

ASKANCE-7



ASKANCE

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First English!

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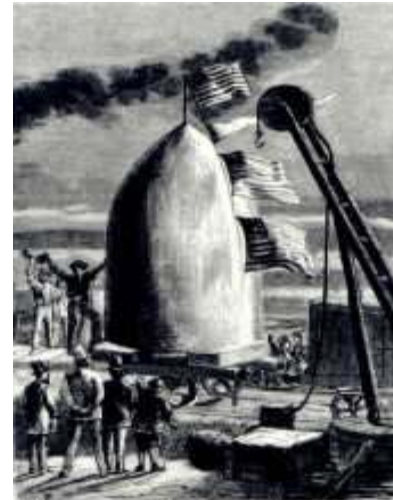
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Art credits

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Bemused Natterings

It was 365 days ago today (give or take a few)...

One year.

This fanzine has actually managed to stay on course and on time for an entire year. And I have to admit, it has been a lot of fun.

The great thing about doing a bi-monthly science fiction fanzine that sometimes actually talks about science fiction is that the pace seems to fit my schedule fairly well right now. Unfortunately, my plans on joining FAPA last month had to be put on hold until I finish my dissertation so that I can graduate with my PhD in Education next year. At least, that's the plan at the moment. Being in SNAPS almost taps out my spare time, so one apa at a time, I guess.



That being said, I could not have done this without some fine help from some fine fan friends who have contributed mighty fine work over the past year. So, many thanks to the following people (contributing writers and artists) for allowing their names to be associated with this zine:

James Bacon
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Alan White
Frank Wu

And a major league THANK YOU likewise goes to the wonderful loc-writers who have made "From the Hinterlands" one of the better letter-columns running in any fanzine being pubbed right now. Without all of **you** wonderful people 🥰, this fanzine would not succeed.

Follow-ups are good...

In last issue's lettercolumn, Lee Anne Lavell commented on a quote I used from the Roger Corman flick, *Creature from the Haunted Sea* (1961). Well, I just have to follow that up with this bit of information. On a recent excursion to Wal-Mart, I was digging through their \$1 DVD clearance bins, and I not only found a DVD that contained the afore-mentioned Corman movie, but another of his "classic" efforts, *She Gods of Shark Reef* (1958). As if that wasn't enough of a find (yes, I have strange tastes), the same shopping trip scored another budget DVD that had *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), starring Vincent Price, and *The Devil's Messenger* (1961), starring

Lon Chaney. These are good ones, the former being a version of Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*, recently re-filmed and released starring Will Smith. (I haven't seen this latest version yet.)

I find all sorts of fun stuff rummaging through those bins. Other finds over the past few months have been a DVD of 4 Alfred Hitchcock movies: *Jamaica Inn* (1939), *Sabotage* (1936), *The 39 Steps* (1935), and *Easy Virtue* (1928)) and *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Volume 2* (the 1954-1955 TV series starring Ronald Howard), Fun stuff. Some of these I actually use in my English classes. How I do that would make for a fine fan article some day.

What & Who are all in this issue

Once again, a lot of familiar faces, and why that is I am not going to get into right now. Let's just say this: fanzine fans enjoy writing to and for each other's zines. So who's hanging around this time? Well...

James Bacon

James has joined the fray once again, if only to prove that marriage has no affect on his prodigious fan-writing output. I am only too glad to have him back, this time with a rather multiple book review that is rather interesting, to say the least. This is the kind of article that we faneds have come to expect from this fellow.



Arnie Katz

This gentleman probably doesn't much of an intro, but Arnie has been quite busy preparing for the influx of fen into Las Vegas for Corflu Silver next month. Even so, he found the time to provide this arkle for my annish. Thank you, kind sir!

Lee Anne Lavell

She has become a recurring writer in this zine, and I will not complain. Now that the demise of David Burton's wonderful fanzine *Pixel* is a known fact, Lee Anne's writings may become even more regular here in *Askance*. We shall see what happens.

Valerie Purcell

My wife sometimes has a good way with words. She rarely appears in this zine, but if I can get more artwork from her (Val is a wonderful artist), you will see more of her stuff. She will be graduating from Sam

Houston State University in May, 2008, and I just had to share this delightful "excuse" she wrote to explain why she had to miss classes one week this semester.

Robert Sabella

One of fandom's inveterate (invertebrate?) list-writers in his fanzine *Visions of Paradise*, Bob has been involved with fandom for forty years now, and shows no sign of slowing down. This guy not only reads science fiction, but he likes to write about it, too! Submissions from him are always interesting and make us SF fans actually think about science fiction. Golly, what a concept!

NEW AMSTERDAM,
NEW YORK,
NEW BERLIN

BY JAMES BACON



I have always had an interest in military historical matters; I liked listening at an early age to the less well known stories of the 1916 Easter Rising. The house-to-house fighting that occurred not a mile and half from where I grew up on a road, North King St., that I knew very well, where civilians were killed in one of the many atrocities of that time. But this is not about Commandant Edward Dalys' 1st battalion and his men's outpost on Church Street and their fight against British occupation forces, or, for that matter, Peter Reid's exploits and recordings of his fellow gallant officers' attempts at escape from the high gothic walls of Schloss Colditz' which was also an early read' as were the movie, TV series' and game.

Two books, though, of late that I have really enjoyed have been set in and around New York. I must admit I was underwhelmed by my visit to the City; it's wonderful for sure, The Flat Iron Building and Jim Hanley's Universe comic shop forever fantastic memories, as were drinking in pubs near the bullpen, but not the huge leap in amazingness that one expects from the hype, especially compared to London.

The New York that these books contain is, of course, nearly seventy years in the past, and I find myself quite enchanted with the suburban and outer suburban areas of that great city. Although set in a similar time period, there are some sixty six years separating the writing – well, publication - of both books, but interestingly, I found much commonality in regard to language and terms and technology in the settings of both books.

The ominous subject of these books is the back ground that is a catalyst for sudden upheaval and change to our main characters' lives, and while the main bulk of the tale concerns the effect this story has upon our characters their actions, and, most importantly, inner feelings thoughts and fears of the narrating main characters and how they describe their families and friends dealing with the serious situation in which they both find themselves, the background in both cases is personally quite fascinating.

I enjoy books about potential histories narrowly avoided - alternative histories if you like; it's a genre where I feel imagination is just not good enough for the story to blossom - the writer must possess a realistic aspect to his skill. It is no good portraying human suffering aptly if one is then jarred out of the narrative by unfortunate use of inaccurate technology or unbelievable propositions or historical hijacking a historical personage out of character.

For instance, it's better to say that Mr. Churchill got killed and Lord Halifax was offered the position of Prime Minister and accepted it without the need for the long silence, rather than suggesting Sir Winston would appease or surrender.

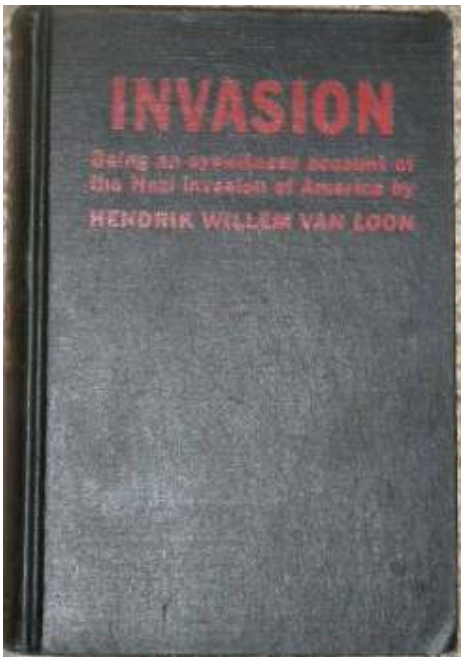
No good having inaccuracies and errors throughout a story that undermines the trip into the world that could be different.

Phillip K. Dick's book, *The Man in the High Castle* is, of course, the seminal work in this genre, I feel, and it is my favourite Dick as well as one of my favourite visions of a defeated world, as that's how I would see such an outcome to the second world war. Utter defeat for all that is right. Of course, totalitarianism comes in many forms, and I would be lying if I didn't mention how important *1984* has been to me, as a book. Apart from just being wonderfully enjoyable, I still find the world set up, the simple yet so precise methods which are utilised so bluntly in today's propaganda war on terror, enemies like the shifting sands of a beach, the lies and hypocrisy are as sharp as the sadness about the ending.

I like to think that I enjoy these works, because I treasure what freedoms I do have and the liberty that I feel everyone is entitled to. I recognise the continual erosion to these freedoms, although it is much more acute in the UK, where postcodes, ID, and bank accounts count for everything. In Ireland, the list of things which actually are acceptable as ID is hilarious, but then that's Ireland for you; you could easily disappear off the radar at home, whereas here, well, they probably could find out what you ate if they tried. Even to get a bus cheaply, the government can find out where you were and track you with the seven or eight cctv cameras that record continuously on each bus.

I also recognise the rebellious fighter in myself. At school escaping was a big part of my thinking, how would I escape from here, and although reading comics helped that in a temporary way, it is the physical side of things that fascinates me. I loved hunts and escapes in Scouts, and I like to see people try and work out rope tricks and physical conundrums. I often day dream, wondering how I would manage in a real life catastrophe or an invasion, if I would resist openly or secretly and would I comply, which I hope I wouldn't.

So when I saw *Invasion, Being an eyewitness account of the Nazi invasion of America* by Hendrik Willem Van Loon (pronounced Loan, as in bank) on Andy Richards' Cold Tonnage books website, I put it on a list to purchase at some future stage; having accrued some credit with said same business, I was sent the book yesterday. I read it last night. I have read it again today. I really liked it.



Van Loon has a message to tell. He is warning Americans of the concerns that he inwardly has about the dangers of Nazism and naivety of isolationism through depicting the potential for an invasion of the US. How appeasement and tolerance towards the BUND members and their attitudes may be all very well in regard to constitutional rights of the individual, but he extrapolates what such laxes in security could actually be the precursor to.

By portraying an actual account of what occurred to this man and his family, how well the fifth columnists had succeeded at debilitating parts of America, quite easily and how sudden coincidental things can be seen as insidious planning can be, one gets a decent picture. The build up of Germany's Empire by supporting other nations and utilising airbases for 'training' are all interesting themes, as are aircraft carriers which get a mention; how many would

have known about the existence of the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin* is doubtful, and although unnamed, it's interesting that it did exist.

The pace at which men could potentially descend into savagery and hatred in the name of a leader is portrayed very aptly, and lest we forget that many ordinary men got enwrapped in the evil that was Nazism, and suddenly on the ninth of May, eight and half million Nazi's suddenly disappeared into thin air. It is wrong to assume that all were inherently evil; rather, they were part of an evil machine: some would have been selfish, some self-preserving, others naive and foolish, and well, some were truly good, sheep in wolves' clothing, lest we forget the man from Krackow and his ark.

I am aware that one needs to be cautious of limiting liberty to potential enemies; for example, Guantanamo Bay has all too much in common with the disastrous policy of internment that turned into a recruiting fire in the north (Northern Ireland).

At the same time, Van Loon is an intelligent man with a journalist's inquisitiveness and accurate background provision; this is no mere paranoid panic-stricken writer seeing shadows where they do not exist. Twenty thousand people were listening to Kuhn, the leader of The German American Bund, refer to Roosevelt's New Deal as the Jew Deal in Madison Square Garden in 1939. This was no fantasy, although we know now that Bund came to nothing. Van Loon, who was originally from The Netherlands, was, by 1940, very aware of the actions of the invading forces of Adolf Hitler, their methods, and unfailing enthusiasm for getting the job done by all and any means.

I love the way van Loon seems to be able to describe Americans with the outside objective eye; he has wonderfully fluid writing as he gives an account of what occurred in the forty eight hours following the invasion of America by Nazi forces from his localised viewpoint, although somewhat at the heart of the local action. The book is written with a newsman's skill for getting the point across with just the right amount of back-sourced information to fill in the gaps, and provide the reader with a clear understanding of what has occurred.

It uses the interesting method of being the resurrection of notes written at the time and published in 1960. Sadly, Van Loon died in 1944; well, sadly for me, as this is a writer who I would love to have met and discussed the resulting history with him. I wonder what he actually thought of the subsequent outcome of the War; he was dead before D-Day, so he wouldn't really have seen the true tide turn that was the invasion of Northern France.

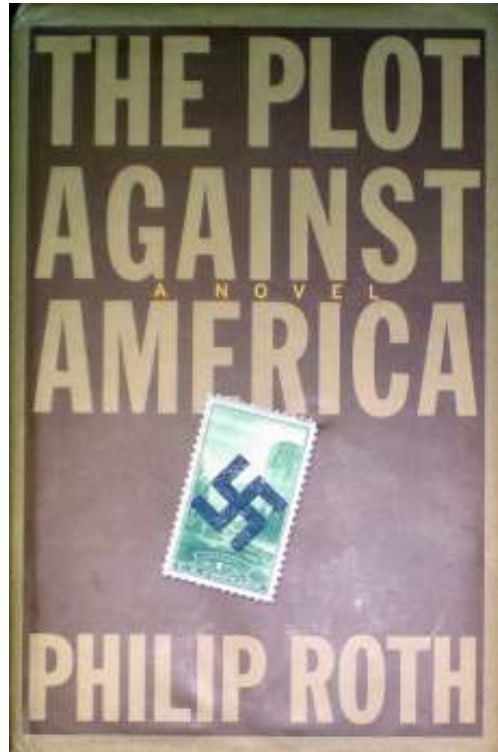
I wonder how many stubborn Vermonters were in that invasion; I expect quite a few, and no doubt they were as skilled and as brave as their fictitious comrades in arms, so ably described by Van Loon.

I liked the way he advises the reader in a postscript that these versions of events in America, although at times quite unbelievable, are all based upon reportage of real life occurrences in Europe, so perhaps a reader at the time might balk at the preposterous ideas that a fifth column would seek out printers and writers on behalf of a Nazi invading and occupying force. In the afterword, Van Loon clearly cites that he can present real occurrences. It's interesting that he does this as a counter to 'local Nazi sympathisers', and his expected 'outcry about war mongering and sowing the seeds of hate' about his book.

Jesus, can you imagine!

This book is a warning in the ilk of another favourite, *The Riddle in the Sands*, but it is very blatant in its method. But it is just such a damn enjoyable read. Van Loon, who at one stage worked for the Associated Press, is just infectious. I could not stop reading this one and had it done in three hours. It is not an epic tome, just enough to provide the a satisfying read, and at this distance, an interesting take of events in one hand and, in the other, a fascinating effort of anti-Nazi encouragement in its most erudite form.

I was about to say that it must take a lot from *The Moon is Down*, yet another favourite by Steinbeck, but *Invasion* was written two years before that book about the invasion of an un-described country by an unknown aggressor, and how the people in a small coastal town deal with the sudden occupation by the invading forces, who seem quite normal initially, and the descent which both sides slide into as resistance and active sabotage by the resolute townsfolk invoke anger and orders from on high to quell such behaviour. People often say this is purely a propaganda work, but I feel that the town could as easily be in Pennsylvania as Norway or The Netherlands, and that it is an imaginative speculative work, and, for me, a history that never occurred again based on realities. I have read that an original version was actually set in America with a Nazi invasion, but I need to research that more, but the movie *Red Dawn* definitely takes some pointers from Steinbeck, and it's easy to view as a direct correlation of occurrences in Norway.



The companion New York book for me is Phillip Roth's book *The Plot Against America*, which is also set in or around New York. I suppose I immediately took to this book as the cover reminded me of another favourite, *SS-GB* by Len Deighton, which has an image of Hitler on a British definitive stamp, although I am no philatelist I do like stamps, have about four dozen first day covers, and ever since my dad, who collected stamps in a modest way, showed me Irish Provisional government overprints of King George V definitive stamps, I have been fascinated with such things. So the overprint of a Swastika on the national park stamp of a Yosemite one cent was immediately eye catching.

The message that an overprint gives is quite menacing and malicious, insidiously grinding down a populace by stealing and stamping upon what they could recognise as their own and enforcing the situation on a daily and mundane basis. It's a tool that's been used by many, and even today one can buy an ink stamp that will apply a Gas mask to the Queen based on artist James Cauty's work. In the seventies, overstamps in Northern Ireland were rife, on both sides interestingly, not very loyal to disfigure the image of the Queen, but then it all depends on what one is loyal to.

Roth's book is autobiographical, according to himself. It is a brilliant illustration of how life was for a seven year old Jewish boy (Phillip) in the early forties, and it is very subjective. It is an alternative history, and although many compared its concerns with those faced in this new century, I didn't find the allegorical message to be all pervasive. Rather, it was there, but not the key to this book. Of course, people's behaviour under a Nazi sympathetic government and the way the American Jews could potentially be treated is fascinating and scary, although we know that this is how Jews across Europe were also treated; in actuality, it became a much more horrific scenario than mere threats to culture, lifestyle, and blatant anti-Semitism.

The picture Roth draws of New York, that American life so different to the triviality portrayed by TV, which I always find enjoyable and it makes me think of Falls Church in Virginia, for some reason, is different than the New York I experienced, but then that would be true of anyone who has visited London for a short while; you never get to see it all.

Roth allows the reader to see all the action through his childish eyes, and this is where he works his magic as the fears and concerns are heightened in the mind of a child, like monsters under

the bed and also naive observations portray very sinister and, indeed, fearful intonements into the reader's mind as one quite vividly sees the potential and route the story could be leading.

At the Jewish book week this year here in London, an interview with Roth was screened. It was a great festival, and I realised that there are more than enough books with the message about the calamity that faced a whole religious group in Europe that we can always reflect upon fiction and attempt to apply today's current concerns and political agenda to what we learn, but mostly it was the insight into the Jewish thought and lifestyle which is key to this book.

Of course, the nice diversionary hinge of Charles Lindbergh, a man who in real life was awarded the Service Cross of the German Eagle for his services to aviation by Herman Goering, and, of course, the doubt and misinformation about Lindbergh's politics and patriotism, is a good place to have a divergence. I am unsure what his actual views were and if he were truly an anti-Semite, but I know he was a patriot and perhaps naive.

In Roth's fantasy world, Lindbergh signs non-aggression agreements with Germany and Japan, and subsequently starts to invoke anti-Semitic policies. Interestingly, some quarters of the Jewish population readily accept Lindbergh restrictive policies and see appeasement as the best way forward. This is acutely apparent as Roth's brother Sandy first is encouraged by his aunt to go to Kentucky to learn good values on the 'Just Folks' scheme, which sees this New York Jewish boy turned into a Midwestern-valued vision of the Anglo Saxon puritan dream. It rends great cracks in the family's internal relationship, and the blindness with which a persecuted people could willingly walk towards inevitable doom is quite vividly and believably offered in prophetic prose. At times one feels the only person really seeing the truth is Roth's father, Herman.



The child sees so much changing in front of him, and it's harrowing, resulting in nightmares of his beloved stamp collection being defaced with swastikas, which are a precursor to the actual loss of his collection as he and his family are forced to escape to avoid 'relocation.'

Interestingly, a journalist plays a part, Walter Winchell, especially for Herman Roth, who sees this person as a voice of reason, and that happenings to Winchell are the barometer for the whole race. The father of our family is not only very shrewd and clever, but who also, at times of human weakness, allows his son to see the defeat that no child should see, as the facade a father always has is sometimes eroded by grave happenings that cannot be hidden.

There are some real sad moments. Phillip's own relationships with children and relatives his own age are portrayed so well, and at the same time we see that although he may not have enjoyed the company of another child, he is truly upset to hear that said child may now have no parents. There is a real edge to Roth's understanding of the thinking of a child.

The divergence in history has a band-aid resolution. It is a quick fix to allow the reader a permanent respite from the despair such an alternative version of The United States would evoke in anyone, and it's a neat one that is helped by Roth giving a nice selection of biographies, factoids, and information upon which he built his divergence.

Readers can draw their own conclusions about the persecution faced by the Roth's and those in today's world who are perhaps in the same situation given their background and the current war

on terror. Yet one hopes that there is not quite as obvious a level of hatred on the streets of New York.

Sure, there is a perhaps a deeper understanding or meaning that can be derived from the story, and one might be able to reflect or represent current meanings in this book, but I get the feeling that this is just a supplementation to the story itself, and I understand the book is not a allegorical piece of work, as far as the author is concerned.

This is good, as I didn't take it as such and just really enjoyed the diversion that Roth used, and also learned a lot about Jewishness and modern(ish) Jewish attitudes within urban culture.

What is interesting that these books, despite their similarities, are also a juxtaposition of what one should be thinking. Sure, the Nazi's were bad, but we can't assume that about anyone else; we need to prove it, and no one type or race of person should be mistreated just because they have a belief. We need to enforce the rule of law equally with everyone fairly, and although this may mean some elements enjoy a freedom of speech that I may find distasteful, it also means that the government should be respectful and cautious, and not overreact and use media and fear to dictate their encroachments upon everyone's liberty. These novels provide a balance to my thinking, and meanwhile are damn fine reads.

-- James Bacon





SCIENCE FICTION and HISTORY

by ROBERT SABELLA

Science Fiction historians and critics have different opinions as to what constitutes the foundation of science fiction. Traditionalists often follow the Gernsback credo that science and technology are the heart of the genre. In his anthology *The Ascent of Wonder* (Tor Books, 1994), David Hartwell states "It is a commonly held opinion of writers who write hard sf, and the perception of the readers who prefer to read it, that hard sf is the core of all science fiction." Notice that Hartwell doesn't specifically support the claim; he merely points out that for some writers and readers science is perceived as the heart of science fiction.

Another viewpoint was espoused by Kim Stanley Robinson in an interview in the April 2007 issue of *Locus*, in which he stated: "I have always been fascinated with history, as almost all science fiction writers are. For a long time, I've been saying science fiction itself is a historical genre; every text has within it (implicitly or explicitly) a history that runs back to now. To make a quick distinction between science fiction and history—at least a first cut—science fiction is set in the future with a history that runs back to now, and fantasy dispenses with that connection and takes place in some historical bubble space of its own."

So which is the true "core" of science fiction, science/technology or history? On a purely personal level, I have been reading science fiction faithfully for 40+ years, but the vast majority of what I read is not centered around science/technology. While it incorporates science as part of its worldview, it generally does not do so any more than my own daily life incorporates technology on a user basis. The sf I prefer tends to feature historical development as its foundation, with science/technology as one of the fiction's aspects.

To explore this theory a bit further, I went to the results of a 1998 *Locus* poll in which its readers selected the best science fiction novels published prior to 1990. 52 books made the cutoff, led by Frank Herbert's *Dune* in first place. I went down the list and designated each novel into one of two categories: either science-centered or non-science-centered. The results: 9 books are science-centered and 43 were not. These results (which was admittedly not a scientific survey) lead to the obvious conclusion that while scientific/technological advances may accelerate the changes in some science fiction stories, or be one of the specific aspects causing the change being studied, the specific changes being studied are primarily historical rather than scientific.

So if historical change is the true core of science fiction, should there not be a suitable definition incorporating this? Thus, my proposed definition of speculative fiction (which is not the first one I have ever devised) is as follows: Speculative fiction is the study of historical change upon the

world as we know it into a world different than ours. That change might involve plausible change (science fiction) or implausible change (fantasy or alternate history).

As the definition implies, speculative fiction actually contains three distinct sub-genres, two of which (fantasy and alternate history) have very little, if anything, to do with science/technology, while the third sub-genre incorporates some science/technology into its fiction with a minority actually being based on it.

More circumstantial evidence? Consider all those Future Histories which are so popular among science fiction writers. Going back to Robert A. Heinlein's seminal future history, and continuing with such important future histories as Poul Anderson's Poleotechnic League-Terran Empire, Larry Niven's Known Space, Cordwainer Smith's Instrumentality of Mankind, C.J. Cherryh's Alliance-Union, Isaac Asimov's Foundation, Clifford D. Simak's City, James Blish's Spindizzy, Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover (primarily set on a single planet, but a detailed history nonetheless), John Varley's Eight Worlds, Frederik Pohl's Gateway, Dan Simmons' Hyperion, David Brin's Uplift, James H. Schmitz' Hub, Stephen Baxter's Xeele, Alastair Reynolds' Galactic North and the list goes on. How many of them actually have science/technology as their foundation? Niven and Reynolds certainly do, but which others? While most incorporate science/technology into their framework, their foundations tend to be change from the world as we know it into future worlds.

There are various types of sf stories which at first glance do not seem to fall into either the science/technology or historical change aspects of sf, such as "secret histories" involving aliens or time travelers hidden among us. Or the large number of sf stories set in the historical past, near or far. While some of the latter are indeed concerned with science/technology (such as Sterling and Gibson's *The Difference Engine*), it is not stretching the meaning of historical change too far to make the claim that both groups of stories are primarily concerned with exploring changes with our real world's history rather than changes in the future.

So if history is indeed the foundation of most science fiction, why does a large segment of the reading and critiquing public view science/technology as its core? I can think of several explanations for this. One is that science fiction appeals more to scientists than it does to historians, since the latter group can satisfy their fictional craving with historical fiction, while scientists do not have such an outlet. Thus their claim that science/technology is the core of science fiction actually translates to it being the core of "their" science fiction, an unarguable fact.

Another possible explanation is that in the 1930s pulp magazines other than those edited by Hugo Gernsback expanded the range of science fiction considerably (magazines such as *Astounding*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Planet Stories*), so the science/technology purists reacted by defending their favorite type of sf by proclaiming that while it might not be the foundation of all science fiction stories, it was still the heart of the genre itself. If this fact is true (and I admit it is a totally speculative assumption), then perhaps it is closer to the truth to state that science/technology is the "emotional heart" of sf as opposed to its foundation. If so, then it is unlikely any of its adherents will ever be convinced otherwise.

In any case, I have never viewed science fiction as a specific "genre" anyway, but an umbrella encompassing various sub-genres, so if the science/technology people want to consider that as the core, and the historical change people (myself included) wish to consider that as the core, then we can all rest assured that we are indeed correct; we're just talking about different sub-genres under the huge umbrella entitled "speculative fiction."

-- Robert Sabella



The Core Fandom Paradox – Untangled!

When people want to insult Core Fandomites, they say the same things that people have said about us since we were called “fanzine fandom.” In fact, nonfans, semi-fans and fakefans have been saying this stuff since Forry Ackerman and Jack Darrow thought it would be cool to bring Jack Williamson into their correspondence.

What they say is this: Fandom/Fanzine Fandom/Core Fandom – take your pick – is elitist and exclusionary. They claim its participants are arrogant snobs who think they’re better than everyone else.

That’s a pretty antagonistic appraisal. It would wound me deeply if I cared about the people who usually come up with it. Even when coming from strangers who mean little to me, it stings.

It rankled.

It annoys like a leather seat on a humid day. I doubt many other Core Fandomites enjoy this characterization, either.

I know that’s true because such an attack is guaranteed to make Core Fandom notice the perpetrator. In the past, we have always felt compelled to defend ourselves against these accusations if only to “set the record straight.”

The usual response lists recent additions to Core Fandom and points out that they got involved with comparative ease. Then we ignore the inevitable reiterations from the same source. We do that because it’s good for the blood pressure and helps preserve the sunny dispositions for which all Core Fandomites are justly famous. (Our farts smell like roses, too.)

Another good reason for ignoring subsequent comments is that we understand that we’re not going to change the mind of someone who clings to such a hostile attitude.

We also realize that, by their lights, we are most definitely snobs. Many tirades come from people who think they have personally suffered snobbery and arrogance in dealings with Fanzine Fandom/Core Fandom.

They feel we have rejected them and they act accordingly. The truth is we *have* “rejected them,” at least from their point of view. Their hostility originates in hurt feelings brought on by a misunderstanding of Core Fandom.

Idealistic (and egotistical) as I am, I seriously doubt that one article can bridge that vast gap. For one thing, the people most in need of this article are probably among the least likely to read it. Maybe we can take at least one small step forward in handling these conflicts better when they periodically arise.

That brings us to the sub-title of this column and the Paradox of Core Fandom:

If Core Fandomites are so nice, how come Core Fandom is snobbish and arrogant?

Understanding Core Fandom starts with some fanhistory. Most Core Fandomites know fanhistory, even if they are hazy about details. They know the sweep of events and generally have read touchstone fan-literary works. Some know more than others, but timebinding is characteristic of Core Fandom.

There are many ways to interpret history. The same goes for fanhistory. Core Fandom’s historians differ in their interpretation, but largely agree about the Big Picture. This is not Objective Truth; we add subjectivity to any analysis that touches us personally. It *is* pretty much how Core Fandomites see things:

Once, all of Fandom was a lot like today’s Core Fandom. Fans were “square pegs” who embraced a consensus about Fandom’s aesthetics, ethics and mores. Core Fandomites still honor essentially the same social contract.

Core Fandomites endorse that social contract, not because we think it’s right, but because we think it’s right for *us*. The classic conception of Fandom, as embodied in Core Fandom, is an environment that we creative oddballs find comfortable. Certainly, other types of people will gravitate to other environments, and other approaches, to Fandom. Core Fandom is the one that we enjoy.

Core Fandom has experienced population explosions that altered the basic character of Fandom. Core Fandom has survived, but it’s now an unwelcome guest in the house that its pioneers built. Fandom’s “open door” policy led to Core Fandom becoming a splinter of Fandom.

From the time Fandom began to assume the aspect of a genuine subculture, it has acknowledged that it’s surrounded by a mainstream society that is sometimes hostile and frequently insensitive to the things that fans hold dear.

Core Fandom is surrounded by All Known Fandom, a group at least 250+ times larger. Today, Core Fandom stands in similar relation to All Known Fandom as all of Fandom once stood to the Mundane culture.

All Known Fandom is more sympathetic to Core Fandom than nonfans were to fans back in the day. Since all sub-Fandoms originated as part of Fandom, they tend to share some of its attributes. That makes them more likely to relate to Core Fandom (and, hopefully, vice versa). Still, All Known Fandom is sometimes hostile and often insensitive to things that Core Fandomites hold dear.

When its population exploded, Fandom’s largely democratic institutions allowed these newcomers to reshape Fandom to fit their needs. Fanzine Fans generally seldom opposed these changes on the grounds that Fandom should be open to everyone. What Core Fandom’s

fancestors neglected to consider is how they would feel about Fandom after the changes took effect.

Fandom's population boom in the 1960's and early 1970's largely consisted of folks who didn't need Fandom in the same way as the pioneers did. They were followers of popular mainstream fads, like Edgar Rice Burroughs, JRR Tolkein, and *Star Trek*.

There's a degree of similarity to the plight of Native Americans during America's westward expansion (minus the massacres, trail of tears and infected blankets). In both cases, the clash of cultures has gone through three phases:

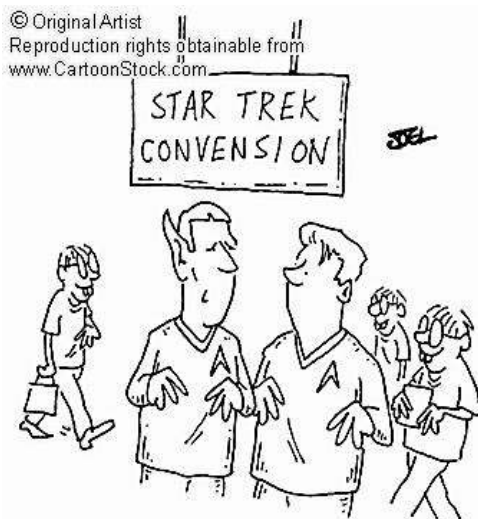
1. **Welcome.** The Native Americans were fairly cordial to the first Euros they met, all things considered. It was the hyper-fannish NYCon 3 and St. Louiscon that opened the floodgates in an effort to serve all segments of the SF community.

2 **Battle.** When the Native Americans realized that the Europeans could not be trusted, were greedy and planned to take whatever they fancied, they fought as hard as they could. So did our fancestors – and with pretty much the same futility.

3. **Resignation.** At a certain point, the global thinkers among the Native Americans discovered a key Truth: There were a lot more Euros than Indians. Native American leaders who understood the inexhaustible supply of settlers pursued a policy of trying to keep as much of what the Native Americans had as possible while accommodating to the inescapable fact that the Americans were in charge and the Native Americans would have to find a way to survive.

Core fandom is firmly in Stage Three. There'll always be some nostalgia for the Good Old Days, but Core Fandom has concentrated on developing its own institutions and activities and letting All Known Fandom do as it pleases.

Core Fandom has tried to adapt to the reality that the way we see Fandom is no longer the way most of Fandom sees it. We've stepped away from efforts to persuade All Known Fandom to Turn Back the Clock.



"It's life Jim, but not as we know it"

Big events like the World SF Convention are now in other fannish hands, though many Core Fans work on cons. Core Fandomites are generalists; they often participate in non-literary aspects of Fandom. I've done clubs, cons, gaming filking, collecting and even some costuming in addition to my Core Fandom-type fanac. That's a pretty typical resume.

Without feeling the need to control what All Known Fandom does, Core Fandomites still want our corner of Fandom to be the way it is, free of commercialism, boosterism, greed and competition. We want conventions that emphasize the fannish network and we want the joy of associating with our own kind of bent nails. We want to write, draw and publish for and with each other as fans have done for almost 80 years.

We don't care if clubs buy skyscrapers and prowl the streets with begging bowls, or if cons draw

thousands of passive, anonymous non-fans. What we *do* want is a quid pro quo from All Known Fandom. We want to do our fanning in our own quaint and idiosyncratic way.

Now let's get back to the Great Paradox of Core Fandom.

There is very little actual sub-Fandom-on-sub-Fandom acrimony these days. Core Fandom no longer has anything any of the other sub-Fandoms want.

Friction arises from things Core Fandomites write in fanzines, listervs and websites, and say their piece in audio and video content. Just about all of us write, most of us are pretty free with our opinions, and some of us focus on the lighter side of life. That most definitely includes Fandom, Core Fandom, each other, and ourselves. Core Fandom is not much enamored of censorship, so if it's not legally actionable, it's pretty much permissible.

We're used to that wide-open policy; many fans aren't. Core Fandomites want that freewheeling environment badly enough to live with its consequences (fan feuds).

Sometimes, fans read, watch, or listen to Core Fandom content and aren't ready for the irreverence about things that are serious to them, like who gets walkie-talkies. That makes them think we are arrogant and, because we don't go along with the program, elitist. Core Fandom might as well accept that as part of the price of preserving our subculture. And the rest of Fandom might as well get used to the idea we will continue to make our little jokes.

Much more common, and the major source of Core Fandom's rep, is contention between individuals and Core Fandom as a whole. They feel rejected and let their frustration out in one of those "Core Fans are snobs" rants.

Anyone who attends a sizable gathering of Core Fandomites (like Corflu) must be struck by these fans' friendliness and generosity. And there are hundreds of fans whose primary fanac lies outside Core Fandom who happily participate in Core Fandom activities with no trouble at all.

It's a lot easier on the ego to believe that Core Fandomites are snobs who reject everyone than to admit that Core Fandom has spurned only them, just as it is easier for some to believe that all Core Fandomites are bad so then that they might lack something in some way.

Core Fandom welcomes people who find our subculture appealing enough to want to learn more about it. We're less enthusiastic about people who come to it wanting to change it in basic ways that go counter to Core Fandom's consensus. It's fine to want a radically different approach to Fandom, but we aren't motivated to support it within Core Fandom.

Core Fandom welcomes anyone who wants to write, edit, draw, and publish content for Fandom. The groups and cliques within Core Fandom accommodate everything from serious sf/fnal stuff to frothy fannishness,

A fan doesn't need to be anyone's buddy to participate in fan-literary pursuits. If what they do is good, there's probably an element of Core Fandom that will respond. Many fans write, draw, and publish for Fandom with hardly any interaction or contact beyond distributing and receiving content. That level of acceptance is available to anyone who cares to participate. Of course, if the newcomer is obnoxious, quarrelsome and dull, others won't want to welcome him or her into their circle of fannish friends. If that's "rejection," then so be it; people have the right to choose their friends.

When someone rails about the snobbishness and elitism of Core Fandom, it generally means one of two things:

1. They and their fan-literary efforts don't get the egoboo they desire. Newcomers often begin activity with a highly inflated view of their own abilities. Most of us read some Willis, Burbee, Carr and White, and evolve a more realistic picture. Others blame the audience for not clapping loud enough.

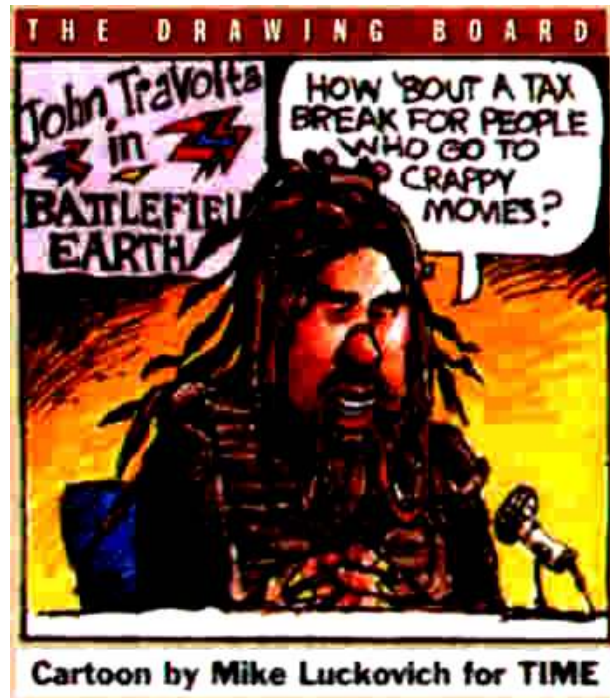
2. They don't connect with any social circle within Core Fandom or their attempt to enter a social circle that isn't a good fit. This goes back to people picking their own friends. Closed social groups are extremely rare in Core Fandom, but they are only open to those who have a basis for building a friendship.

Sadly, that means there will always be people who attack Core Fandom for being snobbish and elitist, no matter how many others join the party without minimal fuss. There will always be fans who don't understand Core Fandom who will lash out to cover their feelings of inadequacy and injured pride. What we have to do, as Core Fandomites, is make sure that we don't put up such a barrier against bumptious interlopers that we yank the welcome mat out from under those who are truly our fannish brothers and sisters.

It's the Great Paradox of Core Fandom.

And if you didn't know, as philosopher Christian Cage says, now you know.

-- Arnie Katz



My turn now, says the editor...

This discussion could go on for quite awhile, I am positive. But there is something I must say.

While reading and proofing Arnie's article, what struck me was an apparent tone of voice that indicates a consensus opinion seems to be coming our way. This is how I interpret things, of course, mainly because, as Arnie eloquently states, fanzine fans/Core fandom fans always place their subjective take on what they read and thus respond to in writing. I freely admit my guilt in doing so. This is, indeed, what makes fan writing so much fun to do.

See, it works is like this: fanzine fandom is just one aspect of the grand conversation of Fandom. People in Core Fandom are – in my experience – intelligent, thoughtful individuals who truly enjoy the give-and-take of fanzine fandom. (They also like conventions and other fannish activities, but that's not important right now.) The fact remains that at one point in the not-so-distant past all of fandom was involved in All Known Fandom, unlike today when All Known Fandom incorporates so many subgroup interests, of which fanzine fandom is one. Plus, like Arnie also says, anyone can get involved in fanzines if they want to.

This is the whole point. Fandom is a participatory hobby interest, says I, and fanzines are a fun means of participation. The fact that this discussion is happening is an indication that fanzines are indeed alive and kicking. We are not dead yet, merely pining for the fields. – John Purcell

FieBY BY BILL FISCHER

THE WAR AGAINST
THE HUMANS RAGES ON!

THE AIR IS THICK WITH
CHIPPED THUNDERBOLTS!
I'M DOWN
TO MY LAST BANANA!
LT. FIEBY - SEE THAT THEY DON'T
FLANK US!



D+4! THE SITUATION
GROWS DESEPERATE! WE ARE
DOWN TO OUR LAST BANANA
AND FEAR THE TRANSFER MAY
SECURE REINFORCEMENTS FROM
THE THIRD COCKER!



2



... FIGHTING HAS DEGENERATED
INTO HAND-TO-HAND...



4

FANZINE REVIEWS

BY

LLOYD PENNEY

It's time to see which fanzines are turning my crank these days, and I think I've made some interesting and different choices this time around.

One zine I am enjoying is Earl Kemp's *e/*. While we use categories like perzine and genzine, Earl's is both and more.

Because this e-zine is meant to be the basic structure of an autobiography, it is quite subjective, and that's fine. We get to see what makes Earl tick. I find it historical because of Earl's role in fandom, chairing Chicon III in 1962, and his role in American history, serving time for

working in the soft core porn publishing business, stemming from Richard Nixon's President's Report on Pornography. It is revealing because through Earl we find out SF's multiple connections with the afore-mentioned soft core porn industry, and how many pro SF writers wrote soft core to get by. The zine is educational because it details fandom in the 60s and its assorted interests, and gives some insight into the realities in the publishing industry. Fan history as she is written.

The articles within come from Earl and his friends in those various industries, and there's a lot of reminiscences there. The illustrations are often Rotslers, but often are full colour miniature reproductions of books from the 50s and 60s, and great to see again. The articles sometimes repeat each other over the issues, but that's a minor quibble; they're mostly to connect other recollections together, and to illustrate the connections and add more dimension to the event discussed.

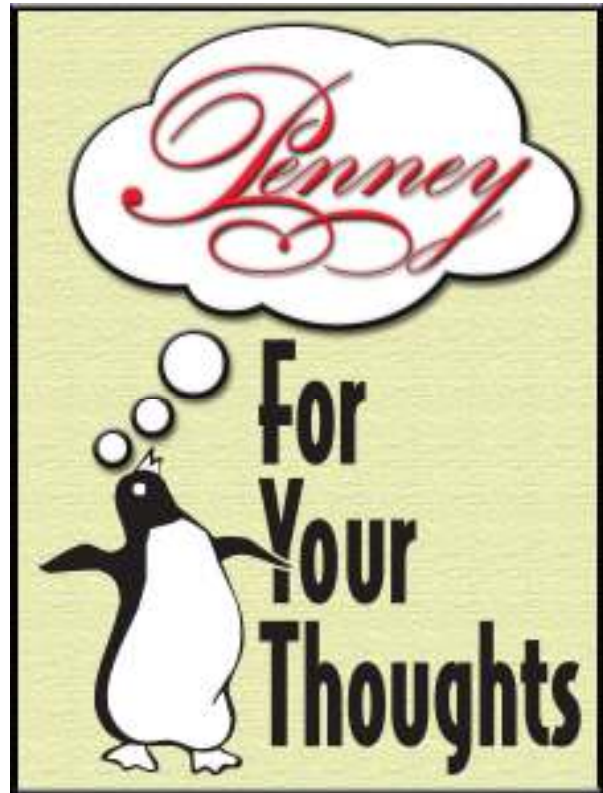
I still find there's more to know about fan history, and Earl's zine has always been a revelation to me. I also think he's enjoying his publishing, reveling in the fact that after all that crap he's been through, he's still around, happily retired, and even more happily degafiated.

e/ is also a challenge to loc. I was born in 1959, but in Canada, so I lived through a different history. I don't have a lot of connections with the history Earl details. It's a challenge to make intelligent comment on the zine, but I go for the challenge each time an issue shows up on eFanzines.com.

You'll probably find more in common with *e/* than I will, so download and enjoy. I've never met Earl, and I'm looking forward to doing so at Corflu in April.

I also find challenges in commenting on any zines by Bruce Gillespie. Our friend Bruce produces some great zines, so I thought I'd review them as a whole.

I'm in the same boat as Bruce: never enough money to do the things you want to do, and the



feeling of being at the periphery of all things fannish. Granted, I'm a lot closer to the edges geographically, but still, I empathize with him. We do the same things for a living, editorial work, and there's not much money there. Bruce's zines show that there are still some who care to look at this literary genre with a scholarly eye.

I will make the picky comment that many of Bruce's publications look the same. Two columns for *Scratch Pad* and **brg**, which I get, and three columns for *Steam Engine Time*, which Bruce co-edits with Jan Stinson. This last zine deserves a review of its own, RSN. The contents of *Scratch Pad* and **brg** look very similar, and the latest issues of each, *Scratch Pad 68* and **brg* 51* were nearly identical. Different reasons, different target audiences. But that's picky on my part.

Those contents, however many times they appear, are sometimes autobiographical, sometimes scholarly treatises on themes and tropes in science fiction, and so few faneds are able to write them these days (Bruce doesn't write them all, but he's willing to publish them), and the local is represented by the best fans Australia's produced, all old friends, and for some, a good Gillespie-zine may be the only zines they'll loc. I read them with wide eyes, and feel myself fortunate to get a letter in with that august crowd.

I might want a few more illos inside the zine to break up the column inches, but that is picky, too. The lack of art inside is more than offset by computer art by Ditmar (Dick Jenssen) and Elaine Cochran (on occasion!), and IMHO, the publication itself is clean-looking without having a clutter of copy and artwork together too often, and when a paper copy arrives, being saddlestitch-stapled and trimmed makes the finished product look very classy indeed, perhaps something above your average fanzine. Maybe that last phrase is the best way to describe a Gillespie-zine. Thank you, Bruce, for sterling efforts.

= = = = =

el - Earl Kemp, P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642. e-mail: earlkemp@citlink.net

brg / *Scratch Pad* - Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough VIC 3088, Australia
e-mail: gandc@mira.net

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Fanzines received via regular mail or viewed on the Internet thus far:

Ansible #246-248
Argentus #7-8
Banana Wings #33
Banksoniain #13
BCSFazine #417
Bodies in Rest and in Motion
brg #51
Chunga #13
Drink Tank #157-164
Drink Tank Third Annual
Einblatt! (February & March, 2008)
el #36
Feline Mewsings #31
File:770 #151
Interstellar Ramjet Scoop
Knarley Knews #127-128
Chris Garcia's Little Thing
MT Void #1475-1484
Number One #12
The Orphan Scrivener #49

Peregrine Nations #7.3 & 7.4
Science Fiction in San Francisco #59-62
Some Fantastic #13
Tits, Sausage, and Ballet Shoes
Trap Door #25
Vanamonde #718-732
Vegas Fandom Weekly #104
Visions of Paradise #125-126
WCSFazine #6-7



by Lee Anne Lavell

Snow White and the Seven Wrecks

I don't believe Indiana is technically in the snow belt, but nevertheless we do get lots of snow and occasionally a blizzard. The last blizzard here was in 1978 and at that time my husband, Jim, and I were snowed in for a full week. When we were finally plowed out the drifts were piled up very high along our moderately used semi-country road that we followed to get to work. Those drifts stayed there for months until one day we finally got a minor thaw. We left for work at the same time but in separate cars with me following him. Along the road (Prospect St.) there is a



very slight dip, and overnight part of the roadside drift that had melted the previous day had accumulated moisture from the run-off and formed black ice. Jim ran straight into it without realizing it was there and his car immediately began yawing back and forth. Fortunately I was far enough back that I was able to slow down in time and only got minor slippage. I watched in horror as Jim's car made bigger and bigger swings until I realized that if he didn't just let it go off the road, on the next yaw he was going to hit a telephone pole. Thank goodness he saw the same thing! Off his car went into the middle of a cornfield where it sank down into the mud. I watched as he tried unsuccessfully

to get it out and then come trudging disgustedly through the mud. I was preparing to drive him back home so we could call Triple A when a pickup truck came whizzing by and plowed into the fence on the opposite side of the road. The driver mumbled something about the fact that he knew that happened at this spot, extricated the truck and drove off. Then, as we were getting ready to leave a car came sailing into the ice and began its yawing. The driver had finally just managed to get it under control when the car behind him, also out of control, scrunched him and

the car behind that sailed into a telephone pole. We rushed over to see if anyone was hurt. All were understandably upset but were okay physically. Not long after that another car went off into the fence on the opposite side. Finally we were able to get back home and call for help. By the time we got back the police were there, plus another car was off to into a snowbank. We waited until Triple-A arrived and pulled Jim's car from the cornfield by means of a rope. Then we finally were on our way. The only damage to Jim's car was a corn stalk that dragged rather limply from his muffler.

Gridlock and the Three Bears

Jim and I were married in the early sixties. We decided that for our honeymoon we would drive out west and visit Yellowstone Park, with stop-offs at the Badlands, Mount Rushmore and the Devil's Tower. Since we had gotten married in early June we arrived at the park slightly before the "season" had started. Thus the place did not have nearly so many visitors as there are in mid-summer, a situation we found quite pleasant. When we first got there we did all the obligatory things like watching Old Faithful erupt. Then we decided to take the scenic drive along the road that circles the park.

We packed a picnic lunch to take along since we figured the drive would take most of the day. I was behind the wheel, while Jim was sitting on the passenger side. This was before we had air-conditioning in the car, but the day was lovely, sunny and warm. As we drove we watched the strange and exotic scenery of Yellowstone and all the various forms of wildlife that frequent the park, carefully obeying the signs that were posted very often along the roadside that said "Do Not Feed the Bears."

We had seen few cars as we were driving but eventually we came across one, stopped in the middle of the road. They were, of course, feeding the bears, a mother bear and her two half-grown cubs to be exact. We stopped some distance back and watched, since they were completely blocking the road and there was no way we could get around them.



Eventually the cubs noticed us and came trundling back to solicit some treats from us, approaching the driver's side where I sat. I hastily rolled up the car window, trying to be a good park visitor and not contribute to their delinquency. They refused to go away, standing up on their hind legs, pawing at the window and slobbering hopefully. Jim and I stared back at them stonily, refusing to give in. Meanwhile the car ahead of us drove away, but we couldn't move because of the bear cubs leaning on our car.

Suddenly I heard "Snorrrk!" and then from Jim, "Yeep!" I turned to see Jim, nose to nose with the mother bear, who had come up unnoticed while we were so absorbed with her children. She had stuck her head in the passenger-side window, which we had forgotten to roll up. Jim reached under the bear's head and starting cranking the window immediately, and fortunately the mother bear withdrew her head as he did so. There we were, left with mama and her cubs crawling all over our car. Finally, in desperation, I hauled out one of the sandwiches we had brought for our picnic lunch and tossed it out the rear window while the bears were all at the front. Off they

galloped (as much as overweight bears can gallop) after it and we took off as fast as we could. So, like it or not, we fed the bears after all.



Chicken Big

Eric Mayer commented in his column, “Notes from Byzantium” in *Pixel #16* that he had come across an article that referred to Tyrannosaurus rex as a chicken and that set me to thinking. Hmm...

Let’s return to sixty-five million years ago. There we are, us poor, outnumbered mammals, huddled in our burrows, hoping to sneak out and grab a few insects, munch on some leaves, or take a chance on some possibly abandoned dinosaur eggs. Then we hear something strange.

Those big things out there are making a weird noise like they are frightened. What is going on, we wonder. We peek out and see something hurtling down from the sky. Something huge. Something red and glowing. The sounds from the dinosaurs become even more frantic as we scuttle back to the farthest depths of our burrow for safety and shelter. We understand now what the dinosaurs were saying: “The sky is falling! The sky is falling!”

So you see, Chicken Little was right after all.

-- Lee Anne Lavell

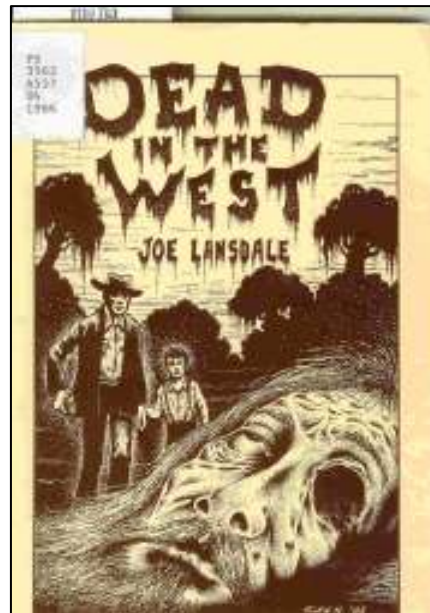
book review in a box

Dead in the West, by Joe Lansdale. New York: Space and Time, 119 pp (1986).

Over the past few months I have been reading a fair amount of books and stories by Joe R. Lansdale, a Texas-based writer, who produces some of the strangest yet most entertaining fiction I have run across in recent years. The latest book I’ve read is this one, set in his favorite milieu, the Texas frontier town of Mud Creek, which is more-or-less in the environs of Lansdale’s hometown of Nacogdoches, Texas, and without question, Mud Creek is not a pleasant place to visit.

In a nutshell, here’s what happens: The Reverend Jebidiah Mercer, a gun-toting man of God, comes to town to spread the Word of the Lord while generally drowning his past sorrows in whiskey and praying to atone for the sins of his past. His wallowing in personal misery is doing just fine, but he runs across some mighty odd goings-on in Mud Creek while preparing for his Saturday night gospel rally. Then the dead start rising from their graves, and things definitely take off from there. By the way, Mercer hates spiders for a reason best explained by reading this book.

The best way I can describe Lansdale’s writings is to call it Gothic Western, if one is to ascribe a label to it. No question about it, this kind of fiction is an acquired taste, but I can now begin to understand why people are talking this guy up. Once you get into his stories, they are hard to put down. Like *Dead in the West*, most of Lansdale’s fiction is creepy, evocative, and well-told. This is highly recommended reading. Read *Dead in the West* if you like good, haunting stories. It’s short, and you won’t be able to put it down.



When life
stuffs
lemons in
your face



A day in the life story, as told by Valerie Purcell

Editorial note: In mid-February, our primary vehicle – a 2003 Dodge Intrepid – was out of commission due to a faulty water pump. It took our mechanics a few days to get the necessary part in after ordering it, and this was a labor-intensive task. This loss of reliable long-distance transportation left my wife and older daughter literally in the dust since they had no other available vehicle to make the 45-mile one-way trip; my car (1990 Olds Cutlass) and Penny’s (1997 Mercury Sable) are basically for local area excursions only. So Val and Penny could not make classes for a couple days that week. What follows - thanks to the modern miracle of copy/paste - is the exact copy of the explanation (complete with digital photos!) of this travail that Val wrote to their professors as their excuse for their absences.

When life stuffs lemons in your face -- you wish you had lemonade.
So, we try to laugh in the face of adversity – which is much
easier when heavily medicated.

Saturday, I noticed liquid coming out of our distance-capable car, so I tried to get a camera under there (since I’m too fat!) to see. I don’t know if you can tell from the pictures or not, but apparently, the car’s **waffle maker** was leaking batter! A serious problem!



So we left it at **Jed’s Auto Repair and Road Kill Café** on Sunday night. Monday we got the news that it was \$800’s worth of serious! The worse news is that the car won’t be ready until **Wed!!!** Well that leaves commuters from College Station high and dry for Tues!

Although it has 114,000 miles on its 2003 life, it is the only car we have a chance to make it to SHSU in. We can't afford to rent a vehicle, and we have no one to borrow a car from anywhere near TX. Therefore, in order for you to get a clearer picture of our situation, I have prepared these pics of our less-capable student cars.

Forgive the poor quality of the photos, but I had to take these photos in the cars' best light -- **in the dark!**



- This classic gem from 1990 only has 153,000 miles on it and is still going strong!
- She still starts everyday – or at least when it has gas in it (only the gas and speed level gauges are broken).
- It rides like the Orient Express, and is about the same size. God bless the Old-mobiles!
- Custom interior – someone else glued ethnic-printed cloth to the

- ceiling, but the duct tape doors are **all me!**
- Holds lots of kids, without those pesky modern seatbelts – but the Carbon monoxide that fills the car *can be* a bit strong – so you shouldn't drive the kids **to** school in it – **only home.**
- When the light comes through the side-to-side, top-to-bottom windshield cracks, it's like a ~~prison~~ prism.

Now here's a beauty!

- Totaled when a monster truck backed over the previous owner at a stop light in S. Dakota, this baby was rescued from a junk yard, and pounded into the shape of a "sporty" car.
- All sorts of new electric and moving parts were tossed under the hood (some in the trunk too).
- Aside from the random clunking in & out of gear at stops, the transmission is practically new with only 169,000 showing.
- 1997 knew how to add luxury – with back seats that fold down flat – convenient for conveying bodies in full rigor.
- Just avoid parking on an incline over 2% - or you will have to push it to level ground to get it started.



Philosophically and religiously speaking, perhaps this is happening now for some 'bigger' purpose? After all, the *middle child* has to get out of school early Tues and start **10 hours** of unpleasant preparations for an even more unpleasant series of medical tests on Wed. a.m. Ah, every 17 yr old's dream day. Maybe for an encore we can all start coming down with that horrible flu everyone's kind enough to share.

-- Valerie Purcell

FROM THE HINTERLANDS

Letters and missives of various importance from readers of this fine, bimonthly fanzine who felt compelled to communicate with me and other contributors to this fine, bimonthly fanzine.

*It is best to begin with a follow-up loc from one of last issue's primary contributors, **Andy Trembley**, who exposits a bit more on his interests in fanac and other matters of note.*

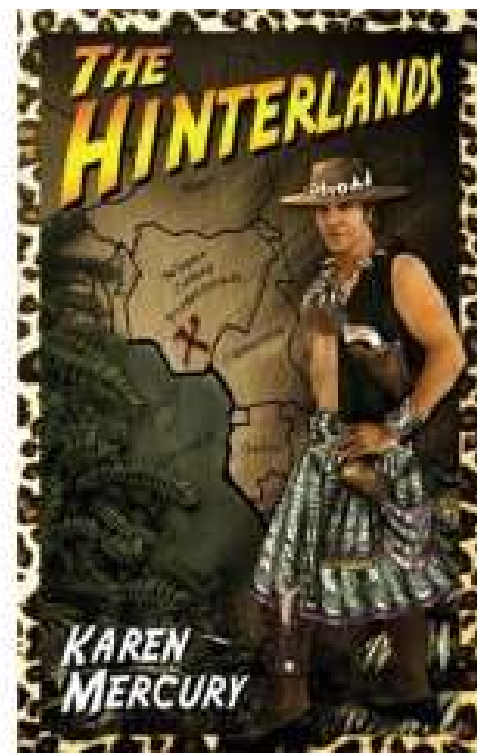
6 Feb 2008

Andrew T Trembley <attrembl@bovil.com>

I've got to start with thanks for the prime article placement.

Do I like running conventions? That's a complicated question. I like working on conventions, and I even like being in charge of a department sometimes, but I'm not the sort of convention fan that feels a need to work on every convention I attend. Running three masquerades last year was a bit of an overload, thank you very much. Running a convention? I've got more crap about Costume-Con 26 spinning around my head than I would prefer, and I'm looking forward to it being past. Making a significant contribution to maybe one convention a year? That's more my speed.

There's a lot of meat in Claire Brialey's article. If I get one thing out of it, I get the agreement that the fannish community will constantly change and evolve, and it must change and evolve. I also see a reiteration of what many of my expat-British friends in fandom have said; fanac isn't accepted in British popular culture the way it is in the US, and not even in some cases by folks who identify as fans.



As for the rest?

I understand the many need for media adaptations to differ from their source books. Ruby slippers are just going to film better. I still wish more media people could perceive what's important in a story and what's the chaff that they can mess around with. I'm also entirely with Lee Anne Lavell in believing that one should always check out the source of any media adaptation.

I've grown to dread the big fannish dinner outing that Arnie Katz talks about. After Ross Pavlac died, I learned from Maria the secret of his flawless fannish dinner outings: he called ahead to three different restaurants, steered us towards locking in on one of his reservations, called the two that weren't popular and cancelled, and showed up with 20 people looking like he had major inside connections. It worked.

I don't know what you've got against looking like Kim Stanley Robinson. I don't know what the hell that Garcia dude is talking about.

I can't really comment on Eric Mayer's pet peeve, except to say that more community organizations and events need to think in those terms.

Who is this "Langford" guy and what is he doing inside my head? Web design is something very close to my working life. I'm all for designing websites that are standards-compliant and devolve well (and avoid gratuitous active content). It makes search and accessibility much simpler. Everybody running a convention website should read "Information Architecture for the World Wide Web" by Rosenfeld and Morville, two librarians. It's a completely non-technical book about how to get your information out there.

And then there's Penney. The review of SF/SF is nice, even if he mixes us up with SoCal. Geographically we should probably be "central" but SF and LA have crushed the center down to pretty much San Luis Obispo, Shell Beach and Paso Robles; by that definition we're strongly Northern California, much to the consternation of the several hundred miles of California to our north. I can't speak to the other 'zines, I've never read them.

Here's to another half-dozen issues of Askance!

Andy Trembley

[Many thanks for the well wishes of the continuing success of this zine, Andy. Now, as for a couple things that you say in your loc:

1) I enjoy working on conventions, too, so long as I don't over-do it, which is always a danger. But with moderation, con-running can be a lot of fun. You certainly meet all sorts of interesting folks.

*2) I certainly agree with you that fandom will continuously grow and change over time. This is inevitable. The discussion that's been going on in this zine and elsewhere (**Vegas Fandom Weekly, Banana Wings**) has begun to veer into this direction, and I believe change is A Good Thing. Ghu only knows what will pass for fanzines and cons in the future, let alone what fans will look like. No matter what, we will always be bound together by our love for the literature*

and this community.]

~ ~ ~

*My favorite – oh, wait! That should be "favourite" – loc-writer from north of the border, **Lloyd Penney**, chimes in with assorted commentary about lastish, especially regarding the "Core Fandom" discussion.*

1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2

January 30, 2008

Many thanks for *Askance 6*. Time for a letter of comment. I'm just tearing through a huge stack o' zines, and A6 is next!

I don't think the Core Fandom argument is the next Topic A, but I do think that while we may think that our own little corner of fandom is nifty and the best, it doesn't help to discount other areas of fandom. I can see the Core Fandom designation because fanzine fandom is the oldest fandom in the bunch (and don't we look it, hm?), and it is the core of what we might see as the origins of fandom, but as said elsewhere, we suffer from an embarrassment of activities in Fandom as a whole. If there's too much to do, we are victims of our own imaginations, thinking up other things we could do in a fannish way. We will never be bored, and there always seems to be a fannish way to pursue any talent or hobby.

Question though...through my own 30 years of fannish endeavour, I have been a Trekfan, a convention fan, a masquerader, a Worldcon fan and a fanzine fan, at different times, or sometimes overlapping. I've kept things fresh for myself by refocusing or changing my interests. Does this mean that at times I was a fan, and other times, I wasn't? I've had other people in my time tell me I wasn't a fan and why, and I set out to prove them wrong. I don't feel I have to prove my fannish credentials now. I like the smorgasbord of things to do to keep you alert and busy. Arnie has every right to promote fanzine fandom to try to draw more people into it; we've been trying with limited

success, and we treasure those who have come to join or rejoin us over the past ten years or so. I won't say that my fanac is the only true fanac, and not yours; it begins to look and sound like a religious discussion. Small conventions are neat and easy to encompass, but Big Tent Fandom can be fun, too. I look forward to the Montréal Worldcon.

(Speaking of which...I will be running the fanzine lounge in Montréal. Lots of time to cook up ideas, get people to host the room, etc. Don't know who's running the room in Denver yet. Yvonne will be working on the team cooking up space, science and technology programming, and will also be in finance, counting the money.)



The difference in the fannish generations between Arnie Katz and Andy Tremblay can easily be seen. Arnie came into fandom when there was but a few things to do in fandom (and that was fine!), and Andy came in with that huge selection of fanac. In my own fanac with fanzines, there are some zines that know nothing of Core Fandom, and some that know little of fandom itself. (There more and more crossovers between

fanzines and small press publishing.) There are clubzines with editors who know little of the fanzine fan traditions; they just like to publish, and are doing so to benefit the SF club they belong to. Fanzine fandom is relevant, but it has shrunk, only in comparison to the enormous fandom that has sprouted up around it over the past 70 years or so. Where does a fan fit in? Anywhere he or she pleases. If you feel there's a group shutting you out of what you want to do, do it anyway. I also don't think there will be any kind of feud with other fandoms because we've been so insular in some ways, most of the fans at Worldcon don't even know we're there. I have seen how destructive being exclusive can be, and I know that being inclusive builds community. I'd rather have the latter. I am slowly getting comfortable in fanzine fandom (took me long enough, only 25 years in the loccol), and I am also comfortable in local fandom, and other fandoms as well.

John, if you go to a convention, and your badge says, "Not Kim Stanley Robinson" or "Kim Stanley Robinson's Younger Brother", you'll have no one but yourself to blame. Also, I think I understand Chris' pet peeve. I have often wondered aloud why fans seem so conservative and set in their ways, while reading a liberal, fast-changing genre of literature. Maybe we are the cranky oldpharts Andy refers to...

The regional convention calendar... such a wealth of cons to go to. Our local con is in about two months. In the meantime, fannish pubnights do just fine for regular gatherings. We've actually found they are preferable to having a club, even though it would g]be great to have one of those, too. I see Howard Tayler is a guest at ChimaeraCon. He'll be the art GoH at Ad Astra in Toronto two weeks afterwards.

The locol...I like the idea of the Propeller Beanie Kid. Sounds like it should be a stuffed toy...with a beard, of course. And, I hope that David Burton is preparing his next *Pixel* right now. *[Sadly, Lee Anne Lavell informs me Pixel has been discontinued. That zine will be missed.]*

I have sent a couple of e-mails to Joan Marie Knapperburger, the current president of First Fandom. This goes with another e-

mail I sent some months ago. She has yet to respond to any questions I have. Perhaps I need to be referred by a current FF member?

... I guess I did forget to loc issue 4, and I caught up and got it done. Collect the whole set, and respond to them all. I don't like letting one go. I do believe that neofans can be a positive influence. Not only do new fans ask questions, but they remind us of our own neofannish days, just in case our egos balloon a little too much. I make the assumption that the neofan will see that this thing we call fandom has a history and a reason for all the things we do within it, and be curious. Most new people I see at cons are just there to party.

Tart reform? That's no fun at all! I certainly enjoy meeting all the unreformed tarts I see at conventions, and don't tell Yvonne.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

[Speaking as one cranky old phart to another, I don't think of myself as being too insular, but I agree that fanzine fans – heck, most fannish subgroups are this – can be rather insular at times. There is so much to do in fandom nowadays that being a Science Fiction Fan can be a daunting enterprise, but that can be a benefit; with so many different things to do, there is bound to be something for a neo-fan – or veteran fan, for that matter – to do that catches their interest. I wouldn't call this Core Fandom discussion a feud either, but mostly just an effort by long-term fans to redefine their place in the changing fannish environment.]

~ ~ ~

*While we're on the subject of fannish groups – as if you could avoid it in these pages – **Randy Byers** has a rather tongue-in-cheek way of looking at this topic.*

21 January 2008
Randy Byers <fringefaan@yahoo.com>

So here's a theory. Fandom is an anarchy, which means it has no center or core. Instead, it is a bunch of allied groups who overlap each other at the margins, or at the

fringes. Thus we are all fringe fans. Every last one of us is on the fringe of some group or another. I say we embrace it! Let's all be outsiders, forever excluded from what the cool kids are doing. Let us be proud and lonely. I'm pretty sure that's the way Ghu intended it to be.

Suffice it to say that I'm not a big fan of the phrase "Core Fandom". What's wrong with Trufandom? Although on that model (i.e., dropping the E from an existing word), I like the wag on one of the lists who suggested it was Cor Fandom, on the model of "Cor blimey." Supposedly that's a variant on "God blind me," so Corfandom would be those of us who worship the Elder Ghods of fandom like Tucker, Burbee, and Hoffman.

When Arnie was originally arguing for the "Core Fandom" coinage in VFW, I suggested Roots Fandom as an alternative, on the model of Roots Music. That is, fandom that's aware of its own historical roots in the lettercols of the old pulp zines and so on, which seems to me to be the important thing that Arnie is pointing at. But in the end none of these phrases is satisfactory, so I'll stick with the old ones for now. Call me a fanzine fan. Or just call me a Claire Brialey fan, because her more narrative and re-complicated view of things is probably the closest to mine expressed so far in your estimable zine. Things get blurry at the boundaries between groups, that's for sure. And that's where it gets interesting, really: the point at which it's not clear which group you belong to or what your true identity is. There's room to grow and move around there, where the boundaries aren't fixed.

Cheers,

Randy Byers

[Good point, Randy. With the boundaries undefined, fans can slide around from interest to interest with the greatest of ease. In my limited time back in fandom (since late 2005, really), I have noticed this happening a lot at the few cons I've been to recently. Depending on what interests a person, then that person can Go There and Enjoy, which in my mind has always been the fannish philosophy. Fans are rather anarchic in

nature, I think, so they're going to defy categorization if they can.

*Along those lines, I am mostly a fanzine fan, but I also consider myself a science fiction fan (reading and watching it), and a bit of a media fan (movies/television) at times. Even gaming is fun, when I'm in the mood for it. And that last phrase is important: "when I'm in the mood for it" pretty much determines what I will read or watch or do given the time. After all, this is only a hobby interest for me. (SHOCK! *ghasp*)]*

~ ~ ~

*Over the course of these last couple years, the letters of comment I have received from **Eric Mayer** have been consistently among the most erudite and interesting locs to read. He always gets me to thinking. So, with that statement made, here he is again:*

Wed, 09 Jan 2008

"Eric Mayer" <maywrite2@epix.net>

John,

Nice cover by Kyle Hinton! I really like sfnal art in fanzines, some of Frank Wu's retro covers for example, or the otherwordly Ditmar stuff you feature in this issue. But it is also cool that fanzines can showcase art that isn't strictly related to science fiction or of a faanish variety. Part of the joy of doing an amateur zine is not having to conform to a "market." You can give your creativity, as an artist, writer or editor free rein. Hope we see more work by Kyle.

Now I am shocked, shocked I tell you, that loc is not pronounced "lawk" which is always the way I have pronounced it. Well, in my head. I'm not sure how often, if ever, I have actually verbalized the term. And, no, I did not come to fandom via any media interest. When I read this I asked Mary, how she pronounced "loc" to which she replied "L-O-C." What? Weirdly enough we've been married 15 years and this has never come up. Apparently neither of us has ever had occasion to say "lawk" or "L-O-C" in all that time. I guess it is too late to call the whole thing off.

So Robert Sabella is another fan (if we dare

call ourselves that) who hasn't done much in-person fanning. I'd begun to wonder if I were entirely alone in that. Oddly enough, I just recently read his zine for the first time and it never occurred to me to wonder whether he had had much personal contact with fans. I mean, I enjoyed the zine. That was the contact I was interested in.



Like him it's not as if I'm a complete jerk socially. I've pointed out over the years that I'm "anti-social" meaning I don't much like socializing and am definitely an introvert but perhaps I've given people the wrong impression. Going to cons to chat with people seems like such a purely social function that I'd probably be uncomfortable. Given some hint of an agenda I get on much better. For a few years I organized and ran the annual summer picnic for the local orienteering club I belonged to. (Which is not to say I am angling to run cons!)

Chris Garcia's peeve is one with which I concur and of course it also ties in with Andy Trembley's excellent piece. Many of those who consider themselves the most hardcore of fans are not very welcoming, but they tend to be folks who have known each other for ages and you can't expect a group of close friends who have known each other for forty years or so to necessarily be welcoming to newcomers who don't and can never share all that those friends have in common. This isn't really "cliquish" if you stop to think about it. You can't just barge in on a small bunch of very close, long-time friends. Could you, say, crash a fiftieth High School reunion of a school you never attended and expect to be accepted as an equal? Hardly. Not necessarily because those people don't like you or are cliquish

but just because, well, you don't share any of the things that they do.

Unfortunately, more and more some fans (and mostly older fans) confuse fandom with their own circle of friends. Or, worse yet, want to define fandom narrowly as being only their own circle of friends. Why can't people accept that there is a big hobby called fandom and within this hobby people form particular groups of friends with whom they are especially close because of age, attitudes and shared experience? People always form groups of friends. Your particular group of friends is not the hobby! Why would you imagine it is?

If you want to argue that your friends are the best, most brilliant, most interesting and talented...fine...you should feel that way about your friends. And maybe some newcomer to fandom doesn't fit automatically into your circle. But don't pretend you and your friends *are* fandom. Guess what, the only people who agree with you are your friends, and probably not all of them.

The part of fandom I like best is fanzine fandom. This is simply a personal preference. There is nothing inherently more virtuous in writing for amateur magazines than, say, filk-singing or costuming. Fanzine fandom is perfectly descriptive of what it is. If you publish a fanzine you are part of fanzine fandom, whether I approve of you or not! You might hang out mostly with a different bunch of fanzine fans than I do, but that doesn't make you, or me, any less fanzine fans or, for that matter any less members of the wider fandom of which fanzine fandom is a part. Yes, fandom started with fanzine fandom but it has grown.

I spent more than a decade in fandom from the early seventies to the mid-eighties. I published a regular zine, wrote hundreds of locs and articles and drew tons of illos and covers too. Yet I had hardly any contact with the majority of the fans and zines which some fans today insist represent "real" fandom. The truth of the matter is that I just hung out with a different bunch of friends. But, yeah, as Andy Trembley so aptly puts it, there came a time when the giraffes tried to

tell me I wasn't a giraffe. And yeah, maybe according to their definitions I wasn't, but that sure didn't affect the fact that I was a fan. If I weren't, I wouldn't be writing this loc.

Best,

Eric

[I am with you, Eric, in that my favorite part of fandom is fanzine fandom. Why I feel this way has been the subject of assorted bits I have written over the years, but suffice to say that the inter-activity of fanzines makes it a lot of fun. I enjoy getting feedback, articles, artwork, and being creative in putting a zine together.

Funny thing, nowadays I rarely have any physical contact with fans, although AggieCon happens once a year here in town; the problem there is that I barely know anybody locally who attends since it is a student-run con. However, my not hanging out with fans on a regular basis does not make me a non-fan. Far from it. I definitely "feel" like a real fan. Judging by the success of this zine, that feeling has merit. Besides, I thank people like you who make this zine possible.

~ ~ ~

So then Eric fired off an addendum loc the following week to provide much needed egoboo to one of my writers/contributors:

18 Jan 2008

"Eric Mayer" <maywrite2@epix.net>

John,

Just a little addition to my *Askance* 6 loc. I got so carried away yapping about fan-political stuff I pretty much talked myself out and glancing back over the issue I realized I really should have saved enough energy to toss some egoboo towards **Bill Fischer**. The Figby idea of attack by a pimento-wielding salad shooter was funny. The Wikiphilia Tart article was downright hilarious. Bill's mind takes some seriously weird turns! In fact, he'd better be careful or he's liable to lose it altogether. I loved the chart of Medieval vs Victorian penalties. Maybe it's my legal background! His

mention of trial by ordeal, such as putting one's hand into boiling lead, made me think how similar our court system is today. Even a civil trial is a punishment in itself so even if you win you've lost. Anyway, I was chuckling all the way through that piece with its twisted "logic" and cool word play. It's so much easier, though, to pontificate on fandom than to comment on a piece like that.

Best,

Eric

[Bill thanks you from the bottom of his oddly-skewed little heart. There are more Wikiphilia articles and Figby strips on the way, I might add.]

[I should also include this tidbit of information: Bill is also a fine guitar player and has – or used to have many moons ago – a fine voice as well. It has been awhile since I have played with him and Michael Johnson.]

~ ~ ~

Joseph Major has become a bit of a regular loc-writer in this zine, and I like his particular style of loc. Therefore...

1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA
jtmajor@iglou.com

January 9, 2008

Askance
John Purcell
3744 Marielene Circle
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Dear John:

Bemused Natterings: A welcoming French waiter? I guess you wanted to get started with fantasy . . .

But I suspect I'm not really to be considered worth being in the core of Core Fandom, focused on its Focal Point. My interests don't quite converge, I'm cored out as it were. And as that's the focal point, the core of thish, it leaves me at something of a loss.

Would you like to hear about my latest medical problems? I thought not.

Fannish Pet Peeves: There was a silent-movie adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1925. And even before that, L. Frank Baum himself had appeared in a live-action intro to silent movies of Oz stories. That was when he went bankrupt, and fortunately some of the copyrights were in his wife's name. But, given the comparative markets of books and movies, should it really be all that surprising that the predominant image of the story is from the movie version?

In a contemporary remake of *The Land of Oz* the ending would probably be changed. But that would be because of the need of the executive producer, the producer, the director, the assistant director, the star, the second lead, the third lead, the Church of Scientology, PETA . . . and all their writers to get in on the action.

Penney for Your Thoughts: And yet, for all his skill, verve, and energy, Dale Speirs never even gets considered for fanzine awards. It just goes to show.

Regional Convention Calendar: It looks as if even the Imperial Storm Troopers can't hold out against the drive for Women In Combat. Now if they would all look that way, then . . .

From the Hinterlands: So you are a sucker for gawd-awful science fiction movies. You ought to get more in touch with Graeme Cameron. I still recall his review of the two "Gor" movies!

Fannish ephemera: At MilPhilCon, Dave Kyle was running a panel. Ed Meskys wanted to know if he could sit in the front row aisle seat so his service dog could lie down on the floor conveniently to hand. I got chosen to relay the request, and Kyle approved. I couldn't help myself. I told Ed, "Dave Kyle says you can sit here."

Lisa saw the look on his face. Further deponent sayeth not.

Tart Reform: Definitely. Yes, yes, oh yes,

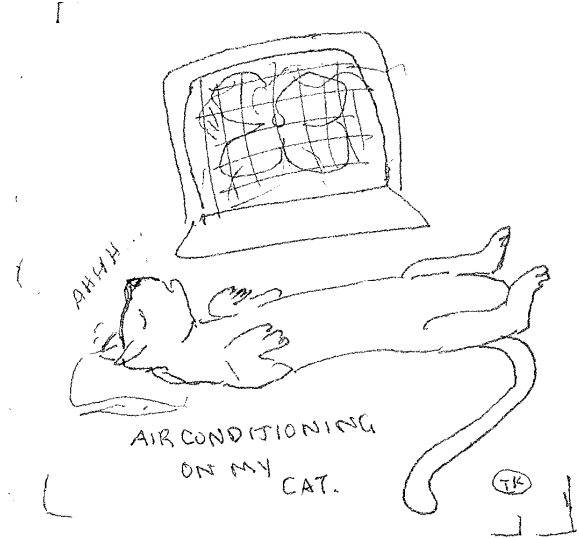
yes, yes . . .is my keying all right? . . oh yes...

DUFF Ballott: While I know the Francises well, I don't think I'm a recognized fan by the standards of the voting.

Namarie,
Joseph T Major

[Definitely, I most certainly agree that Dale Speirs deserves some kind of accolade for his "skill, verve, and energy" for producing Opuntia for so many years. It is one of the few FAPazines I get and I enjoy reading it. Dale is one of fandom's unsung heroes, IMHO. Consider this response a proper

bit of egoboo for Mr. Speirs.]



IAHF'S:

James Bacon, Arnie Katz, David Langford, Robert Lichtman, Guy Lillian, Theresa Mather, Bill Mills, Barry Short, R-Laurraine Tutihasi



Sir Arthur C. Clarke (1917-2008)

I love this photo of Sir Clarke. There were so many pictures available to choose from on the Internet, but I chose this one because I think it captures the essence of Arthur C. Clarke's good nature and intelligence.

All of my life as a science fiction reader, this man has been one of my favorite authors. His fiction never failed to entertain or fascinate me. My favorite books are *Rendezvous with Rama*, *Childhood's End*, *Against the Fall of Night*, and *3001: The Final Odyssey*, but so many of his stories and novels enthralled me it was difficult to single out just these.

Clarke was a cornerstone of my experience as a reader, and his meticulous, poetic language inspires me still. He will be missed, and his final novel, *The Last Theorem* (with Frederik Pohl) is due out later this year.

Godspeed, Sir Clarke, and thank you for the wonderful stories.

Περιοσιαλ Χονπεντιον Χαλενδαρ*

**regional convention calendar, in case you can 't figure it out.*

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Event List [Schedule]

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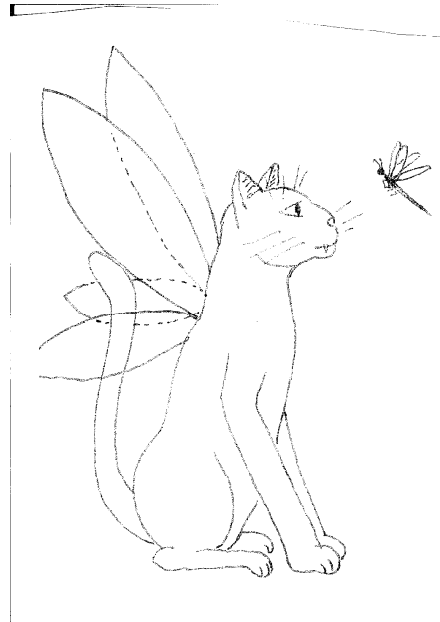
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This incarnation of SoonerCon is deliberately designed to celebrate all aspects of fandom. We don't intend to have a solely "books" or "TV" or "art" emphasis. The emphasis is on FUN. Events include: Film Festival, Art Show, Gaming, Cosplay and Masquerade. Charity. Panel and Workshops. Video Rooms.
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"Who is this 'Langford' guy and what is he doing inside my head?"

Andy Trembley (in his loc)

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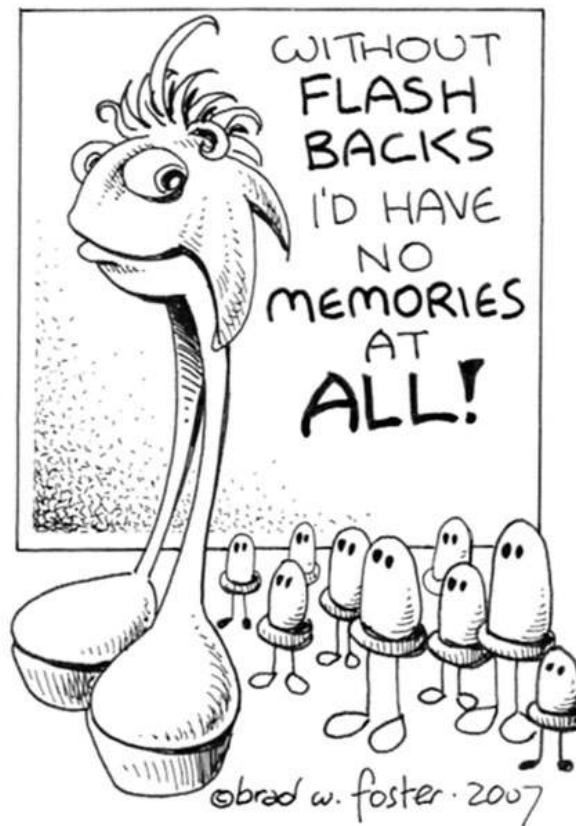
what's next

The May, 2008 issue will have a double convention report by your lovely editor: Corflu Silver and AggieCon 39. The latter comes first (March 27-30, 2008) and the other one is a month later at the end of April. I have been having a lot of fun telling people that I'm playing Vegas at the end of April, and in essence, that is true. See, I am bringing my guitar out to Corflu Silver to play a few songs in the fannish cabaret that Teresa Cochran is setting up for Friday night of that con. This fact also means that I have to make time to do some serious practicing. Well, such a sacrifice I have to make sometimes... Corflu Silver should be a good time.

There may also be another report in the May issue, that being a TAFF report from that crazed fanediting giant from the Bay Area, Christopher J. Garcia. No doubt, Chris will be pubbing the lion's share of his TAFF trip report in his own zine, *Drink Tank*, but he has committed (there's a word to be associated with him!) to writing something for *Askance*. If he does, it will be a welcome addition to this zine.

Also in the next issue, I am planning to make it a special Joseph R. Lansdale issue. Like I alluded to earlier in this issue, I have been reading a lot of his fiction to gear up for interviewing him at AggieCon 39, if he's there. (He is not listed as a guest yet, but since Joe lives a few hours east of here, chances are he'll be attending.) James Bacon has promised to write an article about Lansdale (marriage has *not* slowed James' output, it appears) for inclusion in the May ish.

So you can see that there is a lot of stuff upcoming in the May issue of this zine. It all promises to be a lot of fun, and it is my intention to make it as enjoyable as I possibly can. Come on back now to visit in a couple months and we shall see what all is going on. Thanks for reading, and don't forget to write!



-- John Purcell