1. Confirmation of my learning-

**Title Significance**: Title Significance refers to the significance or importance of the title to the story. It provides important information about the story, symbolics etc. The title of the first story for this week is **Desertion**. Desertion means intentionally and without permission abandoning or running away from something. The term is mostly used in a battlefield where the soldier abandons his/her post and the punishment for this is severe. The title significance of Desertion in this story leads up to the end of the story. Where the transformed humans try to abandon their duty of going back to the dome and reporting their findings. I understood it by reading the whole story and focusing more at the end where it all becomes apparent. The two transformed beings have had a reawakening and they don’t want to go back to their boring, insignificant form, to loose the feeling that they have now!

The title of the second story is **Slow Life**. Slow Life means a being- leading its daily activities in a slow manner. However, the significance of this title is the irony in the word. The title was initially targeted towards the aliens on the moon of Saturn (Titan). But later in the story, it was found that the aliens lived faster and evolved faster than the story initially stated. And as we progress further deep into the story we also get to know where they live, their manner of communication and how far they have come.

**Epiphany:** Epiphany means a sudden, profound insight about one’s life that was previously unknown. For the SF story Desertion, the Epiphany is experienced when the characters were transformed into the alien (jovian) beings called Loper. Before transforming, their knowledge about living in the outside world was full of severe difficulties, impossible for them to imagine. But after they are transformed into Lopers and go outside, all those adversities became normal feelings to them. And this was their epiphany moment where they sense something they have never before experienced. The epiphany happens to **Mr. Fowler** and his dog **Towser** right after they step out of the converted and step outside the dome. There are other epiphany moments in Desertion like when Mr. Fowler realises that he can now speak in symbols and he can understand his dog (Towser). When Towser says that he had always talked to him (Mr. Fowler) it came as a great shock to Mr. Fowler (Simak, 1944). The epiphany moment of Slow Life happens to both the main character (**Lizzie**) and the alien. It happens when they realize that they are not the only sentient beings in the universe. It comes as a shock to both of them. And after sometimes and some new evidence, the other characters **Alan** and **Consuelo** also get their epiphany moments when the robofish gives them an image of the city where the aliens lived confirming that they indeed exist.

**Speculative Scenario:** Speculative scenarios tries to answer the question what if anything fictional actually happened. The speculative scenario of Desertion is when both of the beings transform and discover newfound abilities. And the scenario of what they will have to do after **(return or stay?).** These choices make up the **speculative scenario of Desertion**. I understood it by reading the story thoroughly and the **Lopers decision at the end** made it more apparent. The speculative scenario for Slow Life is the **discovery and first contact** between human and alien lifeforms. And the big what if question- could life really exist in Titan’s liquid water and ammonia oceans? And if they did, how’d they communicate? The story explores it by giving us a volcano at the center of the moon which is the heat source and there is life surrounding it. “They communicate with each other by some form of electromagnetism and with humans, through dreams” (Swanwick, 2012, p.14).

Both the humans and the alien conscious realize that they are not alone in this universe which ultimately becomes their epiphany moment. By reading the story thoroughly I found these speculative scenarios in the story.

Four Core SF Concepts of **Desertion and Slow Life**:

1. **Exploration**- The story **Desertion** takes place on the Largest planet in our solar system called **Jupiter.** The story explores Jupiter’s surface. How life would be if there was. The story explains that Jupiter has massive gravitational pull and the chemistry is also weird. The story reinforces this fact by stating that even the strongest metal on earth would not exist under such pressure (Simak, 1944, p. 39). The atmosphere contains deadly gases for humans mainly ammonia and wind so powerful that nothing on earth can withstand it. The story **Slow Life** takes place on the largest moon of Saturn called **Titan**. Titan is extremely cold, It's so cold that ice plays the role of rock which is the surface made out of (NASA)! Titan has clouds and a dense atmosphere mainly made out of Nitrogen and Methane (NASA). NASA also suggests that there might also be volcanic activities, this is the main term the story uses to give extraterrestrial existence.
2. **Invention**- The Inventions in Desertion are the **Doms**, the **Converter**. The Doms in Desertion are created to withstand the immense pressure of Jupiter. The story states that only through enhancing the metal's electromagnetic tension and through powering the elements 24/7 through electricity the doms are able to withstand the pressure (Simak, 1944, p. 39). The converter is also another invention in the story. It allows genetic modification to the human body to take the form of any other being through the coordination put by the biologists (Simak, 1944, p. 41). Using this machine the characters convert themselves into the only living beings on Jupiter’s surface called the **Lopers** (the highest form of the alien life called the **Jovian**). The inventions in Slow Life are the **robot turbot**, the **VoiceWeb**, the **organic city of the Aliens.** We get to know that the turbot is created by the Mitsubishi company and it is an autonomous submersible vehicle that can run hundreds of sample tests and can carry 20 samples to return back home (Swanwick, 2012, p. 8). The VoiceWeb is an interface to communicate between the people in Titan’s ground station and people from Earth. The organic city of the aliens is the most important invention in the story. It takes the speculation that Titan has volcanic activity and uses that as the heat source for life. The City takes in heat from the volcano and uses it for its existence.

1. **Discovery / Revelation**- The Discovery moment in **Desertion** is when the main characters (Mr Fowler and Towser) step onto the surface of Jupiter. They step into the surface as Lopers and all the barriers they had in their human form no longer existed. The Lopers also realized that the beings also had the same thrill as their pre-conversion human selves (Simak, 1944, p. 45). Those powerful turbulent winds became a breeze and the poisonous ammonia became lavender (Simak, 1944, p. 45-46). This completely changed their perspective on the planet. They undergo many other discoveries like heightened intelligence and newfound physical abilities. And ultimately made the decision to stay on the planet and live as Lopers (Simak, 1944, p. 50)! The discovery moment in **Slow Life** is when both the human and alien consciousness realize that they are not the only living beings in the universe. The alien first contacts the main character of the story (Lizzie) through dreams (Swanwick, 2012, p. 14). After some more information, the other characters are also made aware of the extraterrestrial existence. Another discovery moment in the story is when the robot turbot captures an image of the alien city. They were amazed by the structure of it- how it was like a building but organic! Like it was a living and breathing city (Swanwick, 2012, p. 15). The discovery of the alien entity leading a faster life was also unexpected as it was initially thought that life would be much slower in Titan. Another discovery in the Slow Life SF is when Lizzie realizes that the private confession was no longer private and was leaked to the public which causes panic among the general public (Swanwick, 2012, p. 20).
2. **Transformation**- The Transformation moment in **Desertion** is shown as a physical and mental transformation. By converting themselves into the Lopers they get to see the Planet through a different eye. Everything impossible for them as human beings is daily normal for them as Lopers. The heightened sense and newfound capabilities along with the thrill of discovery make them question their duty (Simak, 1944, p. 50). Hence the story title Desertion comes into full expression. Their physical change along with a bit of experience makes them go through a mental transformation which ultimately leads to their desertion of the mission. The Transformation in **Slow** **Life** is a mental transformation. Here, Nobody changes their appearance but rather, the discovery of something new, something profound and sudden changes their way of thinking completely. When the alien consciousness and the main character (Lizzie) both realize that they are not the only sentient beings in the universe, it changes them completely. Now they are sure to never look at the world the same ever again. It creates a sense of appreciation for the alien entity and a whole lot of excitement for the humans (Swanwick, 2012, p. 21).

2. Cite this week’s two stories with quotations-

Desertion- Towser says, “I can’t go back.” (Simak, 1944, p. 50)

Slow Life- Lizzie shouted at Alan and said, “What the fuck is going on?” (Swanwick, 2012, p. 20)

3. Cite this week’s lesson material-

Desertion- “In this story, the speculative scenario is the result of the transformation and epiphany the character’s experience” (Boily, 2024, slide 11)

Slow Life- “THE STORY “SLOW LIFE” EXPLORES A SPECULATIVE ‘WHAT IF’ SCENARIO RELATED TO THE CONCEPT OF ‘FIRST CONTACT’ BETWEEN HUMAN AND ALIEN LIFEFORMS” (Boily, 2024, slide 7)

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Swanwick, M. (2012, Aug). Slow Life. *Lightspeed Magazine.*

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Boily, L. (2024). *EAC234*: *Week 2 Lesson©: “Desertion” by Clifford Simak* [PowerPoint slides]. Learn@seneca. <https://learn.senecapolytechnic.ca/ultra/courses/_725725_1/outline>

Boily, L. (2024). *EAC234*: *WEEK 3 LESSON: “SLOW LIFE” (2002) BY MICHAEL SWANWICK* [PowerPoint slides]. Learn@seneca. <https://learn.senecapolytechnic.ca/ultra/courses/_725725_1/outline>