: Tais Teng

Of Thijs van Ebbenhorst Tengbergen (1952), zoals zijn echte naam luidt, waaronder hij ook in de beginjaren van het NCSF en *Holland SF* furore maakte met onder meer fraaie illustraties in een bewerkelijke direct-op-stencil techniek. Inmiddels is hij als schrijver, tekenaar en beeldhouwer al heel wat jaren bekend onder het eenvoudiger pseudoniem Tais Teng. Recent werk omvat *In de gloed van vulkanen*, *Het net van de vuurgod*, *De beschermgeest* en *Rechtsaf bij volle maan*.

Also known as Thijs van Ebbenhorst Tengbergen (1952), his real name, that was well known in the early years of the NCSF and Holland SF for his great illustrations in a time-intensive direct-to-stencil technique. For many years now, he's better known by the simpler pseudonym of Tais Teng as an author, illustrator and sculptor. Some of his recent books are In de gloed van vulkanen, Het net van de vuurgod, De beschermgeest and Rechtsaf bij volle maan.

(<http://home.casema.nl/taisteng>)



Dode dame met harp

© 2006 Tais Teng

Noot: De verhalen van occult speurder en madolinegrootmeester Hans d'Ancy spelen in een alternatieve wereld waarin de Nederlandse handelsmaatschappij de zeven zeeën beheerst en magie gemeengoed is.

“Met man en muis vergaan,” zei de koopman. “Letterlijk. Niet één overlevende.” Hij graaide in zijn pijpenkrullen. “Alle vijf mijn kostelijke schepen!”

“Kunt u geen veiliger route kiezen?” stelde Enrico voor.

“Die is er niet! Het is de enige vaargeul tussen Hoog-Helderstad en Texel-eiland!”

Hij bries, dacht d’Ancy, hij wappert met zijn handen alsof ze elk moment van zijn polsen kunnen vallen. Dit is het soort klant waar wij speurders gewoonlijk enkel van kunnen dromen.

“Ik weet het niet. Het lijkt me nogal riskant...”

“Noem een prijs! Elk redelijk bedrag!”

Hans noemde een bedrag dat absoluut niet redelijk was. “En de helft vooruit,” besloot hij.

“Wanneer kunnen jullie vertrekken?” vroeg de koopman en ramde de sleutel in het slot van zijn geldkist.

Twee nachten later: de wolken schoven open en ze zagen de maan voor het eerst die nacht. Hans’ adem siste tussen zijn tanden: de tempel leek uit het maanlicht te stollen, elke zuil een fonkelend kristal.

“Ik had me wat geruster gevoeld als dit eilandje op onze zeekaarten had gestaan,” zei Enrico. Hij keek om naar hun sloep die op de zandbank gestrand was.

“Och,” antwoordde Hans, “het hoeft niets bovennatuurlijks te wezen. Zandbanken rijzen regelmatig uit de zee op, eh? De getijden, de zeestromen. Een week later zijn ze weer onder de golven verdwenen.”

“Zandbanken met kristallen tempels? Waarin iemand op een harp tokkelt?”

Nu hoorde d’Ancy het ook. Tonen zo zuiver dat de harp wel met strengen engelenhaar bespannen moest zijn. Een vrouwenstem verhief zich en de rillingen liepen d’Ancy over de rug.

Wie zo’n vrouw als geliefde had, zou door elke man benijd worden, maar geen seconde rust hebben omdat hij zeker wist haar onwaardig te zijn. Haar vingers zouden lang en elegant zijn, met nagels van gedempt glanzend parelmoer.

“Ze klinkt als een elfenprinses,” zei Enrico en Hans wist dat het niet als compliment bedoelt was. Zijn vriend moest precies dezelfde dreiging voelen.

“De afgelopen twee weken zijn er op deze plaats vijf schepen vergaan,” zei d’Ancy. Hij keek naar het vochtige zand onder zijn voeten. Een vis spartelde nog na. Bij elke stap repten een half dozijn krabben zich weg. “Toen we hier gisteren langvoeren, was het water zestien meter diep.” Hij gaf een ruk met zijn hoofd. “Denk je dat zij...”

“Happen hondsdolle terriërs in je hand als je ze achter hun oren krabt?” snoof Enrico. “Natuurlijk is het haar schuld! Ze moet een lorelei zijn.”

“Waarom ren ik dan niet halsoverkop naar haar toe? Net als de stuurlieden van al die vergane schepen?”

“Je bent een muzikant. Als jij hemelse muziek hoort, luister je eerst aandachtig naar de noten om het later zelf na te kunnen spelen. Zulk analytisch gedrag is fnuikend voor een betovering.”

“En jij dan?”

“Ik ben toondoof zoals je me meer dan eens verweten hebt. Ik kan lichtelijk uit de maat meeklappen met een drinklied en daar blijft het ook bij.” Hij legde een hand op d’Ancy’s schouders. “Laten we haar aanspreken. Voor de normale toestand terugkeert en we plotsklaps zestien meter onderwater over de zeebodem wandelen.”

De muziek zwol aan toen ze tussen de zuilen doorstapten: het harpspel was prachtig, maar op de een of andere manier ijskoud en duister. Als de muziek die reuzeninktvisen zongen op de bodem van lichtloze troggen.

De dame viel tegen vond d’Ancy. Ze was zo overduidelijk dood! Al die strengen zeewier in haar kletsnatte haar en alikruikken in haar lege oogkassen. De harp zelf was klassiek grand guignol, uit de verse botten en wervels van verdronken zeelieden vervaardigd.

D’Ancy stapte naar voren en nam zijn muts af. “Vrouw, hoe perfect past uw melodie bij het maanlicht en het ruisen van de zee.”

Ze keek op zonder haar tokkeling te onderbreken. “Ik speel niet langer voor mijn plezier. Wraak is het enige lied dat ik nog ken.” Ze sloeg een nieuw akkoord aan, dat naar een horizon vol knarsende ijsbergen wegrolde. “Ik speel jouw dood, man. Ik speel ieders dood, want het zijn zeelieden die ik haat.”

Hans bleef doorlopen. Zo lang hij naar haar vingers keek, merkte hij, voelde hij geen spoor van afkeer. Zelfs niet toen haar rottingslucht hem tegemoet woei. Haar vingers voldeden volmaakt aan zijn eerste fantasiebeeld: dun en elegant en zeker, zo zeker terwijl ze over de snaren dansten.

Hij knielde voor haar neer. “Ik ben ook een muzikant, vrouwe. Spelen uit wrok is een allemachtig slecht idee. Kwajikter nog dan spelen om rijk te worden.”

Haar muziek zonk weg tot een diep, loom rommelen, enkel nog dat nasidderen van de dikste snaren dat harpisten “de lome donder aan het einder” noemen.

“Luister naar mijn verhaal, man die spoedig zilt water zal ademen. Mijn vader was een rijk koopman, met een vloot van graanschepen. In het begin dacht ik dat hij mijn vreugde voor de muziek deelde, maar hoe vergiste ik mij!” Ze zweeg een moment, overmand door de pijn der herinnering.

“Ga door,” spoorde Enrico haar aan. “Ook ik weet hoe het is om miskent te worden door je ouders.”

“Och, in het begin werd ik enkel geprezen. Op mijn achtste speelde ik alle negen serenades van Alundil op mijn harp. Foutloos. Klankmeesters waren vol lof over mijn pianospel en een magister riep de schim van Schubert zelf op, die tranen van ontroering weende toen hij mijn vertolking van zijn werk hoorde. Op mijn achttiende huwelijkte mijn vader mij uit aan zijn compagnon.”

“En je man bleek een toondove proleet,” zei Hans. “Een met vlierenhouten oren, die nog niet eens “Sint Maartens paard heeft een klit in zijn staart!” kon meebrullen.”



“Maar al te waar! ’s Nachts besprong dat varken me als een uitgehongerde nerts en fluisterde mij achteraf ruwe moppen in het oor waarvan hij steevast de clou vergeten was. Mijn harp en piano vormde mijn enige troost. Zelfs al moest ik ze in het schuurtje tussen de harken en snoeischaren bespelen omdat hij “zulk gepingel” niet in zijn huis wenste. Hij wilde een zoon. Ik werd echter pas na vijf jaar zwanger en baarde hem aan dochter.”

“En hij was daar minder dan opgetogen over,” raadde d’Ancy. “Wie muziek haat, heeft de ziel van konijn.”

“De volgende dag sleurde hij me mee naar de haven,” vervolgde de dode dame. “Al zijn zeven schepen lagen aan de kade en zijn matrozen stonden in een wijde kring om mij heen.

“Ze baarde me een dochter!” schreeuwde hij tegen hen. “Haar gepingel doodde al het zaad in haar baarmoeder. Mijn krachtige mannelijke zaad zodat ze alleen nog dochters kon baren. Maar dat is nu voorbij!”

Vier potige matrozen sleepten mijn piano aan en jonasten hem over de rand van de kade de zee in. Mijn ivoren harp sloeg hij persoonlijk met een moker in brokken. Zijn matrozen, ze klaptten in hun handen en gierden het uit!”

Een reeks noten dwarrelde tussen de zuilen weg. Ze kwamen d’Ancy op de een of andere manier grauw als motten voor: de melodie van eindeloos, ondraaglijk verlies, van geknakte vleugels.

“Toen ik terugkeerde bleek ook mijn schuurtje met de grond gelijk gemaakt te zijn. Ik bezat zelfs geen neusfluitje meer.” Haar stem werd een fluistering. “Die nacht klom ik uit mijn raam en wandelde ik in het maanlicht naar de haven. Daar verdronk ik mij.”

D’Ancy voelde een brok in zijn keel dat niet weg te slikken viel. Zijn vingers tintelden en voelde vreemd stijf. Alsof ze gebroken waren en nooit meer goed geheeld. “Zeven schepen zei je dat je echtgenoot bezat. Hier zijn er vijf vergaan.”

“Zijn schepen enkel en uitsluitend,” knikte de vrouw. “Waarom zou ik mij op onschuldigen wreken? Maar zijn matrozen, ze lachten zo luid toen hij mijn harp stuk sloeg... Het klonk als de wrede spot van zeemeeuwen.”

“Hij vermoedt dat het jouw werk is,” zei d’Ancy. “Al die gezonken schepen en steeds uit zijn vloot. Hij zal zich nimmer meer op zee wagen.” Hij wreef over zijn kin. “Doden hebben vaak iets materieels nodig om zich te manifesteren. Een kleinood?”

De dame glimlachte en hief haar hand op. “Onze trouwring. Hij heeft de vorm van een harp zoals je ziet. Toen Vinkers van Fokkersloot mij het hof maakte, was hij heel attent en veinsde vreugde in mijn harpspel te vinden.”

“Laat mij eens kijken.” Hij nam haar slijmkoude hand in de zijne. “Staat er nog iets in de ring begraven?”

“Kijk maar.” Ze schoof de ring van haar vinger.

“Een dode kan alleen maar terugkomen als ze een anker heeft,” legde d’Ancy aan de koopman uit. “Iets uit deze wereld dat grote emotionele waarde voor haar had.” Hij hield de ring op. “Dit was Eliza’s anker. Zonder dat kan ze zich onmogelijk manifesteren. Controleer het. Ik moet heel zeker weten dat het inderdaad haar trouwring is.”

Vinkers van Fokkersloot nam het gouden ring met het harpje tussen duim en wijsvinger en tuurde naar de inscriptie. “Ja, geen twijfel mogelijk. Vinkers en Eliza, voor altoos in ‘t echt vereend. Vrouwen hechten inderdaad aan zo’n ring. Zelfs als ze de echtelijk sponde verder angstvallig proberen te vermijden.” Hij slaakte een sidderende zucht. “Man, dat is een opluchting. Jullie hebben je dukaten dubbel en dwars verdient.”

“Maar helemaal veilig bent u nog niet,” zei Enrico. “U moet alle banden met haar verbreken. Zeil alleen de zee op. Bij volle maan. Werp dan je eigen trouwring in de diepte.”

De man fronste zijn wenkbrauwen. “Waarom alleen?”

“Magie heeft haar eigen regels,” zei Hans.

“Hij trapte erin,” zei Enrico toen ze buiten het herenhuis stonden. “Met beide ongewassen voeten.”

“Ik bouw mijn eigen muziekinstrumenten,” zei d’Ancy, “en daar komt het op halve millimeters aan. Natuurlijk kan ik me de vorm en afmetingen van zo’n eenvoudige ring herinneren. En voor een valsemutter als Jasper Esterling is een trouwring namelijk een fluitje van een cent.”

“Had je dit ook gedaan als ze geen muzikant geweest was? Je zei zelf een keer dat wraak niets oplost.”

“Dan sloeg ik wartaal uit. Sommige misdaden zijn te gruwelijk om ongewroken te blijven. Een harp stukslaan met een moker...”

Enrico hoorde onwrikbaarheid in de stem van zijn vriend, de gerechtvaardigde woede die gewoonlijk enkel profeten toebehoort en veranderde wijselijk van onderwerp.

Korte bibliografie

romans

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- De goudmaker* (1989)
- De sultan van de maan* (1990)
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- De orka van de winter* (1992)
- 400 graden in de schaduw* (1992)
- De gunsteling van Sedna* (1994)
- Klauwen van ijs* (1994)
- De wortels van het woud* (1995)
- Dode ogen* (1996)
- Licht op de heuvel* (1996)
- Glazen speren* (1997)
- Voorbij de zerken* (1998)
- Duizend eilanden ver* (2003)
- Het net van de vuurgod* (2004)
- De beschermgeest* (2004)
- In de gloed van vulkanen* (2004)
- De jongen van smaragd* (2006)
- De grijns van de djinn* (2006)
- Onder parelmoeren hemels* (2007)

bundels

- Cepheïde* (1981)
- Aan de oevers van de nacht* (1984)
- De eilanden van de avond* (1993)
- Laserlicht* (1995)
- Neonmaan* (1998)

samen met Paul Harland

- De bleke schaduw van de vrouw* (1988)
- Buitendijks in straten van licht* (1990)
- Computercode Cthulhu* (2005)

jeugd-series

- ‘De griezelklas’
- Bloedzusters* (1997)
- Langs de duisterweg* (1997)
- Het derde antwoord* (1998)
- Gruwelgeintjes* (1999)
- Heksenbaanjes* (2000)
- De Midnight Discoshow* (2000)
- De brug van de stollende dromen* (2001)
- Zwartekattenkwaad* (2002)
- Koemest en paddenbloed* (2002)

‘Elf in de klas’

- Een knoop in je stoelpoot* (1996)
- Walvis aan bakboord* (1997)

‘De zwarte spiegel’

- De wolven van Rome* (2000)
- Het goud van de farao* (2001)

‘De ondierentuin’

- Verboden vingers te voeren* (2001)
- Aaien op eigen risico* (2003)



Nadat in Nederland en België reeds enkele nationale conventies waren georganiseerd, werd (op initiatief van Simon Joukes) besloten de Belgische conventie van 1973 tot een conventie voor de hele Benelux te maken (hoewel in Luxemburg nauwelijks SF-fans schenen te leven, een situatie die nog steeds bestaat). De Nederlandse fans zouden in 1974 de volgende Beneluxcon organiseren. Na het succes van deze eerste Beneluxcons werd de traditie opgebouwd en voortgezet. In België beruiste de organisatie officieel steeds bij de vereniging SFAN, hoewel door gebrek aan menskracht binnen de vereniging ook anderen als organisatoren werden aangetrokken; de conventie van 1988 werd georganiseerd door de groepen Palantir en The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror. In Nederland beruiste de organisatie officieel steeds bij de vereniging NCSF (Nederlands Contactcentrum voor Science Fiction), soms in samenwerking met andere groepen (bijv. 1976 P.R.S.F.Terra). *Hillcon* 1981 werd voorafgegaan door een vergadering van World-SF, een organisatie van mensen (schrijvers, agenten etc.) die beroepshalve bezig zijn met SF. Door deze vergadering naar Nederland te halen, slaagden de Nederlandse fans erin belangrijke schrijvers als eregasten en als bezoekers binnen te halen, hetgeen een grote bijdrage leverde aan het succes van deze conventie.

Het onderstaande overzicht is aan de hand van historisch materiaal zo nauwkeurig mogelijk samengesteld, hetgeen niet de mogelijkheid wegneemt dat er fouten of onvolledigheden in kunnen voorkomen, vooral voor wat betreft de eregasten. Voor enkele Belgische Beneluxcons werden in sommige bronnen bepaalde mensen als eregasten genoemd die ook in programma-gegevens van de conventie zelf voorkomen, maar dan als 'belangrijke gasten' hetgeen niet noodzakelijkerwijs hetzelfde is als wel expliciet aangeduide eregasten. Het programma van *Consternation* 1987 vermeldt dat er geen eregast is maar dat "Roelof Goudriaan en Lynn Anne Morse een prominente plaats in het programma innemen."

Men wordt uitgenodigd correcties en aanvullingen in te zenden aan ondergetekende p/a info@ncsf.nl.

(oorspronkelijk geschreven voor het *Hillcon III* Souvenirboek)

A History of the Beneluxcons

English translation © 1992 LAMorse

After several national conventions had taken place in the Netherlands and Belgium, the 1973 Belgian convention decided, at the instigation of Simon Joukes, to have the convention for the whole Benelux region (although hardly any SF fans seemed to live in Luxembourg, a situation that still exists today). The Dutch fans would organize the Beneluxcon for the following year, 1974. After the success of these first conventions, the tradition was established and could be built upon. The official organization in Belgium was SFAN, although others were involved when SFAN didn't have enough people. In 1988 two groups, Palantir and The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror, organized the convention. The organizers of the Dutch Beneluxcons have always been officially attached to the NCSF (Netherlands Contact Center for Science Fiction), occasionally working with other groups (like the 1976 Beneluxcon with P.R.S.F. Terra). Hillcon 1981 was preceded by a meeting of World SF, the members of which are professionally involved with science fiction (like writers, agents, etc.). By getting World SF to meet in the Netherlands, Dutch fans succeeded in securing important authors as guests and attendees for Beneluxcon, which contributed much to the success of that convention.

The following survey has been assembled as carefully as possible in view of historical materials, but this does not eliminate the possibility of the survey containing errors or incomplete data, above all regarding the guests of honour. For some of the Belgian Beneluxcons, some sources announced certain people as guests of honour, who also appeared on the convention program, but that is not necessarily the same as being an explicitly named guest of honour. For example, the program of

Consternation 1987 announced that there were no guests of honour, but that "Roelof Goudriaan and Lynne Ann Morse would participate prominently in the program."

I invite corrections and additions to be sent to me, care of info@ncsf.nl.

(originally written for the Hillcon III Souvenir Book)

Benelux-cons en eregasten

- 1 Sfancon 4 (Gencon), Gent (Ronde & Casino) 19-20 mei 1973
eregasten: Brian W. Aldiss, Daniel Walther, Gerd Hallenberger, Karel Thole
- 2 --, Amersfoort (Evert Kupersoord) 9-10 nov. 1974
eregasten: Ef Leonard, Felix Thijssen, Paul Van Herck, Eddy C. Bertin
- 3 Sfancon 6, Brugge (Stedelijk Concertgebouw) 18-21 jul. 1975
eregasten: James White, Felix Thijssen, Waldemar Kuming(f)
- 4 --, Noordwijkerhout, (Leeuwenhorst) 14-16 mei 1976
eregasten: Bert Bus ^{a)}, Bob Van Laerhoven, Karel Thole, Simon Joukes (f)
- 5 Sfancon 8 (Gencon 3), Gent (Fabiola Home) 9-11 sep. 1977
Bob Shaw, Waldemar Kuming(f)
- 6 --, Eindhoven (Philips Ontspanningscentrum) 9-11 jun. 1978
eregast: Christopher Priest
- NB in 1979 geen Beneluxcon i.v.m. Season (Worldcon) in Brighton*
- 7 Sfancon 11, Gent (Fabiola Home) 5-7 sep. 1980
eregasten: Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke
- 8 Hillcon, Rotterdam ^{b)} (Hotel Atlanta) 28-30 aug. 1981
eregasten: Jack Vance, Fred Pohl, Kate Wilhelm, Peter Coene (f)
- 9 Sfancon 13, Gent (Fabiola Home) 3-5 sep. 1982
eregasten: Colin Wilson, Hubert Lampo, Manuel van Loggem, Herbert W. Franke, Philippe Curval
- 10 X-Con, Eindhoven (Hotel Cocagne) 2-4 sep. 1983
eregasten: Brian W. Aldiss, Wim Gijssen
- 11 Sfancon 14, Gent (Zalen Van Eyck) 7-9 sep. 1984
eregasten: James White, Jacques Van Herp, John Vermeulen, Michael Kubiak
- 12 Leicon, Leiden (Hotel Nieuw Minerva) 26-27 okt. 1985, eregast: Annemarie van Ewyck
- 13 SF-Projekt, Aalst (Nieuwe Madelon) 25 okt. 1986, geen eregasten
- 14 Consternation, Scheveningen (Carlton Beach Hotel), 6-8 nov. 1987, geen eregasten
- 15 Fantasy World, Antwerpen (Hof Ter Loo) 18-19 nov. 1988, geen eregasten
- 16 Connection, Amsterdam (Hotel Holiday Inn), 17-19 nov. 1989, geen eregasten
- NB in 1990 geen Beneluxcon i.v.m. onFiction (Worldcon) in Den Haag*
- 17 Hillcon 2, Rotterdam (Hotel Atlanta) 22-23 nov. 1991
eregasten: Orson Scott Card, Dan Simmons, Kees van Toorn (f)
- 18 Hillcon 3, Rotterdam (Hotel Atlanta) 25-27 nov. 1992
eregasten: Terry Pratchett, Peter Schaap, Tad Williams, Johan-Martijn Flaton, en Jo Thomas (ff)
- 19 Con-Yak, Amsterdam (Altea Hotel) 26-28 nov. 1993
eregasten: Robert Holdstock, Tonke Dragt, Annemarie v Ewyck (f)
- 20 Comeback-con, Antwerpen (Rubenianum House) 30 apr.-1 mei 1994
eregasten: Brian Stableford, Guido Eekhaut, Alain le Bussy (f)
- 21 Graphicon, Grobbendonk (Aldhem Hotel) 24-26 nov. 1995
eregasten: Raoul Servais, Ian Watson, James White, Andrej Kazmin, Eddy C. Bertin
- 22 Con-Fetti, Scheveningen (Carlton Beach Hotel) 15-17 nov. 1996
eregasten: Bridget Wood, Martin Lodewijk, Leo Kindt (f)
- 23 BOZ-CON, Bergen op Zoom (Golden Tulip Hotel) 20-22 nov. 1988
eregasten: Tad Williams, Eddy C. Bertin, Peter Schaap

ctry	nr	name	ctry	nr	status	name
D	129	Sylvia Jahn	NL	43		Robbert Schwippert
NL	119	Alex de Jong	CDN	91		Renée Sieber
GB	138	Leigh Kennedy	NL	64		Jannelies Smit
NL	6	Peter Kievits	NL	25		Dea Sombroek
NL	41	Leo Kindt	NL	26		Truus Sombroek-Neelen
NL	65	Peter Kraaijestein	NL	15		Jimmy Steinhorst
D	112	Bernd Krosta	NL	16		Sam Steinhorst
NL	8	Eya Kuismanen	NL	14		Saskia Steinhorst
NL	54	Cas Laansma	NL	11		Gonnie Suuring
NL	137	Henk Langeveld	NL	125		Gerard Suurmeijer
NL	86	Brigitta van der Lelie	NL	117		Zsuzsanna Szulyovszky
NL	53	Sanderijn van der Linden	NL	G 39		Tais Teng
NL	97	Oscar Logger	NL	83		Angelique van Toorn
NL	85	Ward Maas	NL	82		Kees van Toorn
D	96	Eckhard Marwitz	N	107		Cristina Pulido Ulvang
D	130	Irene Maschke	N	109		Daniel Pulido Ulvang
D	124	Achim Mehnert	N	110		Emilia Pulido Ulvang
NL	10	Paulus Meijs	N	108		Tor Christian Ulvang
NL	33	Ellen Milo	NL	38		Nico Veenkamp
NL	7	Marianne Mol	NL	34		Jan Veldhoen
B	50	Lynne Ann Morse	NL	101		Frans Venema
NL	88	Jeroen Nijenhuis	NL	69		Jaap Verburg
NL	G 37	Thomas Olde Heuvelt	NL	80		Marjolein Verburg
NL	84	Ad Oosterling	NL	103		Els Viets
NL	66	Henk Ottema	NL	59		Heidi van der Vloet
NL	67	Lida Ottema	NL	95		Jetse de Vries
NL	105	Wilebald te Poel	NL	135		Jeroen Wedda
GB	49	Christopher Priest	NL	28		Myranya Werlemann
NL	48	Larry van der Putte	NL	13		Kirsti van Wessel
D	31	Thomas Recktenwald	GB	98		Colin Wightman
NL	81	Mylene Reiners	GB	99		Sarah Wightman
B	71	Yvette van Renterghem	D	111		Ralf Zimmermann
NL	G 68	Alastair Reynolds				
NL	62	Marcel van der Rijst				
B	32	Frank Roger				
NL	72	René van Rossenberg				
NL	131	Rob van Ruler				
NL	136	Josette Sanchez				
NL	30	Peter Schaap				
NL	29	Theo Schaap				
NL	21	Richard van Schaik				
NL	75	Balder Scharloo				
NL	74	Peter Scharloo				
NL	122	Ronja Victoria Scharloo				
NL	46	Brechtje Schwippert				136
NL	44	Gisela Schwippert				
NL	47	Lodewijk Schwippert				

Members living in:

Belgium (B)	12
Canada (CDN)	1
Germany (D)	9
Great Britain (GB)	13
Rep. of Ireland (IRL)	2
Netherlands (NL)	93
Norway (N)	5
Switzerland (CH)	1

Beneluxcon 2007

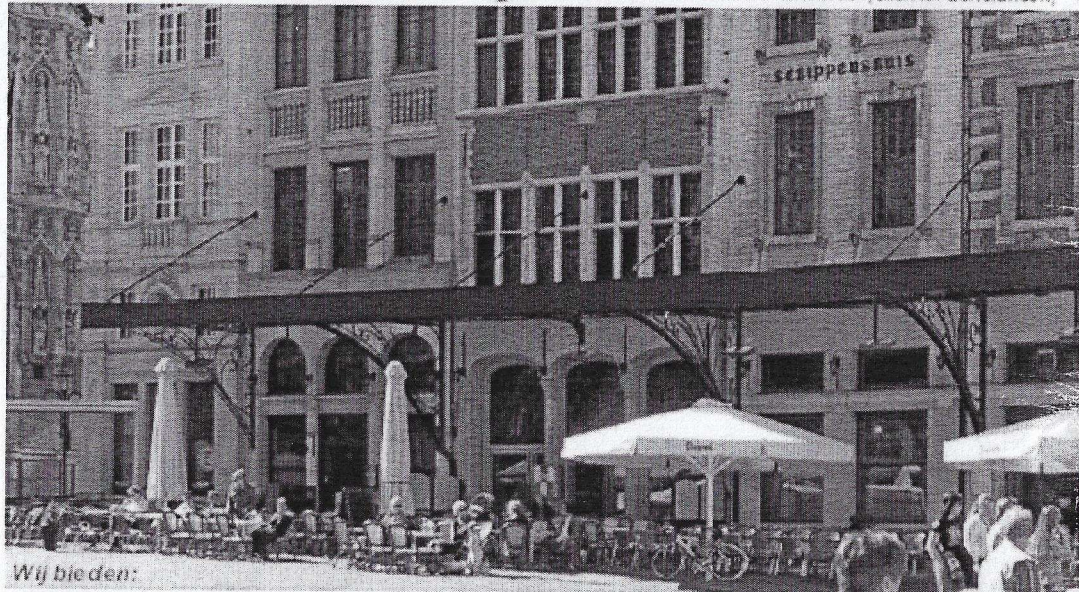
Novotel, Leuven, Belgium - November 23 & 25, 2007

Eregasten:

Christopher Priest (UK)

Richard Calder (UK)

re-registratie 50 euro tot 31 december 2006 - Contact@futurevisions.be - www.futurevisions.be (click for Beneluxcon)



Wij bieden:

De meest (on)waarschijnlijke details over de nabije toekomst, voordrachten door de eregasten, enkele onderhoudende maar beschamende details over hun private leven, een overvloed aan activiteiten voor en door fans, een nachtelijke wandeling door fantastisch Leuven (The Horror! The Horror!), de 'langste tapkast ter wereld', een weekend gevuld met **intelligente-conversatie** pret en twee echt leuke gastsprekers. En Leuven zelf: de overvloed aan knappe vrouwelijke (en mannelijke) studenten, de honderden kroegen, het nachtleven, de restaurants (elke smaak, elke prijs), de historische gebouwen, het zo goed als verkeersvrije centrum etc. Ware het niet voor de hoge vastgoedprijzen dan kwam u hier waarschijnlijk wonen!

Comité: Guido Eekhaut - Frank Beckers - Jo Vandenberg - Roelof Goudriaan