

BEAM

SEVENTEEN



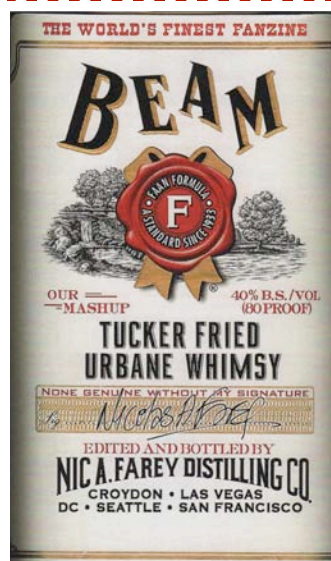
BEAM

THE OCCASIONAL UNOFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS
ISSUE #17 : OCTOBER 2022

MAY TUCKER'S GHOST BE SMILING UPON US



"My voice suddenly got lower has it? Maybe my knickers are too tight."



SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

ULRIKA O'BRIEN

It's funny how a word might save your life, and I'm saying a lot right now.

— Rob Thomas, "Can't Help Me Now"

There's a plausible hypothesis about human speech that the evolutionary purpose of gossip, or more broadly, conversation, is much the same as that of picking nits in other primates. It's a troupe bonding mechanism: a way of giving attention, sharing mutual support, friendly warmth, and even love, with each other, and thus building our mutual closeness, trust, and esteem. Both nitpicking and conversation support the health of the participants. In the case of picking nits, it's physical health: eliminating parasites and the diseases they carry. In the case of conversation, it's mental and emotional health, which, while not always recognized as such, are just as important to a healthy individual. Conversation is a critical means for human beings to feel connected. It's how we understand that we belong to our friends, our family, our tribe. It's how we know we are seen, liked, loved, and valued.

This issue of **BEAM** is edited by **Nic Farey** and **Ulrika O'Brien**.

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But conversation is a far more powerful adaptation than cleaning insects out of each other's pelts. It has a vastly broader reach. It works not just one-to-one, but one- or many-to-many. And conversation can leverage so many time- and distance-spanning communication technologies. We can have conversations via the written word (Look! You're soaking in it!) across the decades and around the globe. We converse by telephone, SMS, video chat, Zoom, podcast, YouTube, and all the social media platforms of the internet. That broader reach means any one individual can make human connections with many, many people all at once. We can speak to an audience of dozens, hundreds, even thousands of others at one go. Often, they can speak back to us. (But, "Don't read the comments!") Far-reaching conversation is an amazing tool for growing and supporting the health not just of the individual, but of the troupe, the community, the nation, even the world. Conversation unites us.

Which is why it's a terrible, terrible thing when we break it. Right now fandom, mirroring the nation and wider world, is busy breaking its ability to converse with itself. Nothing good can come of this project.

As I see it, conversation needs three things to flourish: an open channel, a protocol for how to engage, and a (series of) topic(s) of discussion. Oh, yeah, and it requires an obvious fourth condition: conversation requires others to converse with. We've permitted a lot of damage to the first to simply accrue in the name of corporate capitalism and the unfettered free market, and too many of us are now openly attacking the second and the fourth pillars of conversation, mostly in the pursuit of such high-minded, well-intentioned, and worthy-seeming goals as those claiming to be "justice," "equity," and most ironically, "inclusion." Which, if this goes on, leaves us

with only the shared topics of conversation to keep us talking to each other. It's not enough.

Another term for the open channel is agora: a public gathering place. People first need a place to gather, in order to talk to each other. In the ancient Greek city states, the agora was the open park or plaza where citizens gathered to listen to public talks, hang out, socialize, and to conduct democracy, and business. In Athens, the agora was a highly sacred place, situated just below the slope of the Acropolis, surrounded by temples, and centered around the sacred Panathenic Way. As with many ideas we get from the Ancient Greeks, I think there's something very right about holding sacred the places where we meet together to conduct public life.

In the modern world, that place can be physical or virtual, in person or remote, on paper or pixels, but always, ideally in some sense a public space, where anyone can wander in and, so long as they obey the rules of the commons, participate. The best places are biggish and reasonably open, so people can come at their convenience, listen for a while, find a conversation that interests them, and then drop into it and add their mite to the ongoing discussion. As we all know, fanzines have been one such public place, but they have long been in decline as a share of total conversation. Usenet was, for a moment, an excellent agora, but the social disruptions post 9/11 and the expansion and widespread use of the web undermined its collective usefulness. We all went elsewhere, off into our own social silos and political echo chambers. What we're left with these days are places like Facebook, Twitter, and other social media, all of which are very much subject to the forces of commercial profitability and the current craze for preemptive censorship. That limits the possibilities for genuinely free conversation along multiple dimensions, not least of which

is the question of whether you'll ever even see a given component of the conversation hit your feed, or whether it will be hidden from you either by overt censorship for your own supposed good, or the ad-hit maximizing whims of "the algorithm."

As if the decline of viable focal point meeting places weren't sufficient harm, fandom is, as a tribe, even within a given agora, breaking its ability to converse with itself. We anathematize people for their utterances, their beliefs, or even, worst of all, the caricatures of their beliefs that their detractors stigmatize them with. We ban people from conventions for acts of speech, exclude them from clubs and meetings based on the color of their skin, we block them on Facebook and Twitter, and to what should be our everlasting shame, we fucking disinvite honored guests from the conventions that invited them in the first place, because of things they said elsewhere or even simply because of things others said in their domain of influence. We cut fans out of our conversations *toute court* for wrongthink. And in so doing, not only do we cut ourselves off from them and their ideas and the possibility of changing their minds, or maybe even ours, but we also silence those who witness all this banning and shunning and blocking and casting out. Nobody in their right mind who values community and having friends is going to utter a heterodox opinion

if the potential consequence of such an utterance is being put out on an ice floe to die alone. Every time we cancel someone, the spiral of silence expands. Conversation, real discussion, cannot happen inside a spiral of silence. The loss is immeasurable.

In this we are not very different from society at large, and at both the macro- and the micro-levels, breaking down discourse is a dangerous, deeply stupid thing to do. If we cast out or silence dissident voices we are breaking our own ability to understand not just them, but the world. As I've said before, we are all wrong about something; if we won't hear perspectives we disagree with, we may never learn just where and how we are wrong. We discuss to discover. If we don't discuss, discovery recedes.

But it is so much worse that we are doing it in fandom – doing it *to* fandom – because fans, we of all people, ought to know better. Conversation is what made us. It is why we are here, why fandom exists in the first place. Deep in the letter columns of pulp science



fiction prozines, fandom started as an epistolary conversation, enthusiasts sharing their enthusiasm with each other out of the sheer joy of finding each other and finding a love in common. The prozines gave fans something to talk about as well as a way to find each other. And talk they did. At length and with great brio. And those first letter exchanges, our initial conversation, broadened and deepened and found new forums and new media of transmission (direct correspondence, fanzines, APAs, even clubs and conventions and gatherings in pubs and cafeterias) and became a dizzying, pell-mell galaxy of conversations, far too vast for any one person to follow or even see the full scope of. Conversation created fandom.

This epic conversation has continued through all its decades, expanding and evolving and leaving traces in the pages of fanzines and the ephemeral ether of the internet, along the way creating a culture and a community, and untold friendships and so much love. Fandom in some sense *is* that conversation: Fandom is the self-conscious entity that talks with itself about itself, and oh, yes, occasionally about science fiction, too. Conversation is our origin story. It is what and who we are. Killing the ability to converse is literally an existential threat to fandom.

But even if it weren't terrible enough that killing conversation kills fandom, there's worse. Killing conversation has the potential to kill you, too. Literally. Fandom, the community it is, and the friendships that underlie that community, is one of the rare bulwarks against that most modern of human diseases: social isolation and loneliness. Loneliness kills. Acute loneliness will release as much cortisol in your bloodstream as getting punched in the face. Sustained high levels of cortisol are toxic; they will trash your cardiovascular system, increase risk of heart attack, or stroke,

and accelerate all sorts of other mortal events. You have only to look at the meteoric increase in deaths of despair during the pandemic lockdown to get a sense of how hard loneliness hits people. Or look at our modern, chronic, and growing social wounds of depression and drug addiction: these are symptoms of a society that has lost meaningful connection with itself, and are the precursors to those deaths of despair. As Johann Hari points out, moderns are collectively the loneliest people ever to inhabit the planet. A regular longitudinal study that asks people how many friends they have that they could rely on in a crisis finds over the last five decades or so the modal answer has declined from five, to one, to now, most often zero. Zero friends that the average person could count on in a crisis: nobody. But fandom has been, for me at least, and many of you, I suspect, a place where the kinds of friendships that will shine in a crisis still flourish. I still have five friends I can count on in a crisis. I have more. And I know it, because they have come through for me in the past. Not all of those friendships are because of fandom, but most are. That is unspeakably precious. Don't break it.

To me, holding on to, not just permitting but encouraging dissenting and unorthodox perspectives is an obvious necessity for the intellectual health and growth of any community of thinkers. But here's another way to look at it: there's a term for a group that seeks to exclude all speech and thought that deviates from the group's accepted norms and beliefs. A term for those who seek external contact only to feel rejected and to reinforce the friendly warmth of returning to right-thinking in-group purity. That term is "cult." Let's don't become a cult.

UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...



Not so unusually these days, since he's everywhere, but always a definite pleasure to get **ALAN WHITE** on the front end.

COVER

With a piece first published in BSFA's *Focus* writers' magazine in 2008, **DEV ARGAWAL** finds an unusual interpretation of ***Dramatic Truth.***

PAGE 8



Apparently not unusually for New Zealand's North Island, a well-medicated (whiskey and lemon) **LEE WOOD** avers that ***Winter Sucks.***

PAGE 10

With what is perhaps an unusual fanhistorical viewpoint, **JUSTIN E.A. BUSCH** considers numbered fandoms, TAFF, and posits an entirely new theory, advocating ***Renewing the Past, Reshaping the Future.***

PAGE 15

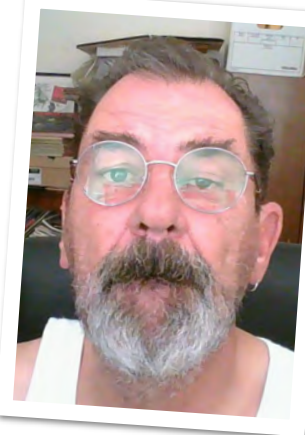


We're unusually pleased to have been granted the first-published segment of "**ORANGE**" **MIKE LOWREY**'s TAFF trip report, in which he plans to become ***A Visible Fan Abroad*** but is initially thwarted.

PAGE 24

We've rather parochially, perhaps, defined an unusual convention location as one neither in North America or Great Britain. **YLVA SPÅNGBERG** provides a Scandinavian vignette, ***To Åcon, With Love.***

PAGE 27



BSc(Econ) **NIC FAREY** considers economic systems in sf, and wonders how starships get built, asking simply that someone should ***Show Me the Money.***

PAGE 28

ULRIKA O'BRIEN ponders the potentially unusual burden and decidedly mixed blessing of having... ***Tits.***

PAGE 31



UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...

THE READERSHIP : *Suscipe Verbum*. Edited by **Ulrika**.

LOCS : PAGE 36

ON OTHER PAGES...

Uncredited text by **Nic Farey** and/or **Ulrika O'Brien**.. Editorial song title by **Bonnie Raitt**.

BACOVER: Photography by **Morgan Fisher**, who writes: "My favourite card in Brian Eno's *Oblique Strategies* (1975) is the one that reads: "Honour thy mistake as hidden intention." About 25 years ago I spent Christmas on Maui and decided to take photos (at night) of the spectacular illuminations on the outside of many houses there. I had no tripod so I shot hand-held, and my camera automatically selected a very slow shutter speed. Next day when I saw the prints (this was film) I noticed with dismay that they were all blurred, as I hadn't held the camera steady enough. In the bin they all went. An hour later I decided to give them a second look, and this time I noticed how interesting the light trails were on some of the shots, so that night I decided to purposely move the camera while shooting. Thus started an ongoing passion which still fascinates me. I called it "light painting" - but it is the opposite of the recent popular technique where people "paint" with flashlights, LEDS, etc., in front of a static camera. For me the camera is the brush, the sensor is the canvas and literally any light, natural or man-made, can be my paint. In this image it was a special plasma lamp I acquired (like lightning shimmering in a bottle) with a blue wash behind it as I turned the camera in circles. No CGI - this is how it came out of the camera. Try it - you'll like it!"



morganfisherart.com

Art: **Eddie Jones** : 'Ringworld' cover art (p28); **Jay Kinney** : BEAM label logo (p2); **Julie Faith McMurray** : (pp38, 40, 43, 45, 48)

Photography: **Tia Haygood** : Morgan Fisher (p7) ; **Lee Wood** : various creatures (pp10-12)

Other photographs/illos, predictably nicked off the internet, selfies or unknown credit. Or FBF profile pics.

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS...

...is the name devised to describe the late-night fangatherings, surprisingly often in the environs of N Farey, which are mostly laid-back affairs, tending to involve the consumption of Jim Beam and other fine liquors, and a whole lot of ~~bullshit~~ amenable conversation on whatever topic might arise.

If you think you might be or might have been an Unusual Suspect at any point in time, then you probably are.

Wherever two or more may be gathered in the spirit of Tucker, we encourage you to raise a glass to the Suspects' Toast: "Absent Friends".

"What contemptible scoundrel has stolen the cork to my lunch?"

DRAMATIC TRUTH

DEV ARGAWAL

Imagine this scene:

It's 1993. You're a twenty one year old man, a hothead. You've argued with your family, ended your first relationship. You're angry and confused. So you join the US Marine Corps.

You find what you wanted: order, discipline, routine. Your hard work is rewarded and you make corporal after two years. Now you begin to play the army like a system. What once appealed is now tedious. You yearn for days off, for the discipline to ease up.

One morning, your men are out in two squads. You've got one; your friend Steve Weddle is in charge of the other. You're dropped at the base of a hill and given a mission. Hike to the top, set up a perimeter and defend it. But the feeling that you're pretending and it's pointless is relentless.

Congratulations, this is your first existential crisis at the age of twenty three.

At the top of the hill, you get out a football and invite your squad to start playing. They follow orders and you just gave them one. Steve's squad is busy setting up a perimeter and marching around it with their empty machine guns. To you, it's glaringly obvious that they're pretending.

Meanwhile, the earth hasn't opened up, the world didn't end because you let your men blow off steam instead of marching in circles.

But here comes someone. And it must be someone as they're in a helicopter. Senior management. Who else flies at random in a military helicopter? They land and out comes a colonel. Like most colonels he's past middle age, with an iron crew cut and silver moustache. He's old enough to have come through the Vietnam War. He walks over, a slender rack of a man, ramrod straight.

He smiles amiably to you and Steve. Steve, the sergeant, explains the mission and what they've

done. Your guys are in the background playing with the football, laughing, yelling, goofing off, as instructed.

The colonel, you reflect, is a very senior rank. Unless you're on parade, you never even see a general. Now here you are about to have a conversation with a colonel. He is basically, as Steve points out, a general-in-the-field.

The colonel is looking at you. Expectant. "And what about you, corporal? What are your men doing?"

With nothing to lose, you explain your thinking. You recount your men's experience, the reality of current world conflict and the chances for another war after such a convincing result in the Gulf.

The colonel nods, apparently understanding. Feeling more confident you explain more.

No one will even know when you come down off the hill. So if no one knows, what is the point in doing it? The whole squad can do this exercise in their sleep, what does one less repetition count?

The colonel nods again and looks at Steve. "Thank you, sergeant." He's readying to leave. To you he says, "Thank you, private."

Reflexively, you correct him. "Corporal, sir."

The colonel leans in and shakes his head at you. "No, son. Private."

In an instant, two stripes, two years of work dissolves in front of you...

This was not your story (obviously). I recount it here by way of discussing character and character sketches.

There are many traps to avoid in writing. Repetition, laziness and superficiality are the more obvious ones. How to distinguish between characters, to make them distinct is perhaps a subtler challenge. Drawing on real experience and things you know to be true is an asset. In this case, I don't know any of the details I've just

described. But I know what I was doing when I heard this story and who I heard it from. I heard it more than once and I then recounted it to other people -- one of the reasons that it stays fresh in my mind.

Over time, I've embellished it. Steve Weddle must have told me the hapless corporal's name but I doubt he described the colonel's moustache and posture. I'm fairly certain that I remember Steve's exact words -- "No, son, private" -- delivered like a punchline.

I've used it as the guts of this article, taking advantage of the events as they present themselves to me to create characters for the people involved. Stories like this surround us. Vivid details cross our lives constantly. The trick is to be receptive to them. If we're listening, we have the raw material to turn them into characters that tell the stories we want.

Everyone has a clear idea who Winston Smith is. No one would confuse him with Tolkein's Samwell Tarly or China Mieville's Isaac Dan der Grimnebulin. The voice of the character is imbued in the details, which come from the care that the writers take in developing their personalities. They feel true to us, because they are wholly realised. And their truth is based, oddly enough, on the lies that the writer tells.

Writing fiction is lying. By exaggerating, by manipulating details to fit a wider story, writers seek to illuminate character for the reader. These lies are told for entertainment, but also to reveal truth -- not actual, provable historic truth, but the more dangerous concept of dramatic truth.

I heard this story many years ago in Santa Cruz, California, when my friend Geoff introduced me to Steve. This was a funny story that Steve recounted. There was, according to him, even more confusion and chaos in his life. Being a sergeant had really straightened him out.

Steve was perhaps an archetypal American, blond, strong, easy going. He had a past, he had a future:

he was training to be a social worker. He'd learned responsibility in the military and wanted to get out of its relentless macho culture.

In April, I saw Geoff for the first time in a few years. Over taco soup in a Mexican restaurant, I mentioned his friend who'd been in the marines and was training as a social worker.

He paused and said, "Steve Weddle". Then he laughed.

Geoff told me that Steve never became a social worker. "And he wasn't in the marines either."

Steve Weddle was a compulsive liar.

After I'd stopped choking on my soup, Geoff told me a series of anecdotes that convinced both him and me that Steve was lying. What impressed me was Steve's mental alertness, his ability to keep his story straight each time I saw him.

A normal reaction might be annoyance, but I was intrigued. Steve's stories resonate with a new dimension now that I knew he made them up. For me, that added another layer of character. In this case, Steve personifies Dr Johnson's adage that, "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier." Steve is now a ready-made character, filled with such conflict and self doubt that he invents his own past, complete with fictional anecdotes about other people.

So I might dedicate this article to Steve Weddle. It wouldn't have been possible without him and his invention. You may pity him his lying and his desire for self-aggrandisement. But if you made it this far, you kept reading, that's thanks to Steve. As a character he comes right off the page.

Finally, in keeping with his fantasy past, Steve Weddle is not, of course, his real name.

WINTER SUCKS

LEE WOOD

Winter sucks.

Not those nice saccharine-crystal white Hallmark movie winters, where pretty divorcees with two troublesome teenagers meet the local handsome ski lodge architect / sports doctor / skiing instructor / budding snowboard mogul / strudel and hot toddy ski lodge chef / curmudgeonly bestselling author with writer's block hiding out anonymously at – you got it – a ski lodge, and all problems are solved over hot cocoa, power outages, roaring fires and snow.... and lots of pretty white sparkling snow. Oh, and if it isn't a ski lodge, it's a charming New England colonial farmhouse with a big red barn left to said pretty divorcee by an eccentric aunt. And horses. And dogs. Because, Hallmark.

No, we don't have those sorts of winters in Taranaki. Once in a blue moon, we might get a dusting of snow that turns everything magical for about 20 minutes before it all melts away into muddy slush, but winters in Taranaki are wet, bitterly cold, and windy with a conspicuous dearth of architects, chefs and good-looking if curmudgeonly bestselling writers. And doctors. All of New Zealand has an acute lack of GPs right now, so if you're looking for somewhere to escape, we would welcome you with open muddy arms. We don't care if you're handsome or not.

Winter sucks for people, but it really sucks for animals, and for me that means chickens and ducks. The cats have plenty of access to warm beds, the goats have shelters and winter coats. But the chickens have turned a significant portion of the fenced off part of my land into a

slippery muddy bog. They're moulting – which chickens tend to do when the weather is at its coldest and wettest because chickens be stoopid, and for the most part they've stopped laying eggs, which is a good thing – they need to recharge their egg laying batteries for spring. Also time to grow in new feathers.

That hasn't, however, stopped two of the hens from managing to hide a clutch of eggs from me. First, it was a little black hen I hadn't noticed taking up residence in a flower planter, cleverly hidden by – well, okay, I admit it – mostly weeds I never got around to pulling out. I'd caught her first batch and destroyed them before they were too far along, but she got sneakier and with Cyclone Dovi making the weather even more sucky than usual, I wasn't outside all that often looking for hidey-hens. By the end of February, I had eight little chickadoodles. (For those of you who are in the northern hemisphere, that would be equal to around the end of August, mid-autumn – and no, Taranaki autumns don't come in Hallmark colours, either.)

Luckily, a colleague wanted them for her son's eighth birthday – eight chickadoodles being his best present *ever*, apparently – and I sold the lot for \$50. Little Black Hen and chickadoodles went off to a new home, and I breathed a sigh of relief...

... until Big Barred Rock Hen managed to hide her clutch of eggs in the back of a tumbledown woodshed, and I had no inkling she was even there until I passed by and heard the distinctive sound of *cheep cheep cheep cheep cheep*. Goddammit. It took some clearing out and clambering over timber to reach her, one baby had been squished (she's a



LEE WOOD

BIG hen!), one dead in the shell, cold and stinking, and seven more had hatched with two eggs left to go. She's obviously not the only mama who contributed to the nest, so the chicks were a range of sizes and colours from white to gold to grey to black – and at least two of the black had a tell-tale white spot on the head that sex-link them as Barred Rock; Roger has finally gotten his own in, with Randy being the obvious father to the rest.

I didn't want any more chickens, especially this late in the year – end of March (beginning of October Northern hemisphere type weather). She and her surviving chickadoodles were promptly evicted from the woodshed and put into the chickadoodle nursery in the main coop. The other coop is currently home to five bachelor roosters awaiting the chop. They've been in there awhile, fattening up. (I made a bad mistake and named them as chicks – NEVER NAME YOUR FOOD!) I took the two remaining eggs and popped them into my tiny emergency egg incubator. One hatched. The other, when I candled it, was murky and dark and, sure enough, when I cracked it open it was stinking and rotten. I called the little chick Lucky Number Eight. More on that later...

Meanwhile, on the duck front, Mrs Moonfoot managed to successfully hatch a dozen of her own ducklings a week or so before Christmas, a sensible time to be raising young birds as that's summer down here. Cute as, little balls of fluffiness. She introduced them to me, and I dutifully fed the lot. They were sleeping somewhere across the main road, and every morning Mama Moonfoot would lead her babies across for breakfast, a

paddle in the pond, naps in the grass, and by sunset, she'd waddle back with babies in tow. If I was home, I kept an eye out and stood on the road while she crossed, but drivers in Stratford seem a bit more kindhearted than elsewhere (also more on that later...)

Once she knew they knew where to come for meals... by Boxing Day, Mama Moonfoot had vanished. Ordinarily, Mamas stay with their babies for 50 to 60 days, long enough for them to be able to fly and fend for themselves. This lot was still too young to be left to their own devices. No Mama Moonfoot smooshed on the road, and while the new dog next door is definitely a bird killing machine, no feathers in the paddocks either. She's still young and inexperienced and maybe she'd decided hey, I've convinced some sucker to feed this lot, they'll be fine, I'm off. Maybe she'll be back next year with a new batch of cute fluffies.

Every morning, babies would show up for breakfast, and learned to climb the stairs to the back deck, look in the door and scream at me if they saw me – or the cat, for some reason, who was not amused – to come feed them. I'm only glad they never figured out how to use the catflap, or I'd have had duck poop all over the house...

... speaking of duck poop. Ducklings are so sweet and fluffy and cute. What they do to a fishpond, however, is not. By the end of summer, any surviving goldfish were long gone, the lotus plants shredded and the water a murky soup of shit green. Cleaning out the fishpond and repairing the damage is on my list of things to do over the summer break –



along with duck proofing it. I'll be happy to buy a plastic kiddie pool for them, should Mama Moonfoot come back with another brood, or any of these grow up and come back for a visit with grandkids in tow. But it's winter, and one by one, the number of ducklings dropped to eight who grew wing feathers, flapped and practiced flying by jumping off the top of the deck, and eventually disappeared. As wild ducks do. Mallard duck season in Taranaki runs from the 7th of May to the 3rd of July, hunters allowed to shoot up to 10 ducks a day. If any survive, they'll be back.



I gave my best friend, Kelly, some “starter” hens once her lovely husband had finished building their own run and coop – three aging Hyelines who still laid eggs once in a while, but were nearing retirement. She named them all, of course, and it was Rob, her husband, who really fell in love with “their girls.” Three very spoiled girls, Goldie, Blue and Violet (named for the colour of their plastic ring bands on their legs). They now have another, Decca, one of my crossbreed mongrels, who has since managed to hatch a single fertile egg from a dozen I gave to Kelly when Decca went broody – sweet little hen turned into Super Bitch. Only one of the eggs hatched, a chickadoodle that Kelly named L’il Peep, which sadly may end up being a rooster. Time will tell.

But a few drivers in her neck of the woods are real bastards; a neighbour witnessed a man driving a company truck jump the verge when the chickens were grazing just by Kelly’s house

and intentionally ran over and killed Goldie. The neighbour got the name of the business, and Rob – a kind-hearted sweetheart in a “don’t fucking mess with me” physique has since... ahem... had a word. And cried; he loved Goldie.

Lucky Number Eight had several close calls during her short childhood. Once she’d hatched in the incubator, I waited until 2:30 in the morning to take Number 8 out to the coop nursery, lifted mum up just far enough to pop her last chick into the middle of the scrum under her and drop her back into place before she was even quite awake. Lucky Number 8 was a wee bit smaller and a wee bit more unsteady on her feet than the others, but alive and active. She was always the last in line running for anything, competing with her bigger siblings, and one evening was too small to jump over the jamb of the door into the main coop, peeping sadly for mum in the rain. I found her, cold and wet,

shoved her under mum for the night and she recovered nicely.

My other bestie wanted more chickens, so she bought a bag of chick crumble for me, with the idea that once the chickadoodles were old enough to survive without Mama, she'd take them off my hands. All looked like it was going well...

... before winter roared in with a brutal hammering. We've had successive waves of cold fronts rolling up off Antarctica, putting a lot of strain on both livestock and wildlife. One by one, the chickadoodles disappeared. Two I think made the mistake of slipping under the gate, because they were small enough where Mum was not, and ended up as feathered chicken nuggets for the dog next door. I've tried to chicken proof wherever I can, but little birds tend to wander where they shouldn't and not come back. A few I think might have been carried off by native harrier hawks feeding their own late season chicks. And – judging by the tunnels dug into the coop from under the thin tin walls – rats. Katy next door, when I was in her laundry room with my finger up her new silkie hen's arse – more on that later – remarked that none of her chicks this year survived, either. One by one, they just... disappeared. Dogs, hawks, rats. Even stoats and hedgehogs, none of which (except the hawk) are natives to New Zealand, and are a chicken's worst enemies. Not that chickens are natives either. Or humans, for that matter.

Oh yes, Katy from next door. They're a young couple with two teenaged daughters and a preteen son, with three large dogs and a Kune Kune pig that escaped several times to root havoc in my flowerbeds before they moved the pig to a more secure pen further down their own paddocks. They, like me, are former townies who know nothing about livestock but are, like me, learning as they go. They have sheep and haven't yet given up (I learned a lot about sheep in a few short years, mostly that I don't want sheep), have

optimistically planted a small grape vineyard that, given a few more years, might actually produce maximum a half dozen bottles of sour homemade wine, and are raising chickens. Not for meat or eggs, but because they're cute. Uh-huh. "Cute chicken" is a contradiction in terms.

Thus the little silkie hen. One of three Katy got from a brother-in-law as a gift. A couple days ago, Katy was on my doorstep, silkie hen in her arms, asking, "What's wrong with her?" A quick examination showed the hen had a small vent prolapse and a bunged up backside. So off we go to Katy's where she draws a nice warm sitz bath for the hen and holds it down while I wash as much yuck off the chicken's arse as I could before I stick my finger up the cloaca to see if it might be a broken egg inside her. Thankfully, it wasn't – that pretty much spells death for a chook. Instead, I pulled out clump after clump of constipated chicken poop until there was no more I could get out and the hard lump around her backside had relaxed. A couple more sitz baths and blowdrying later, and the silkie is out in the run, eating and drinking and pooping with enthusiasm. And I'm the neighbourhood hero because I'm willing to stick my finger up a chicken's bum. (Something that one of Katy's two teenaged girls declared as "ewww, gross!" and left gagging.)

Thus endeth this instillation of things eating other things and copious pooping.

Oh, were you expecting a heart-warming essay about cute and fluffy chicks and ducklings? It's *winter*. I have a horrible chest cold, coughing and runny nose and no it's not Covid because being a teacher means I have nearly unlimited access to RAT kits to constantly check. Just your normal, run of the mill, miserable winter cold.

Because... winter sucks.

THESE FANNISH THINGS

NOT ERIC MASCHWITZ (HOLT MARVELL)

A coffee cup that's stained with inky fingers,
That smell of skunky weed that always lingers
The arrows and the slings, these fannish things remind me of you

Gestetners cranking in the next door slan shack,
That package from JB I had to send back
The phone that never rings, These fannish things remind me of you

You locced, you sneered, you cancelled me
When you did that, you see
I knew somehow this had to be

Spike's legs do bop 'cause she's a a dancer
The neo we all thought was such a chancer
Oh, how the past still clings! These fannish things remind me of you

Drunk oldpharts in the scuzzy consuite
Arm wrestling when Charnock gets well beat
Lilian's abandoned rings, These fannish things remind me of you

Those softball games insisted on by Hooper
As Martin Smith lies in a drunken stupor
KTF that stings. These fannish things remind me of you

How strange, how neat, to find this still
This much is clear to me
They seem to keep it near to me

The dinner plans that went completely tits up
The times we had to swallow pride and sadly kiss up
Ken Forman's bits of string. These fannish things remind me of you

But when all's said and done we're still together
The ups and downs of this we'll always weather
My fannish heart has wings. These foolish things remind me of you

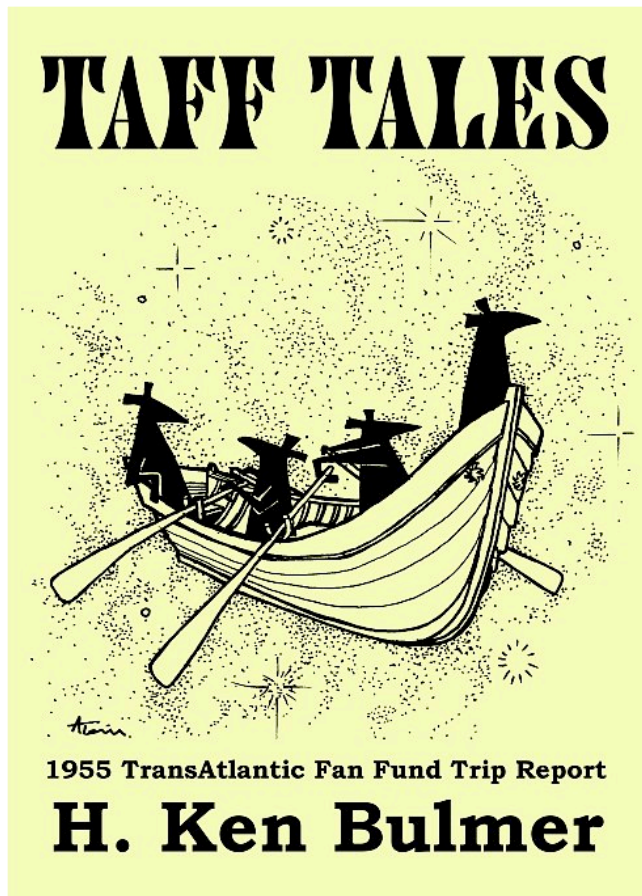
The “not” credit above is to the original lyricist of “These Foolish Things”, written under his pseudonym of Holt Marvell

Lyrical manipulation by **Nic Farey**

RENEWING THE PAST, RESHAPING THE FUTURE

JUSTIN E.A. BUSCH

Prelude: The Voices of the Past



Author, editor, and Hugo Award collector Dave Langford maintains a website (<https://taff.org.uk/updates.php>) devoted to digital reprints of once well known fannish texts and work by contemporary leading fanhistorian Rob Hansen. Writings by Ella Parker, Charles Burbee, Bob Shaw, Francis Towner Laney, John Berry, and many others, long buried in collections of print fanzines, have been resurrected and given new availability. Among the treasures are included trip reports associated with the Transatlantic Fan Fund (TAFF), which has been a key aspect of fandom for nearly seventy years. Langford's assemblage is an enormous and valuable resource for those interested in fan history. And—

The writings found within Langford's digital books contain much material which points toward the need for a serious revision of one of the most popular and widely used methods of structuring fan history. But getting there requires some history in itself....

1: Numbers

The development of science fiction fandom proceeded quickly after the founding of *Amazing Stories*. The first letters to the magazine arrived within months; the first clubs (the Science Correspondence Club and the Scienceers) formed in early 1928 and late 1929, respectively; the first fanzine (*The Comet*, the organ of the SCC) debuted in May of 1930; the first convention, with a dozen or so attendees, took place in October of 1936; and the first world convention (retrospectively yclept Nycon), boasting as many as 200 attendees, took place over the weekend of July 2-4, 1939. Fandom, it seemed, had completed its development as a phenomenon on the American scene; everything necessary was in place and operating smoothly.

So it was that Jack Speer, in June of 1939, published "Up to Now," the first significant work of fan history. Speer made no grandiose claims for his narrative; "this doesn't pretend to be the final history of fandom," he proclaimed; "-- far, far from it. I only hope to make a connected beginning, perhaps to slam such a mass of misinformation at you that those who know will be bound to give the true accounts." He anticipated that his own work, admittedly incomplete and biased, would soon be superseded; he expected that the inevitable corrections, by people who were involved in the events portrayed, would lead toward deeper understandings, followed by a more detailed descriptions of what was done when, and by whom. "The eventual

historian or committee of historians will thus have a good groundwork for a better, fuller, and more accurate account than could possibly be supplied by any one fan, however experienced, working alone to write “the” history of fandom.”

Things did not work out quite as Speer anticipated. In the course of launching his discussions, Speer divided his history, which covered barely a decade, into distinct periods (“Fandoms”), separated by “Transitions,” which themselves could be longer than the preceding or succeeding Fandom. Speer acknowledged that this was a matter of convenience as much as fact — “I acknowledge that the periods are much more strictly delineated than the actual conditions, but I have ample precedent in the writing of general history”—, but the division caught the imaginations of fans intrigued by the very idea that fandom could have a coherent vision of its birth and development, and was quickly taken up, a process encouraged by Speer’s extension of the original idea in *Fancylopedia*, published in 1944.

Other fannish historians soon extended the idea past Speer’s original three fandoms. Robert Silverberg went furthest, in an article in Lee Hoffman’s *Quandry* 25 (October, 1952), entitled “First and Last Fans,” in which he asserted, explicitly following a template set by Olaf Stapledon (in *Last and First Men*, the title of which he had evidently misremembered), the existence of three further fandoms.

Scarcely had Silverberg’s article been published when a group of fans, including Harlan Ellison, proclaimed the creation of Seventh Fandom (May, 1953). This was greeted with a high degree of derision, and another group of fans, including Peter Vorzimer, soon similarly proclaimed the existence of Eighth Fandom (adumbrated in *Abstract* 4, June, 1954). As this was happening, the news of Seventh Fandom made its way to England, where Pete Campbell, seeking to get ahead of the nonsense, declared his fanzine *Andromeda* to be, first, a “Tenth Fandom

Publication” (October, 1954 or earlier), and then “an Eleventh Fandom Publication” (no later than December, 1954, a designation retained until some time in 1955). It was only later that various fans made serious claims about the actuality of a Ninth Fandom; Dick Lupoff, in his and Pat Lupoff’s *Xero*, laid out the logic in his article “N-N-Ninth F-Fandom?,” in January of 1961 (issue 3): “Peter Vorzimer and Company’s Seventh Fandom movement was a thoroughly deserved flop. Fannish evolution is a natural process and no one has yet succeeded in creating an artificial Great Leap Forward. [...] “a reluctance to use the dis-credited name of the Vorzimer movement makes it pretty much mandatory to call the years since then Eighth Fandom. If we are now in fact entering a new period, it will logically be Ninth Fandom.” As had Speer and Silverberg before him, he attempted to provide a list of characteristics; “There are, however, certain characteristics of “a fandom” which do change, and when most or all of them have undergone a transition, why, lo and behold, it’s a new fandom!” Most interestingly, Lupoff singled out “Comic books!” [his exclamation] as a shared outside interest, one of his categories of relevant characteristics.

Most of Lupoff’s suggestions were promptly rejected by other fans; Bill Donaho’s response, “Ninth Fandom?,” in *Xero* 4 (April, 1961), for example, omitted both the stuttering and any sense of enthusiasm for the idea: “Since I suspect that once the warmth wears off the nostalgia, even the current hard core of comics-fandom will be getting pretty bored with the whole thing, it might be just as well to hold off having a great batch of ‘Ninth Fandom’ buttons made up just yet.” Larry Shaw (“but numbers will never hurt me [lower case sic],” in the same issue) sidestepped the numerical approach as denying an important aspect of fandom’s relation to the mundane world: “Fandom, although we sometimes forget it and sometimes actively deny it,

exists in the real world. Fandom can never be entirely separated from the real world. As individual fans are subject to mundane influences, so will these influences have their effect upon fandom. And there are some pretty powerful and ubiquitous mundane influences floating around these days.” The idea of numbered fandoms independent of outside, non-stfnal, influences, thought Shaw, was largely pointless at best. Harry Warner, Jr. rejected the concept wholly. “The trouble with any such division of fandom,” he wrote, some years later, in *A Wealth Of Fable*,

“...is the way it ignores the interests and activities of the bulk of active fans. The collectors, those who were interested only in con-going, those who specialized in local club affairs, and those who preferred sercon fanzines outnumbered those whose activities resulted in the distinctions between numbered fandoms, and this majority showed no corresponding differences in personnel or forms of activities at the moments when the transitions and new numerical fandoms were supposed to be affecting fannish fandom.”

It was the beginning of the end for the numbered approach as offered by Speer, Silverberg, Lupoff, and others.¹

2: Assumptions

It isn’t surprising that there were problems with the Speer/Silverberg system; indeed, it is probably more surprising that the problems weren’t obvious from the beginning.

¹ A ghost of this approach may be found in *Pablo Lennis*, a current fanzine by John Thiel, who began his long fannish career just before Lupoff’s ideas once more raised a controversy over numbered fandoms; recent issues of *Pablo Lennis* often make some sort of reference to “Ninth Fandom,” which Thiel has described as “the progressive fandom” (e.g. in issue 406, September, 2021).

Speer’s descriptions rely on two assumptions, distinct yet related. The first is that the analysis of different fandoms could be done entirely within the development and functioning of fandom itself; as Speer wrote, referring to himself in the third person, “Speer maintains that fandom as fandom should influence the world only thru [sic] its influence on the individual fans, who may be influential men someday.” The second is that the pattern of development, success, and decline which Speer found in each numbered fandom (“a fairly stable stretch in which known elements work out to their conclusion thru interaction and development”) would repeat itself continually.

Both assumptions were wrong, albeit in different ways.

The error of the first was shown quickly. Speer’s expanded argument, spread out over various entries in *Fancyclopedia*, came at almost the last possible moment; within a year fans who had been serving abroad during World War Two began returning home, and neither they nor the fans who had remained in the United States but who had lost friends or relatives held the same opinions in the same ways as they had before the war. Nor was the attitude of the general public, or at least the small segment of the general public which was so much as aware of science fiction, as dismissive as had been the case prior to the war. Destructive rockets, jet airplanes, and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, each by a single atomic bomb, suddenly made ‘that Buck Rogers stuff’ too plausible for comfort.

The flaw in the second assumption became evident soon afterward, as the returned fans resumed activity, but with a much broader range of ideas and approaches. Humorous material, sometimes dark, became much more common, as did references to sexuality, and, most significantly for the argument I will be making, a desire to expand fannish contacts far more extensively than had hitherto been the case. So it was that the

range of fanac and fanattitudes expanded considerably. The problem this posed for the system of numbered fandoms may be seen in Silverberg's gyrations in attempting to broaden Speer's methodology. Writing of Fourth Fandom, "which began some time in 1944 and ended about 1947," Silverberg was forced to admit that it "left few remains of importance," raising obvious questions about the reasons for identifying it as a separate entity at all. Its successor was similarly insignificant; it "was short-lived. It began in the declining days of 1947 and lasted only until 1949." Silverberg's last comments, regarding what he called Sixth Fandom, indicated something close to a surrender:

"Sixth Fandom is a horse of a different color. Just as Stapledon's Sixth Men branched off into all sorts of variants, so has Sixth Fandom. It is impossible to generalize about it, because it is still going on (although some have detected the identity of a Seventh, Eighth and even Ninth Fandom)."

In other words, any sort of coherent definition was, only a few years after the original proposal, becoming increasingly impossible to attain, let alone sustain. Yet there are good reasons, more evident as fandom approaches its centennial than they were when fandom was barely three decades old, for adopting something similar yet broader. It is to these which I now turn. As is so often the case in fannish history, the reasons are found in, and through, fanzines.

Fanzines, or at least certain fanzines, played a significant role in Speer's analysis, Silverberg's analysis, and, even after the idea of numbered fandoms had largely faded out, the attitudes, if not full-scale analyses, of later fans. Their relevance came from the fact that specific fanzines could be defined, or at least appear, as "focal points," the term indicating that the fanzine in question served somehow as the core of fannish activity in the period under discussion. The problem with this definition is easy to see: while

the idea of a central fanzine may have made sense in regard to fandom of the 1930s, when the total number of active fans was scarcely a hundred, it became more difficult to sustain as the numbers - and disparate interests - of fans increased in the years following the war.

Nor did the simplistic approach, sometimes little more than a listing of popular fanzines, take into account one of the most important developments in fandom since its beginning: the creation of fannish travel funds.

3: Truth...

Early fandom was largely a creature of the Depression. Although the first clubs predated the Depression, every single early science fiction fanzine was published during the economic catastrophe. Fannish communications were almost entirely by mail, either as letters or through fanzines (there were plenty of fans whose families did not possess a telephone). Even so, there were efforts made to get fans together in person, even if the rather grandly styled 'conventions' sometimes saw attendance in single digits. Not even the early world conventions exceeded 200 attendees, and the term itself was, to say the least, an exaggeration. As Forrest J Ackerman noted in the *Philcon News* 1 (February, 1947), "There have been thus far four World Science Fiction Conventions. However, despite the all-encompassing title "World Convention", no one from outside the confines of the USA has ever attended. It will be a decidedly different story at THE PHILCON."

Something more was wanted. The answer came in the form of a process unmentioned by Silverberg (Speer could not have heard of it while crafting his own numbered fandoms, as the idea had not yet been broached): fannish travel funds.

Travel assistance appeared early in fandom, but only at the individual level: older fans who owned automobiles would sometimes trade

transportation for gasoline money, or might even absorb the latter cost in whole or in part. There was, though, nothing organized about the process; nor did it often involve extended distances.

This changed after the war, as fans in the United States, many of whom had met fans from the United Kingdom while stationed abroad, started thinking in terms of resuming contact directly. So it was that Ackerman proposed what he called the "Big Pond Fund," intended to pay for the travel expenses of Ted Carnell, "for many years one of England's most active fans, and now editor of the British promag, *NEW WORLDS*."



Ackerman started the drive off with a five dollar donation (about sixty-five dollars today), and a large collection of books and other prizes was assembled to be awarded in a drawing once the fund achieved its goal. It did not; Carnell had to wait two more years to attend a Worldcon (Cinvention, in 1947; much of the funding, in fact, came from Ackerman). But the idea remained attractive.

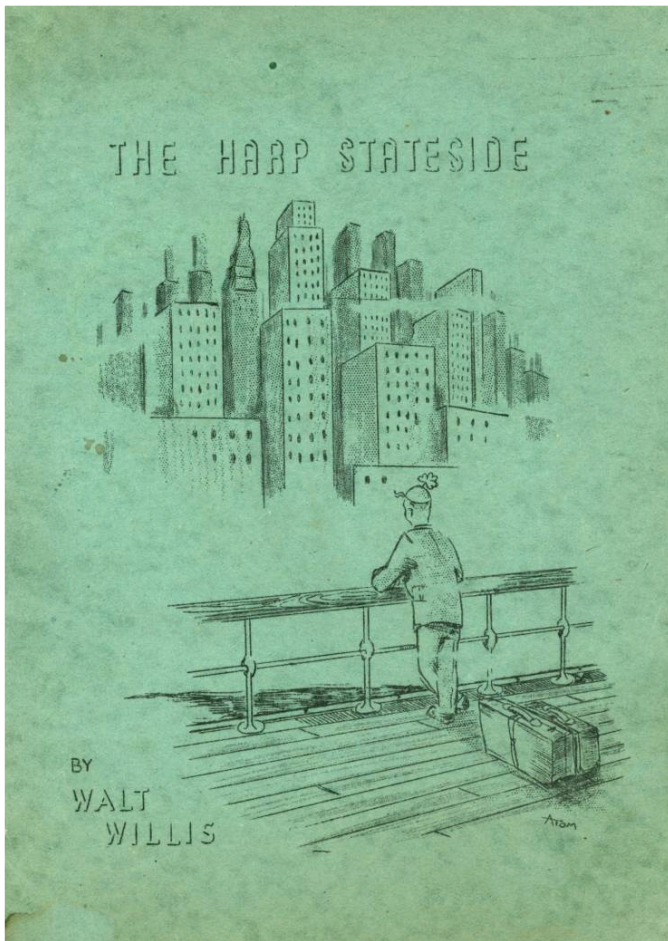
The first sequel came in 1951: Shelby Vick, then a well-known fan himself, started a campaign, akin to Ackerman's for Ted Carnell, to bring the Irish fan Walter A. Willis to the New Orleans Worldcon. There being limited time for

fundraising, Vick changed the invitation to Chicon II, adopting the phrase "WAW With the Crew in '52." Willis wrote an extended essay, "Willis Discovers America," as a sort of prelude to his visit even before he knew he was coming (ironically, it was not published until 1955), and the fundraising exceeded expectations, allowing Willis a leisurely and enjoyable trip.

The second sequel followed almost directly: the creation of what is now known as the Transatlantic Fan Fund, or TAFF, a subsidization of fannish travel, usually, but not always, to a Worldcon. The first of these launched in 1954,

but its intended recipient (Vincent Clarke) could not travel, so the actual first recipients, in 1955, were Ken and Pamela Bulmer. The Fund has remained active ever since, its success giving rise to several subsequent funds with different geographical foci. Fandom's reach was indeed broadening.

This, though, is not the sole, or perhaps even the most important, aspect of the development of fan funds. What mattered most was the example set by Walt Willis. Willis, widely considered the best writer in the whole of fandom, recounted the details of his trip in a lengthy essay, "The Harp in America: Over There with Grunch and Eggplant" (the first part of the title derived from his renowned column in Lee Hoffman's *Quandry*, "The Harp That Once or Twice;" the second part from an anecdote by Bob Shaw), printed first in *Quandry* 27/28 and then in an expanded version, *The Harp Stateside*, with illustrations by ATom, published by Willis himself.



This mixture of personal anecdote and travelogue, written with Willis's customary humor, gentle but often incisive, was like nothing most fans had ever read. Something of its flavor may be sensed by Willis's narrative of his problems with bus travel; the reader senses the frustration Willis must have felt as yet another bus broke down, yet nowhere does frustration gain the upper hand. The point regarding Greyhound is all the more devastating for being made elliptically:

"Now, at this point I would like to defend the Greyhound Company against an unfair accusation that has been levelled against them. It has been bruited about, probably by some brute employed by Trailways, that our bus broke down three times between New York

and Chicago. I am happy to say that this is not true. Not once, in all my long and eventful association with the Greyhound Company, have I known that noble and generous organisation to foist me off with a patched-up bus. Every time one broke down they would simply throw it away and bring on a new one. Their courage in persisting with this policy in the face of financial ruin was in keeping with the old bus company motto "None but the brave deserve the fare." I am glad to say it was finally rewarded. You will scarcely believe this, but the fourth and final bus did not break down at all. This remarkable vehicle was immediately whisked away to the Greyhound Research Laboratories, where they are working on a form of Willis-proof transport."

A very high bar had been set both for something which had not yet come into being - the TAFF report - and for subsequent fannish essays, stories, and reminiscences.

Writing had always been important to fandom, of course, but the 1950s saw a surge of major fannish pieces, many of them with roots in the work of Walt Willis even when they were not actually written by him. With "WAW With the Crew in '52" as its predecessor, the TAFF Award included the expectation that each winner would write a trip report. At first they did, most of them appearing initially, and sometimes only, in various fanzines: Ken Bulmer (*Taff Tales*, 1955); Robert Madle (*A Fake Fan in London*, 1957); Ron Bennett (*Colonial Excursion*, 1958); Don Ford (, 1959); Eric Bentcliffe (*EpiTaff*, 1960); Ron Ellik (*The Squirrel's Tale*, 1961), and Ethel Lindsay (*The Lindsay Report*, 1962).

Not until 1963 did a TAFF winner fail to produce a trip report, and not until 1969 did the tradition weaken into only occasional publications. Nor was this all; plenty of pieces, now legendary, appeared alongside the TAFF reports. Among the material from the 1950s available on Dave Langford's website, we find John Berry's long-

running fanfic spoof, known by its overall name, *The Goon Defective Agency*; Chuck Harris's regular column "Random," in his celebrated fanzine *Hyphen* (co-edited by, you guessed it, Walt Willis); and, above all, *The Enchanted Duplicator*, by Walt Willis and Bob Shaw, the single most frequently reprinted piece of fan writing. These pieces, and others like them, towered over a decade of superb fan writing.

4: ... and Consequences

Fandom in general, and fanac in particular, meant many different things to many different people over the decades, and those meanings have been felt and demonstrated passionately, and sometimes very well. Yet it is not difficult to see, in many of the writings of the 1950s, an expressive expansiveness and generosity of spirit hitherto much less common in fannish circles. This should come as no surprise; fandom itself was expanding enormously. Chicon II, the 1952 world convention, had more members than the first six Worldcons combined, and most others of the decade exceeded 400 attendees (no convention prior to 1950 had more than 200 members).

As fandom grew, things that had seemed to be of vast significance to earlier generations often diminished in memory, becoming mere catchphrases or even being all but forgotten (it is no accident that *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz's hyperbolic history of early fandom, made its first book appearance in 1954). Among the casualties was, as we have already seen, the numerical system of fannish eras; despite an occasional effort, no one has ever made anything



Robert A. Madle

past seventh, or even sixth, fandom hold up under examination.

Nor, in fact, do the preceding fandoms hold up well - save First Fandom, which, encompassing fannish beginnings, is secure (if anything comes afterward, there must always have been a first). The problem, which might have been obvious even earlier, had anyone looked for it, is that too much is being made of situations too small to carry the weight thrust upon them. In 1939, it may have seemed plausible to posit detailed segments of fannish

history as having particular meanings; by the mid-1950s, despite Robert Silverberg's best efforts, no such plausibility existed. Fannish history, as practiced by Speer and Silverberg and their followers, was something like carefully examining the cracks in the varnish on an oil painting and drawing conclusions about its aesthetic importance therefrom.

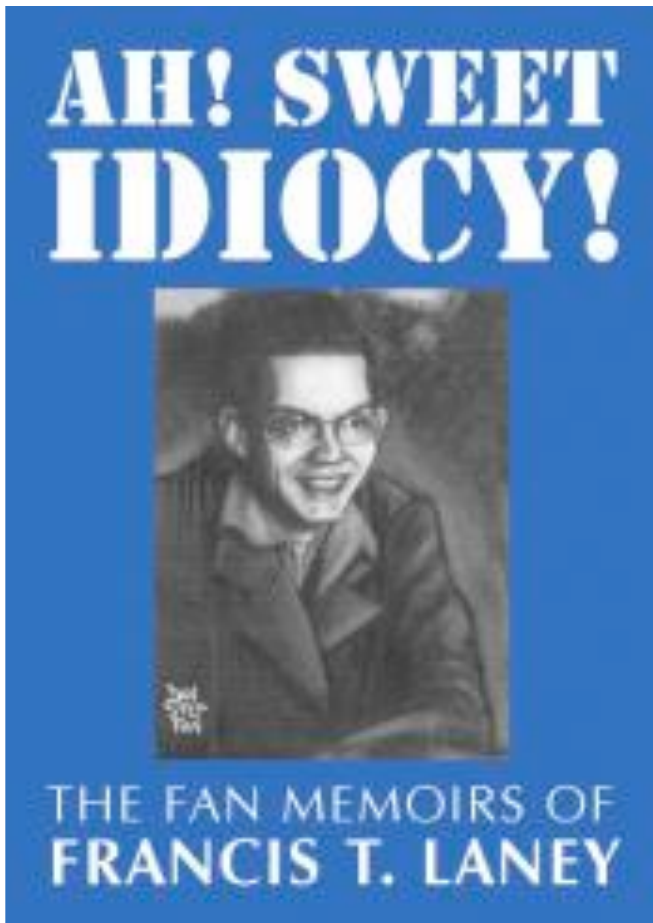
Especially vulnerable to criticism were the transitional eras depicted by Speer (Silverberg, whether intentionally or by virtue of being unaware of the idea, never used them). Once the salience of the years to either side of a transitional era diminished, the point of the transition all but disappeared. In fact, Speer had missed the role of transitions altogether: a transitional era becomes significant only in retrospect; it acts as the fertile ground out of which changes can grow. The transition, therefore, is in fact part of something which had not yet happened; it has no existence of its own.

With this in mind, I propose, eighty and more years later, revising Speer's approach to take account of forces which he could not have seen

and did not imagine. To avoid unnecessary conflict with current usage, I will apply letters rather than numbers, and will use only three.

The beginning - Fandom A - is implicit in much of what I examined in Section 2. It encompasses the early efforts of fans to organize, define, and create science fiction fandom. It begins in 1928, with the earliest club, and ends in 1948. The reasons for the latter date are straightforward, both directly and indirectly. The obvious landmark is Torcon, the first Worldcon not held in the United States; Torcon itself included another, perhaps surprising, landmark: it featured the first Fan Guest of Honor (Bob Tucker).

Conversely, 1948 also saw the publication of the first truly notorious fan book (129 pages): Francis Towner Laney's *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!*.



As Harry Warner, Jr. would write later, in an essay reprinted as the introduction to Rob Hansen's e-edition), Laney "was following a hallowed tradition which most fans obeyed at this particular time: when you think you've had it in fandom, do something spectacular to call attention to your gaffiation. Often this took the form of a cynical and bitter letter to this or that fanzine, or an article blasting all fandom as a useless or dangerous institution." The description is mild compared to the reality of Laney's prose. This is, again, a landmark of fannish vituperation (and, occasionally, generosity), and it remained influential, although unreprintable, for years afterward. Fandom was vastly different, and in very distinct ways, once Laney had released his blast.

These are events of the year. 1948 also falls midway between Forrest Ackerman's first attempt at the Big Pond Fund (1947) and his later success (1949); here we see, as noted above, the slow development of what will be a major component of fannish practice and lore. Similarly, and symbolically, it might be noted that February of 1948 witnessed the final installment of E.E. Smith's *Children of the Lens*, his last major work, while March and November saw the first appearances of, respectively, Judith Merrill's "That Only a Mother" and Arthur C. Clarke's *Against the Fall of Night*. Science fiction itself was changing in ways scarcely imaginable even a year or two earlier, changes which would inevitably find their echoes in subsequent fandom(s).

The expansion of fandom continued apace for the next two decades; many were the subfandoms which found a home within the larger whole. This began to change in 1969, and in 1972 it became clear that a new fandom - *Star Trek* fandom - was making its won way in the world. Thus comes Fandom B. This being rather beyond my frame here, I will note only two key moments, one actual and the other symbolic. The first is the *Star Trek Lives!* convention in New York City. The

conrunners anticipated that they might reach 500 attendees; in the event over 3,000 appeared, more than had attended any Worldcon to that point. Subsequent *Star Trek* conventions were even more massive in their attendance, and eventually became wholly commercial propositions, as what is now known as media fandom exploded into life. Few events have had a more significant impact on science fiction fandom.

The same year also marked the end of crewed moon voyages, Apollo 17 (December) being the last. Since World War Two, science fiction fans had been witnessing technological triumph after technological triumph, many of them seeming to point toward the eventual colonization of the moon, of Mars, and perhaps even of objects even further away, just as depicted in so many stories and books. This, it now appeared, was no longer to be the case, and an era of fannish - and perhaps also mundane - optimism faded into history.²

Fandom C is harder to place chronologically, although its driving force is obvious: this is the fandom born of the dominance of the internet. Perhaps 2001 is as good a date as any; certainly somewhere around the turn of the century, print fanzines ceased to be central to fandom, which communicated now increasingly through digital platforms (outside of apazines, I know for certain of only five print-only fanzines, two of them mine, and have some awareness of a few other possibilities, although attempts to trade with their editors have been met only with silence). This is also the era of fanac.org and efanazines.com (and Rob Hansen's website), of podcasts and virtual

conventions, and of an increasing fragmentation of the very idea of fandom as a community. It is, however, well out of my analysis here, save as a fact in itself.

5: L'Envoi

Occam's razor applies to history as to philosophy: it is best not to multiply historical entities (eras, if you will) unnecessarily. At any given point, there are those who aware of current tendencies and, in accordance with their own views, goals, hopes, and fears, are working for or against what surrounds them. There are others who are oblivious, having better, or at least more interesting, things about which to think. And there are those who are attempting to analyze the forces impinging upon them and their colleagues, friends, and even enemies. All are part of the process of history, but few are those who can truly grasp it from within; that is a task best assumed by those who come later, who have, perhaps, gained distance and perspective. Most of what seems vitally important at any given moment will take its place among the minor matters of the past soon enough. This, though, does not mean that those for whom certain topics or issues demanded intense personal responses were wrong. Quite the opposite: it is only by engaging with the passions of the past that we can hope to gain a clearer sense of our own passions. Resources such as those provided by Rob Hansen do not merely provide an opportunity for exercises in nostalgic curiosity; they offer ways to develop a deeper sense of our predecessors in fandom and what mattered most to them and why. We can learn from them, of course, both as regards what we reject and what we might wish could be retained, but, far more importantly, we can find ourselves engaging with people we never knew at a deeply human level, one which has the potential to reshape both our understanding of fannish history and of ourselves.

² It is worth noting also that 1972 also marked the beginning of NESFA Press, best known for its excellent reprintings of novels and stories by authors drawn generally from earlier generations. Modern fandom may be digital in most things, but it is accompanied by a certain nostalgia, even if many a reader might find it difficult to say just for what.

A VISIBLE FAN ABROAD

MICHAEL J LOWREY

A TAFF Journal of the Plague Years Chapter the First: The Trip That Never Was

It was about the Beginning of January 2020, that I, among the Rest of my Neighbours, heard in ordinary Discourse that a new Plague was come from the East, for it had been very violent there. It matter'd not, from whence it come; but all agreed, it was come into Europe. [apologies to Daniel Defoe]

I didn't pay much attention. I was watching the election for the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, whose results were announced about the same time. This was my third nomination, and this year, huzzah! I was the winner. The complications and politics, including the thunderous editorials by a good friend (Nic Farey) telling people not to vote for me? Those belong in a history of TAFF, not in what is after all a trip report.

That January, I wrote:

Ideally, after leaving Stockholm on 22 or 23 March, I'd *like* to get over to Finland, then proceed south and west through the Baltics, Poland, maybe the Czech Republic or even Hungary?, Germany, the Netherlands, ideally France, then up to England, over to Wales, across briefly to Ireland, then double back to England, to London, then north through English fandom to Scotland (at least the Lowlands, whence the Lowreys/Lauries/Lowerys came; and Edinburgh) and back south, arriving in Birmingham for Eastercon 9 or 10 April.

Ambitious? Hell, yeah.

I warmly remember 1990, when there were busloads of Finns and carloads of Poles at ConFiction; I'd love to have contact with folks like that, make this a truly European visit and not just the British Isles. I don't have names or addresses for any of these places, though, and would be pathetically grateful for any aid you

and other Eurofen can provide. (Perhaps some of the folks currently registering for ConFiction?) One of Langford's few failings is that his *Ansible* con and meeting lists mostly seem to stop east of the English Channel. If there are no fannish contacts to be made, obviously the Finland and Eastern Europe leg could be omitted, instead going through Denmark to Germany. And if there were invites from Italia or Portugal: hey, I'm eager to be flexible. There's no place I want to avoid outside of Putin's Russia and Russian-occupied Ukraine.

I do want to emphasize: I am a union activist and former student radical; I have no problem with staying in hostels, or sleeping on couches, futons, air mattresses, or piles of donated clothing heaped in church basements [real-life example]. I'm a cheap date (teetotaler, too; so cheap for drink-buying) and not a picky eater (just enthusiastic). I have no problem with traveling by means of buses, trains, trolleys, ferries, hovercraft [not full of eels], car rides from fen I just met, etc. My only first-world need is WiFi, as frequently and cheaply as practicable.

Alas, I am only fluent in English and somewhat in rusty Esperanto; I can stumble through a menu in Spanish, or insult idiots in limited and somewhat archaic Deutsch. I have no Svensk, Suomi, Latviesu Valoda, Magyar, Lëtzebuergesch, etc. I'm also horrible with faces and names; fair warning.

I want to emphasize, my ultimate itinerary will be determined by where fans want to have me visit, not by where I would like to be a tourist. I just want to get away from the 'ambassador from Anglophone North America to Anglophone Europe' syndrome.

By late February, I had a schedule in place. With the help of such stellar folks as Johan & Linnéa Anglemark, Marcin "Alqua" Kłak, Jukka Halme,

Tomas Cronholm, Pilar Fernández, and Blanca Rodríguez, from mid-March, when I would begin with the Swedish national convention Fantastika 2020, I was struggling to make arrangements to visit as much of Eurofandom as practicable, from Sweden onward, ending my Grand Tour at Concentric. As late as March 9, details were being finalized for a sofa in Barcelona on which I could rest my head. Tickets were being bought and my itinerary finalized; Py had even created and ordered limited-edition enameled pins as guest gifts for those who would host me.

Not all my ambitions were realized, but I was set up to land in Sweden for Swecon, go on to Turku and Helsinki to meet with Finnish fans, then do a run through Warsaw, Katowice and Krakow meeting various Poles along the way, followed by a hop over to Madrid, then Barcelona for visits with Spanish fandom, then to London. I was to hit Gatwick at 8:20 on the morning of the 3rd of April, and had no idea what would be doing from there until the Thursday before Eastercon in Birmingham on Easter weekend (10-13 April). I had to return to the States after that, but I was pleased by what I had been able to do.

And then it all fell apart. On March 11, one of my Spanish contacts told me the country was being closed off. By March 12, I announced, under the header 'Shredded Orange TAFFeta: A Journal of the Plague Year':

As the 2020 TAFF delegate, I was booked to begin next week with Fantastika 2020, the Swecon (Swedish national SF/F convention), then going on to Turku and Helsinki in Finland; Warsaw, Katowice and Krakow in Poland, and Madrid and Barcelona, before carrying on to London, parts unknown in the UK, and eventually Birmingham for Eastercon (the British national con). Less than 24 hours ago, I posted a defiant determination to be fandom's delegate across the Great Water.

Now Fantastika has been cancelled/postponed, and Eastercon may follow. All the meetings and stayovers and gatherings in between? They may be banned, or fans may simply consider it prudent to avoid such assemblies for now.

I am sorry if anybody perceived my previous attitude as one of irresponsibility; I thought of it rather as steadfast determination to fulfill the obligation I had undertaken to serve as fandom's ambassador. I had all these invites from eager fans (they *felt* like they were younger and more enthusiastic than the Old Fans and Tired I usually hang with) in places like Helsinki and Katowice and Barcelona, boldly seizing a chance to connect with the broader fannish world. I was looking forward to crashing on sofas in Krakow and Madrid and Turku. And now....

My heart is breaking as I face the probability that all this planning, all this enthusiasm, will prove to have been for naught. I am hoping that something can be salvaged from the wreckage, and in the meantime I thank all of fandom for their input, even those who criticized me most harshly.

Sure enough, every con and meeting was cancelled and travel was globally forbidden. With a few minor exceptions (a ferry and a train ride, I think), all of the tickets I'd scheduled were cancelled without refund, costing TAFF more money than I care to think about, even two years later. Everyone rushed to insist that I remained the 2020 delegate, whenever I would travel (not least of all Nic); and I was assured by older, wiser hands that TAFF would not be bankrupted even if almost every cent/euro/pound spent on tickets was to be lost (as most eventually were). But as the world learned more about COVID-19, glib hopes of a fall 2020 trip collapsed; as would, in their turns, spring and then fall of 2021.

ALL THE WAY FROM PANGLOSS

NOT MOTT THE HOOPLE

Forgot my six-page one-shot, and hit the sky
Half way to Pangloss 'fore I realized
Well I rang the next door neighbor, we had a bond
He said it's in a pile of Vanamonde

Now it's a mighty long way to get to B.C.
And I don't have the ish to bring with me
Gonna look like a bum with no membership fee
All the way to Pangloss

Well I got to Pangloss, crept in, kept my head down
Two hundred fanzines out, and me the clown
Stavros said "Drunk old arseholes, you're all the same
"Can't even get a one-shot done", I felt so ashamed

Now it's a mighty long way to FIAWOL
Through the Corflu cult (yeah, that's getting old)
You're a wannabe star but you're still on parole
All the way to Pangloss

Yeah it's a mighty long way to FIAWOL
And they keep telling you, you got to stay in your role
You're pubbing your ish but it falls down a hole
All the way to Pangloss

Yeah it's a mighty long way to FIAWOL
Some say you're hot, and some say you're cold
At least you're not dead, but just fuckin' old
All the way to Pangloss

Yeah it's a mighty long way to FIAWOL
And the nextish is great, I mortgaged my soul
Came away fired up, this is gonna be gold
All the way from Pangloss

Original song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuMOWrRZ0HA>

Lyrical manipulation by **Nic Farey**

TO ÅCON, WITH LOVE

YLVA SPÅNGBERG

I learnt to knit in school, we all did – at least they tried to teach us all. But I wasn't very keen on it. In those days I was way more interested in doing drawings, something that kept me happily occupied all evenings and half the nights, to my mother's resigned concern. I had a mild case of the knitting craze that was rampant in the early eighties and achieved two sweaters, with great pride. After an episode when I went home to mom's for Christmas, broke out with chicken-pox and had to stay with her for two weeks, and then, upon returning home, found that the knitting I had forgot to bring with me for the holidays had shared its bag with a pear I experienced some doubt. Neither the knitting nor the pear were very appetizing at that stage, and I thought that perhaps knitting wasn't for me after all.

But fifteen years later I suddenly developed an urge to spin and dye yarns, something that turned out to be a lot more difficult without tutelage than I had anticipated but led to me amassing yarns of all possible qualities and characteristics. A budding passion took hold of me and I started knitting.

When the first Åcon was held in 2007, I was a little nervous. Leave home for the weekend without a knitting? No. Knit in public ... at a con?

I needn't have worried.

Åcon is an annual Finnish-Swedish con, held on Ascension weekend, in Mariehamn, the capital of Åland. Åland is a small group of islands in the Baltic, just between Finland and Sweden; it's an autonomous part of Finland but the inhabitants (about 30 000) speak Swedish, albeit with a dialect very close to the one spoken by the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland.

The idea of Åcon was to bring the fandoms of Sweden and Finland closer, and the committees have, over the years, consisted of both Finns and

Swedes. The first years there was only one real Ålander among the members. She was venue liason and liased us with Hotel Adlon, an establishment boasting a sports bar, a pizzeria, a not really immense lobby and one conference room, which during Åcon is used for the only program track. Because of these limitations, Åcon accepts only a hundred members.

And yet, this miniscule con manages to have a high quality program and guests of honour from abroad – Britain, mostly, but also the States and Canada. Don't ask me about how this is feasible financially, I've never been on the committee. I'm just in awe of the fact that it can be done.

Members don't come only from Scandinavia but also from Britain, and sometimes further afield. (Though the member from China probably was in Europe on other business.)

Åcon is ... how should I describe it? Relaxed. Familiar. Exhilarating. Relaxing. Awesome.

Maybe "awesome" isn't quite the right word. You see, both Finnish and Swedish have vowels with tréma, thus Ä (pronounced as in "hair") and Ö ("first"). But Swedish also has the vowel Å ("call").

The Finns seem to think this poor letter endlessly entertaining, hilarious even. Åcon is, therefore, "the åsomet little con in the world".

Or as the convention's motto went a few years back: The most fun you can have in a demilitarized zone!

And the knitting?

Oh, I almost forgot about that. Åcon is a knitters' con. Everybody knits. I could happily continue with my lace cardigan (in cheap cotton yarn, now thrown away) even when participating in a panel. Just one more reason to love Åcon.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

NIC FAREY

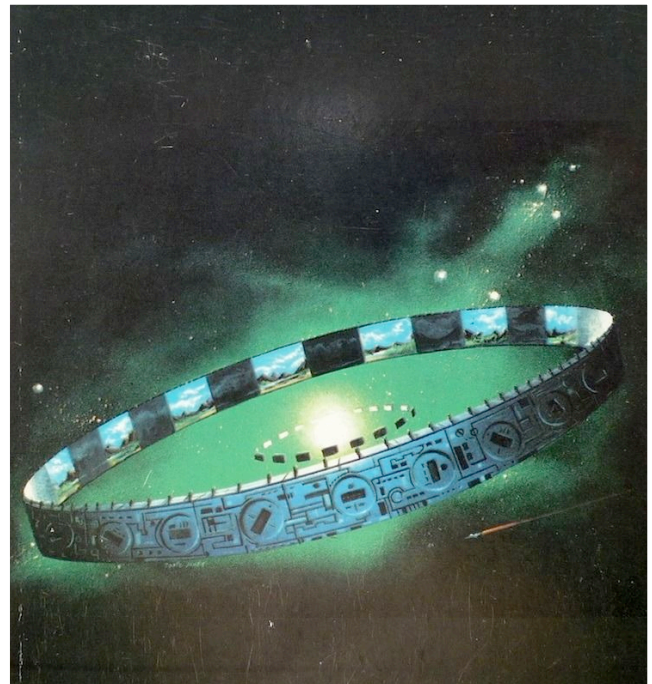
The genesis of this article occurred as a serendipitous confluence. In an editorial Zoom conference with Ulrika (yes, we do do that, and they're not all dominated by scurrilous gossip) we alighted upon the topic of Universal Basic Income programs, some of the experiments of which I had already been aware of and interested in. This led me to consider whether a discussion of monetary systems in sf (where they exist or are central to the world-building) would be worthwhile, even from my typical position of single-minded anti-capitalist fury, or perhaps because of it.

The very next day (or at least it seemed like it), I was having a typically meandering conversation with my work colleague "Mad" James Kerns while staging at the airport and bemoaning our penury, when he observed that "You know, in *Star Trek* there isn't any money", after floating the idea that all the money in the world might be collected and divided evenly among the population for a fresh start. After disabusing his belief that *Star Trek* doesn't have an overt medium of exchange or seemingly an inherent desire for wealth with "Tell that to a Ferengi" (and later thinking of the episode "The Most Toys") I did continue to ponder.

Concurrently, the BBC World Service broadcast a short series of documentaries, 'Money Money Money', on the history and establishment of media of exchange and the forms they take.

James' mention of *Star Trek* prompted the immediate question in my mind of "How do you get a starship built?", and I then realized that any theoretical consideration of a moneyless society is hampered by the fact that we're inculcated to everything having to be *paid for*. This is a fact of our individual lives which are transactional, but consider that this does not have to be the case with a more collectivist mindset. The ultra-capitalist system (properly, I suppose, termed "late-stage capitalism") which currently exists

cannot and could not possibly have seen through projects such as the Hoover Dam or the US Interstate highways. We could interpret the need for a starship or a fleet of them at some point in a similar public works concept, but this implies an overall governmental authority which is both willing and able to make it happen, a situation from which mankind is deliberately retreating. Larry Niven's contentions that at the point we'll need to construct a Dyson sphere or indeed a Ringworld, then we'll have the ability to do so looks like utter fantasy, since the current state of "government" suggests that we'll be grunting and hurling feces at more enlightened alien visitors by then.



In the case of most science fiction, the existence of a medium of exchange of some kind seems to be either assumed or ignored completely. In my undoubtedly less than comprehensive (though not insubstantial) reading in the field I can think of only one capitalist-as-hero, Van Vogt's Artur Blord, although there are more than enough examples of characters who are simply rich

enough to do as they like (Jubal Harshaw, perhaps?) with little comment as to how they reached their plutocratic status (although Harshaw is stated to have plied the trades of doctor and lawyer). That's not to say that sf stories centrally concerned with money or economics don't exist, as a quick peruse of the SF Encyclopedia under the headings 'Economics' and 'Money' will easily show. Asimov's 1958 short 'Buy Jupiter' is one where the sneaky capitalists get the win.

The history (or manner) of media of exchange can be reasonably broken into four stages: barter, commodity, representative and fiat, and it's worth defining these. Barter is simply enough understood as an exchange of items of need. I have more firewood than I need, you have an apple orchard, and we exchange presumed surplus to each other's satisfaction. This is simply expanded to a tripartite situation where perhaps Fred needs apples but not firewood and I need cabbages, which he cultivates in abundance, so we agree that I will give you firewood in exchange for you giving Fred apples, and he gives me cabbages. The further expansion of this inevitably local system should end up with the entire community having a big swap-meet with hopefully everyone coming away with their needs met. Very socialist, but really only workable at a local level. Inter-community trading creates the necessity for the commodity system, in which a single item of intrinsic value (like a piece of metal) is determined by whatever method of bookkeeping to be worth an equivalent in other commodities: one unit of whatever can be used to acquire a cord of firewood, a bushel of apples or a crate of cabbages, say. This soon requires subdivision of the commodity, since I might only want enough apples to make a pie and not leave the unwanted amount to rot, which starts the process of coinage denomination. The inherent problem with this type of money is that the commodity is often if not always consumable itself, salt being

an historical example, but also really any metal you can think of - iron can be made into swords or ploughshares, silver and gold into jewelry and so on. This moves us to the need for a representative currency, the "gold standard" or some equivalent.

A representative currency is, at least in theory, one that is backed by a commodity, for example the gold standard in which a bearer's note can be cashed in for its denominational equivalent in the underlying commodity. I wonder if anyone ever tried to do this by, say, turning up at Fort Knox with a sack of used notes and asking for gold bars. Representative currency predictably became a transitional state, since it was tied to the value of the underlying commodity, which would itself be subject to the whims of supply and demand and is also manipulable (which is not to say that the next stage isn't). There is at least one fine example I know which posits a representative currency, the typically and wonderfully subversive 'Spondulix' by Paul di Filippo, in which the commodity is deli sandwiches.

The vagaries of having a representative currency are pointedly expressed in Blish's 'Cities in Flight', where the underlying commodity changes, in this case to a drug standard related to anti-agathics, a huge amount of which Mayor Amalfi has passed up (not knowing what their future value would be), ultimately leaving his city of New York impoverished rather than immeasurably wealthy.

Fiat currency supplants the representative version, and here an issuing authority (usually a government) mints coinage or prints pieces of paper in useful denominations which have transactional value (only) for getting that firewood, apples or cabbages. Fiat currency was first created in 11th century China, but didn't achieve a measure of ubiquity until the 20th century in the rest of the world. President

Richard Nixon's defaulting on the gold standard was the turning point for the USA, here.

None of this, though, predicts the *Star Trek* moneyless future, and there's little I could find that depicts any transitional stage between needing and then not needing some form of currency, until the blinding flash of light arrived with the season finale of *Orville: New Horizons*. Without spoilers, I hope, Commander Grayson (Adrianne Palicki) explains to a would-be but well-meaning thief of the technology that the turning point is the invention of the matter replicator, which leads to a post-scarcity society in which the irrelevance of money is just a side-effect. Grayson, however, also explains (with a clear in-universe historical example) the reason for the existence of the Planetary Union's equivalent of the Prime Directive: replication technology had been gifted to one particular planet which swiftly proceeded to destroy itself, implying that late-stage capitalism isn't geared to getting this bounty to those who would most need it. In other words, any race or species has to be philosophically able to reap the benefits for all, not just some elite who would wish to remain ascendant at the expense of the rest of us. It's

also strongly implied here (as in *Star Trek*) that there almost has to be some kind of cataclysm resulting in the effective destruction of existing society, only to be recovered from by the serendipitous invention of replicator technology.

This sidetracks us to the consideration that replicator technology isn't all-powerful, since, for example, *Star Trek* ships have to beetle around to various mining planets to secure supplies of dilithium (and other commodities in other instances), a situation that doesn't appear to have changed much in the future of *ST:Discovery*. The limitations of the replicator remain unexplained and ignored. It's worthy of note that in the travels of *ST:Voyager*, for example, transactions often occur as barter, which is quite the throwback. That very much echoes the Maori concept of "koha": a favor done for some perhaps future return, but primarily as a way of establishing community bonds.

It seems, then, that we can't expect any smooth transition from a wholly transactional society to a post-scarcity (moneyless) one. I'd like to get the *Orville's* version of replicator technology, though. It is able to produce a decent whiskey.



TITS

ULRIKA O'BRIEN

Tits are just weird. Or at least, becoming the custodian of a pair, particularly a large pair, is weird.

There are things that just fell through the cracks (you should excuse the expression) when it came to my early sex education. My mother gave me a very rudimentary talk when I was eight or so – whenever it was I first asked about reproduction I guess – and then left the rest for me to figure out from a series of worthy and educational books. Not one of which, by the way, felt it incumbent on them to make even passing mention of erections – what they are, or are like, or are for, or indeed that they happen at all. So that was an interesting surprise. Perhaps as a direct result, I find erections endlessly fascinating, miraculous, and charming to this day.

And yeah, another thing that never really got explained was the whole tits-as-mind-control thing.

Sure, I understood that adult women had breasts, generally speaking, and I suppose I had some vague inkling that I would eventually develop a set of my own. I never yearned for breasts of my own. Indeed, I didn't give them much thought, not even when the Tit Fairy showed up, way too fucking early, before I turned eleven. I certainly had no conception that anybody else would think about them, ever. Other than perhaps my grandmother who got a bit persistent about getting me my first training bra. Nobody warned me about tits' awesome potential. Absolutely no one told me that my tits might have the power to make boys and men lose their damn' minds. And yet...

I don't think I had any very good modeling on how tits work in the wider world. Not in real life, certainly. As a kid, I did watch a lot of old black and white movies from the '30s, '40s, and '50s – back then, old black & white films were practically all that was on TV. Them and Captain Kangaroo. He was no help, either. And

the women in those movies seemed very little like anyone I knew. They wore extravagant, beautifully form-fitting, décolleté dresses in luxurious, slinky fabrics. They also spoke in contrived, stilted periods, were perfectly coifed and made up, and tripped along like elegant unicorns on their impossibly high heels. They were nothing like my mother, grandmother, or any real women I knew. I don't remember ever aspiring to dress or be like them. They were too alien, too unattainable. Something. Besides, I was a tomboy.

But in the movies, despite vast tracts of generous, shapely, miraculously well-supported cleavage being on more-or-less constant display, nobody made a thing about tits. Men in the movies did not grope them, or ogle them, or even notice them, really. Along with the pineapple headdresses and strappy platform heels, along with the New Look silhouette, tiaras, Audrey Hepburn updos, and all the rest, prominently displayed bosoms were simply part of the package. That was how women dressed fancy in old movies.



Apparently, this is not how things work in real life. It did take the clue train several passes to finally run me down, though.

In retrospect I realize the stupidly premature tits had a part in the cherry orchard incident. At the very least, they made me seem far older than my ten years and some months. That day, I was running away from home. Finally. It was a fine spring day, and I had my lime-green vinyl purse with me, and a flowered, bell-bottomed pantsuit my mother had made for me, and I was going to show my parents whatever it was I was going to show them. I would be revenged for some injustice or other. I have long-since forgotten it. Forgot it the same day, probably.

I got as far from home as the cherry orchard next to the junior high school. There was a man there, working in the orchard, picking fruit maybe. (Maybe there were others there, too – surely there must have been if it was harvest season – but I only remember the one.)

He called me over as I was walking past on the sidewalk, asking me if I had the time. Back then I wore a gigantic man's style watch – the only kind my mother ever bought for me – so I could hardly have denied knowing, even had it occurred to me to try. It did not occur to me. I came over, and told him the time. He asked my name, and I told him. He told me his name was David, with the soft, fricative Spanish 'v'. He taught me to make the unfamiliar sound, made me repeat it until I had it right. To this day, my Spanish 'v's are excellent.

I don't remember what all he asked me, but at one point he did ask how old I was. I told him. I don't know if he believed me or not. He said I seemed much older. He began asking me if I wanted to see a show with him. I didn't understand what he meant, what he was asking me. He repeated the question, several times, but it was the same words and I still didn't know how to answer. Suddenly, the world got darker. He had stepped in close, and his arms were around

me, muscular adult arms, holding me against himself, hard. His mouth was on mine, wet and confusing, and I could feel his tongue pushing against my closed lips, against my teeth. I was a blank. My heart was hammering in the base of my throat and I was paralyzed. Could. Not. Move.

After some nameless eternity, just as quickly it was over. He was talking again, still on about seeing a show. He asked me to meet him there after his work was over. He set a time, and I agreed to it. He made me promise. I promised. Anything to get away. I turned back the way I had come up the sidewalk. Back toward home. I walked calmly until I was sure I was out of sight. Then, I ran.

It was years before I stopped feeling guilty about breaking that promise. It was years before I could interact normally with Hispanic men. But in all of that horrifying, endless abortive French kiss, I'm pretty sure he never groped me. Small blessings.

The first time I was groped was in junior high school. Seventh grade, it was, in the cafeteria. I hated junior high. I was often the object of mockery and torment, and in that first year, largely friendless. I was in line for a tray of something awful. I have a clear memory of wilted, near-black canned spinach in a congealing pool of urine-yellow fluid. There may have been a rectangular block of so-called pizza. Reed O'Reilly was just behind me in line, with a giggling pair of his cronies behind him. I knew I was in for it.

Reed asked me whether I 'stuff.' "What?" I asked. "Do you stuff?" he asked again. There was more giggling in the background. "What??" "Do you STUFF?" What? Stuff? Stuff what? I don't think I even responded out loud that time. Like I say, I never had any particular ambition to get breasts. They came unsought and uninvited, and had simply to be dealt with. So it would never in a zillion years have occurred

to me that someone might pad out the contents of her bra with Kleenex or whatever. I simply couldn't comprehend what Reed was asking me. Getting no useful information from me, Reed apparently decided that the empirical approach was best. Quick as a blink, his hand was on my breast, squeezing it. Not painfully, but there was not one damn' thing erotic about it. My mind went blank again, frozen in an eternal instant. I had no reaction to give. I don't remember if I paid for my lunch. I guess I must have, then

I tell these stories not to beg sympathy or imply that I am still traumatized. I just wanted to give some concrete examples for the observation that men (not all men!) do some really epically stupid shit when under the influence of a pair of knockers. I see that now, after many reinforcing lessons, but it was a while yet before the clue train caught up with me. Even after Reed's little stunt, I had no notion that my breasts might have had something to do with weird male behavior.



stumbled away feeling mocked and humiliated, once again. Many, many years later Reed ran into my mother while she was out walking the dog, and asked her to send his regards to me. Apparently, he *liked me*. Only now, retelling this, do I begin to wonder if the whole stupid incident happened *because* he liked me. Holy fuck. Fathers, please, please tell your sons not to pull shit like this. The contents of a girl's bra is not your business unless she invites you, and checking for yourself is no way to handle a declaration of interest, or affection. Obvious observation is obvious, right?

Then I bought a pink sun dress on a visit to Sweden. I *loved* that dress. It had a tailored bodice that fit like a bustier, cut low, and required no bra underneath to keep the girls snugged together and well forward. It buttoned all the way down the front. ALL the way. Also, it was just exactly the shade of ice pink that suits my coloring. It absolutely gave me cleavage that wouldn't quit and I felt pretty wearing it, especially with a pair of espadrille heels that cross-laced around the ankle and all the way up to the knee. Without fully realizing it, I felt sexy. Too sexy, apparently. My normally very broad-

minded Swedish grandmother did NOT want me wearing it out. I couldn't get a straight answer as to why not. To me, the display wasn't any different from what you might see in one of those old black and white movies that we watched together. That seemed perfectly okay in the films. Now would have been the time to explain to me in so many words that large breasts when squished together like that have the power to rot men's brains right out their ears. Especially when what's doing the squishing is a dress that, if unbuttoned, would leave nothing but girl underneath. And for esthetic reasons, I preferred to wear it with the topmost and bottommost buttons undone. There is such a thing as preying too much on the imagination of the observer.

The pink dress never actually got me in trouble, but it sure provoked attention. Home in San Jose I wore it to the county fair and actually had a small group of men following me around the entire fairground. Not approaching – possibly thanks to my kid brother and his best friend -- but just, apparently, fascinated. A few years later I wore it to my speech class on a day when I was speaking. While I waited outside the classroom for class to start a woman, a total stranger, came up to me and berated me at length for showing up on campus looking like that. We didn't have the term for it then, but this was my first episode of slut shaming. It's not like my nipples were showing or anything. But I had big tits and I wasn't hiding them. I was, in fact, showing them off. This is another thing that nobody tells you. Nobody told me, anyway: large breasts are shameful, proof of a base nature, and need to be hidden away to protect society at large. Small-breasted women can get away with absolute murder and nobody blinks. Décolletage down to her navel? Fine. Nipples clearly visible in side view through the armholes of her shirt? No problem. But you put a pair of D-cups into a scoop neck shirt? Die, heretic!

That scoop neck will get you every time. For a while in college I worked as a courier for a fancy Century City law firm. (I was, in fact, the first woman my boss, Roger, hired into that job and thanks to me, he went on to hire other women couriers after me. Presumably small-breasted ones, though, as we shall see. But teaching Roger that women make perfectly competent couriers was a proud moment, after the fact.)

Over that summer word came down to Roger from the lawyers that I wasn't dressing professionally enough. Now, I was just delivering filings to the court clerk's office and making copies at the law library, occasionally serving summonses, and driving a banger Pinto wagon with no working A/C so no, I wasn't wearing blouses that buttoned up to the neck. But I wasn't going out of my way to show skin, either. I just needed to survive driving around in the LA heat without air conditioning. But the attorneys objected to cleavage, and Roger dutifully delivered the message that the partners wanted me showing less skin. I quit soon after, for entirely other reasons. But by then I had come to appreciate the brain-crushing power of tits, and was therefore able to deploy them in a measured and deliberate way. Tactical tits, you might say. On my last day, I wore my Suzi Wong dress to work, as a final "fuck you" to the attorneys.

Now, the Suzie Wong dress was something special. My boyfriend of the time had bought me a gift certificate to Trashy Lingerie for Christmas that year. Trashy Lingerie made what you might call erotic couture: custom corsetry, bustiers, bras, the whole line. At the time their confections were much seen in the pages of *Playboy* magazine, particularly on various Playmates of the Month, and they were eventually skyrocketed to even greater fame when Madonna debuted one of their corsets onstage. Jet black it was, with gold tassels at the nipples. Typical Madonna restraint.



Now, on my own I have never been the sort of girl that turns heads, garners adoring worshippers, or stops traffic. Best I could ever manage was the lesser laurel of Babe by Fannish Standards. *shrug* That's not a terrible thing, I'm not complaining. But it means I can fairly give credit where credit is due, to that

So. The Suzie Wong dress was made to measure. Built for me, you could say. Like its namesake, it was cut as a Chinese chi pau, form fitting, with a mandarin collar. Unlike the original, it had a deep keyhole neckline made to show off the effect of a push-up bra underneath. I had it made up in black silk, edge-piped in red. It was just shy of knee length, and slit right up to the hip on either side. With gartered black stockings and my red stiletto pumps, that dress could literally stop traffic. Among other things. In that dress, I had it going on. When I wore it to John's next office Christmas party one of the staff wives actually *creaked* -- like a rusty hinge -- when she saw me walk in. For that matter, when I wore it on a visit to the Magic Castle magicians' club in Hollywood, I actually got selected to be the audience assistant in the close-up show. Assisting the magicians is more typically the exclusive province of the sort of long, lean, devastatingly beautiful sylph that the film and fashion industry litters the landscape with. But that time, runty, unbeautiful me. That dress was magical.

magical damn' dress and the Mind Melting Power of Tits. When I strode into the lobby of the Century City office tower that housed Wyman, Bautzer, Rothman, Kuchel, and Silbert (hut, hut, hike), I was truly rocking the house.

At the elevator, I waited for a couple of tall, pinstriped, three-piece suited attorneys to step off before I marched into the carriage. The two of them stopped dead, did a comedy double-take and fairly scrambled over each other to try to push their way back into the elevator. Too late. I smiled sweetly at them as the doors closed between us. I may have laughed out loud. I have never in my life, before or since, had that kind of absurd first-sight effect on men. It was amazing. Supernatural. I don't think I'd want to have that kind of power on an ongoing basis, it would be uncomfortable and alienating. But for just a moment there, I was very fucking mighty.

And that, my dears, is why tits are weird. But kinda fun, once you learn how to use them.

SUSCIPE VERBUM

THE READERSHIP

Public and heartfelt apologies to Jerry Kaufman, whose loc on 15 somehow slipped through the cracks in the long interim between that issue and 16. Here it is...

Jerry Kaufman

It was a pleasure to get a paper copy of BEAM 15 (51 MAEB). I've enjoyed reading it, and have a comment or twelve to make, starting with a gush of appreciation for Sara Felix's cover. It's a watercolor, isn't it? Not a medium I see used in fanzine art very often. Hardly ever, really.

***Ulrika:** I am forced to conclude that you either don't read This Here... or you don't look at the pictures. TH... is positively chockablock with watercolors, at least in those issues where Nic runs illos by, er, me.*

Andy Porter was not the only person to attempt to defend Ulrika and fanzine fandom at File770.com; Ken Josenhans also made a couple of posts, and I feebly tried to suggest fanzines were a Good Thing (I chimed in at the end of the conversation), but we all were roundly condemned for our condescension.

***Nic:** I don't think it ever works (although it can be reflexive, and Ghu knows I've done it) to meet condescension with equivalent condescension. In effect you're then playing on enemy ground with the enemy's choice of weapon – and I use the term “enemy” guardedly but circumstantially accurately.*

***Ulrika:** I think it's just further evidence of the heroically tin ears of the respondents at File 770 that they accused you, of all people, Jerry, of condescension. I'm not sure I know anyone more anxious to appease all interlocutors.*

I think naming awards (scholarships, buildings, etc) after people has pitfalls, and in today's culture the pits have sharp stakes.

***Ulrika:** Sharp if you (the awarding body) have a thin skin, mostly. A lot of the*

sharpness could be blunted if various award and convention committees would stop capitulating to threats by whiners. The fact that committees keep caving is what gives the outrage addicts power. Dog trainers know that the way to expire bad behavior is to stop rewarding it.

FYI, when you say of Campbell that he was “devoted to a lot of ideas we'd now call pseudoscience, with our benefit of half a century of hindsight and discovery,” you're assuming that the readers of Astounding took Campbell's ideas at face value. Plenty of people, fans or not, thought those ideas were preposterous pseudoscience at the time. And even with half a century gone by, plenty of people believe in pseudoscience still. I'll leave it for Gary Farber, should he decide to read something other than tweets and Facebook posts, to give you book, chapter, and verse.

***Nic:** Citing Farber always brings to mind either or both of the Goon Show sound effect of stampeding boots running off into the distance in search of brandy, or Graham Chapman's King Arthur: “Run away! Run away!”*

Pat McMurray's story of “Dr. Mengele at Octocon” is saddening and maddening. I can't see what the joke was supposed to mean, what was supposedly funny about it, or why the jokers only showed chagrin in the moment they thought Pat was Jewish.

***Ulrika:** Yeah, that whole episode was mysterious. The ‘joke’ was stupid, unfunny, and deeply childish. Luckily, that's the first and last time anyone in fandom has opted for the deeply childish approach.*

Say, I know the Boiled in Lead song that “The Facebook Algorithm” is built on. Nice job.

***Ulrika:** Thank you! I'm glad someone out there had the context. I knew the source was*

Really Fucking Obscure, but the fit of the alternate lyrics was too good to pass up.

Leigh reports on the room keys needed to access upper floors in Robin Johnson's hotel... At the San Jose Worldcon a couple of years ago, the hotel hosting the party rooms also had this arrangement - not only the elevators but the entry needed a room key to open - but there the hotel would NOT unlock the lifts or even the entrance, so volunteers had to monitor the entrance and the elevators to allow attendees to get to the parties. What a pain that was!

Ulrika: *As I write this, we don't yet know how this very type of limitation will play out in Vancouver for Corflu Pangloss, though the Sands has been very accommodating so far. Fingers crossed.*

As is often the case with Andy Hooper's plays, I found myself gauging how many fannish references I got, how well I tracked the parallels with 1984, and, in this case, how many of the deleted songs I'd heard of.

I enjoyed Steve Jeffery's Corflu report, especially the bits wherein his seven year old brain tried to understand Eternity, and his visit, with others, to the Museum of Visionary Arts (official name, per their website, is American Visionary Art Museum).. I've always had the same problem with the concept of Eternity, and I'll bet the artists whose work is in that museum also grappled with it. (My idea of Eternity is that it's a single endless moment without detectable duration - yes, a time paradox.)

It's just my imagination, but I think that in the movie version of her life, Mary Gentle could be played by Emma Thompson.

Nic: *I wonder what Mary thinks of that idea.*

Regarding what I saw as undue harshness of your Scalzi roast, Ulrika, you claim KTF privilege.

Ulrika: *Nerp. I claim many things, but "privilege" is not among them. Thanks to flagrant abuse by idiots, that word gives me*

hives, and I don't apply it except when it actually fits the case, which is rarely.

I don't recall clearly if I accepted that style of fanzine reviewing as appropriate, although it could be amusing. One criticism was that it discouraged more people from starting or continuing to publish than it helped people to improve or to seek out zines new to them.

Ulrika: *I very much doubt that anything I do or say could discourage John Scalzi the tiniest little bit from doing anything at all, but if my commentary had the effect of dissuading pros who don't do any fanac from arrogating fan Hugos to themselves by dint of having a large and devoted personal fan base, I would take that as a good thing. A very fucking good thing. So if you're trying to convince me that the KTF approach was misguided, you've definitely picked the wrong argument.*

Nothing hilarious, Nic, in seeming to define fannish fanzines as "not useful" because I was trying to explain what the Hugo voters voted for, and why. Judging by the winners in the fanzine category, at least, they seem to prefer zines that have a direct and obvious connection to the SF genre, and that gives them information. (That's not my main criterion for what I would consider best.) I can't comment in detail about either The Drink Tank or Emerald City, as I read neither of them with any regularity, but the few issues I saw either concentrated on a movie or movie subgenre (Drink Tank) or reviews and commentary on current events and conventions (Emerald City), IIRC.

Ulrika, I think "reach" is a factor, although I doubt it's the only factor. It's hard, probably impossible, to look back at fanzine nominees and see if the winners had significantly larger circulations than the runners-up most of the time.

Ulrika: *I don't think it would be that hard to assess relative distribution of nominees in lots of cases. But you're missing an entire category of fanzines (and fan writers, and fan artists, which is more what I was thinking of)*

—i.e. the zines, writers, and artists that don't ever or often even make the short list, despite excellent quality of output. And while it is not uniformly the case that excellent fanac that's overlooked is also of limited availability, I'd say it's true of the majority of cases.



I really agree with you both, Nic and Ulrika, about what fan writing is, but as we've been going on about the Hugos, which evidently we all care about even if we don't take direct part in the process, here's what the WSFS constitution says: "3.3.16: Best Fan Writer. Any person whose writing has appeared in semiprozines or fanzines or in generally available electronic media during the previous calendar year." There's nothing subjective here, like there is in our preferred definition.

Ulrika: Yes, it's inarguable that this is the official definition. But my point, in case it was previously too subtle(!), is that it's a terrible definition. It functionally includes everyone who ever wrote anything put out on

the internet in a given year, irrespective of whether they are writing to, for, about, or even in awareness of, Science Fiction or its fandom. I become deeply tempted to start a series of monkey warfare pranks involving getting ever more ridiculous non-fan "fanwriters" stuffed onto the Hugo ballot. Should we start with Queen Elizabeth? While we're all feting her memory anyway, might as well get her a fanwriter Hugo as well.

David Redd

Many thanks for *BEAM 16*, astoundingly good-looking yet again, and some fascinating reading for which I made notes even more indecipherable than usual. I gather that I was interested in the brontosaurus revisionism, which showed our world to be as mutable as Philip K Dick perceived. Tuvan throat singers were once a distant rarity, but now they're everywhere. A few years back the same things happened to Andean panpipes.

Ulrika: The sudden efflorescence of Andean pan pipe music makes some degree of sense to me, given the influx of Peruvian musicians into the busking scene of various metroplexes. I don't think I ever heard Tuvan buskers, though, so presumably that's not how their music achieved its sudden burst of mindshare. While Sturgeon's law applies to ethnic music as well as anything else, I was very pleased with the (re?)naissance of pan pipe music in anglophone countries. I love the plaintive, mournful vocal quality of the pipes, particularly when it's deployed as a foil to a cheerful melody. The counterpoint creates a feeling that even in great joy weaves a thread of pending sorrow. That tension speaks to me on a deep level.

As for Erle Stanley Gardner and your title for him this issue, I have found (but cannot trace) a reference to the numerous expendable fatalities in

an old TV detective series as “Cannon Fodder”. Apt in your case and that. Apologies for not joining in the conversation on Firefly/awakeness, but in my distanced way (hermit in the country, remember) I’m too remote from current sociological phenomena to do more than note their occurrence – and for some vocabulary I again need a translation before I can appreciate your dialectic. Oh well. “Capsule Lovecraft fandom description” was noteworthy. No note for Sandra Bond’s tour de force? Should have been. Clearly, I was so overawed and overcome by enjoyment that the pen slipped from my helpless fingers. My last note, “p67 illo”, means I liked it.

Steve Jeffery

That is a splendid editorial from Ulrika. I felt/feel the same confusion and anxiety when things I thought I knew or learned as solid fact suddenly change or disappear. I’d probably feel even more beset if failing memory didn’t cast a vague fog over what some of these old certainties used to be before they came back wearing new names and faces. Sometimes age has odd benefits in that it can teach an old dog new tricks if they have forgotten what the old trick used to be. But at the same time, it is the things you remember from long back (like the Brontosaurus) that tend to stick and serve to throw you off kilter. Just lay your hands off Triceratops I say. That was always my favourite.

Ulrika: *Triceratops was dead good, yeah.*

I saw a book on a library shelf this morning titled *Living with Uncertainty*, by Susan Jeffers, and rather wished I’d taken it out for a browse now. It might have helped. (I had gone in to return James Young’s *Nico: The Songs They Don’t Play on the Radio*). On the way out I found a new book by David Spiegelhalter and took that out instead, so I can at least apply this to Sagan’s advice

“Quantify” but also be able to judge how trustworthy those numbers are. (Something Sagan really ought to have added, although you could argue they are covered by his last couple of points.) But I’m a stats nerd, and Spiegelhalter and Tim Harford - along with the late Hans Roslin and the Rev. Thomas Bayes - are high on my go-to list for making sense of numbers.

This looks a fascinating, and sizeable, issue, and it’s going to take me a while to work through it.

Tommy, I did warn you about Rich Coad’s unerring ability to channel the competitive spirit and last second buzzer reflex of Paul Merton in *Just a Minac*. Note to self: do not try to play competitive board games with Rich. There will be blood.

Nic: *Having been the inaugural winner of ‘Just A Minac’, and having seen how aggressively and brilliantly it’s come along, I am minded to retire undefeated. Rich complained (but not too vigorously) after that first episode that I had unfairly handicapped him by plying him generously with Bulleit whiskey throughout, and there’s much truth in that.*

Glad you enjoyed your time at Corflu Heatwave, but really how could you - or anyone else - not in a small and fan friendly con. Good to see you again at Concorde too.

From which comes Sandra’s illustrated(?) GOH speech ‘Fandom Considered as a 1966 Two-Tone Triumph Herald’. I did briefly consider opting out of the draw again this year, but having done it the last couple of times I decided what the hell, if it comes I might just remember enough to wing it. Maybe not wise, but having a speech typed out in double spaced to go with a PowerPoint slideshow doesn’t quite seem to be in the spirit of Corflu. And in the event I’m not entirely convinced Rob would be able to navigate and cue PowerPoint slides on his laptop.

Ulrika: *I have great faith in Rob Jackson's technical savvy. And while it may not have been him, someone surely ran PowerPoint slides for us during the presentation of Corflu Pangloss' bid at Concorde.*

I must get a laptop sometime. Although my 1996 Sony Vaio still -sort of- works, it can hardly be classed as portable (luggable maybe). But then it's taken me more than three years to finally get round to buying my own PC, especially as it was more convenient to use the work laptop while working from home over the last two and a half years, at least up to the point IT locked its ability to connect to anything outside the company domain.) But given that Corflu has a small and relatively static membership, an increasing number of whom are ineligible for the dubious honour of the GOH spot having already been selected in past years, there must come a time when it comes down to the single remaining eligible candidate. And then what?

I did particularly like Sandra's observation about the fragmentation of fandoms: "We got comics fandom - their car was quite like the first one but painted brighter." and "We got Lovecraft fandom - their car had an interesting hollow knocking sound from the engine, and their hood ornament was a bit awful." which I thought was pretty neat for something apparently made up off the cuff.

Like Ulrika, Rob and I had communicated only via a series of text-only emails up to the point he said would pick me up from Dulles arrival lounge on my trip to Corflu FIAWOL with a vague description to look out for an "oldish guy with a white beard". Who was terribly confused when I introduced myself, and denied all knowledge of being either a Rob or indeed a Jackson or wanting to meet me. Some people. We did eventually find



each other, but you know it it might be a good idea to have some form of mutual recognition system when meeting fans for the first time. Like, I dunno, some form of obviously recognisable t-shirt, or a rolled up copy of Warhoon 28.

Ulrika: *Yes, Steve Glover used a similar trick when I arrived in Edinburgh, which worked quite well. He was flourishing a copy of Robert Parker's novel, The Widening Gyre, which was also the title of my fanzine at the time.*

Given Ulrika's knowledge of the UK from old TV shows, it's a wonder she wasn't more nervous about coming to a country where people in small English villages are murdered at an alarming rate until the culprit is finally uncovered by a little old lady. It's for similar reasons that I've decided to avoid visiting bridges in Scandinavia.

Ulrika: *No need to be nervous if one is advisedly cautious. I simply didn't visit any small villages.*

I must check out some of those Pre-Raphaelite painters Ulrika mentions since I only really know about Artemisia and a couple of others from a series of post that Tiga has put up on Facebook. I think it was at the Birmingham Museum of Art

that I stood in front of an apocalyptic painting by Mad John Martin for about 10 minutes, completely transfixed. (I did the same when seeing an actual Jackson Pollock work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and completely revising any preconceptions I had picked from 'Jack the Dripper' documentaries. Ditto Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2' in the same gallery.)

Ulrika: *It is startling how powerful some artworks turn out to be in person. I never believed the frequent claim that photos can't convey the impact of a painting until I met my first Van Gogh at the Getty Museum as it then was. The painting poleaxed me. I stopped in my tracks, rooted to the spot and dumb with awe and wonder, for I don't know how many minutes. I have been a devoted Van Gogh fan ever since, but I don't have any prints of his work on display. Prints are too disappointing to bother with.*

My prog rock philistine eye is drawn to the flowers behind Stokes' Madonna and wonder if it is indeed Giant Hogweed.

(I nearly snorted my morning coffee the first time I heard Lauren Laverne announce Stuart Maconie's and Mark Riley's radio show as "immune to all our herbicidal batterings".)

I don't know when it changed, but in Victorian times, pink was held to be the stronger colour and more appropriate for boys while the softer blue more suitable for girls. I don't know if this is why the Victorian's poster-child, Alice, is typically depicted as dressed in blue, or at what point pink became regarded the more 'feminine' colour.

Thank you both, Leigh and Tommy, for the kind comments on my trip report.

I was discussing Mary Gentle's work with someone (Jerry Kaufman, I think, in Littlebrook) a little while ago, which prompted me to retrieve *Ilario: The Lion's Eye* from the shelf for a re-read alongside here newest one, *Black Opera*.

Leigh Edmonds

There's no need to apologize, Ulrika, about Beam being late. Most fans have excuses much less compelling than yours, or no excuse at all.

Ulrika: *Oh, sure, I know, but realize too that there are certain Fannish Traditions to be upheld, at least occasionally, and surely wasting a few column inches making excuses about Why This Zine Is Late is a tradition of very long standing. It also allows the writer, if she is so inclined, to invite the reader into the quotidian impedimenta of her life a little, without having to resort to some sort of full-blown and tedious diary zine.*

I don't know about others but I'm delighted to get a copy of your BFF no matter when it arrives. Among other things, it restores my faith in fankind and the ability of fans to be entertaining, thoughtful and artistic all at the same time.

Ulrika: *Aw, thank you. That's kind.*

If I may, I thought the highlight of this issue was your TAFF report, Ulrika. You tell us that writing is difficult for you but the writing in this report suggests otherwise.

Ulrika: *Writing for me is more **slow** and punctuated than precisely difficult. I can certainly string together a sentence pretty easily. Getting to the right words, and assembling them in the right order, particularly if I'm working toward making a particular argument, that's what takes thought, time, craft, and blood on the page. If the result looks fluid and effortless, if the transitions make sense and the humorous beats land correctly, that means I struggled long and hard to get it that way. Most of the time, I only get part way there. My writing involves a lot of thinking and reading and reordering to achieve the overall shape I want, and then, as Nic will tell you through gritted teeth, nearly endless small revisions to get to a final version. In which I will then spot further necessary revisions only after everything has already gone Orff to the printer. Everything I*

do is a work in progress, but eventually Nic rips it out of my hands and calls time.

Nic: *What teeth?*

Or perhaps it is that your difficulty with words means that you work harder at knocking them into shape than most of us do and the results are excellent. There are many highlights to your report but the one that comes to mind most readily as a really good example of writing is description of your feelings about Birmingham. I don't know whether I now want to avoid the place or go and have a look for myself just to see if it is as you described it. (I'm guessing that you wrote this some time ago, either than or the notes you took at the time must be voluminous - or you have an amazing memory. I tried to think what I was doing in 1998, possibly working on a book about power stations but maybe not.)

Ulrika: *Bits were certainly written right at the time, mostly in the form of disconnected notes, anecdotes, and episodes. My notes from the time are in fact voluminous. The raw material I'm extracting these TAFF chapters from runs over 70 pages, closely typed. So I have lots of fresh impressions to draw on. And of course, Google Street View is my friend when it comes to reminding myself of locational details that have long since lost their brightness in memory.*

Then there was Sandra Bond's GoH speech from Corflu. It's a better way of describing the changes that have taken place in fandom than anything else I've seen so I will use it in the future if anyone asks me for an explanation. Lucy Huntzinger's contribution was another great piece of writing which made me feel somehow deprived that I have not gone on that voyage of exploration to find something of my identity, but on the other hand I am more than a little relieved that I have not had to. Lee Wood's contribution is very evocative but also makes me glad that I don't live on a farm. Jane Carnall's long exposition on the Rama books now means that I don't have to read

them, thanks for that. I enjoyed the first book immensely but would prefer, I think, the sense of wonder that Clarke created in that first volume which does not, it seems, follow through so strongly in the following volumes. The other contributions were also interesting and/or entertaining but do not inspire any comments from me. Apart from, of course, Stacey Tappan's piece which is truly dreadful in the sense that it is about something dreadful. The actions of The Met illustrate, among other things, what happens when you place the arts in the hands of the money lenders.

I did think, Nic, that you went off like a fire cracker about Farah Mendlesohn's off the cuff comment. It did not occur to me that it was the put-down that you seemed to take it for. There are quite a few tv shows I've seen that I could make the same glib comment about, but perhaps the key phrase was her "recognized what I was watching" which might suggest that she is of a higher intellectual level than the rest of us. Still, I know capitalist propaganda when I see it, there's an amazing amount of it on the media but I don't know that I need to go into chapter and verse when saying why I don't watch most of it. Perhaps my problem here is that I don't know what Firefly is, found The Dukes of Hazzard so silly that I don't recall watching more than one episode and don't know who Farah Mendlesohn is. So perhaps I should be more circumspect. Or perhaps your complaint is that her comment was glib and in unpacking it you have discovered things that you don't agree with. That's okay, but I cannot imagine that there is anyone among us who has not made similar short hand comments from time to time. I'll plead guilty anyhow.

Your editorial, Ulrika, is very clearly and eloquently argued. I guess that what you wrote needs to be expressed to folks who do not understand that all knowledge is provisional, but perhaps people who do not understand that would

be difficult - if not impossible - to argue against as you have here. Good luck with that.

Apart from some excellent and thought provoking writing this issue of BEAM also looked great.

The cover and the back cover are lovely, as are most of the interior illustrations. I think that the effort you've both put into this issue pays off very handsomely and I thank you for including me in your mailing list.



Ulrika O'Brien

It's not typical for an editor to write letters of comment to their own fanzine, I guess. But I write comments when I want to take part in the conversation, and at least in writing to BEAM I feel I have a fair chance of getting into the letter column, rather than simply winding up down the oubliette. As I particularly wanted to make some observations on Nic's editorial in #16, this seemed like the most equitable way to do it – putting me on even footing with other correspondents, rather than taking advantage of my privileged status as co-editor.

So, *Firefly* as parable of the aftermath of the American Civil War: Joss Whedon has apparently said many times in interviews that he was inspired by reading a book about the Civil War and by subsequently speculating about what life after the

war must have been like for those who had fought for the losing side. Fair enough. But it's a long way from speculating about the experience of the losers in a rebellion to writing the world of *Firefly* as exactly analogous to Reconstruction-era America. The analogy fails almost wherever you look. Supposing that the show is some sort of apologia for the Confederate cause is not justified by cues internal to the show, or the world it imagines. There is zero indication that the Browncoats were fighting for the preservation of slavery or the justification of human chattel, yet surely that ought to be central to any vindication of the Confederacy? As Allison Douglass observes, the core planets and their various practices of treating human beings as cattle would be a far better analog to the Confederacy. Neither is that other salient feature of Confederate ideology – virulent anti-Black racism – plausible in the racially mixed composition of Browncoat troops or the crew of the *Serenity*. Even the claim that the imagery of the show is somehow derived from that of the CSA seems strained to me.

But Farah Mendlesohn's reaction to the show strikes me as symptomatic of the woke response to "problematic" content. It's also reminiscent of the way certain kinds of fundamentalist Baptists and Pentecostals will withdraw their children from public schools, or homeschool them from the outset, lest they absorb the heresies of sex education or evolutionary biology. Clearly, they fear the arguments of their faith are so insupportable that they couldn't withstand even mild critical scrutiny or comparison to alternative theories. And perhaps they're right.

John McWhorter has recently been flacking his book, *Woke Racism*, in which he argues that wokeness should be understood as a literal religion. He says it's a religion based on structural similarities between wokeness and organized religion, especially Christianity. Wokeness believes in original sin, that cannot be wiped away: white privilege. Wokeness holds its tenets sacrosanct

and rejects any possibility that they might be in error, or subject to factual falsification. Wokeness is certain of its own moral purity to the extent of justifying harm to heretics who question its beliefs or methods. Wokeness has a great love of casting the tainted and impure forever into the outer darkness, and this, too, has echoes in Farah's behavior profile. I suspect that Farah is very much an acolyte of this new religion, and as with any religious fanatic, argument is going to be a waste of your time. In fact, part of McWhorter's point in calling wokeism a religion is to help potential interlocutors understand that productive exchanges are simply not possible when talking to the woke. So while a pisstake of Farah may provide you with a momentary satisfaction, it's not going to change any minds, particularly hers.

Just wanted to toss that pebble into the pond of discourse. Otherwise, keep up the good work, guys. BEAM shows promise of becoming a pretty decent fanzine someday.

Nic: We're working on that.

Signed,

Ulrika O'Brien, flippant tosspot

Kim Huett

On the topic of pink it might be worth considering the fact that back in the day it was pink for boys and blue for girls. Pink was considered a manly colour due to an association with flesh and blood. Pink was the perfect compromise because it was considered one of the hot, fierce colours but not lower class like red (which was forever tainted in Edwardian eyes by being the colour used for the coats of common soldiers). Purple was not an option as purple was the royal colour, and orange was right out due to an association in English minds with the Netherlands, an association considered problematic by some people for reasons I don't have the strength to go into right now. Blue on the

other hand was considered not very tough at all due to an association with flowers and birds and the French (typical English bias you understand). Prussian blue was alright but that's because the Prussians used a very dark blue to clothe their soldiers and such a dark blue is a very intimidating colour when combined with a few muskets and bayonets. The French under Napoleon on the other hand used a much paler shade which looked very festive, even when combined with a few muskets and bayonets. Oh, and while red was considered too common for street wear it was also considered very martial which is why hunting parties adopted red for their outfits.

And that's why English police were known as lobsters. Of course the English didn't want to be saddled with a police force because the French already had a police force. The reason usually given for disliking the French model was a fear of the police being used as spies and informers as it was claimed they were used in France. I suspect this merely hid a dislike for the French. Anyway, when the constabulary were introduced into England it was decided to uniform them in blue rather than military red so they would not be seen as a symbol of brutal military oppression belonging to the crown (it had become a very English hobby to not entirely trust whoever was on the throne, which is why during the Napoleonic Wars the King's German Legion hadn't been allowed to ever enter Britain). However many Englishmen didn't trust that the new formed police wouldn't be used for brutal oppression if push came to shove. Consequently it was said that constables were like lobsters, blue now but put them in hot water and they would soon turn red. However once people became used to policemen in their blue uniforms it's likely their presence influenced people into thinking of blue as a more masculine colour and helped the sexual colour inversion to occur. So what do you think of that?

Ulrika: *Well, it's a very anglocentric account of why the colors switched gender associations, and as far as I can tell, the flip was more broadly adopted than that, even in places outside the British sphere of influence, so I think it might need further thought.*

Eli Cohen

Re Nic's editorial: Gee, I watched Firefly and never realized that it supported slavery and unfairly represented the good-guy Alliance as evil. I just thought it was an outer-space Western (like an SF version of horse opera; hey, maybe we could call it, um, "space opera"? Nah, never catch on). With as little to do with the American Civil War as, say, "The Rebel", a TV western series from the early '60s about an ex-Confederate soldier -- oh, wait...

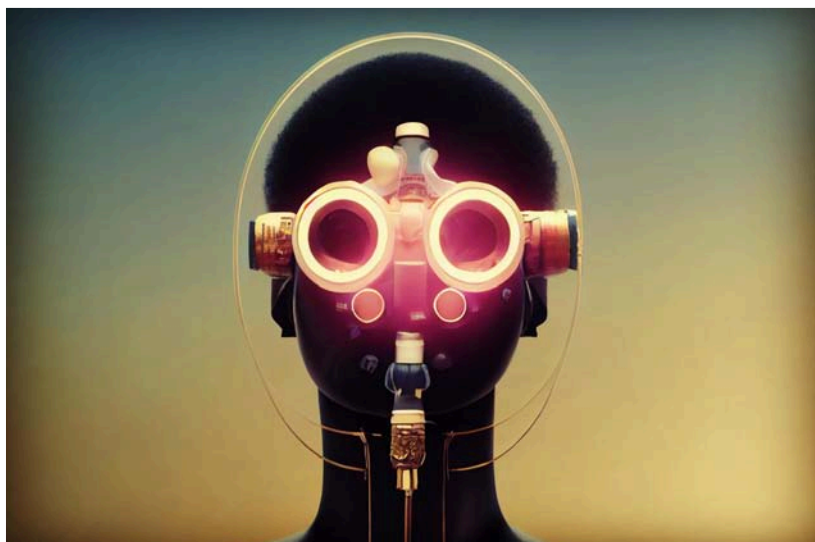
Re Ulrika's editorial: It is, indeed, crazy how facts keep changing out from under you, like Pluto going from being the ninth planet to the eighth planet (1979-1999) to not being a planet at all; continents suddenly starting to drift apart in the 1950s; humans losing 2 of their 48 chromosomes in 1956; etc., etc.

Ulrika: *Wait, we had 48 chromosome pairs in the 1950s? Now we've only got 43? Someone call the cops! We've been robbed!*

Compared to this, country names appearing and disappearing are relatively minor, though they caused my uncle no end of problems trying to renew his passport -- see, he was born in Czechoslovakia, but the U.S. government demands that the country of birth on your passport be a real country when you renew, and he had no idea which side of the Czech Republic/Slovakia border he'd actually been born on (he was three, by the way, when he came to the U.S.). Meanwhile, I'd always thought that my grandmother (his mother) was Hungarian, but actually

what she'd meant was that she was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in reality was probably Romanian. I am reminded of an old joke, from the Soviet Union era -- "Where were you born?" "St. Petersburg." "Where did you grow up?" "Petrograd." "Where do you live now?" "Leningrad." "And where would you like to live?" "St. Petersburg."

Leigh Edmonds, re our fandom vs others, and what to do about attracting newcomers: One of my regrets about the recent Worldcon was not getting to talk to John Hertz for more than 5 minutes, as he was apparently working on a plan to deal with this problem. When I think about my history and that of some Pittsburgh and Ottawa friends, it seems to me that college SF clubs were an important entry point (said clubs having a member or two, maybe a founder, who had at least a peripheral connection to fandom at large) -- which encouraged groups of proto-fans to go to nearby cons, thereby having a chance to get infected by meeting people at parties; or being given fanzines; or even *gasp* joining the N3F! I guess being "given a fanzine" today would be someone texting you a URL... Also, the isolated, secret SF reader of yore, desperate to find others who shared their vice, is long gone -- how many people these days haven't heard of Star Wars or George R.R. Martin or hobbits? (And how many



people today would even understand the meaning of “that crazy Buck Rogers stuff”?) I expect today’s college SF club members, if there are such, would also be game, anime, and comic book fans, with far too many conventions to choose from, tons of friends, thousands of e-zines to follow... OK, boomer.

***Ulrika:** Not only do we have the mainstreaming of every form of fantastic literature and media to get lost in, but perhaps more significantly, we’re up against a vast proliferation of places and ways to connect with people who share your interests, pretty much all of which give instant gratification in terms of response. If you’re cruising for the dopamine hit of people responding to what you write, waiting for someone to send a letter of comment or write a flattering review doesn’t even raise a flutter. What we do here, while deeper and more thoughtful (I think) than pretty much anything posted on Twitter ever, simply can’t compete in terms of speed.*

I could go on, but another stupid fanzine appeared in my mailbox, by someone claiming to be “Nic Farey”, and I feel I should at least look at it, even though it’s probably spam. Anyway, I enjoyed BEAM (must mention the lovely cover by Jeanne Gomoll; and I really liked Ulrika’s p. 59 and p. 64 illos -- something about their view of mountains across the water gets to me; I hope to see the view across English Bay in March, for the first time in over 40 years).

***Ulrika:** Time passed; things happened, and March became October, but we still look forward to meeting in person on the shores of English Bay.*

Justin E.A. Busch

Many thanks for the print copies of BEAM 15 and 16. The physical presence of a zine does make a difference; an e-zine, however well done, is simply a flat thing on a screen, all too similar to so many other flat things on screens. Seeing and

feeling the object at hand, its wraparound cover straining to contain the cornucopia of writing and art within, brings it to life in a way no digital image can. It’s the difference between an airport – a space intended to hustle the travelling pawns swiftly by, while mulcting them of as much money as possible – and a vast urban train center of the time of early fandom and before: a monument to the significance of travel, or travelers, and of their possibilities.

***Ulrika:** I am now envisioning the hard copy of BEAM as a sort of Old Penn Station of a fanzine, and that may be unreasonably egotistical and grandiose of me, but fuckit, I love the image.*

Print zines, however unfashionable they may be, do things e-zines cannot, and editors such as yourselves have made much of the fact. BEAM is an admirable companion to William Breiding’s *Portable Storage* and John Coker and Jon Swartz’s *First Fandom Annual* as what I often call a “sumptuous” zine. To paraphrase Hegel: The swan of extravagance strides forth only with the twilight of print.

Writing LoCs on something I’ve already reviewed is something of a challenge, since the review itself is in essence a LoC published outside the publication being discussed. Fortunately, said cornucopia is abristle with other comment hooks, a couple of which I will utilize.

Nic’s opening salvo struck the target squarely. Some years ago I saw all fourteen episodes of *Firefly* in the course of less than a week thanks to two students in a class I was teaching who forcibly loaned the box set to me. I really enjoyed two or three episodes, generally enjoyed three or four more, and didn’t dislike any of the others, although they didn’t especially engage my interest. At no time, despite my childhood having been spent in Nashville, Tennessee, did I think anything about the Confederacy, especially as a reason for refusing to watch any further episodes. Oh, and

the course I was teaching? American History 2 (1789-1900) which does indeed touch upon a little thing called the Civil War. But, you see, I did not have the advantage of Farah Mendlesohn having given me the proper party line so that I could stop thinking and simply respond as required. It rather reminds me of those Cardinals who were reputed to have refused to look through Galileo's telescope because they already knew what they would see (Western Civ 1 (3000BC-1517), another course I taught at the time).

The saddest thing here is that such blunt dismissals for such banal reasons are not only the antithesis of honest criticism, they forestall their own purpose. We cannot improve our indubitably biased (mis)understandings unless we get to witness the examination, and join the conversation, which demonstrates both the bias and its potential harm. Otherwise, as Nic pointed out, what's left is "arguments [...] getting presumptively solved in a fleeting fashion – actual analysis and thoughtful discussion [...] going out of style in favor of sloganeering". Let's raise the slogan for the cadres, "Down With Sloganeering!" Oh, wait a minute...

*Ulrika: Ah, Justin, I am on the verge of making you a declaration of undying love, just now, and it isn't **only** because you say such perceptive nice things about my art and writing, elsewhere.*

I praised Jane Carnall's tour through the Ramaverse in Fanfaronade [column] 17, but only briefly; it deserves further consideration.

"When men write stories about women", Carnall points out, "the women have sex (usually with men) and get pregnant (mostly by men). Men who write novels about men do not in general focus much of the plot on whether the man is sexually attractive, or whether he will succeed in having children." Of course there are exceptions, but they are fewer than the norm Carnall depicts, and often serve mainly to highlight their own exceptionality.

Oddly enough, one of those exceptions, if only partly, is *Rendezvous With Rama* (1973), the first novel in what became the series, which Carnall discusses mostly in passing. The book could hardly be described as balanced in its use of male and female characters, but it is possible to see Clarke, who had been writing for some decades before creating the novel, making some genuine efforts to overcome his own past. That his success is limited does not diminish the value of the effort.

Nic: We could make comparisons with Asimov's later attempts to include a bit of nooky in his work. His notable creation, Susan Calvin, was depicted as sexless and unapproachable, the jarring exception of the short story 'Liar!' notwithstanding. Yet that's also a robot story that could have a deeper analysis in that the woman (Calvin) is depicted incongruously as pathetically weak and susceptible, and the poor conflicted robot gets a lot more sympathy from the author than she does.

We meet Surgeon Commander Laura Ernst in an ostensibly humorous manner, which I recall thinking awkward when I first read the book in 1974. "Some women, Commander Norton had decided long ago, should not be allowed aboard ship; weightlessness did things to their breasts that were too damn distracting." It turns out also that he and Ernst have a history: "...in a moment of mutual loneliness and depression they had once made love" (the sex part). But she did not get pregnant, and it seems unlikely they will "repeat the experience". (Astronauts are sterilized to prevent mutations; there are women astronauts; presumably the same procedures for storing eggs as those for storing sperm are in effect. Norton has two wives and three children, whose existence seems mainly a method of giving him an emotional connection to life on Earth; if there is any mention of polygamy being limited to males, I could neither recall nor find it). After that, Ernst is treated quite seriously; she, the chief medical officer, has virtually absolute veto power over crew

involvement in the exploration, something accepted as normal by all, and is herself deeply involved in that exploration.

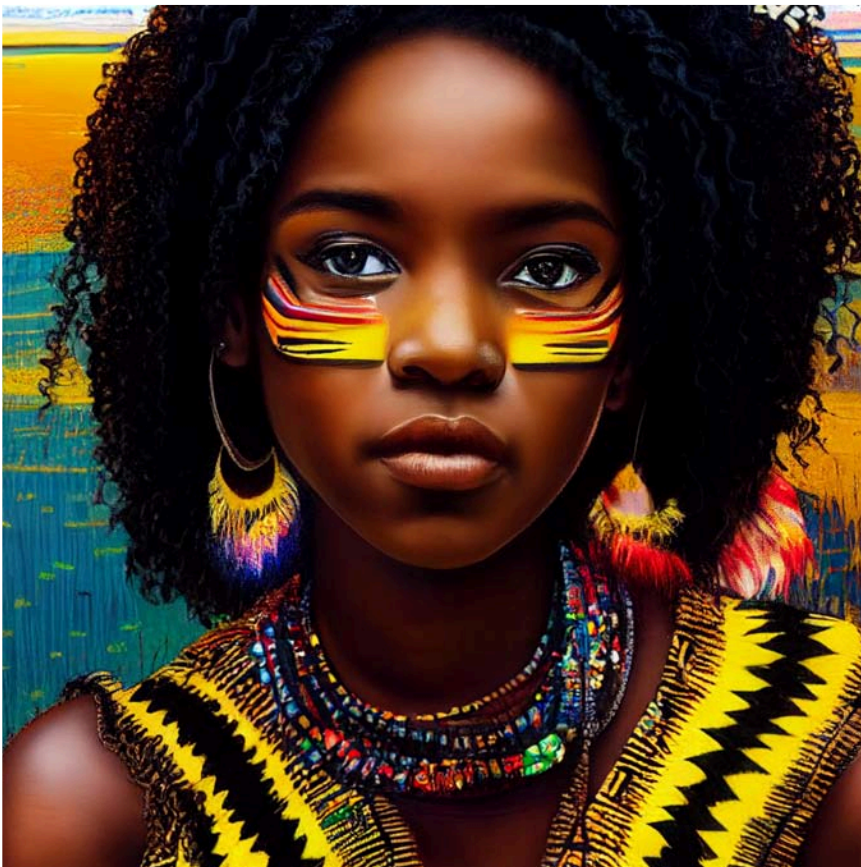
Sergeant Ruby Barnes, the other crew member treated at length, avoids sexual humor altogether as she is introduced; her quirk is an emphasis on boats as cultural indicators: “You can learn everything about a culture by studying the way it builds boats”. The idea is not widely shared, yet neither is it dismissed; “Her colleagues thought this rather a restricted point of view, but at least it was a stimulating one.” Her expertise proves useful in designing the raft needed to explore the Rama waters, and she takes command of the process. “No one thought it in the least peculiar that an executive sergeant was now taking charge of the proceedings. Ruby Barnes had the only master’s certificate aboard; so that settled the matter.”

Such are the women of significance on the Rama exploration team (the two wives and Dr. Thelma Price, a member of the Rama committee, appear briefly but with minimal import). The two women are outnumbered by the sims, genetically modified monkeys which perform much of the routine work aboard ship, but their presence has far more significance. It is this which is key.

There is no condescension here. Both women are professionals, and both take charge when the area of investigation intersects with their professional capacity. No-one objects; Clarke does not gin up artificial tensions by having some minor male character reveal that his parents owned a sailboat and he thus feels privileged to take charge, or any other such nonsense. True professionals, Clarke is saying, recognize the qualifications of other professionals and spend no time defending their own egos at the expense of mission success. The

captain and crew of the *Endeavour*, men and women alike, are trained, and operate, as a team. Carnall, referring to Rudyard Kipling’s strictures upon a polo team in ‘The Maltese Cat’ (from *The Day’s Work*, 1898) – “a team of crack players rather than a crack team” – later reminds us that of the Rama II’s exploratory group only sex out of twelve return alive. No one dies in *Rendezvous With Rama*.

Lurking alongside her specific critique is one of the great problems with too much science fiction, especially that by men: that almost everything in it, including the characters, is silently treated as basically a piece of technology to be used in the service of the operant power structure’s ambitions and goals. Perhaps this is indeed the way the future will, or even must, be if humanity is to survive (see, for



example, Robert Heilbroner's *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* (1974, mark the date), which considers the likely need for an authoritarian political structure to overcome the dangers of global warming and other environmental degradation. Heilbroner does not like the idea, but considers it thoughtfully, dispassionately and disturbingly plausibly.) But the point must be demonstrated, not merely assumed, lest all we have is the Farah Mendlesohn approach writ large by the party.

Carnall's critique is all the more devastating because we have already seen the same author portray two women who are indeed intent upon understanding the universe and whose contributions to developing that understanding are both vital and utterly independent of sexuality, childbearing or even gender. I hesitate to blame Gentry Lee; perhaps Clarke's attitudes had changed in sixteen years. But Carnall's points are decisive: the flaw at the core of the three Rama sequels is that the authors "could not bring themselves to write a novel, still less a trilogy, about a woman whose drive is to understand the universe". The shame, one touched upon but not developed by Carnall, is that a central aspect of the disappointing aspects of the Rama sequels is that they are regressive; contrary to the earlier novel, the depiction of women in the later ones all too eagerly uses them as, in effect, machines for breeding, breeding made necessary by the lack of the consistent and coherent professionalism we had seen sixteen years earlier. The irony is clear: in novels supposedly about the expansion of human possibility, their relation to their own predecessor undercuts their central thesis: that such progress is possible.

Oh dear – my *cacoethes scribendi* has led me astray for a second time. (The first version of this LoC began with a brief response to Nic's take on Perry Mason, a brief response which proved to be nearly as long as this letter.) I can see the comment now, should I combine the two into a jumbo-sized

LoC: "WAHF Justin E.A. Busch, who offered to make *BEAM 17* make *Outworlds 71* look like an infinitesimag. We passed on the offer." I'd best send this one anyway, lest the third be even more long-winded.

Well, anyway, *BEAM 16* is a fine contribution to the art and practice of fanzines, and I thank you and your authors for it.

Perry Middlemiss

As the late, lamented Warren Z said in his song 'Monkey Wash, Donkey Rinse': "Hell is only half full/Room for you and me." Near the end of my working life I could see the writing on the wall and figured the time was rapidly approaching when I would be hauled up before the thought police over something or other that I had said, and end up in Warren's hell. I had learned early on that the only jokes worth telling in a workplace were those where you were the only one appearing as the source of amusement. I knew I was in trouble when people got upset about those as well. I'm not only unreconstructed but totally unreconstructable I think. Hell is other people, especially those who take "offence" on other people's behalf.

Nic: I've noticed that there's plenty of people who will bray that "Only [name an oppressed minority here] should speak for [the oppressed minority]" yet unaware of the utter irony of it all, they presume to do so for [said oppressed minority].

My wife has recently been to a few workplace training sessions where she was reliably informed that she wasn't allowed to compliment someone on their new dress - reason given: you're only saying this because the person wearing the group is of a different ethnic grouping from you and you're now just being demeaning. The fact that you might actually like the dress is beside the point. And, as for food, it now seems to be an act of cultural appropriation to pay less for, say, Vietnamese food than you would for French or

Italian. The fact that we're Australian and, as all right-thinking Westerners know, "we don't have no bloody culcha, mate." So we have to appropriate someone's. Anyone's.

Not that this has anything at all to do with *FIREFLY* of course. But as I haven't ever seen an episode of that show I figured slagging off my own countrymen was a possible alternative.

Poor old Martin Tudor indeed. I was on my DUFF trip in 1996 when he was in the US on his TAFF journey. And what a journey that was. How he made it through to the end I'll never know. True grit and fannish perseverance and generosity I reckon. He did a wonderful job in the circumstances.

William Breiding

I was resolved to loc this ish. But immediately a conundrum appeared. How do I approach BEAM 16? A brash bray or something more measured? Do I loc it in parts, as I was tempted, or as a whole, so I know what was attempted and achieved? In the end I chose to read the issue sequentially to see what it was you'd done.

Overarching comments: if I had not received the apparently rare hard copy (for which you are both blessed for sacrificing hard-earned cash) I'm pretty sure BEAM 16 would have had less of an impact. Like Leigh Edmonds, my reactions to on-screen and hard copy are very different.

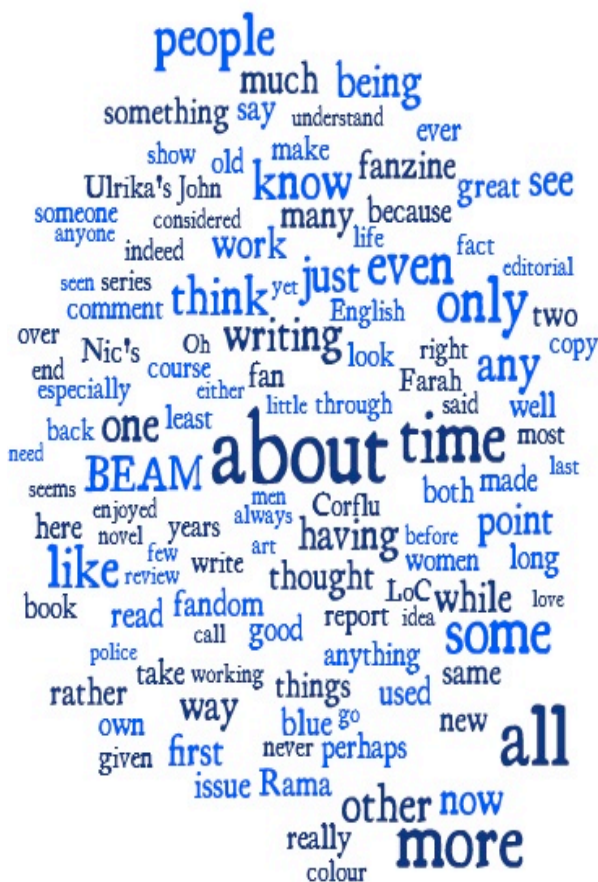
The temptation to skip, skim, generally be flippant, and often ultimately ignore, applies to the digital copy. The gravitas of heft and beauty of the paper BEAM is harder to stash away in the pile, easy to take seriously as a whole; it's all right there in front of you, screaming. Even if I were to print it out myself (unlikely) it wouldn't have that same wow-oh-wow! effect of 11x17 folded.

While the both of you shine this ish, Ulrika is the star. The combination of her gorgeous watercolor paintings, lengthy essays, and pithy reaction to loc-hacks, earns her the wizard's hat.

What caused me to originally want to respond to BEAM in parts was Nic's opening statements. Then I read Ulrika's follow-up and I was ready to have at you both. But rather than being mired from the beginning, I moved on to the rest of the issue, which in its whole had an admirable intensity.

After I read Lucy Huntzinger's piece on the quest for her biological parents I was left musing at how many adopted friends I've known in my life, wondering if that was just happenstance or common enough that everyone has adopted friends. A half-dozen friends have struggled to come to terms with being adopted. Among them all their adoption has been a life-long issue, and its effects can be measured, some major, some minor.

Loccloud by worditout.com



For all it has shaded their psychological background. Lucy and I never became friends when she returned to San Francisco.

It was sort of like the consuite at a Corflu; you see someone across the room and mean to go over and talk, spend time, get to know, but it somehow never happens.

A friend emigrated to New Zealand. I used to call her the “it girl” of Tucson because she always seemed to be at the center of any interesting happenings with any number of different groups of people, and frequently she was the organizer. So it was with interest that I read Lee Wood’s breezy and enjoyable farm tales. It did lead me to wonder why Lee moved there. (Ah yes, romance!) My friend thought it hilarious that I viewed her as an It Girl when I told her, and asked if being the It Girl of Tucson was what had caused her to run away to New Zealand, for certainly it must have been exhausting and attended by a certain amount of expectations. While Ingrid was bemused, she never fully explained her move, which by now proved permanent. She bought property and has been there for more than a decade.

The deeper I got into Jane Carnall’s “Reading Rama” the odder it all seemed. Not Jane’s piece, but the Clarke/Lee Rama books, which I have not read, and am now unlikely to have even the vaguest desire to do so - not from Jane Carnall’s rather measured look, but from the unsettling view and approach to gender, character, and motherhood that she describes. I’ve been delving into ancient issues of the Peter Nichols edited *Foundation* (talk about sercon!) from the early-to-mid seventies which gave the original *Rendezvous With Rama* a rather bland review calling it a characterless exploration, rather than a novel. Not having read a ton of Clarke’s novels I still get the impression that the themes explored in these novels aren’t something Clarke would have done on his own, and much of this must be Gentry Lee’s doing, considering he went on to write two

more novels in the Rama universe without the Clarke name attached.

The central fannish bits, Tommy, the Lulzine review, Sandra’s GoH speech, were all great fun. I kept hearing Sandra’s voice as I was reading, which made me giggle, and Tommy’s honest and engaging con report on the precipice of Covid led me down myriad avenues of why I so frequently shy from in-person fanac. The Monahan/Hardin fanzine review technique is unique, rather like an extended loc, rather than a review, and they are always interesting.

Another great installment of Ulrika’s TAFF report. I will be looking forward to rereading her report in its entirety sometime soon! The high point was Ulrika’s description, interpretation, and reaction to the Stokes painting, *Madonna and Child*, which, indeed, is a beautiful radical work conceptually undermining The Church. Thanks for reproducing it here. In the final version of Ulrika’s report it would be great if she were to edit out the self-conscious conniptions about not having taken notes and just rely on her memory, or just make some shit up (or be fantastical), like the best of the fan writers who have gone before.

Ulrika: I feel that self-conscious conniptions are kind of my hallmark, though. If I gave them up, there would hardly be much me left over to fill a report. But I’ll take the request under advisement. No promises.

I went back and reread Nic’s Erle Stanley Gardner piece in 15 to see how it played out against his discussion of the new “origins” series Perry Mason. I’ve never read a Mason novel and watched the show only enough to be enamored of its stylized writing and trim acting, noting how Mason always got the bad guy to breakdown in court and say he done it. Not at all surprised that the HBO series is updated to what are perceived as modern, inclusive sensibilities. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with this—you just have to be ready to embrace that it will vary from the much-loved original, and possibly give new twists

to the Canon. My own favorite vintage detective stories are by Richard S. Prather. I found a copy of one of his Shell Scott novels at a thrift shop for a quarter called The Wailing Frail. I went home and gobbled it down, laughing, and enjoying it all the way to the last line and have been a big fan ever since. Prather was, in his way, a great noir stylist who seems to have been completely forgotten. The books are very manly, so you have to be able to overlook all the casual misogyny, racism, etc., to get under that white brush-cut hair and into the skull of Shell Scott.

Stacey Tappan's "Diva Diaries" was very blue collar in its description of work ethics and the entitled expectations of the Met. It actually reminded me of my situation as a groundskeeper at the University of Arizona. We are constantly being told that we are the most important employees in facilities management because the initial perceptions of the university is its grounds. FM's expectations of a groundskeeper are extraordinary. We are also the lowest paid employees and the fewest; the acreage each groundskeeper maintains is near breaking point.

When I read Stacey's description of the Met's expectations of its singers I was shocked. Without their singers they are nothing. But then this has been the plight of the working class forever; what surprised me was seeing it applied to Opera. I shouldn't have been surprised.

And so we come back around to the opening statements. I won't dwell overly long on either of these.

I can't say I much agree with Nic's approach to his protest of the woke and cancel culture, while agreeing wholeheartedly with his sentiments. Unfortunately there ended up being no lasting cognizant point to it, degrading into what appeared in context an unwarranted personal attack on a specific person for a one-line comment that was so nonspecific it could be construed in any number of ways. My reaction was that Nic's

comments were cruel, possibly thoughtless, and perhaps intentionally inflammatory in order to cause a reader reaction. In my lexicon of fanzine publishing that just doesn't sit well.

Then we come to Ulrika's very sly and engaging essay on the nature of shifting-realities that, in the end, is nothing but a defense for what Nic has just written, actually using the phrase, "felt like an orchestrated personal attack". My reaction? I was shaking my head in disbelief. If Ulrika was trying to temper what had come just before by explaining Nic to us through her shifting feelings about him it didn't work. What Nic did was a blindside and any point he might have made about cancel culture and the woke was abnegated. Sorry, buddy.

***Ulrika:** It's fascinating that you saw my editorial as responding to, even defending Nic's. Funny what unintended meanings can be created by mere juxtaposition. The two pieces were crafted entirely independent of each other, though of course I had some idea of Nic's topic. No, I really did mean to point to the great personal and intellectual value I place on maintaining the ability to change my mind about ideas, factual claims, and especially people. Nic and I got off on the (very) wrong foot, it's true, but I'm not sure it's possible to get off on the right foot with respect to Farah Mendelssohn if one has their critical and skeptical faculties engaged and operating properly. That empress has no intellectual clothes. Meanwhile, I owe not only my tremendously valuable friendship with Nic, but the even greater one with the love of my life, to having taken the chance to re-evaluate a bad first impression when the opportunity presented. Maybe someday I'll say the same about Farah, but I very deeply doubt it.*

***Nic:** It's been noted by some correspondents that ishes of BEAM have somehow managed to be what I'll call "accidentally thematic". I can see your point in viewing Ulrika's editorial as a "defense" of sorts, but as she*

says that wasn't its primary intent, and I think you've got this a bit backwards. The salient bit of commonality, if you can call it that, is the contention that it's better and more sane to react and revise in the light of new information than it is to be unthinkingly doctrinaire.

Another great issue of a really good fanzine. I'm glad to hear that another issue may be coming sooner than 16!

WAHF

John Coxon: "Liked the issue, thought-provoking stuff. I don't have any thoughts that are particularly worthy of being committed to your loccol, but just a very quick note to say that I'm very flattered that Jacq Monahan and John Wesley Hardin chose to review Lulzine #4! Just to let you know, issue #4 is no longer on the internet anywhere because we let our hosting lapse, but the

articles mentioned were reprinted in Lulzine #13, Lulzine #17, and the upcoming Lulzine #18 (which comes out by the end of this month [December 2021], but isn't out yet). All those are available by heading over to <https://lulzine.net/> so hopefully that's helpful." ; **Bill Burns ; Jerry Kaufman ; John Purcell ; Fred Lerner ; Mike Glycer:** "I'd forgotten I'd written a LoC. I was also surprised there was more to it than the first hundred words, since at the point Ulrika jumped in with a thousand-word filibuster. Insecure, anyone?" ;

***Ulrika:** I cannot hope to surpass the masterful irony of Mike Glycer accusing anyone else at all of insecurity. I will not detail the nuclear meltdown he leveled at poor Sandra Bond for merely preferring the honor of a FAAn award to that of a fan Hugo.*

Lucy Huntzinger ; Marc Ortlieb ; Paul Di Filippo ;

TOPIC F

Rather than reply bittily and repetitively throughout the loccol to comments on my editorial in 16, I'm going to make a single, and I hope simple statement here.

Some correspondents (and this is fair and accurate criticism) pointed out that the "name-calling" bits had, for them, completely overshadowed what was supposed to be the core point: the ridiculousness of Farah's rejection *in toto* of *Firefly* based solely upon a scant viewing interpreted through a lens of excessive "correctness".

Steve Jeffery, pointedly and on point, noted in *This Here...* that he had in fact "wasted half a day" going back over the original Facebook postings, and equally on point, said that other readers would have been highly unlikely to have done so. This made it abundantly clear that I had simply allowed Farah's opening statement "[I] recognized what I was watching, and left" to do all the heavy lifting without providing any of the further exchange between us to contextualize - the rest of that conversation being something that I knew, but the readers of the editorial didn't.

This was a clear fail, presuming that everyone else is following the same things that you are, when they're transparently not.

In short, this defines the editorial as poorly or at least ineffectively written, not least because for several correspondents, even those who divined its intent, it came across as nothing more than an unreasoned and unreasonable hate-piece.

Of course, I stand by the *intent* of my diatribe while properly mourning its weaknesses of execution.

Nic Farey

