

procrastinations one genesis and exodus

Procrastinations is written (or, in some cases, merely edited) by John Coxon.
Credit is given to material that is ~~ripped off~~ gratefully accepted from others.
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Future issues may be published. You have been warned.

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This has been published because I thought I could write a fanzine, and nobody told me otherwise.

Thanks go to the people who encouraged me to start writing: the ZZ9 committee (particularly Douglas Spencer (LJ: dougs) for giving me the link to his brilliant fanzine, Convers[at]ions); Max (LJ: hawkida) for posting something on her LiveJournal to which I replied and Steve Green (LJ: stevegreen), who asked me what I had to lose by writing one.

This fanzine aims to be entertaining but informative. Some articles are serious, some are for amusement value, and some manage to combine the two, but I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed making it.

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new to sf?

By John Coxon
LJ: johncoxon

There are, broadly speaking, three types of SF fan in this world: Those who know of and are friendly with John Coxon (mainly through LiveJournal); those who know of his existence but know next to nothing about him; and those who had no idea he existed before they started to read this (hi, guys!). The first type will know that he's new to science fiction and SF fandom. The second type will probably guess as much, because they've not heard much about him, and the third type will probably be relieved that he's not a deeply entrenched fan who they've just ignored for years.

The reason I've explained Coxon's First Theory of SF Fandom is because it's relevant to the subject about which I'm writing this article – about somebody who's new to fandom gathering the courage to plunge in. It is difficult to take the plunge and enter this new, murky dimension, but more established SF fans tend to step in and announce themselves as friendly people, and then you're away.

I got into SF fandom through a very friendly bunch of people known as ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha. You may have heard of them – if not, I recommend www.zz9.org. There is a (fairly good) possibility that you're actually a member – if you are, give yourself a pat on the back. It's all your fault.

But it was surprising how difficult it was for me, as a thirteen year old boy, to join that society, all the way back in 2002. I didn't know anybody (and I do mean that literally) who'd even read *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, let alone wanted to join a society, so I didn't know what kind of people would have signed up.

There wasn't a forum, or any sort of community aspect in fact, on the website (or even referenced). In fact, upon reading it for the first time, it came across as being rather unfriendly – the text on the website seemed quite snobbish (the text is something which, I am glad to say, has since

changed). As a thirteen year old, it was slightly daunting, joining this community of people.

I think that feeling would have remained if Doug hadn't discovered my LiveJournal and said "I'm a ZZ9er, here are some friends, read their journals, enjoy!" Rather a baptism of fire, you may agree. But it did mean that I was introduced to a lot of SF fans online, a lot of whom I have now met in Real Life.

The second thing which jerked me out of feeling daunted was ZZ9's decision to hold their AGM in Peterborough in 2003. I live in Peterborough, so this meant I could go without my mother saying something along the lines of "not in a million years". I met people. I bought a mug. I bid in an auction (this triggered my comic book collection, but that's a different and shorter story). I was introduced to MJ Simpson and Flick and poppy and Doug and Robert Newman and a lot of other people who are (or were, in the case of Simo) fairly pivotal in either general fandom or ZZ9.

The community aspect of fandom is the most important, since without it, fandom wouldn't exist. This community is becoming more and more 'plugged in' as a greater proportion of SF fans use the Internet – fandom is suited to this because you can't catch up with fellow fans at conventions every week, so LiveJournal and e-mails help to bridge the gaps between conventions.

The ZZ9 attitude to the internet has changed a great deal since I came across that paragraph on their website at the end of 2002. We've even got our own RSS news feed (provided through an LJ community) now. But, in my humble opinion, people who might otherwise become members of fandom are not doing because they don't know about the fantastic people who are a part of it.

I don't know how we can resolve that, and I don't know if fandom really needs to work to attract new people. Some people are of the opinion that societies and clubs are dying. Some people think they've never had

it so good. But I will conclude with this: I'm trying to get ZZ9 to provide an official forum.

the contribution of T-shirts to the sf fan's psyche

By John Coxon
LJ: johncoxon

As every decent SF fan knows, T-shirts are the cornerstone of modern civilisation. Almost as useful as towels, they can be used for many of the same things (although, admittedly, less efficiently) and they tell somebody a great deal about who you are, where you came from and your purpose and direction in life.

In short, they are SF fandom's answer to tribal tattoos and circumcision, and they should be treated as nothing less. Amongst women, the wearing of T-shirts can sometimes tend to be less common – this does not mean that women have less of a standing in society, since the lack of a T-shirt can make statements also.

Take, for instance, your average hungover SF fan, the morning after a very large party. He's not yet woken up – his vision is still not functioning at what is usually considered to be the optimum capability, his sense of balance is malfunctioning every so often, he is, in short, not fully aware of what is going on around him.

This is where the humble T-shirt steps in to save the day. If you can't remember somebody's face, and you're not sure whether they're at the convention or just in the way, or if you can't quite make out whether they're wearing a name badge, looking at a nice logo on a nice T-shirt will tell you all you need to know about that person¹ in a couple of seconds. If the person isn't wearing a T-shirt, for instance, if they're wearing some other top or something similar, more drastic measures

¹ Usually, all you need to know is two things: a) are they an SF fan? and b) will they buy me another drink? Another possibility is c) can they direct me to my room (since I woke up in a lift this morning and I don't know what my name is)?

might be required to discover their identity, like speech, or acquiring cognition, or (shockingly) both.

To remove this undesirable set of circumstances, our hero will assume that they are not the person he's looking for and continue until he does spot a T-shirt, a beacon of recognition in a hostile and unfriendly world. If this didn't occur, we'd all be familiar with that embarrassing moment in which you realise that the person with whom you are desperately trying to communicate is, in fact, a Finnish woman with her possessive and overprotective husband.

"Ha!" you may say, "I never have a hangover the morning after a convention! Why should I care about the T-shirt?" Well, they're cool, too, if you're not sophisticated enough to use them as a form of identification, bonding and indication of social standing. So wear one anyway, if that's the case.

it's all everyone else's fault

By Douglas Spencer
LJ: dougs

A couple of days ago, John diffidently suggested that I might want to write a little something for him, discussing how I came into SF fandom. Since he'd been so polite about my old fanzine, a publication which chiefly involved recycled material people had written on LiveJournal, I sought out something I'd written on the same site a couple of months ago and I've polished it slightly into what you see below.

At university in the mid-1980s, I wasn't a member of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Society, because (it seemed to me) they were almost exclusively into wargaming, and they met on the same afternoon each week as the word-game society, and I was at the time a Scrabble player of county standard. I did, however, know some of the people in the SF+FS, fellow mathematicians for the most part.

While I was there, I picked up a flyer for ZZ9, a fan club for the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I understand John is writing a line or

two about them elsewhere in this issue. Now I'd been a fan of both SF and humour for a long time, and in this book (for I came first to the book, and only later to the radio and TV series) I'd found them comfortably working together, which was unusual. I joined ZZ9, and started receiving their club magazine. So that means I've been a ZZ9er for a little over 20 years now.

A little later, in my middle year at university, my sexuality (which had been awakened and vigorously exercised by someone else the previous year) was stretched, warped and twisted by someone I met there, and as a result I left university very thoroughly mixed up. In the ensuing few years I did a great deal of reading in connection with the issues over which I was confused, but wasn't really in a position to put any of it into practice.

I went to my first convention ("convention", in this sense, meaning an event run by a group of fans rather than a promotions company, where the key activity is standing around in a bar talking Old Toot to each other) in October 1991. This convention, advertised in the pages of ZZ9's magazine, was "Eroticon Six", a convention all about kink. I'd recently started going out with Anne (who later became my wife), and things were going very slowly with her, partly because of my earlier confusion.

Eroticon Six drove home to me that people as strange as me were, in fact, quite normal. I found this greatly encouraging. I came home from there having bought a membership for another convention the following May, and told Anne that I wouldn't be able to take her out on her birthday because of this. In fact I ended up taking her to the next convention, and over the ensuing few years we went to a dozen conventions together.

After Anne died in September 2001, I stopped going to conventions for a while.

About nine months later, I dragged myself to another couple of conventions, "Damn Fine Con" and "<ploкта.con> Release 2.0" where,

amongst other things, I received an LJ invite code from Max. I wrote a poem while I was there which subsequently became my first LJ post, and which received good feedback, both at the con and elsewhere. So I started looking for places where I could start writing in earnest once more. I found my way onto the Mash-slash Yahoo! Group, I published a fanzine of my own, I resumed attendance at the London pub meetings, and realised what I'd been missing from fandom.

So fandom, the SF-Convention-running fanzine-writing kind of fandom, has helped me accept the kind of person I am, and helped me to pull myself together on those occasions when I've been falling apart. I've since been described as "a well-adjusted pervert", which I've elected to take as evidence of some sort of success: Not just my success, but the success of fandom in helping me find my place.

Join fandom. It'll do you good.

lucifer and his portrayal in literature

By John Coxon
LJ: johncoxon

Lucifer appears in several books and comics and short stories by Neil Gaiman as well as the popular series of comics, *Hellblazer* (although he is not called Lucifer, as far as I know). Mr Gaiman is fairly well-known, even outside the familiar circles of SF, and I have recently begun to read some of his works. All the things I've read so far are very good, but his writing has made me wonder about Lucifer.

Now, for those who don't know, Lucifer is the traditional figure for an opposite or an adversary to God, and he is also called Satan and The Devil as people see fit.

However, this is at marked contrast with any religious sources I have been able to find. For instance, take the Bible. There exists a website on which one can search through the various versions of the Bible for references to various keywords, so I went to this website and searched

for Lucifer. You can search using two different indices, so I searched on both, one after the other.

I got one result. This is not promising for the theory that all the portrayals of Lucifer have come in some way, shape or form from the Bible. I clicked on said result and it came up with a rather juicy little number taken from Isaiah 14 (verses 12-15 in the King James version, as a matter of fact):

¹² How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

So. It's established that he was a Bad Person. But, read it closely. It clearly says "[he] will ascend into heaven". Surely an angel would already be in heaven? Reading that passage more closely, it's established that this person called Lucifer is in fact simply Babylonian royalty. So, not much evidence for the 'fallen angel' theory in that, I think you'll agree.

That's that for mentions of Lucifer in the Bible, so let's talk about Satan. Now, I tried doing the same for Satan, but I don't really like reading on a PC screen and I didn't want to have to sift through the Bible passages and come out with a conclusion. Having said that, I did find this quote which is to be found in Job 1:

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. ⁷ And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. ⁸ And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? ¹⁰ Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. ¹² And the LORD said

unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

I like this quote. It suggests that God has Satan wrapped around his little finger, in many ways – almost like they’re friendly rivals.

This quote didn’t answer the entire question. So, I took the sensible route, and I asked the Canon Pastor of Peterborough Cathedral. He’s very nice, and I explained to him my findings, and he nodded and listened, and then I said, “how is Satan described in the Bible?”

I didn’t expect the answer which I received as a result of that question. As it turns out, the Book of Job is very interesting from the point of view of learning about Satan and heavenly politics (although I must admit I’ve not gotten around to reading about it yet).

Satan is, as depicted in the Old Testament, actually a bit like Eric Forth² today. This is going to require an explanation before I get sued. Heaven, as portrayed in some books of the Old Testament, is actually governed by a ‘cabinet’ of angels, with God as the Prime Minister (even if He is portrayed as being perfect). Satan is actually a member of the heavenly cabinet. He’s portrayed as the embodiment of temptation, so he was probably the member of cabinet who criticised the actions of the other angels (hence the Eric Forth reference).

A discussion of Satan’s role in the Bible isn’t why I’m writing this, so it’s time for some closure on what I hope you will agree has been a fairly interesting article. Essentially, I have no idea why Lucifer/Satan has been portrayed as an adversary to God in the way that he has, but I suspect it’s something to do with keeping peasants in fear of sinning in the Middle Ages.

I haven’t looked at mentions of the Devil in the New Testament. If you want to see something that looks at that, too, then feel free to do it yourself and send it to me!

² Eric Forth died on 17th May 2006 and you can type him into Wikipedia for more details about him. He wasn’t all that much like Satan, but there are slight similarities.

he's allowed, he's a teenager

By Max Hawkida
LJ: hawkida

I can often forget about ages when I meet people within fandom, it's not much more of a defining label than the colour of someone's eyes. But John doesn't let you forget his age.

Someone fed me a similar line once – "I don't tend to think too much about age gaps, especially at conventions" – and, being 18 at the time, I didn't believe it. I knew people socially who were in completely different age brackets from my own from about the age of eleven, that being the consequence of following my best friend to church services. We'd drop by the house of the lay preachers for a chat and go and talk about photography with the vicar and after church we'd gather at various people's houses for lunch, particularly on special occasions. I felt terribly grown up at times and in retrospect I can see it was an act from both sides. I was humoured more than anything, although as time went by it earned me babysitting jobs and I got to know some families very well. I didn't believe the age stuff could be invisible once I'd noticed, though.

However, as time went by I noticed that no matter what birthday passed, I never really felt that I was really any older. My mum criticised me once, she thought I was reading inappropriately young books and was disappointed because I used to read ahead of my age. What could I say? I liked juvenile fiction and I didn't stop liking it when I wasn't the target audience. Today it's perfectly acceptable for an adult to read Harry Potter or sit at home playing computer games but my mum was vaguely disapproving. Inside fandom the pursuits seen as childish are common. Board games, comic books and an interest in fantastical worlds.

And now I see what they mean when these people say that age doesn't necessarily matter. My friends are all kinds of ages and I'm pretty sure they're not humouring me, nor me them. Mostly, it doesn't even come up unless someone is engaging in the inescapable lament of The Greying of Fandom.

Except with John. John has a series of stock phrases including "But I am a geek", "I've spent [rapidly increasing figure here] on comics this year" and his favourite of all "I'm allowed, I'm a teenager". He says it so often I'm convinced his twentieth birthday is going to come as something of a shock to his system, although he tells me he has a plan to slowly introduce "I'm allowed, I'm a student" into his lexicon and phase out the age based phrase.

John has reasonable parents. They let him wander off to Nottingham to go to a party and they give him lifts to the pub where the local SF group meets. He lives just down the road from us, and despite this I got to know him online initially. He was the ZZ9 fan who knew far too much about the prices of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy merchandise, index linked to the eBay trading market. He's a smart guy with a good academic record and a fantastic knowledge of space travel. He's taking science based subjects and cherry picking university courses at the moment whilst expanding his knowledge of fandom and SF and nipping down to London to pose for pictures with Neil Gaiman. That's in between having a beer at the pub with us and telling us all about his teachers and lessons with a cheerful, self confident tone that is one day going to be overhead by the bar staff and get him into trouble.

John is a seventeen year old fan and hopefully only the age aspect of that fact will change because he's a good guy. I know that although I don't feel terribly different, I've changed since I was seventeen and my interests have veered all over the place. I think John might find his studies engrossing and disappear from fandom when he goes to university (it's happened to older fans than him - when did you last see Pam Wells mentioned in a fanzine?). Or he might join societies and get really into rocketry or LARP or some new fangled hobby I've yet to hear of. When his income isn't entirely disposable and has to pay for rent and food perhaps the list of conventions he plans to attend will be whittled down to nothing. He says he won't be leaving any time soon as his fanaticism for Douglas Adams has relaxed somewhat and he'd have disappeared from the scene already if he was going to. Let's hold him to it.

closing remarks

When I asked Doug and Max if they'd consider writing something fairly short for my fanzine, I'd written four pages and I would have been happy with a couple of pages coming out of my request. As it was, my request for material got me over four pages of stuff and meant that my final product has turned out four pages longer than I had originally intended – and this is with two pages more of material written by somebody else waiting to be included if (when?) there is an issue 2 (and I hope I will be able to produce a second issue!).

I truly didn't expect two people who I've only really known properly for maybe two years to put themselves to the trouble of writing what they have written on my behalf. Doug's piece is absolutely brilliant, and a lot of the things about which he writes are mirrored in my own life – SF has helped me with issues like my sexuality and identity in precisely the same way, and has led to me gaining a great deal of confidence over the period of those last two years.

Max's article made me laugh out loud when I read it for the first time, because although it does have some deliciously funny lines in it, they're only funny because they're true. My obsession with merchandise has died down somewhat since my initial entry into fandom, however (although I do still have the \$100+ towel sitting on a shelf in my bedroom).

Thanks go to both of them most sincerely, as well as Flick (LJ: flickgc) for helping me with my many questions, and I hope to see you all in issue 2. So long, and thanks for reading!

The version of this fanzine freely available online is a different file from that which I used to print the fanzine as a booklet. If you want a copy of the file I used in order to print your own booklet, please contact me.

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