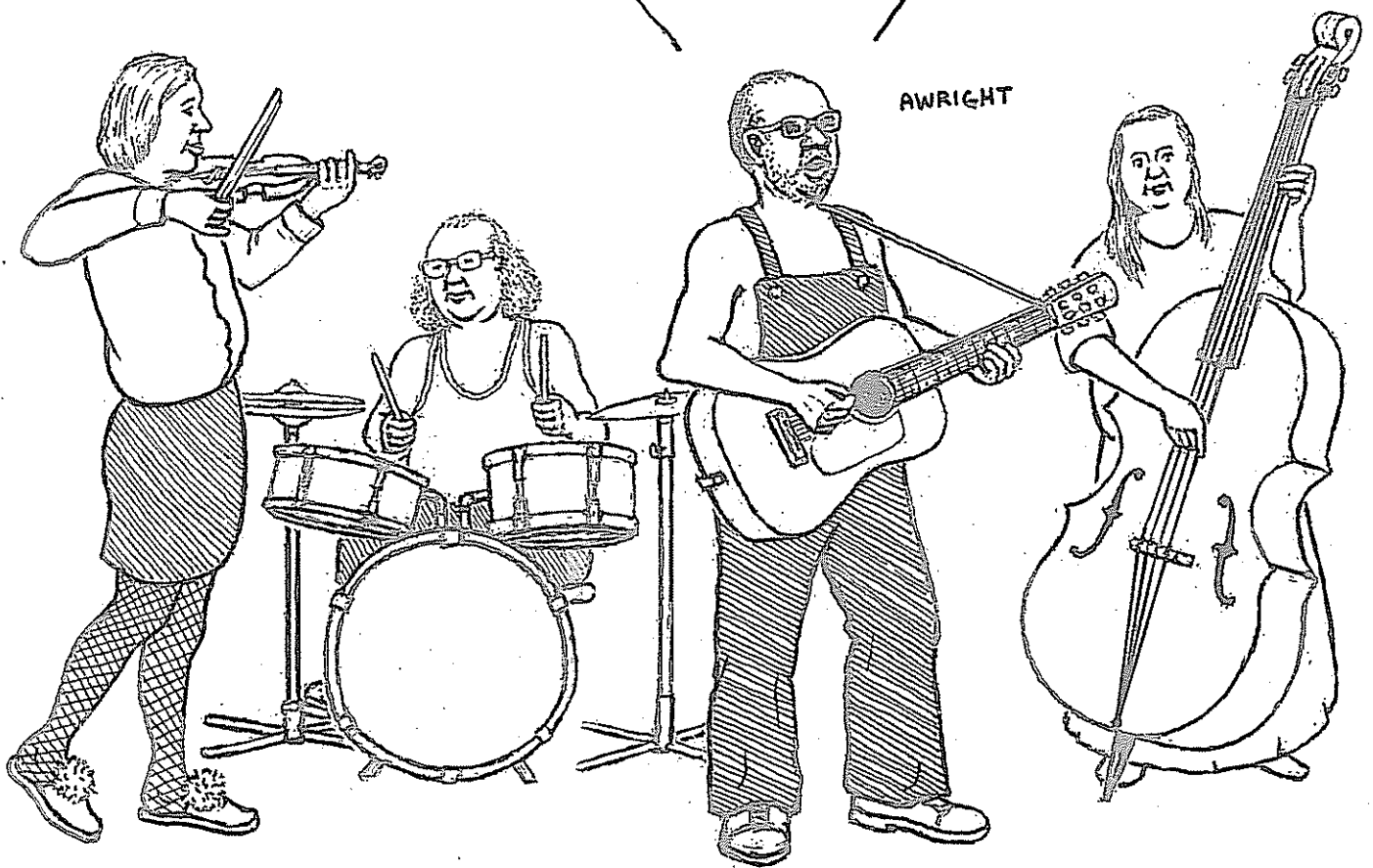


QuasiQuote 8

I GOT SPOTS
ON MY DICK,
I GOT SPOTS
ON MY DICK,
I GOT SPOTS
ON MY DICK,

YES, YOU'RE
MY BABE,
IT'S WHAT
YOU DO-OO
TO ME



*** NEW RELEASE ***

SPOTTED DICK BLUES

(TRAD., ARR. R. BERGERON)

COUNTRY GRAY CHARNOCK & THE FISHNETS

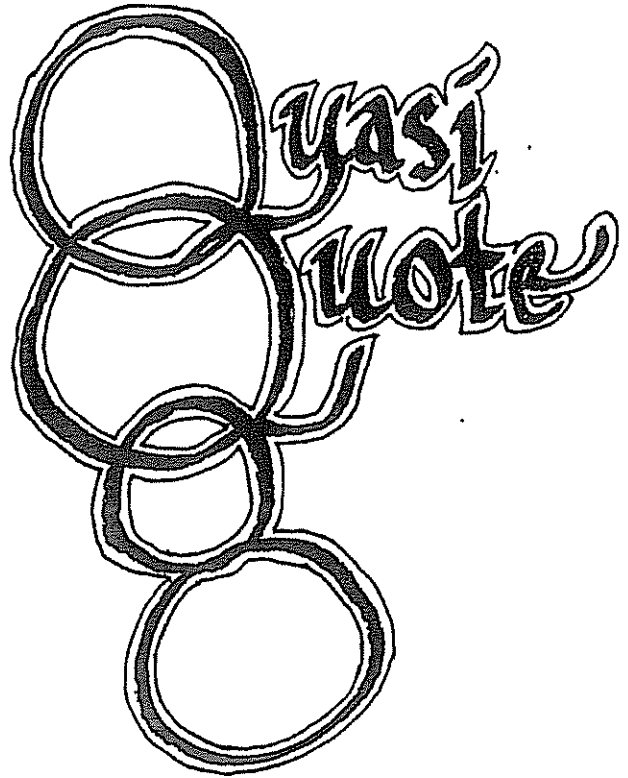
GUITAR & VOCALS: COUNTRY GRAY CHARNOCK; VIOLIN & KAZOO: JOSEPH BOOTS
NICHOLAS; BASS: CLAIRE BOJANGLES BRIALEY; DRUMS: RAMBLIN' MARK PLUMMER

“8”

QUASIQUOTE 8, the fanzine that challenges you to balance a beer bottle on your head and sing “Babylon’s Burning”, is the Official Journal of the Fuck Off Julie Bindel Society and appears in March 2009.

SANDRA BOND remains the editor and 40 Cleveland Park Avenue, London E17 7BS, UK is still the editorial address. Letters of comment may be sent to locs@ho-street.demon.co.uk.

Insurgency against fva and fwuk makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise; what it does to a woman, science has yet to establish. Available for the usual; stamps and monetary contributions entirely unnecessary unless you really insist. Eyes down for a full house!



“Soylent green is Peebles!”

This issue’s lousy file contains the following habitual criminals and stoolies:

Front cover: D West

1: ‘Watch Out For Stobor’: editorial (logo: Tim Marion)

3: ‘Three Books You Haven’t Read’ by Sandra Bond (art: Brad W Foster)

6: ‘That Is Too Many’ by Mike Meara (art: D West)

10: ‘In Defence Of Eric’ by David Redd (art: Sue Mason)

12: ‘G.O.H.’ by Taral Wayne (art: Steve Jeffery)

18: ‘The Poor Man’s Picture Gallery’ by Sandra Bond (art: John Toon)

20: ‘Ish Mail’(art: William Rotsler x3, Alexis Gilliland, Sue Mason, Terry Jeeves, Marc Schirmeister)

34: Leftovers and Reheats (art: D West)

Back cover: Jim Barker

WATCH OUT FOR STOBOR: Editorial

CORRECTING FLUID DEPT: The date of March 2009 in the colophon above is accurate so long as you’re attending Corflu this year, where the first bunch are being handed out. Those not lucky enough to be at Corflu are unlikely to receive it until a couple of months afterwards. This is not some misguided attempt at fannish elitism on my part, nor yet is it due to me being a cheapskate and saving further copies for plokta.con; the reason is simply that after Corflu I’m going to remain in the States for a couple of months and consequently I don’t want to cram my suitcase any more full of paper than I can help when I need to fill it with more vital things such as clothes. QUASIQUOTE is, I agree, a many-faceted fanzine and might even be called versatile, but I don’t think it can double as a garment.

CORRECTING FLUID DEPT part 2: It’s hardly the best-kept secret in fandom, but speaking of Corflu, Britain is bidding for a second one. It’s been a good long while since Corflu came to these shores, and indeed, we get more Worldcons in Britain than we do Corflus on a purely numerical count.

Those involved include Rob Jackson (chair), Linda Krawecka (hotel liaison), John Nielsen Hall (treasurer), Pat and Graham Charnock (memberships and programme, respectively), with general hangers-on being myself, Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer. The provisional dates are 19-21 March 2010, and the venue is the Winchester Hotel, Winchester. Guest of Honour will be... ah, no, wait, you don’t catch me that easily!

Naturally enough this has to be voted on at Corflu Zed, so don't go rushing to send money just yet, but so far as we're aware there are no rival bids, so we hope all will be clear for us, and it's on this basis that I make the announcement. If you're reading this in Seattle, there should be flyers knocking around somewhere; if you're receiving this afterwards, with luck a flyer/booking form will be enclosed.

We're aware, of course, that not every US or Canadian fan who normally attends Corflu will be able to travel as far as England for one, but we hope that as many 'regulars' as possible will make it – and also that a decent number of British fans who find America too far to go for a Corflu will attend to compensate.

The name of this beanfeast is CORFLU COBALT, so named as it's the 27th annual Corflu and cobalt is element number 27 in the periodic table. Wikipedia tells me that cobalt is a key ingredient of a 'dirty' nuclear bomb, and also that cobalt compounds added to beer to stabilise its foam have been responsible in the past for 'beer drinker's cardiomyopathy'. You may all rest assured that attendees will not be contaminated with radioactivity as part of the programme, and that if you experience a sinking feeling upon drinking too much beer, it will almost certainly be a mental and not a physical symptom (in which case, of course, Dr Jackson will be on hand).

GROWING SMALLER BY DEGREES AND BEAUTIFULLY LESS DEPT: Peter Weston (may his tribe increase), as most of you reading will doubtless know, is editing a fanzine again these days. As one might expect from Uncle Peter, it's all good fascinating stuff. What his readers are not so sure of, though, is what the damn thing is called.

He started off by calling it issue 3 of PROLAPSE, which is fair enough even if it had been over twenty years since the three issues which formed issues 1 and 2 (don't ask). Then after ten issues he started to have second thoughts, and the current one, #13, appeared with the title RELAPSE in boldface superimposed over PROLAPSE in a fainter face. Quite what this was intended to do, other than possibly confusing people when it comes to Hugo or FAAN nominations, is beyond me. Maybe he intends to gradually fade the PROLAPSE out and bring RELAPSE up, like John W. Campbell did all those years ago when he changed ASTOUNDING to ANALOG.

Given that Peter has never made any secret of his admiration for Campbell and ASTOUNDING I suppose this homage shouldn't come as a surprise. What does surprise me, though, is that he's doing it despite a previous well-documented case where a similar change of title happened:

"Unfortunately, I didn't just *do* it then and there, but instead messed around with an unnecessarily slow and progressive name-change, inspired by the way John W. Campbell had turned ASTOUNDING into ANALOG."

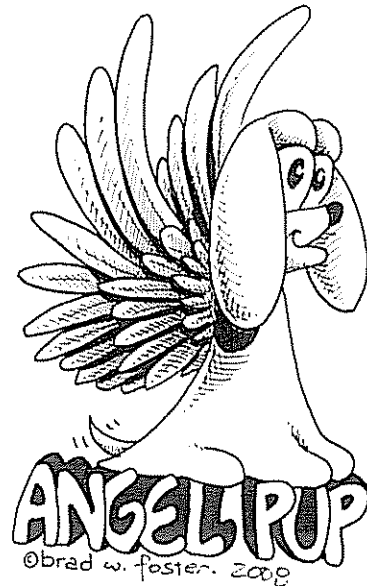
The fanzine in question? ZENITH – or if you prefer the later title, SPECULATION – edited by Peter Weston, whose words I quote from WITH STARS IN MY EYES. The burnt fool's bandaged finger goes wobbling back to the fire, eh, Peter?

BRUM BOOST DEPT: Moving from Peter to another fan from Birmingham, this fanzine and its editor are pleased to support STEVE GREEN for TAFF 2009. Steve's list of accomplishments in fandom are too many to list in the space available, but suffice it to say he has devoted much time and energy (not to mention money... what price CRITICAL WAVE?) to fandom over a long and distinguished career. Deadline for votes is not far off, 18th April 2009, and ballots may be downloaded at <http://www.taff.org.uk/ballots/taff2009.html>.

THE FOOD OF LOVE DEPT: This fanzine has been typed to the sound of *Regular Urban Survivors* by Terrorvision, *Hello Young Lovers* by Sparks, *In The Arms Of My Enemy* by TV Smith, and *Great Escape* by the Rifles, which last group Graham Charnock describes as "very artful and knowing, and has money behind it, and they won't be around in three months' time let alone three years'. I'm constantly surprised people still fall for this kind of music scam. It's like someone shuffling up to you in the tube and offering to sell you a Rolex." Graham Charnock is the editor of *Bye Bye Johnny*, a fanzine for elderly science fiction fans to get together and grumble about how rock and roll isn't what it used to be in their young days, dash it.

THREE BOOKS YOU HAVEN'T READ

By Sandra Bond



I SPIED A PALE HORSE by Mark Timlin. Toxic, 1999. £6.99

GAME NIGHT by Jonny Nexus. Magnum Opus Press, 2007. £7.99/\$9.99

THE COUNTRY YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN: ESSAYS AND REVIEWS by Joanna Russ. Liverpool University Press, 2007. £20.00

It was Bob Shaw who once likened the growth of science fiction to a small village growing with the passage of time and the march of progress into a large town. It might not be the most fashionable address to have, but it was still a good place to live in.

But the difference between a village and a town is that when you live in a village, you know every street if not every resident. When you live in a town, you may know the heart of it very well, and you probably know the streets around your house pretty thoroughly, but it's likely that there are parts of the town on the other side from you that you barely know or have never visited. Modern science fiction, in these terms, has become a sufficiently urbanised sprawl that it's all too common for an interesting house (read: book) to be built (read: written), or even a street full of them, without the majority of the town's inhabitants knowing about them.

Herewith, three examples of interesting books which have, as far as I know, slipped beneath the radar. I don't think I've seen a single review of any of these, or even a mention, in any fanzines (save that after the first draft of this piece was written, *Steam Engine Time* gave a glancing positive reference to the Russ volume, with the ever-perceptive Bruce Gillespie calling her essay "On The Wearing Out Of Genre Materials" the single most interesting essay on SF, and other genres, he'd ever read). No mention of any of them appears in the BSFA's grand index.

Let's take the oldest one first. A little scene-setting seems in order; Mark Timlin is primarily known for his work in the detective story genre, and more specifically, for the creation of the Sarf London tough-guy ex-copper and private detective, Nick Sharman. They are fast-moving, deliberately lowbrow, and of their kind, pretty good. There was even a brief TV series featuring Clive Owen as Sharman in the mid-90s, but it was canned when the backlash of the Dunblane massacre caused high-violence shows such as that to go out of fashion.

So what is the result when an author with this pedigree moves into science fiction?

The answer is perhaps unsurprising; we get an end-of-civilisation-as-we-know-it novel. A plague, whose origins are never pinned down, causes the death of the majority of the British population, and the hero – or rather, anti-hero – being naturally enough one of the few survivors, has to somehow contrive to stay alive among a society that's crashing down about his ears.

So far, so predictable; why, the protagonist is even an ex policeman, just like Sharman. There's also a long section of the book featuring the theft of a petrol tanker and a bunch of neo-barbarians, just like Mad Max 2.

What's less predictable, and what raised the book above the potboiler level for me, was a series of deliberate and knowing nods towards the John Wyndham school of what has been called 'cosy catastrophe' writing. It would be going too far, probably, to say that Timlin's book sets itself up as a challenge to *THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS*, and takes the attitude of "That is not how it will be; this is how it will be". But equally, I would be very surprised indeed if Timlin didn't have that in mind when writing certain parts of the book, at least.

It's not marketed as science fiction, but science fiction it most definitely is, and I'm even going to say very cautiously that of its kind it's not half bad. Certainly Mark Timlin's name now belongs in the upcoming new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* on the basis of this novel.

The problem with British comic fantasy is that Terry Pratchett and to a lesser extent Tom Holt have made the genre so totally theirs, bestriding the narrow earth like a Colossus, that a new author trying to break into it has a task that's not so much uphill as vertical. This may or may not be the reason why the writer calling himself 'Jonny Nexus' has opted to self-publish his novel *GAME NIGHT*. Being fair, I should point out that Nexus is apparently a pretty big cheese in the world of role-playing fandom, and that being so, he may have seen himself as having a ready-made audience for a book.

Be that as it may, we have a book. It has an idea at the heart of it with plenty of potential; what if the gods *do* play dice? Specifically, what if they play role-playing games?

This gives us the potentially fascinating, potentially unwieldy scenario of a dual-level narrative; the gods on one level, the characters they are playing on another level. The two are differentiated by the use of different typefaces (thankfully they are dissimilar enough to be obvious without either one being too garish). And the gods – in a tradition dating as far back as Aristophanes if not Homer – are all too human and prone to arguments, bickering, and inattention to the matter at hand.

Several questions arise. Can the author extract sufficient mileage from this scenario to fill a two hundred page novel? (Pretty much.) Can he make it amusing enough to hold the attention of the average reader as well as the dedicated role-player? (Hmm. Being a role-player myself it's difficult for me to say, but I'm not so sure.) Can he avoid the temptation of descending to in-jokes too often? (Just about).

There are several very nice touches; the Game Master (and head of the pantheon) is insecure, broody, and prone to fits of jealousy towards other deities, in particular the Christian one (who is referred to by the title 'Mister Six Days' throughout; I laughed, I confess.). The Warrior, one of his players, stands out as a blustering, brash idiot who never thinks before acting; simplistic characterisation, perhaps, but the source of some amusement anyway.

But other aspects are not so satisfactory. By choosing to describe his deities as 'The Warrior', 'The Jester', 'The Sleeper' and so on, rather than relate them to any already existing pantheon, Nexus gives himself the job of having to build the reader's relationship with these characters up from scratch rather than giving himself the head start of simply making them Mars, Apollo and Neptune, or Thor, Odin and Loki. Worse, with the exception of the All-Father and the Warrior, the other gods really don't ever achieve sufficient characterisation to crystallise in the reader's mind; and if this is a fault where a mere human character is concerned, how much more of a fault it is where the reader is being asked to imagine a supernatural character!

As for the plot, it carries through the book and comes to an end which was, perhaps, what the reader was expecting, yet was (again, perhaps) the logical outcome to the novel.

A flawed book, in very many ways, but nonetheless one that I found surprisingly enjoyable. Worth checking out.

The point I was making at the start of this piece about the diffusion of the science fiction genre is brought home very forcibly by the appearance of Joanna Russ's collected essays and reviews as *THE COUNTRY YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN*. A pleasantly fat volume of over three hundred pages, the main question this book raises is why on earth it hasn't appeared until now.

Back in the days when science fiction was still a village instead of a town, the village green played host to two critics who sat side by side on the bench, as it were, watching the village go about its business and passing commentary upon it as it did so. Those critics were Damon Knight and James Blish, the latter hiding behind the rather inadequately maintained façade of "William Atheling Jr", and by and large, the villagers of the day honoured and respected those two chaps for their cogent, accurate, sometimes trendsetting, and sometimes very witty comments on the state of things.

Now it's revealed that at the same time as Knight and Blish were sitting there on the bench on the village green doing their thing, there was a third critic in the village of science fiction, doing very much the same as them at pretty much the same time. If only Joanna Russ's reviews and essays had been published – even by a specialist publisher such as Advent which printed Knight's *IN SEARCH OF WONDER* and Blish's *THE ISSUE AT HAND* – then her name might very well have ranked alongside theirs on the honour roll of pioneering SF critics, and it would have deserved to do so too. But it's taken forty-one years (the oldest piece in the book dates from the *December 1966* issue, *gordelpus*, of *F&SF*) before they were finally collected. I decline to open the can of worms which is immediately placed before me at this point, that questions whether the reason for this was Russ's status as a woman (and science fiction's leading feminist) compared to Knight and Blish as males. (But I bet somebody is going to open that can before long, and when it does get opened, the results should be pretty interesting.)

So what do we have, now that the essays are finally between book covers?

Firstly, anyone worrying that the contents might appear dated should be reassured that they aren't. Like all good criticism – and indeed, like Damon Knight and James Blish's – these essays and reviews are essentially timeless, and what's more, they should be required reading for anyone writing science fiction even today. "If Knight reviews you, *listen*," someone said at the time Knight's reviews were at their height; sadly this book appears too late for the same advice to be given regarding Russ, but it would have been accurate. Her comments on Gene Wolfe on p.57, for example, are astonishingly accurate when one looks at his later career; her thoughts on Brian Aldiss, Norman Spinrad and Michael Moorcock are no less spot-on, while her in-depth analysis of David Redd's early work so thrilled me that I toted the book all the way to Kettering for *Cytricon V* and waved the relevant page under the confused Mr Redd's nose, much to the embarrassment of both of us, no doubt.

This isn't to say that Russ is beyond criticism. She makes one judgment of Robert Silverberg which she recants first in a footnote to the column in which it appeared, and then, redundantly, in a subsequent column; actually, I can think of worse summaries of Silverberg than "a sossidge-factory trying to become an author", if you except the unnecessarily cutesy spelling of 'sausage'). Nor is the book itself beyond criticism, containing as it does some very glaring typos ('Robert Shackley' appears not only in the heading of one review but also in the index, and yet again we find that perennial misprint 'Frederic Brown'; at least Frederik Pohl escapes unscathed on this occasion).

The contents of the book are not solely related to science fiction, and I suppose most readers would be surprised if any collection of Russ's non-fiction failed to contain a suitable dose of feminist discussion and argument. This one duly does. If I don't go into great detail about it, this is simply because I'm approaching this review from a science-fictional viewpoint, not because the feminist content is of lesser value of relevance; also, because I consider myself better qualified to deal with the science-fictional part. Again, as I said above, this can of worms is sure to be opened interestingly...

Or is it? Once upon a time, it would certainly have been. But once upon a time, this book's appearance would have sparked reviews and commentary all over fandom; whereas now, its appearance has passed almost unnoticed. To return to Bob Shaw's simile, if science fiction is now the sort of metropolis where something like this book can appear and be ignored, then I think both the city of science fiction itself, and all those who live in it, cannot help but be the poorer for it.

Twenty Three Years?

THAT IS TOO MANY!

MIKE MEARA goes back to Novacon

Chapter 1: In Which We Travel Hopefully (or, Do You Remember An Inn, Miranda?)

“No I don’t”, replies Pat. “I have no wish to remember anything at all about con hotels. And why are you calling me Miranda? It’s not your old trouble coming back, is it?”

Apart from Cytricon V in October, Novacon 38 would be our first convention after more than 20 years out of the fannish loop. And because Cytricon was, for various reasons, on a special higher plane of wonderfulness, it was so much more than just a con that it doesn’t count. Our last con of all in our previous go-round was a Rubicon in August 1988 (it says here in an old diary), and our last Novacon was number 15.

So as we motored along the over-familiar length of the A38, A5, then the less familiar A461, our minds were full of questions. Is the hotel really as bad as some fans seem to suggest? And why does it call itself a Quality Hotel – shouldn’t we be the ones to judge that? (If you read the online reviews, many already have, and I suppose The Management make no claims that the Quality they espouse is anything more than mediocre.) Would there indeed be a handpump on the bar, welcoming weary travellers like the Statue of Liberty? Or would the whole thing be just a Wet Weekend in Walsall instead of a Fine Fannish Experience? Only time would tell – and since we had to go within cursing distance of that linear car-park that is oft-times the M6, perhaps the time would be a bit longer than our estimated hour.

Chapter 2: In Which We Arrive

White Van Men are often as careless about cleaning their vehicles as they are about driving them, so we were interested (but not, in the light of recent events, especially amused) to pass one on which the legend “Cleaned by the NHS” had been hand-inscribed. (Remember “Clean Me” and the rather wittier “Also Available In White”?)

We had noted with puzzlement that directions had been provided for approaching by road from the north, and from the south, but not from the east. Once in Walsall, we saw why. The whole of this part of the West Midlands is spending its way out of the recession with a grand road improvement plan (the last two words there are an assumption), but of course things often get worse before they get better, and currently only a fool would attempt to approach junction 10 of the M6 from the east, especially at sunset.

These fools rushed in, and on, and in only 75 minutes the satnav said we were there – but where? We knew we weren’t looking for a con hotel in the old style: an imposing but rather frail old lady, standing uncertainly still as the town changed all around her. Rather, we sought a squat trollop, lounging beside only the motorway, the means whereby her clientele could approach, transact their business, and depart as rapidly as they had, er, come. Wham, bam. No wonder modern hotels have no self-respect. So this pile of building materials with the “Quality” sign in front of it must be it, then. Relief as familiar faces (Claire and Mark, arriving at the exact same millisecond) are spotted in the car park. Past the “Astro-Hire” van (what a nice skiffy touch by the hotel management, to help us all feel at home!) and barely through the doors, already I could see the fabled handpump, and what’s more, *actually in motion* and not a cardboard replica as I had feared. Oh joy! Oh happiness!

Chapter 8: In Which We Go Out Of Sequence

No, only joking. I would love to be able to write a non-linear conrep like Sandra’s, but my brain only goes from A to B to C, and even that can be problematic. So it’s really

Chapter 3: In Which We Run Out Of Titles Already

Check-in was moderately efficient, registration (Ina and Gavin) much more so, and already a culture shock: the con badge – large, colourful, laminated, provided with a range of fittings to allow attachment to almost any part of the clothing or body that comfort and decency would permit, and best of all, printed on both sides, thereby reducing the chance of forgetting who you are at a crucial moment. A significant improvement.

Lots of fans around already, so we’ve timed it right. Greg and Catherine, who have to travel from the Outer Galaxies to get here (or indeed anywhere) have been here since lunchtime. Other faces too, vaguely familiar: could that be... and surely that’s...

But even I can't drink with a suitcase in each hand, so first the long, long walk to find our room, which seemed to be in a different time-zone or even dimension from the rest of the hotel. A shuttle-craft, monorail or even a golf-buggy would have been helpful to us oldies here. The room itself was surprisingly spacious, albeit a little tired and frayed on closer inspection, but the near full-size bath was pleasing. The aircon unit was another skiffy touch: when I switched it on, the way the air vent opened gave me a mental flash of some early Gort prototype, reconfigured by thrifty engineers for use as a domestic appliance.

Chapter 4: In Which We Are Called To The Bar

There would be plenty of lubrication time before the Opening Ceremony at 7pm, and I fancied I could hear the siren squeak of that handpump, calling to me across the parsecs. Lubricant of choice would of course be whatever said handpump was dispensing – Black Sheep Bitter, as it turned out, a good choice for a con beer, tasty, refreshing and not too heavy, and well-priced for a hotel at £2:40 a pint. The other handpump offered the well-named but less appealing (to me) Addlestones Cider; Catherine Pickersgill urged me to try it, but my stones are addled enough already, thanks. Besides, would you drink something that looked like someone else had drunk it already, then thoughtfully put it back in the glass? Sadly, the wine list turned out to be more or less as I'd expected; I have long realised that my sophisticated taste in wine (flavoursome, fairly-priced, neither semi-frozen (whites) nor half-mulled (reds)) is not catered for by most hotels and pubs.

Already, vast numbers (or so it seemed) were here to meet, greet and exchange drinks with, and it began to dawn that although, judged on programme book numbers, this would be the smallest Novacon since the third, it was still going to be *a little bit too big!* I recalled how our preference for smaller cons had led Pat and me towards Silicons, Faancons, Mexicons, Unicons, Rubicons and away from Eastercon (Channelcon 1982 was our last) and even, in the end, Novacon. Something to ponder for our second time around.

Before the opening ceremony, a quick initial visit to the dealers' room. What a buzz to see once more so many sf books in one place! But here was Culture Shock #2: sf mags the like of which I'd paid a small fortune for in the old days, lying here unwanted and unsold at 50p or £1 a pop. Tragic. During the weekend I did accumulate a small but perfectly formed selection of purchases, which alas included only two from the list of seventy-odd titles which various Wegenheimers had put together for me. It was in here, too, that Greg and Mark explained to me the wonderful new (to me) concept of Publish/Print On Demand. It seems that the internet has changed sf as well as fandom.

After the opening spiel came Room 101, a regular Novacon feature I gather, wherein GoH Ian MacLeod (when he could get a word in) gave the impression of being a Nice Bloke. Even before the end, though, I was drawn away by hunger, thirst and the need for fannish conversation, and I saw no more of the programme on this first day. Remembering briefly that I should pace myself, it was only around 2am when I embarked on The Long March back to the room. Pat, of course, sensible girl that she is, had retired somewhat earlier.

Chapter 5: When Hadrons Collide

10am Saturday, is when. Too early to be in the bar, so I had no option but to go along. Good decision. David Evans is a most amusing speaker, and even the fact that the trick with the liquid nitrogen and the rubber tubing failed to work didn't faze him. (Can't those guys get *anything* to work properly?)

I always loved the book auction, partly for the books but mainly for the theatre of it. Chris Morgan had to do most of the work, since Rog had been invaded by aliens (Throat Wars IV: A New Croak). Chris was amusing and did a good job, but a faster pace would suit me better.

Another couple of programme items sneaked through under the radar, due to incoming drinks, conversation etc., but we did catch fan GoH Vernon being interviewed by his old friend Pauline Morgan, sitting in for his other old friend Rog (Throat Wars V: The Strepsil Strikes Back) Peyton. By adopting a restrained approach not at all like that of St*ve Gr**n, she got quite a lot out of him. We even found out why he doesn't smile.

I feared that Rog (Throat Wars VI: The Return Of The Streptococci) Peyton's previously-announced plan to go out for dinner might be in jeopardy, but he had decided that the best treatment for his throat was to drop a bomb down it, in the form of a really hot curry. So he led a select band, plus Pat and me, to the Golden Moments. Great food, and the wine was better than the hotel stuff too. Thanks, Rog. (I was going to call him a man of taste, but in the circumstances... The throat treatment did work for a while, though, he said.)

Like the auction, the Pub Quiz needs the spice of theatre to make it tasty. A bit of chaos and uncertainty is part of the structure, so my thanks to the organisers for providing it. On my own I would have barely got into double figures, but fortunately our team (More Wine. Vicar?) had Julian Headlong (who Knows A Lot) and some others who knew Something. Though I came into my own a bit in the final pseudonyms round, we lost by one point, one miserable measly steinking point, to The Andromeda Strain, who had Rog Peyton, Greg Pickersgill and doubtless other founts and fountesses of skiffy knowledge. They also had ten people to our team's seven, but modesty forbids me from drawing any inference from that fact. (You can if you want to, though.) My serious and genuine thanks to everyone involved in putting on this programme highlight – please keep it in for next year.

All this merriment put me in the mood for much more chat, drinks etc., none of which I can report here, because I can't remember any of it, so it was twenty past bloody four when I finally lurched out of the almost-deserted bar. Silly boy, Michael. You'll pay for it tomorrow.

Chapter 6: When Clangers Go Bad

I don't do breakfast very well, certainly not at cons. Pat and I normally prefer to find a table on our own where we can grunt at each other until such time as the orange juice and coffee have done their job. If anyone cares to join us during this process, they are welcome (ish) – just don't expect any sparkling discourse.

So we were a bit late getting into Jack Cohen's item on Darwin. Earlier I had been delighted to meet Jack again after so long, but upset to learn of the health problems he's recently had. A most amusing talk though, with an experiment that actually worked; let's hear it for Chemistry! Keep it up, Jack – we and the world still need you, though the world may not know it.

Greg's premise that none of us might be here if Uncle Hugo hadn't run that lettercol in *Amazing* appeals to me. Co-panelist Steve Green didn't agree, and I have the photos to prove it, but Greg won the debate. I would argue that, so long as the development of the internet didn't hinge on Gernsback's decision, we *would* certainly be here by now, since anyone can now put up a website or blog proclaiming their love for sf, and within hours, thousands would have flocked to their banner. Okay, this might only be Novacon 8 or 18 rather than 38, but we'd be here. But I wonder: which one of us went back in time and talked Hugo into it?

Another thing Greg had been banging on about was how our cosy old world of paper fanzines and snail-mail locs had been out-evolved by internet technology, and was now barely hanging on, red squirrel-like. I was somewhat dubious until I saw the next programme item, which addressed just this issue. Panelists with PCs were blogging the panel and talking coherently to the live audience at the same time; this was impressive enough, though I understood barely one word in three, but when they started to get responses from far-flung corners of the earth before we'd even finished... Later, Mark and Claire attempted to explain Live Journal to me, but even now, having had a look at it, I'm not much wiser. Should I ever pub another ish, it would definitely appear on good ol' paper. You can trust paper (of course, there are exceptions: some toilet paper, the *Daily Mail*...) I am wary of the impermanence and mutability of the on-line way, and eZines seem to me to be neither one thing nor the other, lacking both the physical actuality of paper and the immediacy of a blog. There's no doubt that the fanzine world is in trouble, though: congratulations for sure to Nova winners Peter, Claire and Alison, but two of these three won last year as well, and the variety of names has not been great over the past decade. I'm sure they, and we, would appreciate a bit more competition.

After the awards and stuff came the Beer and Food Tasting, in which local delicacies such as faggots and grey peas with bacon were washed down with a wide choice of bottled beers provided by the diners, plus a couple on draught courtesy of the Committee. Pat and I had been looking forward to this, but in the event I couldn't really get to grips with any of it. Possibly my system was trying to tell me it was tired and bloated, and could it go home now, please?

However, the after-dinner conversation was another matter. We pondered the continued absence of Uncle Peter since his brief appearance on Friday, and Mark Plummer speculated that Big Knob Fun at the NEC (or wherever this regrettable double-booking was happening) was simply too lucrative, not to say enjoyable. A chance remark by Steve Green about the limited choice of footwear available to him gave rise to a remarkable scenario, soon to be a major film at a cinema near you. The poet and tragedian William McGonagall, who was present in spirit (beer isn't his thing), has sent me the following astral ode for inclusion here:

Ohhh, 'twas already the sixteenth of November 2008
So surely we could not have very much longer to wait
For the Catastrophic Shoe Disaster to befall Steve Green
Who is without doubt the finest TAFF candidate the West Midlands has ever seen.

There was much more, but the aetherial broadband went down at this point – bloody BT!

Well, it all made perfect sense at the time. As indeed did a modest proposal for World Domination Through Fandom. Most of the details are top secret, for obvious reasons, but I can mention a hidden vault containing a piece of the True Shoe, a lock with a 10,000-year guarantee (courtesy A Berry), a secret trapdoor which is *really* secret because the hinges are on the wrong side, and a holographic projection of Uncle Pete Weston. Meanwhile, on the next table the charades junkies had started up again, and kindly (in fact, without even realising it) inspired the title of this chapter. You had to be there. Why weren't you?

Chapter 7: No Diamonds On My Windshield. Just Walsall Drizzle

Monday morning looked how I felt – grey and grotty. Greg would like an extra day, he says, but for me, the toxins have accumulated to a critical point by this stage: too much alcohol, too little sleep, food of a type and quality I wouldn't normally consume, and the silent, invisible, omnipresent menace – hotel air, the quality of which seems inversely proportional to the number of air conditioners providing it, causing Pat to cough and my sinuses to complain ever more stridently. Plus the

background irritation of needlessly complicated hotel systems, and the lack of staff with the training to use them. Enough, enough.

The message of Monday morning is: it's been fun, but it's over, go home now. So we did. I hate goodbyes, and con goodbyes are especially hateful. We were home by lunchtime, but the good food and good wine we had were scant consolation. Cons, music festivals, holidays, all involve stepping up a life energy level, which we eagerly anticipate, and enjoy hugely when it gets here. But having stepped up, you have to step down again – can't stay there forever.

Like the man said: I don't like Mondays (especially con Mondays).

Chapter 8: In Which I Talk To Myself

Q: *So, Mike, did you and Pat enjoy your first Novacon for twenty-three years?*

A: Pretty much, yes. We liked the same things we used to like before, and disliked the same things we used to dislike before. A bit surprising, because we've changed a bit, and so have the hotels. But perhaps the essential nature of convention fandom hasn't changed, and that's maybe the overriding factor. Room parties seem to have died out, but that's no bad thing; they always seemed a bit juvenile, like midnight feasts in the school dorm. Has fandom matured a bit, or has it just got older, like CAMRA members? Some fans who were real characters seem to have disappeared for good, which is a big pity. Some of the old-time fans who are still around have either changed a lot when you wish they hadn't, or haven't changed at all when you hoped they would have. 'Nuff said. Also no masquerade (or Fancy Dress, as we oldies like to call it) – but Novacon isn't that type of con anyway, never was, and that idea probably faded out before we did. (I do have some good shots from Novacon 3, though – remember "Barefoot In The Head", Vernon?). Also also, no bugger gave me their fanzine, which was VERY DISAPPOINTING; I had to resort to lifting a few copies of *Xyster* from the free fanzines table. *Grmph*.

Q: *Will you try it again next year?*

A: Probably. I was going to say it depends a bit on the hotel they pick, but it doesn't at all really. All the hotels of this general type that I've ever experienced are much the same: they are not as good as they seem to think they are, and definitely overpriced in comparison with those in, say, France. Also, they lack personality and self-confidence; they all feel they have to appeal to the mainstream. Our personal tastes I need to make a con of this size excellent rather than merely very good indeed. So this is as good as it's likely to get, but that's good enough, so no worries. To say that a con succeeds in spite of the hotel rather than because of it would be to go too far, but there is an element of truth in that. Of course, if and when conventions go virtual, we can custom-design our own environment, which I guess would not look very much like the Quality Hotel, Walsall.

Q: *What about Eastercon 2009?*

A: Probably not. Much too big for me, and the hotel arrangements won't work for me. But if we don't go, we'll miss out on the people who only do the two big cons of the year. What to do, what to do?

Q: *Are you going to stick around in fandom this time?*

A: We plan to. When it (convention, fanzine, online group) sparks into life, however briefly, it truly is one of the great, uplifting experiences you need periodically (and frequently) to prevent you from sinking too deeply into the swamp of mediocrity that is everyday life in general. The challenge, then, is to behave in such a way as to maximise the frequency of these experiences. We didn't quite get this right last time around, which is why we went away after a while. Maybe we can do it better this time.

QUASIQUOTE,
EH?



"IN THE GREAT
TRADITION OF
KEITH WALKER"?

I PREFER TO
THINK OF IT AS
TIME BINDING



THE NEW
BONDAGE

DIRAC ANGESTUN GESEPT

By David Redd

At Cytricon V, Sandra held up her copy of NEXT OF KIN before the assembled intellects and made a stirring sercon case for Eric Frank Russell as a Fifties writer still notable today (unlike the less worthy L*n Wr*ght etc.) As for me slumped at the back of the hall, I was with her all the way – after Dave Langford’s recent mention of “poostermoolies” in *Ansible* I’d started thinking, there’s more to EFR than you’ll find in the Science Fiction Encyclopedia, by Thog! So let me add to your orations with my own Case for Eric.

Besides the general memories of his slick crowd-pleasing yarns in *ASF* etc., we can dig up some scattered but high-powered recognition of his talents. Kingsley Amis in *NEW MAPS OF HELL* called him the “least unimaginative” of genre-sf writers; William S Burroughs appreciated his *THREE TO CONQUER* for its theme of virus invasion; and Terry Pratchett called *WASP* “the funniest terrorist’s handbook ever written.” The interesting point here is not any praise given but the fact that three highly regarded novelists have thought him worth mentioning for *three totally different* aspects of Russell’s work: his range, his theme and his humour. (Most *ASF* writers are only worth mentioning for *one* aspect of their work, if that.) Let me try to be methodical – not easy with that joker Russell, I discover – and illuminate each of these aspects in turn:

Range. Like some thespian in a travelling rep company Russell could do all the different voices: thrilling, funny, sentimental, insight, wonder, black, angry. (Since you ask: *SINISTER BARRIER*, “Allamagoosa”, “Meeting on Kangshan”, “Minor Ingredient”, “Hobbyist”, “Bitter End”, “I am Nothing.” Etc.) True, you’ll see a lot of space exploration and military characters, which is only like saying there’s a lot of Alaska and frontier types in Jack London. He chose to operate in his home territory, or more exactly the inspiration from bringing ideas to his home territory found him – the sources of many EFR ideas can be found in books, articles, news items or Army folklore, but it’s his treatment of the ideas that counts. By the mid-Fifties he seemed to find his verbal fluency drying up (in *New Worlds* No. 100 he complained of “sterile periods” in which he would “revert to the status of a low-grade moron”) and his retreat into the less varied military-setting humour appears to have skewed his subsequent reputation. I think you should look again. For instance, his “Jay Score” stories predated Jon J Deegan’s “Old Growler” yarns as notable precursors of *Star Trek*, but despite dated elements take our society further into the future than either.

(His then-readable now-dated US pulp style, adopted I think in imitation of G-Man magazine thrillers, lends a superficial similarity to many of his stories. Don’t be fooled. The stories no longer take reading *en masse* very well, but sample them in their natural habitat, among other magazine stories of their time, and you’ll notice that many of them are the best story in the issue. E.g. “Dear Devil” or “The Sin of Hyacinth Peuch”.)

Theme. This seems to divide right down the middle between the “We’re property” of the earlier novels and the “individual against authority” of the later short stories. In fact, I suspect it’s the same theme seen from different angles; also, there are lots of variations and sub-themes if you start looking. He can champion both the individual being (“Mechanistria”) and the essential unity of all intelligent beings (“The Undecided”) while seeming to be both racist (the yellow peril of “The Timeless ones”) and anti-racist (the surrogate blacks of “Postscript”). He firmly dismisses the evil from salvation (“Basic Right”) and yet clearly approves of the Salvation Army winning souls for God (“Sustained Pressure.”) Are we to suspect that no single story can be taken as a clear reflection of his own personal opinions? This is a man, though who could enjoy shocking people, with Army language as Sam Moskowitz has noted or simply with outrageous suggestions. (*Prolapse* recently reminded us of Russell meeting editor Bea Mahaffey and remarking, “I’ve often told editors what I’d like to do to them, but this is the first time I imagined it could be a pleasure.”) A complex picture emerges: not a writer working from A to B and perhaps stretching himself to C, but one with (at his peak) an imaginative territory stretching out in all directions. Which takes “theme” back to “range” – rather confusing; more work needed, boss.

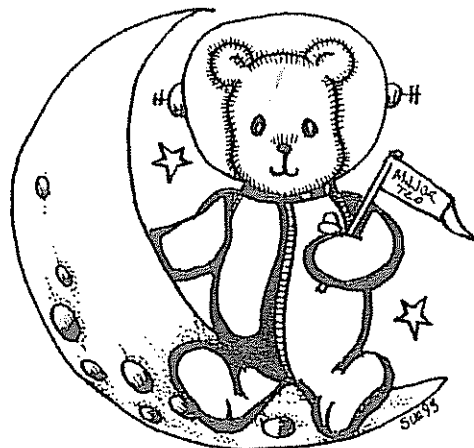
(I can't avoid another parenthetical comment on theme. Russell was closely identified with Campbell's *ASF*, in which Campbell suggested approximately that Mankind was the toughest, roughest beast in the entire universe and would conquer the seavagram; however several maverick Russell stories from other magazines show an almost 100% opposition to Campbell's orthodoxy. In "The Case for Earth" our habit of war gets us locked away in quarantine, and you can hear the prison door slamming behind the reader. More delightfully, *SENTINELS FROM SPACE* regards all our violent-beast ways as pure immaturity, and portrays the unsuspected adult form of our species as gentle and peace-loving, literally cosmic butterflies, man. Take that, Campbell! If only this novel instead of *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND* had been discovered by Charles Manson...)

Humour. Got to say it: Russell was a joker. Unfortunately his stories were so readable and entertaining that we didn't always notice how very dark this humour could be. It shows up in parts of *DREADFUL SANCTUARY*, memorably when the word "poostermoolies" helps demonstrate that the average citizen is an unthinking suggestible idiot. In *WASP*, that well-loved saboteur yarn of lone Earthman Mowry against a Sirian planet (which is actually WWII Japan with its serial numbers not all filed off), the message that one ill-intentioned man can soften up an entire world for destruction is as dark as Mowry's fate, imprisoned by his own side and condemned to repeat his black exploits like any sinner suffering endless punishment in hell. Did you notice how Mowry convinced himself he was justified in murdering someone in cold blood? Maybe Pratchett's quite wrong; the book's not funny at all, and the only joke is on us. But if you look at Russell's shorter pieces, in many the comedy is so open and enjoyable that you can see why he became regarded as "just" an entertainer. In sf humour, Russell set the standard.

(One more aside. Despite what was suggested at Cytricon, I don't believe that Russell tried to write mainstream war stories and only market forces made him convert them to sf; he liked to write science fiction and the WWII echoes entered his work because in a period of gradually declining inspiration they enabled him to keep writing. But full marks to Sandra for spotting evidence in Peter Weston's fanhistorical slideshow of how infectious Russell's humour could be.)

Summing up. I think Russell has become underrated; he was – at his peak – more ambitious than perhaps his fluent but unliterary writing skills allowed to show. (It's of note that he sold only one story to *Galaxy*, and none to *F&SF*.) His first novel is his least interesting, a straightforward adventure, but in subsequent novels the pulp thriller format generally proves a less than adequate vehicle for his concepts. I would guess that *THREE TO CONQUER* is his most accomplished longer work, since it sketches quite effectively the implications of having your mind invaded, and is insistent that the cure might be as bad as the disease.

Yes, it's time somebody started reconsidering the Russell oeuvre and writing about it. Begin with any story you like. "The Timeless Ones" say, wherein the yellow peril expands across space not by weapons and pushing freedom but by slaving in humble jobs so as to spread with slow sustained pressure; a case of "the meek shall inherit", and should we read EFR's future name for the Chinese – "Miggies" as "Meek-ies"? Is the story racism or a more general warning? Or simply a vision? You decide. And that's just one minor story worth looking at. Try "Fast Falls the Eventide" next and surprise yourself. The list is long...



GUEST OF HONOUR SPEECH

*Given by Taral, FanGoH
At Mipplecon I, the 2009 Worldcon*

It might surprise you that I was of two minds about being here today, as the Fan Guest of Honour at Mipplecon. On the one hand I'm delighted, that after decades of make-believe bidding, it finally came time for Minneapolis to host, instead of hoax, a Worldcon. And I'm even more delighted that it should choose to honour *me*. On the other hand, I have some trouble putting aside the suspicion that it isn't the real me, the *famish* me, who was invited, but my alter ego. I was unsure even how I should appear to you here so that I could give this speech. Should I stand here in my usual skin, or put on that other "me" that is better known outside the happily introverted circle of fanzine fandom.

To put it simply, which "Taral" did you invite here to Mipplecon?

In recent years, I've not attended as many conventions as in my younger days. I've grown somewhat apart from people I knew. As often as not, when I went to a Loscon or Philcon, I'd sit by myself in the lobby, hoping to see a familiar face from the old days, who might come by to gush out his "long time no sees", who wants to know what I'd been doing all this time.

But I didn't seem to know the current crop of active fans, who I had usually never met. I felt like a party crasher among them. As well, science fiction fans had inexplicably decided that they were interested in discussing science fiction. Even at room parties I overheard conversations like "hot new writer, a shoo-in for the Phil K. Dick", or "there's no shame in using tested SF devices like time-travel or faster-than-light drives in mainstream literature anymore." Was anyone *really* interested in that?

Well, perhaps I was a bit spoiled, having a faster-than-light device of my own.

I didn't have to sit by myself in the lobby, but I seemed more comfortable there. On occasion, I had tried to take an interest in "big rock hits Earth" panels and that sort of thing, but quickly found that my opinion as a mere fan mattered less than Ben Bova's in such matters. This despite having personally *moved* a few big rocks out of Earth's way.

Then I'd remember that I was due for a panel of my own. "When would humans be allowed out of the solar system" maybe, or "Why does everyone in the galaxy have two eyes and thumbs?" Some of these panels were more fun, and some more serious. You'd never guess which were which from the titles. But I wasn't on those panels as "Taral the fan", but "Taral the XT", and had to look the part.

A phone booth won't do. I just want to be momentarily out of sight at such times anyway, and an empty restroom is perfect. If there's someone in it, I find another one -- or wait. I don't know why Superman never seemed to think of it.

I slouch into the restroom, an inconspicuous fan dressed in the usual t-shirt and badges, and emerge a few moments later ready to perform. (I won't go into what happens in those few moments. As a special effect, it would be disappointing compared to the transporter dissolve and matt in Star Trek.) No matter that I often wear the same jeans and t-shirt at home, whichever body I'm in. But people expect something more exotic of an XT. So I'll come out in full fig -- something in fluid silver, and a short drape off the shoulder -- like this one -- but I don't like to feel overdressed so I'm afraid usually it's just a sleeveless denim, cut off at the knees.

So who am I, standing here and speaking to attendance of Mipplecon, the 67th. World Science Fiction Society convention? The fan with mimeo ink on his fingertips and twiltone dust in his pockets? Or the lucky bastard who greeted the first extraterrestrial to visit Earth, and evolved by trial and error into one of them? Happily I am both. I'm not Guest of Honour at Mipplecon because of juvenile fan pubbing I did thirty years ago, nor am I GoH because I'm standing here as an extraterrestrial. I am the guest of this worldcon because I am the only *fan* who is an *XT* as well.

Talk about living the fannish dream...

They say everyone remembers where they were the day Kennedy was shot, or when the Challenger moon-shuttle was destroyed by a meteor. I remember the day I met Saara Mar more vividly than that. It was a dozen once-in-a-lifetime experiences, all in a day. Of course, now people are familiar with the elongated silver bullets that are Dalmirin starships. In 1970, though, it was unlike anything in the air, and when I saw it glide gracefully by my 10th. floor apartment window, I followed it like a lost puppy. By no means was I the only person who gathered at the landing site. I did seem the only one hopeful enough, or foolish enough, to leave the cover of the trees and walk straight up to the ship. Alone, I touched the cold mirror-like surface in awe. No science fiction movie that has tried to create the moment of First Contact has come anywhere near capturing the experience. You can take my word for it.

Then, I saw in the mirrory surface that someone was standing beside me. She had appeared out of thin air, it seemed. I turned to look into the chalk white face framed with blue hair, and realized with surprise that she was fur covered, like a cat. She even had somewhat cat-like ears. Seemingly she was female. I had expected the gargle or hiss of some alien language, but Saara Mar only held out a blue furred hand, sort of as though to touch my chest, and said "Hello."

Well, (duh), of course. She had been studying us from orbit for weeks, listening to our languages and learning.

Other people had gathered at the edge of the clearing. It's now a housing tract I'm afraid, with no monument to the landing. They began a gradual, cautious approach. Before they were even close, Saara and I had established a dialog that went beyond "war? What is war?" or anything like that. She was amazingly easy to talk to about what I felt at that unimaginable moment. And she was interested in everything. "Why do American pop singers have British accents? Do you use those flat scales on the end of your fingers for anything special? Why do you wear gloves only on your feet? Why are there so many different calendars?" I don't know how long we answered each other's question on that sunny Spring day.

People were finally coming right up to the ship and crowding around. I noticed they weren't ordinary people though. There were some police, a few men in dark suits, who didn't need to flash a badge to let you know they were secret service, and lots of soldiers. They hustled me away, of course. I think it was the first time I ever saw Saara frown.

Important men had important issues to raise with the First Contactee. You can imagine the sort of questions... was the extraterrestrial going to share advanced alien knowledge with Earth? Would she end world hunger and cure cancer? When was she going to help the free world overcome Communism? Did her people worship God, and in what way?

Or were they here to steal our body parts, and mutilate cattle?

Much to their relief, the answer was an unequivocal "no."

Then they realized "no" was the answer to all their questions.

This debriefing produced nothing but a baffled Saara. Picture yourself driving your Chevrolet into a small town, in a remote area of Alabama that had somehow forgotten there was any outside world, and you were

surrounded by eager town councilmen, who demanded you ended balding, wanted to know if you were bringing them holographic TV, and if asked if you meant to side with them against the people living in the next town down the highway . What would *your* response be?

“Huh? You wanna run all that by me again?” That was pretty much Saara’s reply, most of the time, to the statesmen, scientists, and religious leaders who monopolized her attention for the next several days. The fact was, she was just passing by, and had no plans to save Earth from itself, or settle our arguments one way or the other. Apart from a few of the scientists, she found these self-important officials to be largely a bore. After a while she said, “Where’s the young guy I met before you clods?”

She liked me. Instead of asking Saara how to build a death beam, or try to instruct her in market capitalism, I wanted to show her how to ride a bicycle, or asked if she’d like to share a banana split. My approach to interplanetary diplomacy was much more to Saara’s liking. The big-shots didn’t seem able to overlook that she wasn’t human, and couldn’t act normally around her for one minute. On the other hand, I’d stopped seeing her as strange pretty quickly.

I guess there really are circumstances where it helps to be an SF reader.

I thought she was exotically beautiful, in fact. Considering how non-human she is, Saara looks implausibly human. She might have had tentacles and spines, or four eyes that only saw in infra-red, and might have breathed toxic gases that etched metal. But she didn’t. She had two arms, two legs, a face with two eyes. In dim light she easily passes for a mime in white face... one wearing a blue wig at any rate... and with silver eyes. There *is* a reason why XT’s don’t come the other way, *really alien*, but that’s the subject for a boring panel, some other time.

The next few years passed playfully, one or the other of us discovering something new almost every day. I recall Saara being particularly delighted, or fascinated, by eyeglasses, animated cartoons, automobiles, ventriloquism, chocolate (a bit of a high for her), tattoos (which she couldn’t get), electric razors and nail clippers (that she didn’t need), sticky tape (that she couldn’t peel), swear words (whose purpose escaped her), TV dinners, money, fireworks, clowns, beauty parlors, bubble gum, yo-yos, collectable plates, Halloween costumes, professional hockey, vinyl records, parade balloons, and all sorts of everyday things to be found only on our small, backward world.

For my part, I learned the answers to a lot of questions that planetologists and cosmologists would have given their left nut to ask. Probably their right one too. It wasn’t long actually, before I began to run up against conceptual limitations. I just didn’t get some of the math, or the reasoning behind straightforward things like how her spaceship could be bigger inside than outside, or how you could walk around a doorway in the air, but if you went through it you could be in the next room or maybe on the peak of Mt. Everest. It was all way beyond me. No doubt that’s when Saara began to consider tinkering with the workings in my brain, so I could get past “one, two, many...”

To say that was an interesting experience, is a colossal understatement! I don’t recommend it if you value the person you are. It can’t be helped, but you *won’t* be quite the same person after. Truthfully, though, learning was easier after my upgrade from Taral one point oh, to one point one. It became possible to interface with technology that I was beginning to understand. I could finally be trusted to turn off the lights in the ship, or at least not leave the fridge door open, and let the anti-matter out.

I had read a little science fiction, from the days when I pinched my father’s pocket books from his actual pants pockets. Saara found SF both prophetic and risible. Imagine if you were a visitor to the 8th century, and read contemporary stories about the 20th. While they might be highly imaginative and foresighted, could you really resist being amused by the idea men could fly to the moon on a levitating carpet? And would it not raise a laugh that beings living in crater cities spoke perfect Arabic, or Attic Greek?

Star Trek had only gone off the air the year before Saara “discovered” Earth. She really enjoyed watching reruns, and she always cracked me up with her side remarks about the thousand and one impossibilities in the show. Her asides usually ran something like “Arcturus has no planets. It swallowed them as it moved off the

main sequence. They think planets can orbit inside a stellar atmosphere?" Or "time can't run backwards, you can only move backwards *in* time, and it's not even the same time afterward." Or, "phoo, you can't move anything faster than light with only the energy from matter-antimatter annihilation, the trick is in collapsing dimensions to select your speed of light, not in expending more and more energy." The naïve pseudo-science didn't stop either of us from enjoying a minute of the show, of course. Nor from enjoying "2001: A Space Odyssey" or "Star Wars".

Around that time, I picked up a science fiction magazine from somewhere. In the back I noticed an ad for OSFan, the local SF club, that brought us both to fandom. I think it was then Saara made a connection with that part of the human race that looks past the appearance of reality and understands that things were different in the past and (more important) will be different again in the future. We became rather more interesting to her as a species.

For her, it was the first of many such discoveries about humanity. For me, it was a lasting relationship. For Saara, SF was a short-lived interest and she moved on, but I found myself comfortable in the casual setting of journal writers, recreational artists, small press publishers and other hobbyists who make up fandom, and have stayed with it, on-and-off, ever since.

Of course, I had certain advantages over other fans. While some of you were reading "The Martian Chronicles," I was able to leave footprints in the rusty soil personally. I splashed through the methane-ethane lakes of Titan, before anyone else from Earth had any notion what lay below the Saturnian moon's perpetual haze. I admit, I felt a little guilty about my good luck. Bringing back a few rocks to give to friends didn't help my guilty conscience much. While playing with the idea of bringing an entire asteroid to Earth-orbit for scientists to study, Saara made a much better proposal. That was how an assisted space program for NASA and the ESA began in the 1980's.

Beyond proposing the idea, Saara laid much of the groundwork for the subsequent, systematic exploration of our solar system.. She lent the appropriate technology, advancing space travel by fifty or a hundred years. At the same time, Saara held back potentially dangerous principles that might have led to weapons, or other applications we weren't ready for. My part in this was mainly to add catchy names to vehicles and probes, and occasionally explain human idiosyncrasies to the slowly growing number of XT's arriving on Earth.

You may thank me that the permanent scientific base on the Moon is named Clarke Base, instead of the James E. Webb South Polar Multi-Disciplinary Lunar Research Facility, as NASA wanted.

Yes, life has been like a box of chocolates alright. Not all of them with cherry centers though. There were tough nuts to crack.

For example, Earth's visitors have had to deal with frequent attempts to enforce petty, peevish, local laws. I have still not been able to explain to Saara why it's legal for *me* to go shirtless on a beach, but not her. And her reaction to learning she wasn't permitted to drive a vehicle, or speak when not spoken to, in some middle Eastern countries went well beyond expressions of bemusement.

Sometimes serious issues were at stake. Not many of you will forget that the United States of America lagged several years behind most of the rest of the world in clean, cheap energy, because the power corporations tried to use environmental protection legislation to force the disclosure of dangerous technology to them, which they would have patented for themselves, and profited from, if they could. As a result, America suffered a black out of XT technology until Washington came to its senses. Other sectarian interests have tried to pronounce jihads on the XT, or condemned medical advances, on the specious grounds that they were conspiracies to make mankind sterile, or docile. There have been plenty of times when the XT have wondered if Saara's initial take on Earth wasn't the best after all – to pursue her own purposes, and ignore any purpose expected of her.

But we're fortunate that there are wiser heads out there than down here. We haven't been left to stew in our own juices.

There are few non-democracies on our planet today. The handful of hold-outs are backward, impoverished places whose citizens understand they are kept that way by the thugs who rule over them. Those thugs dare not leave the safety of their fortress states, because to do so is to be subject to instant arrest. Nobody goes hungry, even in those unfortunate places. No nuclear weapons exist anywhere on Earth. There will be no epidemics in future, no black-out of civilization, no global extinction event.

Unfortunately, you still can't get a real bagel outside of New York, people still believe wrestling is a sport, cars are just not as much fun as they were in gasoline days, and nobody has ever found a way to make Hugo award ceremonies short... No planet is perfect.

I suppose there are some guest of honour speeches that might be a little shorter, too. You're probably beginning to think this is one of them. You're probably right. Before I step away from the mike, though, I'd like to say that Saara discovered the Earth thirty-nine years ago, as of last April.

Originally, her purpose here was a quick look at the spectacular ring system of the second largest gas giant in the Sol system. It wasn't known that sentient beings lived on the third rock until Saara's ship crossed the wave front of our expanding electromagnetic bubble, about 90 light-years out.

Her first thought was to stay a while, and form a first impression of our species, then move on. We were wild and irrational, capable of passions she couldn't bear, that turned destructive in a flash. Still, by its very nature, so much excitement and unpredictability was also fascinating. Imagine yourself transported to the Wild West of 1875, immune from the local craziness, and invulnerable to any random act of violence. By its very nature, so much excitement and unpredictability would wear you down eventually. Soon you'd want to be home again. You'd want warm baths, clean beds, electric lights, decent coffee, some soft rock from the stereo, and civilized people to mingle with again.

Her first years on Earth kept Saara nearly continuously curious and delighted. Gradually, though, she has tired of her unlooked-for responsibilities. We look back on the early days, and realize how much we both miss them. We'll always have the memories of good times, and of the profound moments we had together -- me learning to fly a car, she tripping on high heels, both of us contemplating mortality from the decomposing bridge of the Titanic. And of course, there was fandom.

Fandom was sort of my home away from home, when things got just a little too fantastic... or when the fantastic started to seem a little too normal. Whether I wanted to get away from the studio back lot of "Star Trek: Rebirth," or to put off sorting the dirty laundry, fandom was an escape. Fandom was a comfortable, in-between sort of place. It wasn't quite as normal as shopping at the mall; it was quite a lot less freaky than a dinner party with His Majesty King Charles III at Balmoral Castle. It was a place where I could relax, and still be stimulated by the activity around me. It offered a number of diversions that I could take as seriously, or unseriously, as I chose. Depending on my mood, I could indulge in a bout of apa hacking, I might pub my ish, or I could totally goof off at as many cons as I had time for. One thing I never really got the hang of, for obvious reasons, is costuming. Carrying a bat'leth, or a wearing a bat cowl, really didn't fool anyone.

If I had not had reason enough to avoid costume shows already, the occasional fan dressed up as me or Saara was the clincher.

I won't deny I wasn't the most sociable of people. But I enjoyed all the smoffy bullshitting late at nights, in the lobbies of hotels all across the country. Did I give two figs about who was holding the next Worldcon, or if a controversial fanwriter won a Hugo? It seemed so at the time, but looking back on it, probably not. Mainly, it was fun to pretend to care.

Enjoyable too were the boxes of old fanzines in the dealer's room. Nobody outside of fandom had discovered them yet, and treasures were passed over the tablecloth in exchange for fifty cents, or a dollar. Sadly, I don't have time to itemize the one-shots, dead-dog parties, signed books, auctions, dealer's room discoveries, dinners, or smof sessions that lightened up those years.

To many funny things happened along the way to tell the stories. If persuaded to recount one, it would likely be the keynote speech given by Robert Heinlein at KC Con in 1976. I don't know of anyone who was there who didn't crack up when the Guest of Honour categorically stated that Humankind was the toughest, smartest species out there. Following an awkward moment's silence, Heinlein peered down at Saara in the front rows, as though seeing her for the first time, and graciously added, "present company excepted."

It's been a swell time. Is it really 2009? Has it really been thirty-nine years since the first starship floated down from the sky? It doesn't seem like its been that long.

But, after all, thirty-nine years *is* half a human lifespan. Even to someone pushing two hundred and twenty nine, that's still a long, unexpectedly extended visit. And so Saara wants to go home.

Don't tell her I told you that, by the way. She's sensitive about her age, being so very young still.

There will still be XT's on Earth of course. Other Kjola like Saara, Uluriamimsi, Teh Langgi, Xsiprits, Dnebrala, and many others – there's a lot of work to do on this orb. I think there will be one less Homo sapiens as well, when Saara leaves. Her people are strongly monogamous, and there's no question of my staying behind. And I'm as much Kjola as human after thirty-nine years. Besides... I haven't been out of the solar system yet. The adventure hasn't really begun.

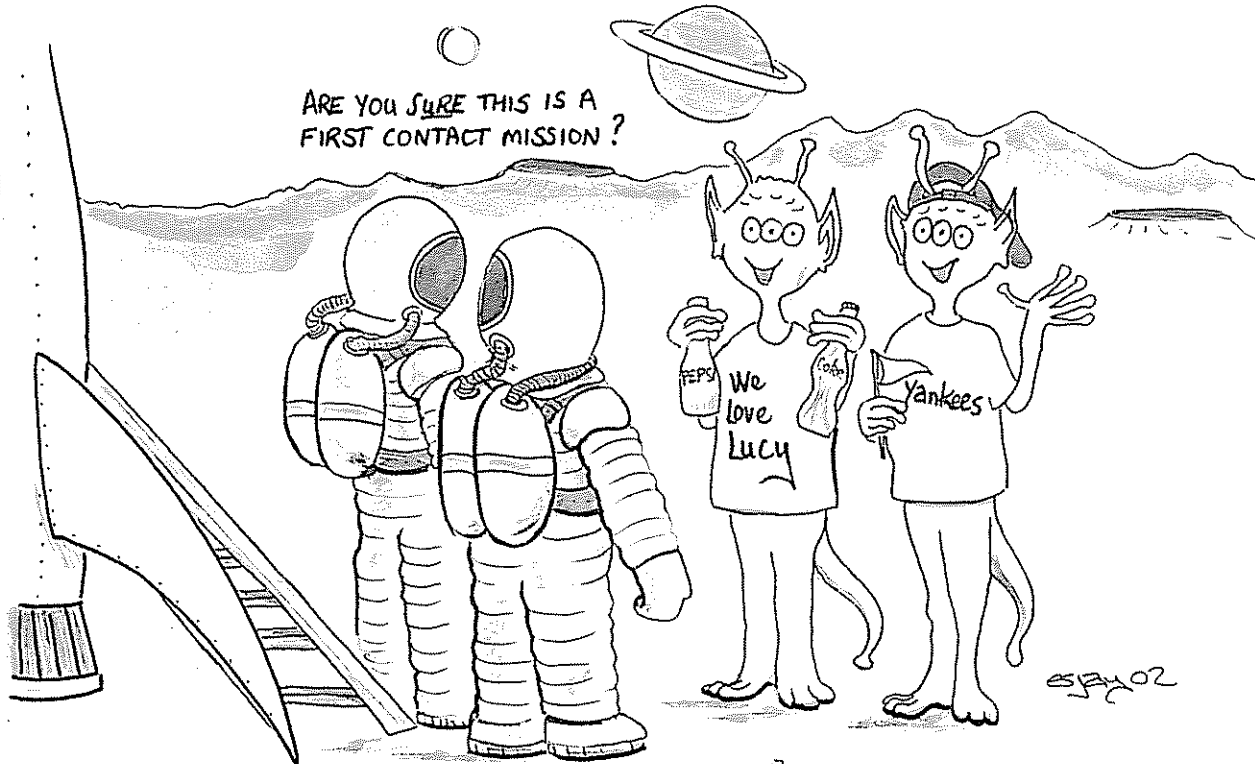
Postscript

The world is surpassingly strange, and even when you think you know a thing, chances are you haven't a clue... For instance, I discovered this one evening while wandering freely in Wikipedia.

"In the Arabic language the word seerah comes from the verb saara (imperfect yaseeru), which means to travel or to be on a journey. A person's seerah is that person's journey through life. It is the story of the person's birth, the events surrounding it, his life and his death, and his manners and characteristics."

What unseen purpose directed me to pick *this* as her name more than 35 years ago, without knowing a word of Arabic? As if that weren't serendipity enough, *saari* is also Finnish and *saare* Estonian for Island. Mar or maa is the word for land.

"Traveler to Island Earth"?



ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A FIRST CONTACT MISSION?

The spirit of Vince Clarke came and looked over my shoulder. I looked back at Vince.

No, I wasn't surprised exactly. My first and greatest fannish mentor, Vince has served as the yardstick of my conscience for fandom-related matters for many years now. I don't always listen to what his spirit has to say, being weak and human as I am, but generally when I don't, I wish subsequently that I had.

Vince shook his head a little. "Now look what you've done."

"It wasn't my fault!" I protested.

"Maybe not," Vince allowed – he never disagrees with me outright, I've noticed – "but it's happened anyway, hasn't it? You've offended Arnie Katz."

"I never meant to!" I wailed. "Arnie Katz is one of my fannish ghods! He's published more great fanzines than you can count on the fingers of both hands! He's run all those Corflus and brought fandom back to Las Vegas and he was like *so* with William Rotsler and..." I swallowed.

"And now he's folded VFW," Vince completed the sentence for me. "And in the final issue, he points a finger at you for calling him 'undistinguished'."

I sank back into my chair. "I did not so too call him undistinguished! I said his writing was..." I looked up at Vince's spirit. "I'm digging myself deeper here, aren't I?"

Vince nodded sadly. "It's not as if you haven't done it before," he reminded me, though I hardly needed reminding.

"Yes, yes, I remember. Kev McVeigh, back in the days of PULP. I said his fanwriting was 'of the second rank' and he threw a complete fit and said I'd called him 'second rate'. There's a *difference*, damn it. There are first rank fanwriters and second and third and fourth and... oh, to hell with it." I took a deep breath. "And what I meant to say about Arnie the K was that he doesn't have a distinctive *style*. Distinctive. Not distinguished. The two are different. You can tell a Langford paragraph, or a Chuck Connor one, or a Willis one even, just by looking, a lot of the time. Arnie doesn't write like that..." I tailed off again, wilting.

"I always said," Vince mused sagely, "that I didn't like fanzine reviews. I never could see what purpose they served. If we were still in an era where fandom was expanding and new fans were popping up all over, unfamiliar with the fanzines on offer... but we're not. Most fanzines these days have essentially the same readership. A bad review is just hurting someone's feelings in public. It doesn't serve any purpose that couldn't be achieved by writing someone a letter of comment."

"But didn't Dave Langford..." I began to protest.

"Oh, yes, Langford wrote that very clever piece about F R Leavis and all the other literary critics recanting their ways. But lit crit is one thing. Fanzine criticism is another."

The Poor Man's Picture Gallery



Sandra
Bond

“How about D West? Or Greg Pickersgill?” I ventured.

“Well, setting any personal issues aside,” Vince replied, “Pickersgill and West’s extravaganzas of reviewing were spectacular enough in their way, and accurate enough, but did they change anything? Did they make the level of literacy or layout or legibility of fanzines in general any higher? Did they make Keith Walker fix a single typo? I’m not sure they did.”

On reflection, I wasn’t sure they did either.

“And look at Joseph Nicholas,” Vince went on. “He recanted pretty much every fanzine review he ever wrote, in the end. Sackcloth and ashes.”

I decided not to point out that the proximate cause for Joseph doing so was, by his own admission, a review of his reviews by D West.

“Well, what about Arnie?” I said. “I could send him a snarky letter telling him to reread that review in QQ6 and pointing out the difference between ‘undistinguished’ and ‘undistinctive’. But I really don’t want to do that. I like Arnie, I don’t want to start a shooting war with him. Or I could leave it alone and say nothing... but I don’t want to do that either. It would be unfair on me, and I like me as well as liking Arnie.”

“What else did he say?” Vince’s spirit reached out politely for the keyboard. I surrendered it to him. He tapped a few keys to scroll down the PDF of VFW113. “Here we are...”

“Fandom is a hobby and, it can be argued, people pursuing a hobby shouldn’t be graded on their performance. If they’re having fun, enjoying their hobby, that’s all that’s really important.”

“Yes,” I said, “but he then goes on to argue with that viewpoint. Justly so, I think. Fandom isn’t a thing you enjoy in a vacuum, it’s something you engage with other people to do, and you owe it to them as well as to yourself to do it the very best you can.

“The real reason he doesn’t review fanzines any more, he says, is he’s kind-hearted and doesn’t enjoy hurting people. Even the editors of bad fanzines.” Vince had flicked on down through the article.

“In that case,” I said, “surely it’s a little hypocritical of him to run John Purcell’s reviews instead of writing them himself? If Purcell writes a scathing review, and Arnie publishes it, the editor’s still going to be hurt.”

This made Vince look at me reproachfully again. “Whether that’s so or not, VFW is still folding, and you still have a nasty feeling you’re partly to blame.”

I do wish Vince, in his spiritual form as my conscience, wasn’t so good at being able to read my thoughts.

“All right, all right. I tell you what,” I said to Vince. “We’ll wait and see what Arnie does next. You know as well as I do he’s a trufan to the bone, and if he’s not publishing VFW he’ll be publishing *something*. For all you know he’s junking VFW to revive Crifanac or Quip or one of his other classic titles from the past. And as for fanzine reviews...”

I paused, and Vince turned his head slightly on one side, waiting for me to go on.

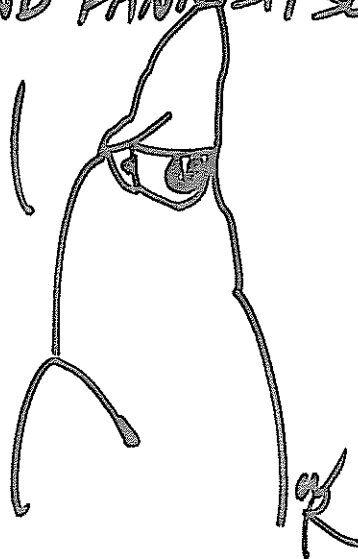
“I won’t run any this issue. I tell you what I’ll do instead.” I took the keyboard back from his ethereal hands, and placed it square on the desk in front of me. “I’ll report on this conversation we had, and let the readers decide. If they want to see me review fanzines – honestly, praising and damning according to my critical view – I’ll start again next issue. If they agree with you and Arnie and don’t want to see fanzine reviews in QQ, I’ll go with the flow and fill the pages with something else instead.”

And that seemed to satisfy Vince. At any rate, he smiled, and nodded, and faded away like the Cheshire Cat, until only his smile remained for a few seconds; and then that, too, was gone.

ish mail

lettercolumn

LETTERS, HA!
GRUBBY SCRIBBLINGS
FROM MALCONTENTIS
AND FANNUISH SCRUFF



JERRY KAUFMAN: Brad Foster's being most mysterious, eh? These figures could be performers in some baffling ritual. I thought at first they were volcanoes with odd plugs in their calderas, but the hands make this unlikely.

F. Towner Velocipede should be quietly proud and simultaneously ashamed of her (or him)self. "Down in the Valis" is both slightly brilliant and extremely silly.

Steve Jeffery has certainly confused Melissa Etheridge with Meredith Brooks when he mentions "the video for Bitch." I'll bet I'm not the first to have pointed this out. (I hope I'm not the first, anyway.)

I've read some of Charlie Stross's stories and books, but haven't yet had the pleasure of hearing him read them. The next time I'm at the same convention, or he makes a trip to Seattle, I must make more of an effort to see him. Incidentally, Bruce Townley is another of my favorite writers. He writes like he talks, and has a unique, recognizable voice. (Gosh, that statement could lead to a great Corflu-type program item: readings of distinctive fanwriters, with contestants attempting to identify the writers. Well, maybe not an entire program item, but part of a quiz.)

Your suggestion will be brought to the attention of the programming guru for Corflu Cobalt.

Okay, Mr Jeffery, is your face red?

STEVE JEFFERY: Many thanks sending me for QuasiQuote 7, whose cheery bright yellow cover (and contents therein) cheered a couple of otherwise dark, cold and depressing bus journeys to and from work. (Unfortunately it couldn't contend with the one where approximately half the female under 15 population of Witney boarded the bus, all wearing the shortest and skimpiest outfits imaginable on one of the coldest nights of the year (I thought I was back in Whitley Bay for a moment), then trooped upstairs and proceeded to sing, very loudly and very badly, for the entire 50 minute journey into Oxford.)

That cover. Well, it's obviously a procession of welders wearing ornate and baroquely decorated masks. The only thing that fooled me was there was no sign of their torches, but they're probably hiding them under those long black cloaks.

Big cheers to F. Towner for the splendid 'Down in the Valis'. Does Lawrence Sutin know about this episode? It seems conspicuously missing from the introduction to the Exegesis. Vikki completely spoiled the plot of Emmanuel Carrere's 'I Am Alive and You are Dead: a Journey into the Life of Philip K. Dick' for me. "He dies." she said, as she noticed me picking it off the shelf.

I understand and sympathise with the economics of e-zines, but there is something very personal about receiving something in the post, because the editor knows you and thinks you may enjoy their fanzine and want to contribute something in return. Maybe, in this eclectic and open electronic age where every seems prepared to hang their (and other people's) washing out in public on FaceBook and MySpace, this sounds old fashioned and a bit elitist, but sometimes e-fandom feels like doing private fanac in a department store window. It depends I suppose, on just how many non-fans browse sites like Bruce Burns' efanazines.com. I think my problem is not having time to go looking. As a programmer, I stare at a computer screen all day, so I don't touch my home PC until the weekend (and sometimes not then). I am astonished at people like Niall Harrison, who appears to be able to read everything on the web, and write half of it.

One sheet or two? I was always told it was three: "One up, one down, and one for a polish".

Until I saw the responses in the letterscol of QQ7, I hadn't realised just how passionate fans could be about an issue like toilet paper. Just goes to show. While not as squeamish about the inevitable after effects of a good curry, nor needing industrial quantities of the stuff as John Nielsen Hall feels he needs, I do recognise Tim Marion's problem long fingernails poking through a measly couple of sheets. Maybe I'd be better to trim the fingernails (though I use the index one as a plectrum), or change hands.

Okay, TiMarion, that was your cue. Put those nail-trimmers down and let's have your thots:

TIM MARION: What makes any fanzine of interest to me, besides the art, is what the editor has to say. If the editor doesn't have much to say, then I find the fanzine of little interest.

What is of secondary interest to me in any fanzine is the lettercolumn, as there I usually get to see the exchange of ideas between the editor and the readers of the publication. I really admired the tight way you edited this letter column -- all the letters seemed to almost seamlessly blend into one another. I haven't seen letter column editing that fine since Linda Bushyager. Or, well, maybe myself. Surely you've noticed that my zines have a bit of a Linda Bushyager influence (or try to, anyway).

And, like myself, I notice that you like to edit the letters down to the bare nubbins, both to save on space and to retain the topics that are of the most interest. I can very much appreciate your edits on my past letters. As for what you edited out in my most recent letter, I actually thought that it might be of interest to not only you, but your readers as well that we (that is, you and I) had/have so much in common with our mingled disdain (okay, hatred) and admiration for our fathers and for almost exactly the same reasons! I thought that was somewhat remarkable, I guess -- which is why I remarked on it. It's up to you to decide what is too personal (of what is written by others) and what is not relevant to your fanzine, but I must confess I receive a cold, empty feeling when I "share" like that and you can't even evince via email similar surprise over our similarities.

As for the art, your covers and interiors are some of the best around.

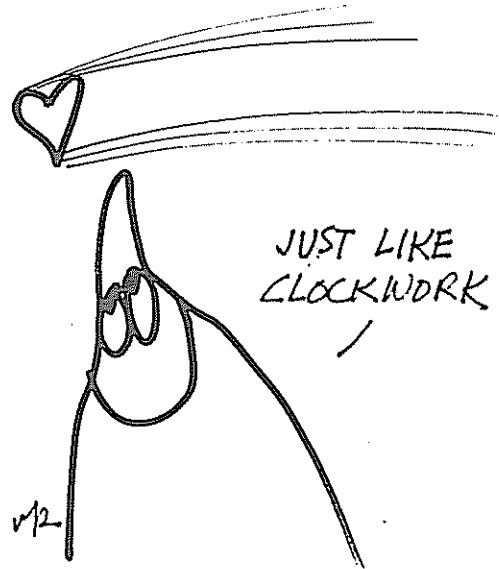
Of the letters, I found Fred Lerner's to be of the most interest, as he was probably the one who spoke most for me as well. He claims that he might not enjoy a Corflu because he enjoys all the other things, besides fanzine programming, that make up the major conventions. Your reply is amusing when you say, "You either Get It, or you don't." I'm sure that Fred really does Get It when he considers that, although he may have spent considerable time in the fan lounges or fanzine rooms at Worldcons, he still has not met all the fans attending the convention that he wanted to see, which (as I'm sure Fred knows) was almost the entire reason for starting the Corflus. (I know that despite occasionally hanging out at fan rooms at Worldcons in 1974, 1976, 1977, 1980 and 2000 that I have never met Fred

Lerner.) I suppose it might actually be a Good Thing if both Fred Lerner and I were to attend at least one Corflu, but I know in my case I have almost completely lost interest in traveling and conventions (and maybe even fandom as well). I'm glad you went into more detail answering Fred about Corflu, rather than just leaving it with that original remark quoted above, which might have seemed too dismissive.

Good heavens. My aim with QQ is to evince a warm and cost feeling, not a cold and empty one. I'm sorry to have to edit the letters down as far as I do - sometimes I think the ideal letter column is one like Ken Cheslin used to have, where he just photocopied the letters themselves, and it would certainly make for less work - but you buggers will keep sending me huge letters and unless I turn QQ into a letterzine outright there's no way I can not edit down letters. I try to leave more than just 'bare nubbins' - the lettercolumn this time is in double figures and is certainly the largest item in the zine. If a bit gets edited out it won't necessarily be for being "too personal", that's for sure.

And no, I don't acknowledge every loc by email. I probably ought to, but I suck, ok?

Your advice to Fred Lerner is noteworthy for how many other people think the same. Frex -



CURT PHILIPS: Thanks for Quasiquote 7. As unlikely as it seems (to me, anyway...) this is the first fanzine to ever make me go downstairs to the room where I keep my SF magazine collection to look up a particular story. It was your mention of Damon Knight's "Thing of Beauty" in the Sept. 1958 GALAXY that did it, and I don't think I'd ever read that story before. It *is* a good one, though I wouldn't call it a lost classic. But Knight was such a good writer that even his lesser work stands a little taller than that of most other writers. He had a particular knack for conveying tone and depth in his prose that seems effortless when he does it, but when you try to figure out just exactly *how* he did it, it's like - well - like trying to operate a machine whose instructions are printed in Swedish when you read only English. Lots of head-scratching involved.

I quite enjoyed Scoutmaster Langford's instructions on the new merit badge and can smugly report that I can pass all 12 requirements rather handily with the possible exception of # 12. Plunging All Fandom Into War with only a single match and 1 oz or less of kindling is easy. All I'd have to do is set fire to any fanzine that Greg Pickersgill doesn't have a copy of and mail him the ashes. The only thing keeping Fandom quiet at this very moment is my complete failure at finding such a zine. I wonder if, instead of starting up a Love Camp in the Ozarks I could just agree to host a Corflu in the Ozarks? Or is that redundant?

You and Jim Linwood had me gnashing and gnarling with envy at your description of "Books, Bits, and Bobs" with those old copies of AUTHENTIC SF. Brit SF mags are pretty thin on the ground over here and they are currently my primary collecting interest. I have a particular weakness for AUTHENTIC. I only have 10 of the 85 issues but it's a beautiful little magazine, isn't it? Someday I'll have to jump on a tramp steamer and smuggle myself into England just to scour the land for SF magazines. And, you know, visit some fans while I'm there, I guess...

A good lettercol with a surprising ammount of interest in toilet paper. I missed QQ6 and so didn't read Erika Lacey's article that seems to have inspired the discussion, but it must have been a pip. I recently retired from 19 years as an American Civil War reenactor and at my final campfire I was asked by the assembly to sum up all the wisdom I'd gathered from 19 years in the hobby. My reply; "never, ever go reenacting without a supply of toilet paper in your haversack. Ignore my warning at your peril!" It was hard-earned knowledge and I was glad to share it with the younger folk in that hobby. I always

share my hard-earned knowledge, but I hoard my emergency toilet paper with fanatical determination. It would only take being caught out in a thousand acre wilderness in a Civil War uniform in below zero weather with no toilet paper to turn even the most charitable of souls into a hardened miser. I know whereof I speak...

I was particularly interested in Fred Lerner's impression of Corflu as being "...a small group of people trying too hard to maintain an artificial continuity with the Fandom that existed when we first involved ourselves with the microcosm." At the time that I'm writing this - December, 2008 - I've not yet attended a Corflu, but thanks to the generosity of the "Corflu 50" I will attend my first one in Seattle this coming March and though I've been involved in Fandom in small ways since the mid-70's I've not been able to shake off the nagging feeling that I'll step off the plane in Seattle and will somehow immediately start convincing fans that they made a horrible mistake in selecting me for the Corflu 50 Fan Fund. I suppose that the anxiety is directly linked to the question of fannish connection that Fred alludes to above. And I suspect that it's a matter that every fan must deal with at some time (though obviously in a great many different ways). Fandom is an entity that exists Out There in the conceptual world we fans all inhabit. Everyone reading this is a part of it, yet we all have to Connect to it in some way and at some time to become a part of it, yet Fandom *is* us. Us, and all the fans that have gone on before us like Willis, Tucker, Hoffman, Warner, Shaw, Ackerman, and on and on. And, I must point out that Fandom is also less famous fans like Kent Moomaw, Clair T. Beck, the kids who joined the International Science Correspondance Club, those unknown fans who showed up for the convention in Leeds in 1937 and disappeared soon afterwards, and so many, many more. And I would also firecely argue that Fandom is also a lot of neos who none of us know yet because they haven't discovered Fandom yet. But they will someday, and they'll make their mark. Someday, 30 or 40 years from now - if I should live that long - I'll meet some young fan who'll ask me about the old days when fanzines were still *printed* on *paper*, and I'll chuckle and admit that it was once the way all zines were pubbed. And they'll ask me about Tucker and Ackerman and Warner, and I'll tell the stories again. Some cynical fans today may doubt that there will even *be* any new fans 40 years from now, but fans were saying the same thing 40 years ago. Fandom changes as we change, but it carries on.

All that is part of why I love Fandom. I love the absense of any real generation gap in fandom and the fact that any of us can meet for the first time and soon be old friends. I love the people and the traditions and the sheer implausibility of Fandom. It's a hobby that was created whole cloth by introverted teenagers and it should have blazed and died with their youth, but that's the secret of fans; no matter how old we get we never really lose our youth. And we mostly (except for a few cases like Kent Moomaw, perhaps...) never give in to the vastly more practical and far less wonderful world outside of Fandom. Here's one of my very favorite fannish moments, and maybe it's one of your favorites too: A young English fan named Michael Rosenblum is sitting at home one evening in December 1940; a little over a year after the start of WWII. He's writing a fanzine that evening and it's almost the only fannish activity of any consequence that's survived the war in England up to that point. He probably doesn't know it at the time, but he's almost single-handedly keeping fandom in the UK alive during the war. Suddenly there's an air raid warning. The Germans are bombing in his area and everyone must go to shelter. Rosenblum probably did just that, but he took his typer with him and while bombs were literally falling around him he typed in his FUTURIAN WAR DIGEST the most impressive interlineation in all of Fannish history:

"readfuturianwardigesttheonlyfanmagproducedinanairraidharktothosegunsmymy"

I never knew Michael Rosenblum but I'm very proud to be part of the same Fandom that he was. He reminds me that Fandom is as eternal and as inclusive and as wonderful as we all choose to make it. I hesitate to predict that Fandom may turn out to be one of the greatest social creations of humanity, but I wouldn't want to argue that it isn't. And - getting back to Fred's comment - I have to take exception to his suggestion that the connection some of us feel to Fandom is in any way an artificial one. It's real, all right. I may have some anxiety about the contribution that I personally can make at Corflu Zed next March, but I have absolutely no doubt whatsoever that when I walk into that Seattle hotel I will be at home among family. And so would you, Fred - but I think you really know that at heart.

And again:

EARL KEMP: You asked about the cover by Brad Foster. I don't see how there could be any confusion as to what is portrayed. It is clearly a lineup of competitive costumes at an sf con masquerade getting ready to parade before the judging panel. Unfortunately, however, much to the chagrin of all the contestants, each has come dressed as their favorite BNF, direct from Emerald City, the ever-popular Cheryl Morgan. It's as clear as day....

I liked everything in this issue, including the layout, down to the letter column before I started mental feuds with some of the letter-writers. Although I love Art Widner and have for a long, long time, I still find it difficult working my way through his private alphabet.

Hope Leibowitz, however, sent my memory soaring. Her comments about the difficulty of finding suitable toilet paper in Mexico City, following Erika Lacey's letter in a previous issue of QQ. Hope has no idea how lucky she was in finding that toilet paper.

When I first began my rampant world traveling, I had a similar problem, or two or three. Initially I did Mexico by car and at one point I had the conviction that I knew personally more of Mexico, its geography, peoples, indians, culture, architectural ruins, etc., than 90% of all Mexicans who had ever lived. It was my obsession for decades. I would go on multiple-thousand-mile auto trips, up and down and back and forth, crisscrossing the country.

And, without a doubt, the single worst thing I have ever done, and one that should be avoided at all costs, is to be brave enough to even enter a Pemex gasoline station restroom. Beyond description.

Then, I did Europe and Asia and North Africa and South and Central America and damn near everywhere I went, there were two problems: nothing that resembled what I knew as either toilet paper or coffee. (Also the natives including those in London seem to have never heard of deodorant. Theater ushers, waiters, busboys, etc. would make you gag just by moving close to you.)

Consequently, the first lesson I learned was to never go anywhere without at least two boxes of Kleenex in my luggage, and carry a pocketful of them at all times.

I also had much problems with female attendants in men's toilets. The shame and embarrassment of having one of them standing over you, reluctantly handing you one single-ply 4x4 inch scrap of something resembling waxed paper while you're trying to wipe your ass was very difficult to endure.

Hope never had it so good.

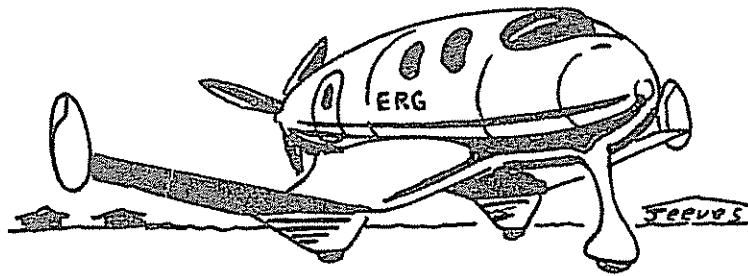
I feel sorry for Fred Lerner because Corflu is where it's at. It resembles the earliest sort of fan gatherings that I ever attended, fledgling Midwestcons, the greatest of the greats, and Corflu is its heir. I agree with everything you said, Sandra, about how good it is. And I thank Fred for his kind words about THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM.

And yet again:

ROBERT LICHTMAN: In your editorial in QQ No.7 you write, "Are Graham Charnock, Graham James, Brian Parker and so on still fans? Or are they just ex-fans who like to keep in touch with old buddies from the past?" To me they're fannish revenants. At least that's the term we used to employ back in the '80s when people would emerge from deep gafia of various lengths and get active again to one extent or another. In fact, I was one of them—disappeared for the most part from 1971 when I did my final fanac before pulling up stakes and moving from San Francisco to rural Tennessee to live on The Farm commune, and then reactivated in 1980 when I went to work for Paul Williams's Entwhistle Books and one day he began receiving Ted and Dan's small frequent *Pong* and passed them along to me for reading. And the rest is a story I've told too many times and I don't want to put your readers to sleep.

But my bottom line here is that there's a very shadowy line between active and inactive, and between different levels and types of fanac—and I'm always inclined in the direction of welcoming everyone, not questioning where they are in relation to that line, and enjoying whatever fanac they might commit.

Dave's list of requirements for the Fanzine Merit Badge made me smile. I'm particularly looking ahead



to *QQ* No. 8's lettercol to see if anyone composed a reply to my inviting them to join FAPA using those terms Dave listed.

In the lettercol Jim Linwood writes, "It was nice to see a posthumous appearance by Ron Bennett and I hope a few more of these gems are lying around." In fact, the next issue of *Trap Door* will contain one. Will have to add that nice Mr. Linwood to my mailing list.

Fred Lerner writes, "I get the sense from the Corflu reports I've read of a small group of people trying too hard to maintain an artificial continuity with the Fandom that existed when we first involved ourselves with the microcosm." That's perhaps partially true, but I reject the "trying too hard" and "artificial continuity." If seeking camaraderie in small groups is a Bad Thing, then we Corflu attendees are all guilty as charged. I agree with your response that "Corflu is, I suspect, one of those peculiar things in fandom which you either Get or you Don't." Fred should try a Corflu next time one comes to the eastern U.S. and see for himself.

You're certainly right in "The Poor Man's Picture Gallery" that "in recent months, fanzine covers have been...kickass." Yes, 2008 was a good year for them—and certainly part of the wonderment is the more or less wholesale move over to color, even on paper fanzines. I wonder if this will continue as harder economic times hit us. I'd love to be able to afford a color cover on *Trap Door*, but it would add at least another \$100 to the cost of doing an issue.

Bruce Townley's article was a good read, but since it was about a novel I've never read (and am unlikely to, even though it sounds pretty interesting (even though the edition he got doesn't have a spaceship on the cover). It seems slightly out of place in *QQ*, though, which I think of as primarily a fannish fanzine. When I was reading it I thought that perhaps it was overflow from an issue of *Sense of Wonder Stories*.

QQ is a fannish fanzine, but if *LIGHTHOUSE*, *WARHOON* and *SKYHOOK* can run SF criticism – or *BANANA WINGS*, to take a more modern shining example – why can't I?

JOSEPH MAJOR: The cover looks like a convention of the robot-men like the humans in Jack Vance's *Planet of Adventure* series who associated with the alien races and imitated them. So these people are wearing robot masks, and robe themselves to hide their pathetic flesh. The hands give them away.

As for Charlie Stross's *Saturn's Children*, I succumbed to false economy and got the SF Book Club edition. After a while, I downloaded the image of the regular US cover from the Web, printed it out (on a color printer of course), and stuck it over the cover.

Given that "Freya" is the origin of the name for Friday, and "Venus" (where the book begins) is the basis of the name for Friday in Latin-based languages (from dies Veneris), yes, I'd say that Stross is conducting a homage to Heinlein. He even managed to have nipples going "Spung!" making sense.

Staying with the subject of dirty pros for a moment...

F. TOWNER VELOCIPEDA: I wonder whether any of your readers have noticed the distinct resemblance between loony Mormon sci-fi writer Orson Scott Card, and loony birdwatching Goodie Bill Oddie. I sincerely hope that no future convention will be misled into inviting one of these gentlemen to be their guest of honour in place of the other.

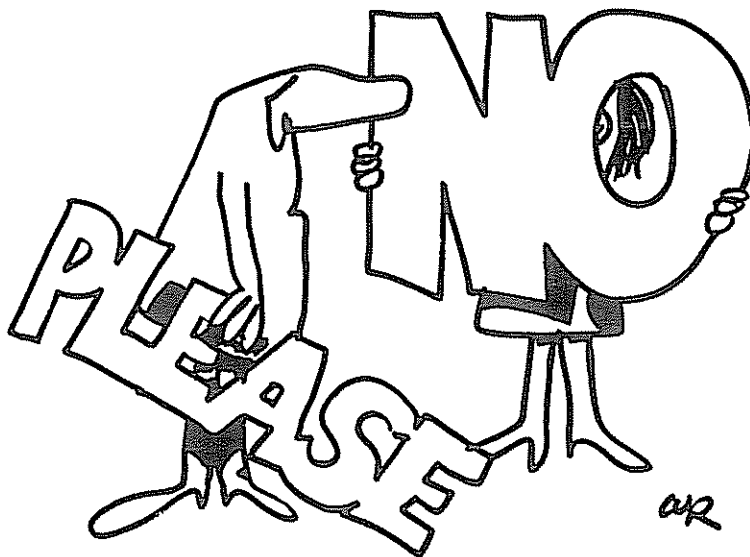


Ender's Game



Twitchee's Game

Are they by any chance related? I think we should be told.



JOHN PURCELL: You'd probably get a kick, Sandra, out of knowing that I almost typed up this loc to print out on a sheet of paper then send it your way via air post. That would be a bit of a vintage touch, wouldn't it? Get a paper zine in the mailbox, and wing a proper letter in return. It is tempting. One of these days I may just do this. Maybe when I get around to loccing the latest Banana Wings, which is currently on my bedtime reading shelf.

Your latest endeavour is quite lovely and was much enjoyed. Dave Langford's "Fanzine Merit Badge" was a bit of fun, especially since my now 13-year old son Daniel spent four years in scouts. The requirements for this Fmz badge are quite stringent, much more so than, say, the knots badge Dan earned, or any of the many other badges and belt loops he acquired during his tenure in Cub and Boy Scouts. A glance through the listing here shows that I would do well on items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and I could probably muddle through #10, too. This is obviously biased toward the UK's version of fan scouting, which leads me to consider what the requirements for an American fan scouting merit badge would be.

Since we American fans tend to be rather lazy sluggards, I would probably keep the aforementioned items, replacing #2's reference text with Harry Warner, Jr.'s fan-historical tomes. Number 12 would be changed to simply "plunge all fandom into Holy War by any means possible." A recommended tactic here would be to rename Arnie Katz's Core Fandom to Metafandom (see Randy Byers' arkle "If You

Meet a Trufan on the Road" in Chunga #15). Item 11 would be tossed right out, as would #5, unless the latter is changed to "Write a KTF fanzine review in the style of Ted White." Such a plan would reduce the required steps to 9, which sounds like a perfectly fannish number to me. If #5 is kept with the suggested change, then it's a nice round number: 10 steps to the American fanzine badge completion.

Face it: we Americans like to change everything British to our way. Keep in mind that this attitude all started with Noah Webster and his Americanized dictionary, so it's not my fault. And speaking of re-spelling perfectly normal words...

I am glad to see a bona fide loccol, especially one that leaves Art Widner's creative spelling alone. You're right: doing so is a definite nod in the direction of our fancestors, especially now that Forry's gone. I think Art may be the last practitioner of Ackermanese. *Sigh* This could be yet another dead language in the offing. Let's hope the linguists in fandom keep the misspellings alive.

Steve Jeffery notes he's been playing guitar since the age of 14. Since you asked, I got my first guitar at the age of 9, and like Steve, whenever I play it nowadays it is to unwind or write something musical down that's been running through my mind. This is always a good thing, especially since my last CAT scan revealed multiple sets of footprints throughout various lobes. The doctors were most concerned about the physical manifestations that might occur from the massive amounts of waffle impressions in my frontal lobe. Their big fear is displaying Langford Syndrome: reduced hearing coupled with a penchant for acquiring shiny things. If so, the prescribed therapy is lots of Newcastle Brown and fresh air. I will, of course, keep you and fandom abreast of developments.

I'm glad you like the 'bona fide loccol', though one wonders what an example of a non-bona fide one would be. And who publishes it.

SKEL: There has been considerable upheaval in my life over the past 30 months resulting in fandom being put pretty much on the back burner. We have been in the new house (new to us...sort of...it was my parents' place, which we bought a few months after the death of my mother, and my first fanzine was pubbed from this very address) for about 18 months, and a couple of fanzines have actually found their way directly here, which must mean some sort of CoA has appeared somewhere, even if just by way of mouth. I'd be obliged though if you could run an official CoA for us. However the couple who bought our old house have been very good and are still dropping round mail from time to time, so all fanzines have made it here one way or another.

Which doesn't necessarily mean they have been read...as I was reminded when I read QUASIQUOTE 7 and thought "What's all this shit about toilet paper?". So I went into the office and rummage through the 'Unread fanzines' shelf until I found QUASIQUOTE 6. That 'Unread Fanzines' have a place of their own is a major step forward. Before that they had a cardboard box, and we have yet to find that box. This has been a culture shock. We were at our previous address for 30+ years and we knew where everything was. Here lots of stuff is still in bags and boxes, and we don't know where anything is.

Part of the problem was a change in my work situation. I had worked for the same company for nearly 25 years, but they had been taken over by a US company which had then gone into their equivalent of administration (Chapter 11) and the problem with exiting from administration was that the UK pension scheme was currently underfunded and would have to go into the Government's new Pension Protection Fund. To cut a long and boring story short I took the opportunity to nail down a greatly reduced pension, plus a significant cash sum, and throw myself onto the 'contracting' market. A giddy decision for a stick-in-the-mud whose fifty-ninth birthday was already pinning him in its headlights. So for the best part of the last couple of years I've been working away from home, getting back only at weekends. It's not a lifestyle conducive to getting much done around the house. So things are still in bags and boxes, and we don't know where stuff is. A couple of months ago we were putting up new curtains in the front bedroom and needed a darning needle to rethread some of the draw strings which had come out. We could not find Cas's sewing box. We have still not found Cas's sewing box. Mind you, given Cas's hatred of sewing she'd be quite content if we never find her sewing box. We had to go next door and borrow a darning needle!

Which brings me back to toilet tissues and Kleenex...in a way. I know our household is probably unique in that it's sewing box is effectively obsolete, but there are two more boxes that every

household used to have that are also now one with Nineveh & Tyre. One was the 'Button Box', which used contain many fascinating things as well as old buttons. You never threw anything away with buttons. You always cut off and retained the buttons. That way, if you ever had something that was missing a button you could always find one that *nearly* matched. It was also where you put anything small that didn't already have a predefined place. As a kid I'd often spend an idle half-hour rummaging through the button box. For instance it was where you'd put badges and old coins that were no longer legal tender...just in case they ever changed their minds. Actually obsolete coins are useful for wedging things. When I was a kid we had a wobbly table, that my parents would 'fix' by pushing a penny or halfpenny into the loose joint...and which I would unfix by filching the coins and taking them down to the sweetshop where instead they 'fixed' my hankering for sweets...at least until they started using the old coins.

The other common box was a 'hankie' box (or if you were rich, a 'handkerchief drawer'). Until she died my mother would never use tissues. Always handkerchiefs. You didn't waste money on stuff you threw away. Labour (for washing) was free. It was you. So any money spent on Kleenex was money effectively thrown away. I guess I am still my mother's son, because even though I buy 'man-size' tissues I invariably rip them in half before I use them, so that every tissue does two nose-blows. And staying with tissue, but moving from front-to-back and top-to-bottom, we return to "What's all this shit about toilet paper?" I have to state up front that I find it odd that both science fiction fanzines and soccer fanzines would be concerned with the same subject. A Manchester United fanzine, RED ISSUE, once polled its readers as to how many pieces of paper it took "...to send a sausage to the seaside...", harping back to the days when sewage was regularly discharged into the sea. The fanzine used to interview Manchester United players and one of the questions they invariably asked was "Scrunch or Fold?" Most players, European sophisticates that they were, would answer "Eh?", but on being told it referred to their toilet paper technique I can reveal to fandom that every single Manchester United player went with the 'fold' technique. I can only applaud as to me scrunch is simply a method of shifting shit from one part of your arse to another.

As to how much tissue one should use, I think the answer is 'However much you feel you need'. I don't think anyone should tell anyone else how to wipe their own arse. So I differ from Erika in that I would consider it bad form not ensuring that guests should have ample toilet tissue for whatever their requirements. If you invite people into your home you must assume they will shit, and you should not seek to cause them any concerns in the matter.

Mind you Erika's distaste for "crumpled up newspaper" reminds me that in my earliest years that was what everybody used. In a Yorkshire mining village there wasn't a lot of demand for 'toilet rolls'. Toilets were at the bottom of the yard, and you used newspaper.

That COA for Skel and Cas: 122 Mile End Lane, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6BY.

	oo
	o
<i>Dave Langford once said, approximately,</i>	o MEARAS: see under SKELTONS o
	o
	oo

I'm happy to prove him right, because...

MIKE MEARA: That Gilliland illo on p1 is fan cartooning as I like to remember it. The expression on the guy's face is perfect: 7% chivalry, 93% lust.

Langford's piece was a joy, with its distinct flavour of "1066 And All That" exam paper. However, I have a problem with question 11. I remembered the L-word as rhyming with that famous American inventor of the synthesiser, and confirmed this by taking the opportunity to listen again to (and digitise) my copy of THE NEW A---- L---- ALBUM. The best revision I could come up with is this:

Scoutmaster West restores your zest:
 There is no need to Goog-
 le it, our kid - send half a quid
 To WIDOWER'S A---- L----

So 9/10 for Dave, which makes him a Thing of Beauty in my book.

On to the letters. The really strange thing for me about the toilet paper article in QQ6 was not the article itself, but the fountain of weirdness it uncorked amongst your respondents. I can understand the paranoia if you're unlucky enough to be stuck in some place where the paper (and even the places to use it in) are hard to find, and we all have the foresight to take our own supply if we have to visit these kinda places, but to see this Yeah Me Too stuff from people in the Enlightened West was a real shock. Good grief, it's pretty simple, guys 'n' gals: you use as much as you need, depending on circumstances, then you stop. Personally, I wouldn't want to stand too close to someone who thought that economy in this department was more important than a shiny sphincter. Actually, I do have my own pet hate in the defecation department: it's when you go somewhere which *seems* to be okay, but it's got narrow-bore plumbing and you have to put the used paper in a separate bin. In *that* climate. Wrrrgggh! (I bet that one's freaked John Nielsen Hall out again - sorry, John.)

Mike has returned to fanac after years of quiescence with such a flurry of activity (see his Novacon report elsewhere) that I'm tempted to nominate him for this year's Best New Fan. Send fanzines to the Mearae too: Mike & Pat Meara, 61 Stoney Lane, Spondon, Derby DE21 7QH.



CHRIS GARCIA: OK, you've done it. You've managed to get the best Brad Foster piece I've ever seen. There was a battle between me and John Purcell to see whose Foster cover would be best, and I had the lead, but then you come along and destroy us all!

Like Dave Locke and Eric Mayer, I'm a guy who likes words on screens instead of letters on dead trees, so I can't wait to see ya pop up on eFanzines. As a guy who is pretty much constantly having stuff show up there (the danger of doing both a more-or-less weekly and a bi-weekly) I'm always glad to have new neighbors. Plus, it makes it easier for me to LoC.

Shep Kirkbride? I must know more. That's one of the finest piece of fan art I've seen in ages! It really struck me, and that's saying something because your issue was full of art from great artists doin' great stuff, and there's that one piece that just blew me away!

Sigh. That piece is another leftover that's been on file for years, originating from Joy Hilbert's art file from Sic Biscuit Disintegram. As far as I know, nobody's heard a peep from Shep K for years. Directory Enquiries still lists him at the same address in Carlisle, and I keep sending him things... Shep, if you're reading this, you and your art are missed, damn it!

And if you don't believe me, ask:

CHUCK CONNOR: Shame on you for all those comments re the electrosizing of Fandom. I have to admit there is more of an attraction to doing something in PDF or HTML (or even CHM) than there is in doing just a laser and scan zine these days. Mostly, I suspect, because there is more potential to be creative and get away from the standard format. And there's no real excuse in 'I can't be doing with all that' because 'all that' is done with the same software you do your zine with. Unless paper-only zines are the new snobbery?

"All that" in my case is a ten year old copy of Word, scissors and a pritt stick. I defy even Tim Berners-Lee to make a PDF or HTML doc out of those.

Actually, I was a little miffed (it's in the wrist action, you know) by Pamela Boal's comments about coming back for only one issue. I came back for three paper and two electronic (two CD versions and two websites - the CDs were fully stocked versions of the websites, rather than just links.) The only reason why I stopped was because I had a bout of HSP, which the local GPs turned into full-blown white cell rage before handing me off to a proper dermatologist who knew WTF was going on. Believe me, there's nothing like having your body chemically burning patches of your own skin off from the inside to make you realise just how sweet life can be.

Then, once that was stable, there was the joy of Mr. Tingley's Ford Escort as the wonker decided to overtake on a blind hill. Nothing quite beats the sight of someone coming at you, head-on, and at ramming speed. And yes, Mr. Tingley really is his name, though no relation to Mr. Tickle...

My point with the snobbery thing is that I've seen recent comment to the effect that "It's not a real fanzine unless it's done on paper." Where were these people when I dumped assorted duplicators, electro-stencillers, ink and stencils into a skip back in 2005. Nostalgia is one thing, but walking the walk rather than just talking the talk is another.

You... dumped...?!?! ARGH. Uncle Chuck, if you weren't pretty much my oldest mate in fandom I'd be heading over to Hatfield right now to give you six of the best with a crank handle for jettisoning all those...

I'd be interested to see chapter and verse for your alleged quote, since where I'm sitting, everyone and their dog seems to be doing PDF zines nowadays, as witness the number of people who wrote to me saying 'I know paper zines are on the way out but can I have one anyway? I prefer them that way, sorry to be a nuisance...'

BTW, in your review of Pete Sullivan's Tucker Hotel, 'katster' is Kat Templeton, a wonderfully new fan (has 'neo' lost its derogatory references these days? I never liked using it, though I think some people are trying to 'claim it back', like Consolidated or The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence have claimed back the N and the Q words respectively) who seems to be effervescently enjoying most things Fannish and recounting some of the joys in her eAPA contributions.)

I've seen her pop up now and again, most recently asking people where they think fandom will be in five years' time. ("Still here," I was tempted to mutter, but before I could, the likes of Dave Locke and Ted White answered her at greater length and deterred me.)

To move on, and Dave's Scouting For Fans opening re "Build a duplicator..." immediately brought back memories of Ken Cheslin and his mechanical artificial arm, which he used to modify with assorted rubber bands, paperclips and sod knows what else. The last time I saw him was at a Mexican in Birmingham, when John Rickett was still alive -- all three of us were in the bar area and a lot of the younger fans were openly staring at the linkage and springs. Real Steampunk engineering. Ken wasn't to everyone's taste, but I enjoyed his company, both personally and in his fanzines.

The rest, sadly, would probably be a little impenetrable to a lot of the newer fans around at the moment. Apart from that, is the BSFA still going? I think I lost sight of it when Jenny Glover was doing Matrix (and I got told off for doing fanzine reviews and slipping in fake ones. I still say Eat My Beanie is a valid and worthwhile fanzine title...)

The BSFA has now converted Matrix into a website and what you get for your subscription money is six copies of VECTOR a year and that's charlotte. Value for money this is not, and even BSFA stalwarts like Greg Pickersgill have been rumbling.

Moving on to The Poor Man's Picture Gallery. T&A has been selling academic textbooks on art for more decades than Pete Weston and Dave Langford put together (lessee, carry the one, add the seven, divide by Pi-cubed to bring it back to a calculable figure....) but the comment that a fanzine is only worth reading if it has a nice cover, is a bit too loaded, even for you, dearheart. I've never been a fan of Rotsler art, in the same way that some of the American fanzine covers are only 'Rib bustingly funny!' if you know the in-joke of the in-joke about the in-joke of the original in-joke in the first place. There was also a trend a while back for Ian Gunn artwork, which I did at least enjoy in the same way I enjoyed seeing the Shep Kirkbride material again (do you have any contact with him these days? I tried the old 42 Green Lane address, but had no reply back, nor the mail returned ? and yes, I think I might still have a sheet of his material with that same illo on it, somewhere.)

However, to say that a zine is only as good as its cover is just being deliberately provocative so go and sit on the Naughty Step for thirty minutes while I have at you re Pete Sullivan again.

Sigh. I neither said nor implied that, but since you're not the only one to get the wrong end of the stick over something in that column... well, go read this issue's instalment, you'll get the picture.

I think you're (deliberately?) missing the point of Tucker Hotel in that it supplies a mere snapshot of a moment in time, and as such - just like Inthebar - not every single word or comment is a scintillating diamond of wit. In fact, to use ITB as a similar stick, I suspect that if you are not part of the crowd then you feel remote and left out of things. But, whereas ITB depends on its exclusivity to some extent, Bill Mills' VFL can only survive if it gets some serious word-spreading. I was involved with some of the early trials, and they were not pretty for non-techies who might have popped across to have a look and wonder what was going on, only to be treated to people running hardware and software tests in a live environment. Now, however, it is up and running, and needs supporting fans.

Whatever, to move on, and I've got to admit I've not read any SF for some time now, so Bruce Townley's comments re Charlie Stross were interesting. Leaving aside the fact that it seems T&A hasn't left the SF cover arena (hey, it's a respectable, mature genre these days, right?) it's nice to know that there might be something worth reading in Saturn's Children (I was unimpressed with the Stross material and collaborations which were up on the Web a little while ago.) As for the Dilbert-esque comment -- I don't think he would take kindly if you showed up with back issues of the UK version of Computer Shopper for which he used to write regular columns for at one time.

Take note, by the way, Chuck, that addressing your emails to humorous variants of the correct one such as 'locsand bagels@ho-street...' will lead to them being dumped in the spam bucket, so I have to trawl through and pull it out smelling of potato peelings and Viagra, and then clean it off before I can print it. Don't do it again.



SHELBY VICK: Brad Foster did a great cover. I can see how it can be confusing. My first thot was that it was a series of volcanoes erupting robot heads. Then I thot mebbe it was robed aliens marching along. Great, in any case.

Enjoyed the letters, lotsa names I knew (one of the advantages of having been in fandom for so long!) but couldn't find a thing to comment on! . . . Well, there was the discussion of For and Against Corflu, and I agree with you – you either get it or you don't. Having held one mineownself, I get it. . . . One thing, tho: Excuse what rich brown referred to as 'a cast-iron sieve of a memory', but – did we meet at Corflu Silver? I kept no notes, drat it, and recall the entire things as a joyous blur. . . .

"The Poor Man's Picture Gallery" (by who? You?) is a great fanzine review, with which I entirely agree – even tho "The Virtual Tucker Hotel" is picked on. Thing is, that comment is correct – if you ain't kept up with the flow, reading about it later ain't that much. I enjoy Virtual Fan Lounge and land there nowandagain. Ain't a lot of us, but we have fun. And the lead-in comment about covers was Right On.

I was indeed at Corflu Silver, and we did indeed exchange greetings. However, it was in the smoking lounge, so you may be forgiven for it slipping your memory.



Gimme that Ol' Time Religion...

STEVE SNEYD: What does the cover represent? Alien costume party where they're playing the decadent posherati of the Guermentes get together in Proust to the best of their understanding in a posthuman era. (Or are they being the Bullingdon Club, to get in a more contemporary reference, eyeing an oik before they pounce?)

N^o ago, stayed a couple weeks in an el cheapo hotel run by folk from Sinope where toilet system was left hand and water, no paper. And nearly as long ago, worked briefly at a bottom feeder (excuse pun) chemical plant where it was squares of newspaper. When a factory inspector was due, bogroll did briefly appear, but with strict instructions from the foreman no one was to use it, and it vanished instantly once the inspection was over. So I find it a bit hard to get worked up on the subject of toilet roll/nose blow paper quality/distinction.

ARAYA: In the GDR the toilet paper was on a roll without perforations. I have read that in many parts of Latin America it's strictly "bring your own toilet paper" and that this even applies to some of the consulates and embassies. At Forres library they now have toilet-roll dispensers that dispense the toilet paper only one sheet at a time. While this saves waste it can, on occasion, be a nuisance. At a caravan site that we stay at regularly I have an official job as Toilet Roll Monitor. This means that if they run out of toilet rolls when the cleaner is not around we change them. For this we get the awning up for free. Great system!

ALEXIS GILLILAND: Thank you for Quasiquote #7, which arrived in good order and in the usual way, but with a comment hook. Not one of your usual run of the mill comment hooks, but a TP comment hook, based on an article in the previous issue which sparked a lot of discussion in the letter column. Back in the late '70s I worked as a spec writer for the Federal Supply Service, and Walt Dietrichs, at the next desk to mine, handled paper products. The crowning achievement of his career was to finally get the government to shift from 8x10.5 inch paper to the industry standard, which was 8.5x11. Back in the day the smaller size had been specified to save money, since a ream of 500 sheets would weigh less and (in those days they bought paper by the pound) therefore cost less. Alas for cheese paring and penny pinching, because of industry consolidation and like that, the frugal government size soon came to cost more because it was special order, but it took twenty years to get rid of it. Walt also handled toilet paper, or more precisely, he was also responsible for the specification on toilet paper, one of the requirements for which was that it should have no holes. For various reasons (see Dilbert for examples) management decided that the procurement process needed to be simplified, so that the lengthy and complicated specification was to be replaced by the sort and simple purchase order. The purchase order for toilet paper, a simple product if ever there was one, came down from on high, and after some argument Walt put it in, and it was duly used to purchase several freight cars full of TP at, to management's self-satisfaction, a substantial saving. There was a delay of about three months as it moved through the system, and then the complaints started pouring in. The new TP was unsatisfactory because it had holes, if you can imagine such a thing! There was congressional interest, a LOT of congressional interest, and within a month the purchase order had been rescinded and the previously abolished spec was reinstated. Which speaks to the priorities of human beings. It took twenty years to effect a change which merely saved the taxpayers a little money, but when it came to getting rid of that nasty deficient TP the government was handing out, it took maybe twenty days, and never mind any alleged savings.

F. TOWNER VELOCIPEDE: I have long regretted the fact that loony pink-light sci-fi writer Philip K. Dick appears to have written no new novels since 1982, and have often wondered why this should be. I have recently come across a possible solution to this puzzle, which is that Mr Dick has now wrought a new career appearing on the Jools Holland show and other such venues playing guitar under the somewhat unlikely pseudonym of Seasick Steve.



Lucky Dog Pet Store



Dog House Music

Amirite eh? I think we should be told.

WAHF: Susan Francis (whose letter on #6 arrived the day #7 was printed), David Redd, Pamela Boal, Taral Wayne, Brad Foster, Rich Lynch, Nic Farey, Lloyd Penney, John Toon (COA: 10 Terris Court, Church Road, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8QA), Milt Stevens, Eric Lindsay, Jack Calvert, Joseph Nicholas, Henry Welch, Kate Yule, Jason Burnett, KRin Pender-Gunn, Bruce Townley, E B Frohvet (who is gafiating), D West ("This issue is an improvement" – over what, Don?), Claire Brialey, Sheryl Birkhead.

LEFTOVERS AND REHEATS

Well, that about wraps it up for Gød another issue.

Before I leave you, though, a few more things.

Firstly, a grovelling apology is due to Dave Langford, whose article as presented in last issue was an earlier draft than the final version, and was printed in that form purely and simply because I am a disorganised idiot. That pretty much blows my chances of ever getting another Langford piece, eh wot? So (she said, doing a Richard Bergeron impression) come with me and click your browser over to Dave's site at <http://www.ansible.co.uk/writing/scouting.html>, print off the correct version of the article, and paste it over the non-preferred version in QQ7. Do this and you will be blessed with good fortune forever, not to mention being one of (probably very few) copies of the issue in a more than perfect state...

Secondly, I spoke last issue of QQ becoming available primarily on efanzines.com, and even went so far as to say that I'd only produce paper copies for those of you who specifically requested them. Well, was that ever a misguided move. Practically every letter I received said something like "Well, we can't stand in the path of progress, but I do kind of like getting paper fanzines and could you spare me one if at all possible?"

So I hereby recant me of my heresy. QQ will remain a paper zine, and available, on paper via the mail, to anyone requesting it as such.

That said, I do still want it to appear on efanzines. I have been shamefully lax in actually doing anything about this, and since (as detailed in my reply to Chuck Connor in the letter column) I don't own a scanner and produce the originals of QQ for copying with no more tools than a laser printer, a copy of Word 97, a pair of scissors, a ruler and a pritt-stick, this makes the production of a PDF a little more bother than it otherwise might be. But I shall find a way around this, and given that I'm about to go to Corflu where Bill Burns, the efanzines supremo, will also be, I shall try to make time there for a little chat on the subject.

Finally, a plug for SILLY ILLOES AGAIN, "the first CD collection of 300 cartoons from the pen of the late Ian Gunn". Ian, as many of you reading will hopefully remember, was an extremely active fan and productive fanartist, not to mention fan fund and Hugo award winner, from the land down under, before his desperately untimely death in 1998. Among a good many other fanzines he produced SILLY ILLOES and SON OF SILLY ILLOES, two highly thought of collections, and from its title I assume this CD is to be seen as the third in the series. I shall certainly be sending off for one. A\$10 in Australia or A\$13 overseas from Ian's widow KRin Pender-Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia, or you can even send payment via Paypal to her at kringunny@hotmail.com – how easy do you want it, damn it?

Th-th-th-that's all, folks. Look for at least one more issue of QQ later this year.

ACTUALLY, I'M A
STAR TREK FAN

"BEAM ME
UP, SPOTTY"?

NO, NO, I'M
SUPPOSED TO
BE MELLOWING



