

Preface

Murder on the Einstein Express is my first collection of stories, and it contains almost everything I wrote in the science fiction genre over the past 7 years. The four stories in this volume range from Alice in Wonderland in the real analysis setting (Normed Trek) over a computer-based mathematical proofs dystopia (The Cantor Trilogy) and Arabian nights from the future (In Search of Future Time) to a story about a hideous crime in an imaginary train, told in a Russian classroom (Murder on the Einstein Express).

Stories in this collection started coming to life in 2008 with Normed Trek, which was written right after my Calculus II final exam. Two years later, Murder on the Einstein Express was written: first as a flash fiction crime story and then as the nested narrative which I see as the backbone of this collection. Cantor Trilogy was written in 2014, and In Search of Future Time came a year later, first as a sequence of separate things, then as a parallel storyline in Murder on the Einstein Express, and finally as a separate piece.

It is hard to put a genre tag on the stories collected here, especially for Murder on the Einstein Express and Normed Trek. Both of them were primarily written without plans for publishing, simply to move them from the world of neurons to the world of ink, paper, and/or computer memory. As a result, I had a fictional story about science, and not science fiction: such story would hardly find its home outside of my drawer or PC or way to the readers without a book series like Springer's Science and Fiction.

This story collection is a mixture of science and fiction: most of the time the reader is able to separate one from the other, but sometimes the question "fact or fiction" remains unanswered. If there is a central idea in the book, it is David Hilbert's famous "Wir müssen wissen, Wir werden wissen" (We must know, we will know): the characters, real and imaginary, want knowledge, unbounded and complete. Every story hides a homage to real, wise, inspiring people the author admires and loves.

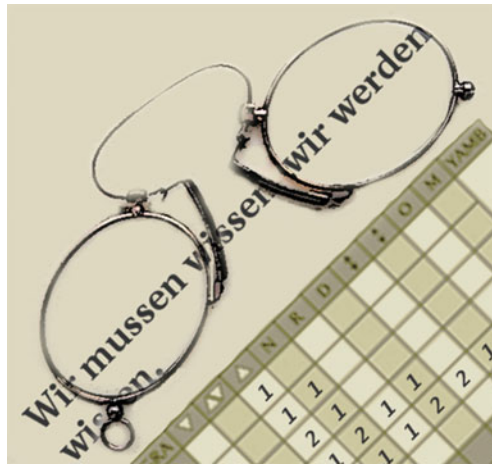
Most of the science fiction in the stories is focused around artificial intelligence, as the author's research areas overlap with the work of the scientific community in artificial intelligence. There is no clearly visible threat to

humans in these stories – there is just concern for AI psyche. Caveat: invisible threats ahead.

I would like to thank a number of people here: those who inspired parts or whole stories, those who read it and gave comments and their support, and of course the team at Springer.

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
September 2015

Harun Šiljak



Hilbert’s sentence, “Wir müssen wissen, wir werden wissen” (We must know, we will know), is in certain way the foundation of this book in which the pursuit of knowledge and question of our knowledge limitations are repeated in every story. Pince-nez glasses are David Hilbert’s trademark. The form seen in the cover is used in a dice game popular in former Yugoslavia (and probably elsewhere), called Yamb (God doesn’t throw dice, A. said). The numbers in the form are just one more puzzle for you: what is the next number in the sequence 1, 11, 21, 1211, 111221? (Image by the author)



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-29065-2>

Murder on the Einstein Express and Other Stories

Šiljak, H.

2016, VII, 79 p. 9 illus., 5 illus. in color., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-29065-2