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Machu Picchu, village at the peak of the Andes Mountains



editorial;

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE N3F

Not many people in the NFFF do personal recollections of the organization, but it comes across to me to go over my past with it, since nobody else is doing it, and it's part of my attempt to get the N3F closer to its members, by getting a little closer myself. You remember I keep saying "Meet the Staff" and other things coming to the same thing.

I heard of the NFFF when I was eleven years old, going toward twelve; there was an ad for it in one of the magazines. Going through a process of elimination, it wasn't Galaxy and it wasn't Astounding, and I asked when joining why it wasn't in any of the bigger magazines, and heard by reply, "We aren't that big an organization, despite what we're called, and we're a little timid at this time about where we advertise. Maybe if we keep growing we'll advertise where the big business is." This came from the membership department. They sent me a form about myself asking me to fill it out. It asked what equipment I had and I told them I had a typewriter, and was intending to acquire a mimeograph. I gave examples of books I'd read and magazines I read regularly and I mentioned three Heinleins, a Judith Merrill anthology, and a "Big Book of Science Fiction". I mentioned also seeing a movie, RIDERS TO THE STARS, and watching SPACE PATROL on television. Pieces of correspondence came in, from the Welcoming Committee, two women saying they were glad I was joining and a man saying he didn't know there'd been any SF movies, and he wanted to know more about the Siodmac movie. The membership department administrator came back saying I seemed to be getting acquainted with people already, acknowledging my being a member, and he sent me a copy of the constitution and some other papers and a booklet which described the NFFF. Shortly I heard from the Welcoming Committee again, giving me a formal welcome. They described groups I might be interested in. People I met included K. Martin Carlson, Gertrude M. Carr, and others who aren't remembered any more. Ray Palmer also had a membership, and so did Edgar Pangborn, and I wrote to Pangborn to ask him about "The Music Master of Babylon." I was doing real business. In fact, we started talking about the way the NFFF was set up. He suddenly noticed my age and said that was all right, I had a lot of things to say and a lot of active curiosity. I contacted several of the departments and started getting some fanzines people there were doing. I was asking a lot of questions and one was, was anybody but Pangborn a writer, and they didn't know and raised this question in the central publication. This brought Sam Moskowitz in and he described himself as being an organizational elder. A lot of people were discussing my age. A few of the women got kind of matronly about it.

What the N3F was doing then mainly was talking about what other writers and books there were besides those they'd read, and there were very lively conversations all around about what was in the books and what they thought of them. Somebody was caught discussing a book that was not science fiction, and she said what her mistake had been. She thought its plot was something that was effective upon science fiction, that would interrelate with it. This was discussed in many issues of the big central fanzines. Someone who got together with K. Martin Carlson was making a list of known science fiction and the two of them got together and formed a book central. What fantasy was, was being clarified in the central publications. A couple of governmental investigators were located in the organization, and three police management people. A whole lot of people in the organization were managing something or other, so it was like a lot of the members were managing one another. Some of them started managing my presence and giving me advice. I took it as being informal. A youth discussion got started due to my presence.

Later Marian Zimmer Bradley and Forrest J. Ackerman were in the membership. I got to know them and both of them did articles for the fanzine I started. Marian did an article on fabulous fantasies of the past, and Ackerman did an article on horror movies.

Finally, apparently beginning with a dispute about the "Sense of Wonder", big arguments got started and members were getting insulting toward one another. Some people from Amazing's "Space Club" and Imaginative Tales' "Cosmic Pen Club", most of them youths, got into the organization and were considering themselves to know more about science fiction and to read more of it than most of the Neffers, and this seemed to trigger a lot of arguments off. Things got so bad that I stated I was not renewing my membership, and I didn't see aught more of them until about 1979. Then I rejoined and was appointed to the head of the Fan/Pro relations activity by then-President Irwin Koch. I quit again when a new president appointed someone else to be head of the Fan-Pro Activity.

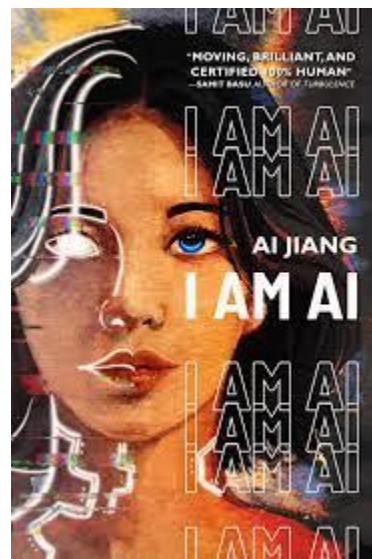
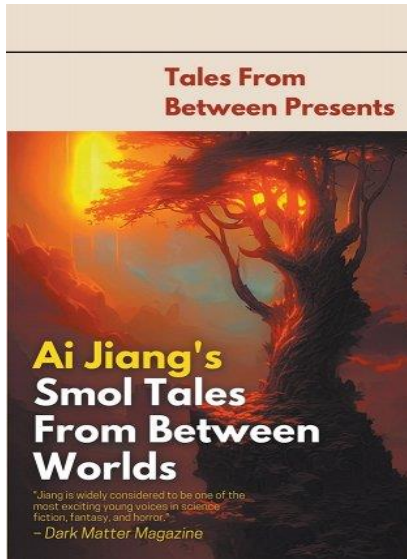
There's my N3F background. I could say a lot more but I might be re-starting old discussions.



origin unknown

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: Ai Jiang by Jean-Paul L. Garnier

An interesting writer with unusual perspectives on interworld existence and the entwining of writing with what is written is here interviewed; she's become well known and active and is highly available on the net.



JPG: Your latest book, I AM AI, is science fiction whereas your last book was horror, how does your process differ from genre to genre and when do you decide to reach for which?

AJ: Rather than it being a conscious choice, I find that the story and characters often choose the genre for me, as well as the theme and concept. More often than not, my sci-fi leans towards political and social commentary, and even far future-set pieces draw on the current landscape of discussions (climate change, capitalism, equality). For more reflective, psychological, and personal pieces that are largely driven by the interiority of characters and their intimate relationship dynamics with others, particularly when it comes to anxieties, fears, worries and interpersonal tensions, I find these pieces leaning towards horror and dark fiction. There is something both sinister and liberating about self-introspection. When it comes to fantasy, I find that my pieces fall more towards the cultural, historical, and philosophical, where I am able to explore ideas and musings outside of our reality, through fantastical metaphors or secondary worlds.

I do think that I am more likely to leave things to the subtext when it comes to horror and fantasy (depending on how heavy the world building) compared to sci-fi where readers of the genre might require more explanation regarding the world and its inner workings. However, I do not have a scientific background, so my sci-fi does lean more towards science fiction and are highly concept-based rather than drawing on real-world science.

JPG: You wrote this book before the whole AI in the arts debate started, would you have done anything differently had it been written now?

AJ: I think I would have kept it the same because the society depicted in I AM AI is eerily similar to what many fear about our own world when it comes to AI, in that it will take over employment and labor of humans or cheapen it, as well as potentially squandering lower cost side hustles. One thing I was concerned about was that because of the title, maybe there might be new readers coming in thinking that I'd used AI in the creation of the project, though I think similar to LINGHUN, where the focus is less on ghosts but their impact on the living; my intention for I AM AI was to focus more so on the people and less so on the AI. So, I suppose I wouldn't have done anything differently, because at its core, it's still a story about toxic productivity and the ways it might drive wedges between us and those we care and love most.

JPG: I Am AI takes on the themes of fascism and monopoly versus individualism, can you elaborate on this and why you chose it as a theme?

AJ: It's funny because when I first started writing, one thing that people always warned me about was not to be too political in my fiction, but I find that the art of writing itself is political and I am sure other writers have said this before as well. To speak our minds and write down our thoughts, whether it is concerning fabricated worlds or ones closely connected to our own, there will be politics, social commentary, or personal cultural touchstones as well as values, beliefs, morals, and ethics, whether it is through a story that supports what we think or juxtaposes it through characters that are against the very fabric of the writers themselves.

Though I suppose this is a very long-winded way of explaining that I like to tackle political themes through a more philosophical and emotional sense and the way they impact humanity and relationship dynamics, and how these issues might impact daily lives and make desolate the previously mundane, warping the definition of what it means to simply live, to connect, to love, to

make art, to live in this world and our surroundings, and what it takes to survive, rather than writing this story as politics for the sake of politics.

But in terms of fascism and monopoly versus individualism, I won't name the big corporations, but we all know who they are, and how they have been taking over much of the commercial market, and the way they entice us with convenience. And how more than ever we need to be consciously supporting local bookstores among other small businesses. There have been recent events in publishing concerning large houses wanting to take over another as well.

Yet when it comes to monopolies, we lose a lot of the uniqueness that having several competitors within an industry might bring, like the way different artists have different styles and aesthetics; similar to businesses, they have different aims and missions, approaches, and what they look for in the products they put out and the type of consumer they might attract. If there is monopoly, we might lose a lot of that individualism, particularly with monopolies like in I Am AI that dictate the direction of every industry.

JPG: The book also takes on the dangers of the pressures of productivity and measuring the worth of an individual based on their output, are these pressures that you feel in your life, and if so how do you feel they are best handled?

AJ: I sometimes think I might be one of the best examples of toxic productivity, and I'm sure there are many who might agree. I think the longest time I've ever stayed up for was about sixty hours with sporadic one-hour naps and maybe thirty-six hours without them, and I'm here now in the middle of illness, and it's almost as though I've developed a trained immunity to rest.

But I think what drives my own toxic productivity a lot of the time is the fear of disappointing others, missing deadlines, asking for extensions. I remember in high school, I'd only ever asked for an extension once in four years, and it was during the last months of school, when I both physically and mentally could not take the pressure. Similarity, for university, there were times I'd sit on the ground outside of school buildings on the way home to steal wi-fi because the library had closed, but I had only an hour left before the deadline with far too many complicated citations that I didn't have time for. At that point, I'd also only asked for one extension during my four years of undergrad. I was a very average student with no ambition and the bare minimum in terms of goals, and sometimes I think I've been overworking the past two years in writing to make up for the fact.

Before this, I did ghost writing, and the culture for that type of work very much promoted a write as fast as you can and as much as you can so you can make more kind of mindset, and I guess I'd brought a bit, or maybe all of it, into my fiction writing. Recently, I wrote a story about a workplace that tricks its workers into waking up early every day and sleeping later to increase work hours. But really, that's something we also do to ourselves, isn't it?

With recent discourse on age, it seems more and more important to understand that success might come at any age, some earlier, some later, and no one is going to have the same path, but there is toxicity in the way that society tells us we must succeed while we're young or else it isn't worthwhile at all, which I don't think is true. Yet I still look at bestsellers who are freshly out of college and university, or some who are still in their undergrad, and wonder just how much harder would I have to work to reach that stage? And I'm sure there are writers who look at me and think the same, and writers who look at those writers and think the same.

When I was looking at master's programs, I saw ones that specifically said you had to be under twenty-five to apply, and upon further digging, there were reddit threads talking about this exact same program (and similar programs of its nature) that favor the quote on quote "attractive" and "foreign". And especially with the fear of relevancy, the need to be productive and produce mass amounts without losing quality is becoming more prevalent. Maybe one day my career will be stable enough like Kazuo Ishiguro's where I can afford to spend six years between projects to really focus in on the craft of writing rather than in fear of not being able to afford the time it takes before the next sale.

But on another note, I feel like I've become the "yes" person, trying always to make more time from less time. I think the most valuable thing you can give to another person is time, and so I find that I try to give lots of it when and if I can.

But anyway, on handling these pressures, do as I say, not as I do.

Meditate, take naps, go on a walk, exercise, listen to music, have a DIY at-home spa day, watch shows that are brain-numbing or at least make you laugh whether at its humorousness or absurdity. I write a lot of things that are on the heavier end, I think, so having lighthearted things in between helps. Recently, I watched JOY RIDE, and I'd highly recommend it because I haven't laughed that hard in a while— though here a fair warning that it's quite the risqué movie.

And sometimes I find myself randomly cleaning. There's something almost therapeutic about the repetitive task.

JPG: The characters in the book are faced with losing humanity, in a very tangible way, because of a tech-dominated world, do you find this to be a real risk in today's world?

AJ: Personally, I think so, or at least, I think tech might drastically change the definition of humanity and what it might entail, especially when it comes to things like connection and community, interaction and public speaking, identity and agency.'

There was once a time when community took the form of only in-person interactions, of planning outings, of going on walks, of sitting outside of homes and chatting on warm-breezed evenings and wet rainfalls, but now, there is a screen between a lot of it, and even though it does mean that we are able to connect with more people, people around the world, of different time zones and places, we're also missing a lot of the physical cues and intimacies, and learning how to pick up in-person social cues—a thing I've heard parents mention about their children who were introduced to school through online classes rather than in-person classroom experiences.

But I've also found that with increasing use of tech, I've become worse at peopling, as in, it makes me anxious, the potential awkward silences of meeting up with people in real life, the commute, the overwhelming surrounding sensory details, the bombardment of cues. And I'm sure that it isn't just me who feels that way. Though I do think it's helped me overcome public speaking in the sense that through a screen, I feel less anxious about talking in front of crowds. Yes, I do think the ability to socialize, to come together as communities, is part of what makes us human, and technology does seem to both add to and take away from it.

On branding, influencers, and online presence, it's an interesting thing. More and more we see, not just in publishing, that there is a need for a brand or a specific image that people need to uphold, whether it is the influence who is cool and edgy, or the internet sweetheart, or the diva, and I feel like

technology feeds into these identity fabrications, particularly when it comes to commercialization of a figure. But we also see that it feeds into an increased vulnerability of people who become hyper visible in the online sphere through technology. For example, the way that Billie Eilish's change in style or Jennie from BlackPink's appearance on the show THE IDOL.

I did want to note that language itself is also a technology, but we can save that maybe for another time and another story.

JPG: Another theme in the book is growing cold and callous to be able to face adversity, how do you think as humans we can avoid this and remain hopeful?

AJ: Read, write, and talk to people, I think, because I'd like to believe that there are many more people bringing light into the world than darkness, though even in bleakness we can often find hope. Check in on the people you care about, even if only briefly, because that momentary display of care could mean a lot to someone who is feeling alone.

I've also been noticing that there are more workplaces that take care of their employees in terms of mental health, doing check-ins, offering help, but there are very much still, places though, where favoritism towards those who can work longer, harder, more efficiently, the quick learners, the persistent climbers, persist. And the existence of those who might step on others to reach the top rather than dropping a ladder or reaching down a hand to help others up, and believing that victory for one cannot mean a victory for all, but it can, and it should.

There were many writers at the beginning of my career that encouraged and believed in me and my work, that extended opportunities my way and passed along my name to those I otherwise would not have been able to connect with, and I hope I can pay the kindness forward, and I think as long as there are still people who are willing to help others, there is hope.

JPG: Similar, in ways, to your last book, I AM AI deals with the pressures of family responsibility, both financially and by putting oneself second, but finding strength within that setup, can you elaborate on this theme?

AJ: I made a joke that wasn't really a joke recently on Twitter about close relatives asking me to buy them houses after learning that I had published a book, which we all know, unless it's a bestseller (and most times, even if it is a bestseller), it's more likely than not we won't be able to buy a house, and even less so several houses, with our royalties. There is a saying however, that runs in the family, to aim for the level of success that might allow you to buy your parents a house to show your filial piety as a way to thank them and show them your gratitude for raising you.

But outside of that, responsibilities when it comes to family, some are avoidable, most are not. That might come in the form of taking care of relatives when they're sick, helping out the family in terms of income, or things like spending a day finding a specific handbag that a fashionista relative desires while on vacation, to what we have in I AM AI, carrying on generational debt and with it, often generational trauma. In some cases, there is no choice. But in finding strength in choicelessness, particularly in a rather oppressive and desolate world, family, found or bloodbound, might be the only thing that grounds our survival, because it might be the case, like what I'd mentioned earlier, where the success of one might mean the success of all.

JPG: I have also received notice that much of your work takes on the realities of vulnerability versus strength and how these two conflicting feelings interact with each other, how do you find a balance

between these feelings for your characters?

AJ: Humans are complex, as thus, so are the characters—whether they are human or not. And I suppose when it comes to writing strength versus vulnerability and how to interact with each other, I look to the people around me as examples how when someone says something but really means something else and what it is about their demeanor that reveals fear behind their unwavering words, or strength in the way they express their vulnerabilities, as though they are not afraid of their weaknesses and only afraid of hiding them. So I suppose it is a blend of the internal and external, how they might illuminate one or another through reinforcement or contradictions.

JPG: What is next for you and what are you currently working on?

AJ: There is a definite rise in climate fiction in SFF as of late, and this has also been a prevalent theme in my recent works. My first novel is a mix of ecopunk, cli-fi, cyber biopunk, post-apocalyptic science fantasy inspired by Chinese Opera traditions, and I'm currently working on editing it before it goes out on sub with my agent. The project I'll be tackling for the rest of this year after the novel is a romantic tragedy horror novel/novella inspired by Fuzhounese wedding traditions and ghost weddings, and then I'll finally loop around to writing the novel version of my short story "Give Me English".

<https://aijiang.ca/>

BOOKS:

I AM AI— <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9781959565093>

LINGHUN— <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9781958598023>

SMO/TALES FROM BETWEEN WORLDS— <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9798374215052>

Note: one of the links above doesn't register, and likely will not work independently of this site, but the other two are so close to it that you may find it located nearby one of the the other books.



REVIEWING THE ISSUE



The writer interviewed this month has a lot of things to say all at once, and writes with power of word, working with existential possibilities and non-possibilities, and I found in reading the interview that she has much in common with the outlook of this and my other publication Origin.

There certainly has been a juggling around of people in the N3F of late. It's getting difficult to figure out who's who. Surprising formatting changes, whatnot. Plus ca change, viva le difference, mutatis mutandis. I can but offer another picture of Jeffrey Redmond, to show what he's been up to.



Jeffrey seems to have bombed out, as has occasionally been the case with N3F members caught sinning, but I still think there was something unjust about his extended term of incommunicado. The statements made about him resembled the Spanish Inquisition, and he comes off seeming like the

man in "The Pit and the Pendulum." He still stays active in what he stays doing, but we don't get much from him here. I'm reminded of the story "The Prisoner" which was once the talk of the N3F, filling the letter column of Tightbeam. I happened across a photo of the making of the film series of "The Prisoner", a behind-the-scenes sort of shot, which also seems to jibe with the situations arising from this occurrence, when members of the N3F who were investigators found him at fault. Don't we all have our faults?

