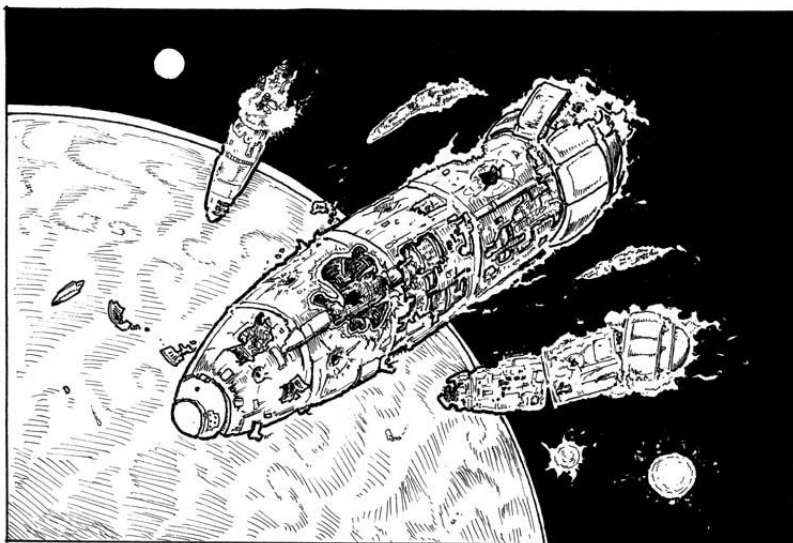


One Swell Foop #6



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Masthead

Yet another aperiodic exercise in recreational insanity from Garth Spencer at 82 East 40th Avenue, Vancouver, BC CANADA V5W 1L4, garthspencer@shaw.ca. Be warned, kids, this is what happens when you don't eat your vegetables.

Art credits

Cover:..... Roy Pounds
p. 3..... Taral Wayne
p. 8..... Steve Stiles
p. 13.....clip art

Missing, Presumed Fled (my Christmas email bounced):

Nathalie Turmeau, Murray Moore, Karen Johnson, Marc Ortlieb, Leigh Edwards, Penneys?, Eric Mayer?, Arnie Katz

New address for my email list:

Earl Kemp – earl@earlkemp.com

John Purcell – j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Henry Welch – knarley@welchcastle.com

Neil Jamieson-Williams – swill@uldunemedia.ca / The best email to use is: swill@uldunemedia.ca / The next best is: neil.jw@uldunemedia.ca. If necessary (that is the other two are bouncing back): neiljw@mcmaster.ca

Lexie Pakulak – lexie.pakulak@hotmail.com

Dwain Kaiser – dgkaiser@hotmail.com

Blithering Nonsense

May the Great Pumpkin be generous to you, and the Daft Lady keep your chaos to a minimum.

This was supposed to go out – with fanzine reviews – in December 2011. So it's going out in February 2012, without. Diagnosis, please?

It's been a quiet year in Couverville. Not a very happy one, for my circle of friends - one of my friends lost her father, and a local SF club has lost at least three elder members that I know of. But most of us continue to be relatively healthy, if not wealthy or wise.

Life continues in its mundane round. The clams are returning north, and the campers have dispersed from their Occupation at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Parliamentarians deserted Parliament and migrated south as they usually do, but then they are seasonal animals. There will be growth in the spring; houses will sprout new ears; young men's minds will once again turn into bad sushi.

After a long period of freelancing part-time I finally got some temp assignments that give me enough to live on; we shall see how long that lasts. Until early February I was working the night shift at a cable company, reducing a backlog of email queries and complaints to a mere week or so of delayed responses. Then they put me on answering live phone calls and after a week I broke down in a weeping fit. Now I'm working part-time again and much happier.

Onward. My New Zealand pro writer friend Lyn McConchie now has a website. (I also have archived some of my amateur writing on a website, but haven't attached a domain name of my own.)

Lyn also wrote in one of her letters about a curious woman who breezily made vast assumptions about lack of copyright in “pool” papers. There seems to be a fair amount of ignorance or misconception circulating about copyright, or other intellectual properties. (This has been on my mind since I’ve been doing freelance secretarial work for an independent trademark agent, who also registers company names and domain names on request.) Bad enough there are so many people playing fast-and-loose with other people’s properties, but *justifying* their ignorance is ... well. Words fail me. The dismaying thing is that ignorance and misconception, and **justifying** them, is such common behaviour.

###

In October I hosted a late Thanksgiving party, largely because I don’t see my friends often enough and I have some space available in the house I rent. My friend Jennifer is a professional cook, but (like her husband Ryan and some of our other friends) she had to work on the Canadian Thanksgiving date itself. It was a bang-up dinner, of course.

Otherwise, I have tended to withdraw from our local fan community. Went to the local convention at the end of September, got squiffed and probably made an ass of myself, but at least I’ve stopped trying to chat up girls half my age. In fact I was only there for evening parties, such as there were, and only bought a day pass.

However, it appears one of my friends honoured me with one of his new fanediting awards during the programming, one of the first of the Canadian fanzine activity awards (that he founded). Got the certificate by mail later.

This sort of captures very briefly a conflict I haven't dealt with ... on the one hand, I have friends, and some of them have a degree of esteem for me. On the other I have this chronic feeling of inadequacy, as if I'm persistently unwanted. So then I isolate myself from future social embarrassments and failures, and fail to learn more social skills, or that indeed I have places to go and people I can see.

This is dumb, and I'm big enough and ugly enough to see it, but it isn't easy to see solutions I can apply. Apparently, persistent depression isn't *about* anything, and trying to find reasons just means you generate reasons for how you feel, using as material anything around you.

I wonder, are some people just **born** to be Eeyores, and other people Tiggers, and other people Bugs Bunnies?

I've been looking at things like Myers-Briggs temperament psychology to try to read people better. Would I do better to see them as *cartoon* characters? (Would it help me get past writers' block?)



Things I Write Online

(My attitude about fandom – to Canadian Conrunners)

It's very simple. I was sold on one kind of fandom. What I got was another.

What I was sold on, what I read about in a library of fanzines, is what used to be called "fannish" fandom - partly a dispersed community of active minds, people who had trouble finding their kind of crowd, and usually found it among science fiction fans; partly, people with a tilted sense of humour, not conventional and not wedded to social norms.

What I found was largely Star Trek fandom, although other fan groups like Star Wars and comics and anime helped turn the fandom experience into a Tower of Babel experience. What I found was *not* a community of active, original minds. What I found were neither fanzine fans nor fannish fans. I tried real hard to contribute what I could to this community, but it wasn't a community, and my contributions were not what they needed or wanted. Nobody's fault, except perhaps mine, and nothing wrong with other people's interests, except they aren't my party.

Lest I sound like someone conned me with a bait-and-switch, I recognize the fact that I keep looking for things in the wrong aisle. I look for the community I learned to call "fandom" - online, at conventions, in the fanzines that keep going from print to electronic media - and keep on not finding it.

In Conrunners, fans are quite open about offering people what they currently want, but where the f**k is what *I* want?

(About religion – to Kent Pollard)

Developing belief system:

1. Life is about manifesting some potential you are born with, not precisely a destiny or a mission but more like developing your talents, accomplishing what you can, becoming all you can be.
2. Any family or society is going to box you in or even destroy your potential, pigeonhole you, demand that you become whatever your culture demands you should be. To some little extent this is inevitable and even necessary. We don't need the potential that sociopaths express, for example.
3. Everywhere you go, whatever society you look at, people have some forms of ritual and worship. Some are pretty crude and some are pretty fulfilling and some are merely institutional; some forms are all three at once, in different times and places. It would appear that this phenomenon is a universal human need.
4. There is no hard evidence about an objective focus of worship. The only sources of information are doctrinal and partisan.
5. Pagan *value* systems appear to have been independent of their systems of *worship*. We seem to be returning to this stance, for practical reasons.
6. The great world religions, at their outset, sort of resemble UFO experiences, in starting out from someone's out-of-context experiences that are hard to credit rationally.
7. Revelations and other out-of-context experiences sound very much like someone being drugged and hypnotized in a room where the only communication comes through a PA system.
8. The Bible and other scriptures read very much like a wrestling match between different impostors claiming to be God and grabbing the microphone away from each other to give completely different indoctrinations.
9. Picking and choosing what to believe in makes a lot of sense, from that perspective.

10. Maybe religions should incorporate and offer worship and ritual services on a subscription basis, like cable companies.

(About Lower Mainland fandom)

Back before the Internet made a hash of several distinctions that applied to hardcopy publications, [BCSFA] had a clearly specified set of membership criteria. In *BCSFAzine* now (I'm looking right at the October issue), there is no mention of membership dues, although Kathleen Moore would be the lady you would talk to. You could ... find her at the November 20th BCSFA meeting, which presumably will be 7 pm that Sunday at Ray Seredin's apartment building ... I see on looking up <http://www.bcsfa.net/join.html> that we have graduated membership rates, the least of which is \$15 for a year's email subscription.

I [have] word from Greg Slade that he no longer masterminds the BIFF gathering, and when I looked up the BIFF website, saw that they've gone to monthly meetings, the next of which is November 4th, not this Friday. ...

There was a gentleman named Steve Kawamoto - I believe it was he, rather than Ken Wong - who made it his mission to contact other fan groups, ... and to list their upcoming events for the edification of all and sundry. I'm trying to remember the last time he broadcast such a list by email. That might have been as much as six months ago or more. Then again, it's been at least that long since I or Steve Forty did a members' handbook.

...

One of the issues I haven't broached is the fact that several different hobby groups are using the same name, "fandom", and I'm beginning to wonder if they have enough in common to do so,

albeit they keep showing up at many of the same events. I bring this up because when you meet BCSFAns and go to their events, you may wonder what's different than you expected, from a background in Transformers fandom.

I have had a similar experience, if for chronological rather than varietal reasons.

Perhaps another way to get at this is to talk about CanadianConrunners, an email discussion group I'm on. Periodically I receive a series of emails from this discussion group, talking about the expectations people bring to SF conventions; ... a raft of emails came in about consuites, and green rooms, especially if the senders came from mediafandom or filking backgrounds. I had the clear impression that some people resist examining their assumptions and questioning their previous experience, and often use the word "should" in judgement of the convention practices they found. I also got the impression that there are people who resist learning something, or broadening their perspective, or realizing they just emerged from a sheltered environment with limited information.

I haven't yet used the plain Anglo-Saxon translation for the ailment I discovered, *inversio craniorectalis*, but oh I am tempted.

If this sounds like I am prone to the sin of pride, or intellectual contempt, you're right. For whatever reason I came into fandom with the baggage that everyone *else* should also have at least some post-secondary education, and treat any SF or fantasy as an opportunity for reasoned speculation, and get more brilliant and creative the drunker they got. This is not quite the gang I entered. Also I expected a hobby group to display some of the elements of an alternative community, frankly, which expectation looks more and more strange the longer I look at it. As a matter of honesty I should advise you that I have not overly impressed members of

BCSFA, regardless of several works or claims to fame I have, and the other fan groups here don't know me.

You may find that you bring expectations into fandom yourself, and you may find that they don't match the fandom you find, and then you may or may not start examining your assumptions critically.

All of which is to say that BCSFA and its fellow travellers in the Lower Mainland may be just before a great transformation, if past history is any guide. Conceivably the transformation has already happened - a breakdown of the illusion of a social consensus, the loss of common interests, points of reference, and definitions of terms.

In this respect, is fandom a vague parallel to our society at large? I rather think so, and that gives me the willies. I feel a bit like one of the minor Hebrew prophets sometimes, foreseeing how my society is about to destroy itself heedlessly, and unable to point it out effectively.

Then I have another drink and get off my high horse.

I admire the fact that, despite everything, you still maintain that calculated air of forced gaiety.



Letters

Taral Wayne (taral@teksavvy.com, Oct. 4, 2011)

(on bespoke art)

Whenever I'm asked this question, I invariably answer that it's a bad idea. If I want to write a piece about rock bands I like, how many bones I've broken or memorable Halloweens, and you've set a theme on "taboos in modern, everyday life we don't see" -- which, I may add, seems to be a very Garth Spencery kind of topic -- they all you do is rule out a contribution from me. Like most fans, I don't write to order.

Still, it's your zine and you can no doubt find enough material for it even if you have asked everyone to write about "miscommunication in the digital media" or whatever.

I'm in the throes of a number of things at the moment -- a worldcon report, an article composed of a number of short subjects, Graeme's "Faned" certificate and other art I need to finish. Some idiot wants a Dr. Who that looks like a kangaroo -- I suppose he thought of me because I do "furry" art. Problem is, I don't do Dr. Who art... That's what Google Images are for, though, I suppose.

Jinnie Cracknell [cyberdestiny_40@hotmail.com], October 8, 2011

Just wanted to start by saying that I loved "*One Swell Foop 5*". I've discovered that I like my fanzines on the less-serious end of the spectrum. I like your thoughts about cats and gravity, it would explain why cats protest so much when moved off a lap or a sofa. About green rooms (mentioned in Lloyd Penney's loc) - the green room at Novacon is not a room but a person, my good friend and former housemate Steve Jones (not to be confused with TV presenter Steve Jones or editor Stephen Jones) who wears a green

waistcoat and buys the drinks for everyone who is on a panel. One drink per panelist per panel I believe.) I liked the piece on language, as I've just today caught up with the first two episodes of "Fry's Planet Word" which is a series in which Stephen Fry looks at lots of aspects of language including genetics, disappearing languages, how we develop language, how language changes and evolves and much more. A big fear of mine is that I will phrase something badly in written text and upset somebody somewhere, or be accused of an -ism etc. - which I usually refer to as "being afraid of Being Wrong on the Internet". This causes me to draft Live Journal posts and Tweets and blog comments in my head that never see the light of day. I am trying to tackle this fear, which is why I am writing a fanzine and trying to write locs to other zines. (Another reason is that by the time I get to a computer or my Blackberry I've forgotten the blog post, comment, tweet etc that I mean to send, which is why I think why can't I just have a computer in my head like in Peter F Hamilton's or Ian M Banks' futures so I can send them as I think of them?)

All the best,

Jinnie the Perky Goth, editor "*Quantum B*llocks*"

((We like *happy perky Goths*. -GS))

*Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, M9C 2B2,
penneys@allstream.net, October 22, 2011*

Many thanks for *One Swell Foop* 5...I look at the news, and see that not eating our vegetables is the least of our worries. We can look at US (and ours, for that matter) politics, and say that what we get for not taking our meds.

I am glad you're keeping a condensed place to put all the Canadian fan histories you've got, and I hope that others will care about them. I think about providing for my remaining years, too, and I think I work damned hard at trying to do it, but I am still failing at it. The EI runs out real soon now...

The old line of 'God exists, but has moved on to a more ambitious project' comes to mind regularly when I see the news. But then, we've been saying and thinking that for generations, and we fail to be accountable for our actions, with too many saying that God will provide, with some irrational explanation when He doesn't. Our collective insanities will bring about the end of our civilization; we are finding our how thin that veneer of civilization truly is. A Rational Secular Humanist Church would be a good thing, but someone would fail to understand it, and denounce it as a terrorist front, or something.

Tonight on the news, I saw a witless member of our government announcing how good Canada would look if we donated lots of money to Libya, now Gadhafi-less as of a few days ago, and taught them all about free elections and democracy. As good as foreign aid is in helping the lives of millions elsewhere, I can't help but feel that we could use some government aid ourselves. We donate money to help create jobs elsewhere, but the government generally fails to help with job creation at home. Maybe I should get myself a foreign address, and then apply for foreign aid.

Liberal governments see the country benefit through the support of the population, which then helps businesses. Conservative governments see the country benefit through the support of the businesses, which then helps the population. At least, I figure that's the way it's supposed to work. As we go from one government to another, the population and business both benefit, like climbing up rungs of a ladder, left foot and then right foot.

When business gets the support of the government, and then won't allow the trickle-down to the population, and bank what money they get, we get situations like what we have today. When the population gets the support, they bank some money, but they have to buy food and consumer items, so business gets some trickle-down. That's why I would prefer a liberal government. The current government doesn't care for the population, and they show that regularly.

The letter column...religious belief is all well and fine, but you still have a rational world to deal with. Combining the two will almost always mean that your surroundings will not be disposed to deal rationally with you. Just a warning. Yes, Brad Foster used to put out little quarter-sized minizines called Goodies, with little nekkid wimmen in them. There were times I'd find them in the dealers' room, what convention, I'm not saying.

Tara's article on the post office does remind me that I have seen articles that show that the USPS is near insolvency, and will cease operations without a huge infusion of cash, which is something the US government has run fresh out of. I have not found daytime work since the contract at the Ontario Association of Architects ended, but I have an interview with another agency this coming week, and that might help get me something. Also, fingers crossed for the possibility that I might return to the Law Society of Upper Canada.

I did find out where the word 'cosplay' came from...a Japanese reporter going to the 1984 Worldcon in Los Angeles coined the term as a short form for 'costume play', describing some fans taking the hall costume to a slightly higher level, with a short skirt or just 'patrol operations' in the convention hallways. He wrote about what he saw, used the term, and it stuck, and has been used ever since.

Yes, I didn't take those articles as parody...they were sublime, and I sometimes miss those gentle nuances. I blame fatigue and the hour I am writing this. Gotta blame something...

Magic



Some days I take up weird-ass interests like reading up on ritual magic, Wicca, and Asatru. I did this twenty or thirty years ago, and have taken it up again. I suspect I've discovered an irregular rhythm in publishing fashions, as if somebody hauls out the "esoteric" card and promotes the hell out of the genre about once a generation. Since chaos theory became a buzzword, there has been a fashion for "chaos magic". Other fashions are emerging, such as modern urban magic with entirely contemporary archetypes, and little or no relation to medieval Latin and Hebrew sources.

Last time I came out a good deal more sceptical than when I went in; what passes for occult lore looks a hell of a lot like wishful thinking, or the alleged science in hack science fiction by a writer who sits in an apartment making it all up.

A central point, which *nobody* seems to be honest and direct about, is the axiom that there can be a connection between rituals or spells in one time or place, and inexplicable events in another setting, with no detectable medium or phenomenon in between them. This parallels the central point in most methods of

divination – the axiom that there can be some unexplained connection between arbitrary symbols and layouts, and personal events, or personal character, or national history.

Maybe the real issue is deeper: that people who convince themselves they can perform divinations or ritual magic are supposed to have an effect on others, on physical processes, on probability itself, regardless of the symbolic system they're using.

It is interesting to see signs that some modern-day people are essentially convincing themselves this is the case, and allegedly they're taking experimental notes as they practice various forms of magic.

At this point you might ask yourself whether the whole idea of magic weirds out mundanes because it suggests reality is plastic and changeable, in ways that we want it to be stable. Based on people I have observed, it seems that humans will sacrifice a lot – our own welfare, even our own survival – to maintain a version of reality, or at least a belief system.

It would be entirely sufficient for “magic” to repulse people simply as a dangerous mind-game, entirely apart from invoking the horror-movie stereotype of a sorcerer addicted in the end to power for its own sake.

Maybe all the field needs is a professional licensing and monitoring association.