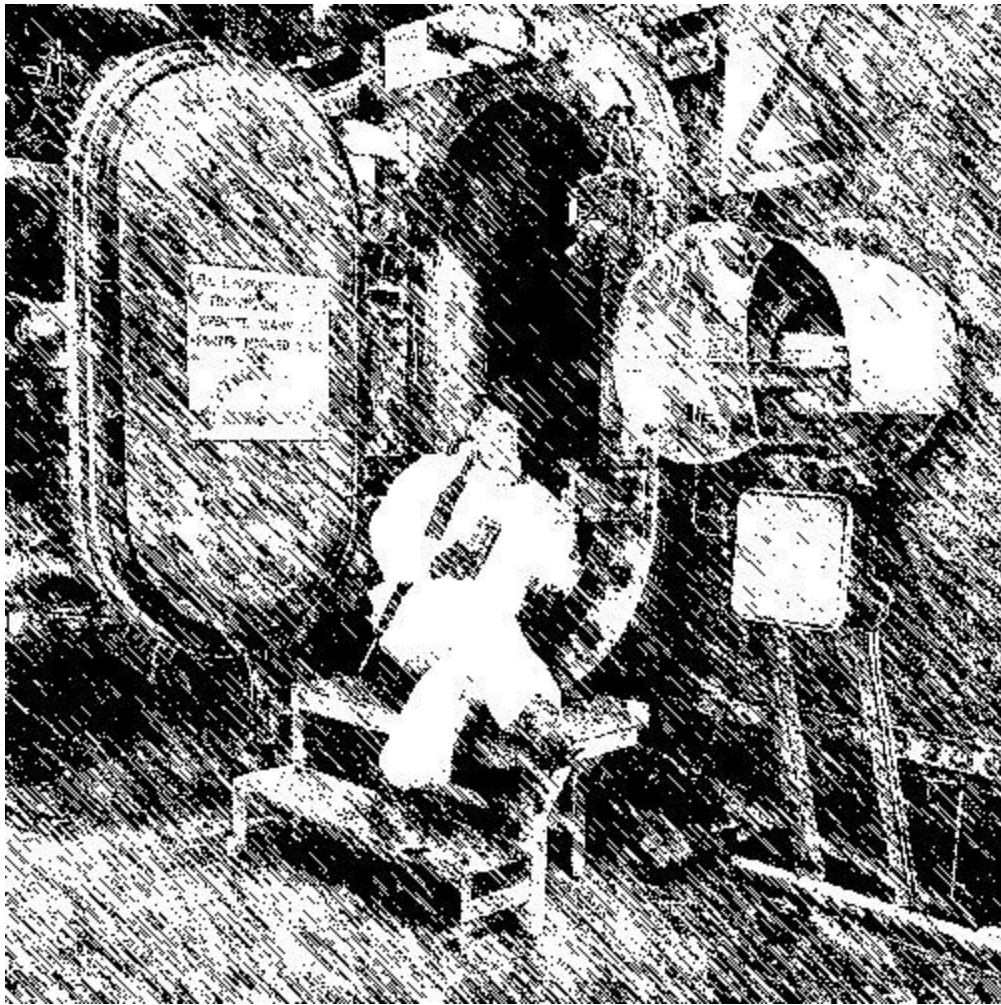


SWIRE

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#12

Annual – February 2012

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Swill @ 30 Annual

Issue #12 February 2012

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Editorial: Goose-Stepping Toward Tomorrow

Neil Jamieson-Williams

What I am about to discuss is not new – it has been said before and has probably been stated better than I am about to do so here. Nevertheless, onward... There is an unfortunate and strong authoritarian undercurrent within science fiction.

This was well illustrated in Norman Spinrad's 1972 novel, The Iron Dream. In an alternate timeline Adolph Hitler immigrated to America after the Great War (there is no WWII in this timeline), and used his modest artistic skills to become first a pulp-science fiction illustrator and later a successful science fiction writer and editor. Hitler would die from a cerebral haemorrhage caused by tertiary syphilis in 1953, shortly after writing his most popular novel, Lord of the Swastika. The majority of The Iron Dream is Hitler's Lord of the Swastika, post-apocalypse action tale in a lurid 1940's pulp style. Spinrad's conceit is that the reader is drawn into the storyline and ends up rooting for the protagonist, all the while, in the background is the nagging knowledge from the reader's mind reminding them that what they are cheering on is Nazism.

Ursula K. LeGuin in her 1975 essay "American SF and the Other" also touches on this theme as she questions the preference for, "authoritarianism, the domination of ignorant masses by a powerful elite... democracy is quite forgotten. Military virtues are taken as ethical ones... It is a perfect baboon patriarchy..." Far from science fiction being a literature of ideas LeGuin states that the preference for authoritarian social organisation is, "brainless regressivism." And I agree, the passion for authoritarianism in SF is a retreat to pre-human primate social organisation.

In my 1984 fanzine, Daughter of Swill, Mother of Scum¹ I devoted the first issue to this subject of authoritarianism and the fascination that science fiction has for the fascist ethic. As I have no copies of this issue², I can only go by recollection; I rehash LeGuin and Spinrad though I don't think that I offered any new ideas to the discussion.

So, if these issues have been raised in the past why am I harping about them now? Because, these issues not only remain, they have become worse over time.

¹ There were three issues of this fanzine, each issue was an essay-like rant on a particular topic.

² Or any of the three issues. Again, a request to fans in British Columbia who may have copies of this zine in their collections; please scan a copy and email it to me.

Science fiction continues to have a love for authoritarianism, whether it is based upon heredity (monarchy/genetic castes), gender (patriarchy/matriarchy), the State (communism/fascism), the military (dictatorship), or capital (corporate oligarchy).³ It is not uncommon for there to be a blend between different authoritarian foundations, but in the end, the result is still authoritarian. An additional theme and favourite is paternalism – this appears to be very common in American science fiction. The supreme leader is simultaneously a cuddly grandfather figure and absolute dictator. Authoritarianism is seen as normative and futuristic. And whatever evil authoritarian regime it is that the bad guys rule, upon close examination, the good guys (all those captains, majors, commanders, resistance leaders, etc.) are just as authoritarian and anti-democratic – the good guys just don't eat kittens and babies for breakfast. True, the good guy protagonist is usually a maverick, someone who doesn't always follow the rules, who isn't "by the book"; this supposedly makes them individualistic and democratic. Really? It does single them out as being individualistic, but it doesn't necessarily make them democratic; even though they are violating the prime directives of their superiors, the protagonist still expects their subordinates to follow the orders that they give them without question. This does not bring to mind a person who is democratic; it brings to mind a person who is so individualistic that they believe that the rules do not apply to them, that they are above the law – this is the viewpoint common with many an absolute monarch.

Among all these heroes and leaders and so on... Where are the people? LeGuin asks the same question back in 1975, "Are they ever *persons*, in SF? No... The people, in SF, are not people. They are masses, existing for one purpose: to be led by their superiors." It is always about the leaders and the leaders have little taste for actual democracy. Where are the elected parliaments and assemblies?

When democracy does appear in science fiction, it tends to take one of two forms, neither of which are really positive. One form of democratic organisation that is common in SF is the "council", a form that is only in part democratic. These councils tend to be populated by high status individuals who act as representatives (we usually are not told how one becomes a member of the council, perhaps they are voted in or perhaps not). Yes, these organisations do run quasi-democratically, they have votes on issues, much the same as any corporate board of directors does, but are they actually representative. How representative is a council of 15, even if the members are elected by the populace, for a planetary population of 4 billion? I would say, not very. When actual assemblies do appear they are farcical parodies of the UN General Assembly; this is to demonstrate that the democratic institutions have been corrupted by politicians and outside groups, which is why we need the strong leadership of the protagonist to clean things up (Adolph Hitler had a similar view on elected parliaments and assemblies). Although science fiction, in particular American science fiction, pays lip service (akin to ritual religious observance) to democracy, there is a strong distrust for democracy in science fiction.

³ A corporation is not a democratic organisation; it has a one-way flow of decision-making, from the top down.

The thing is, humans actually have a strong preference for democracy. For the vast majority of our tenure on this planet we have lived within democratic social structures; this only began to change with the development of food production, aka agriculture. Agriculture first emerged around 10,000 years ago and for the first several thousand years it was small scale – often referred to as garden-plot agriculture or horticulture – and was not destructive to democratic social structures. It did damage human democracy, though. Food production resulted in sedentary living (the first villages/towns), that resulted in food surpluses, that would produce inequality, that would lead to forms of local governance other than direct democracy. In some cultures, authoritarian rule would emerge at this time; but in most, some form of democracy or quasi-democracy would remain.

Around 7,000 the first shifts began that, for some cultures, moved them from horticulture to intensive agriculture – with an emphasis on cereal grains. Those cultures that made the switch to intensive agriculture also made the switch from some form of democratic social organisation to authoritarianism. That is because under intensive agriculture, some powerful group always sets themselves up as being the nobility who own all the land by divine right; everybody else, that is the bulk of the population, are commoners and the commoners who are at the lowest rank in the social hierarchy, again this is the majority of the population, are now serfs or slaves who work the land for the nobles. The development and spread of intensive agriculture coincides with what is often termed, the rise of civilisation; indeed, it was within these cultures that innovations such as forging bronze, writing, and the classical developments in engineering and architecture appear.

While the norm for these civilisations was authoritarianism⁴, some democratic practice was tolerated. Not much, but some. Usually this would be permitted at the local level where the free men, not the serfs or villains⁵, could elect their own town leaders. There were two reasons why authoritarian leaders would allow this. The first being that from the perception of the elite, whatever the free commoners did in their towns was of little or no importance. Second, it was more efficient; it saved the elite from having to expend resources as well as the bother of governing these towns. As we entered the Modern period⁶, authoritarian leaders do attempt to roll the clock back on these freedoms, due to excesses of liberty busting out all over Europe. Excesses such as all that free thought breaking out all over the place due to all those books to read due to the moveable type printing press... Especially when this free thinking results in dissent and chaos in the form of the Protestant Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the Wars

⁴ Okay, the Roman Republic is an exception, in part. During the Republic there were elected assemblies and the senate, but the representation was somewhat gerrymandered so that patricians (the Roman elite) always would have a controlling block. The Republic was quasi-democratic, in my opinion.

⁵ Inhabitant of a village; a small community on a noble's lands where the commoners bound to that particular noble would live. Towns on the other hand existed on lands outside of any noble's estate.

⁶ Historians disagree as to when the Modern period begins, but the majority agree that by 1500 CE it has begun.

of Reformation, and the English Civil War. In the aftermath there is the Industrial Evolution⁷, which accelerates the pace of production, and creates the oxymoron of the wealthy commoner – all of which sets the stage for the American and French Revolutions; democracy bursting out all over. The 20th century brought forth new industrial forms of authoritarianism in the form of fascism and communism, though even these totalitarian authoritarian forms of government, had some difficulty removing all democratic elements from society; for example, there were still municipal elections during the Third Reich⁸. Humans like democracy; we choose it readily when it is not a danger to do so and still tend to choose it when it is dangerous to make that choice.

Of course, since the end of the Cold War, authoritarianism has been on the rise within the Western democracies. Civil liberties have been eroded (for our own safety), social programmes gutted, the average wage continues to shrink, the middle class is in decline, while our politicians vote themselves substantial pay increases, and our corporate CEOs hire analysts to recommend that annual compensation is inadequate and must be increased, the right to strike and collective bargaining is being curtailed, and the financial sector was permitted (due to the relaxing of government regulation) to create the worst recession since the Great Depression and handed the taxpayer, i.e. the average citizen the bill. The current trends point toward a more authoritarian future, everywhere. Perhaps, science fiction is providing foresight with its passion for authoritarianism; is this an example of an accurate prediction by SF authors? It would be nice if this were the case; unfortunately, I think that LeGuin had it right when she said that the authoritarian bent in science fiction has less to do with visions of the future and more an “escape into the phoney...” An unreal world where leaders are always right, capitalism the only true economic system, and where the Galactic Fleet and the Galactic Chamber of Commerce rule the human dominated galaxy, and heroes never have to pay any taxes.

Unfortunately, if the present trends continue the phoney may become reality; the future is fascist.

⁷ The early industrial period was powered by wind and water and thus factories were small-scale cottage industries. This part of the industrial period was more an evolution than a revolution; once the steam engine had been perfected to operate the factory machinery it became an Industrial Revolution.

⁸ Of course candidates had to be politically acceptable (not socialist or communist) and racially acceptable (not Jewish, Slavic, Celtic, etc.) and be approved by the Interior Ministry – but, there were municipal elections; the only elections permitted under the Nazis.

Thrashing Truten: Archival Swill

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Just a few notes on the surviving Swill archive...

Archive Inventory:



Swill #1

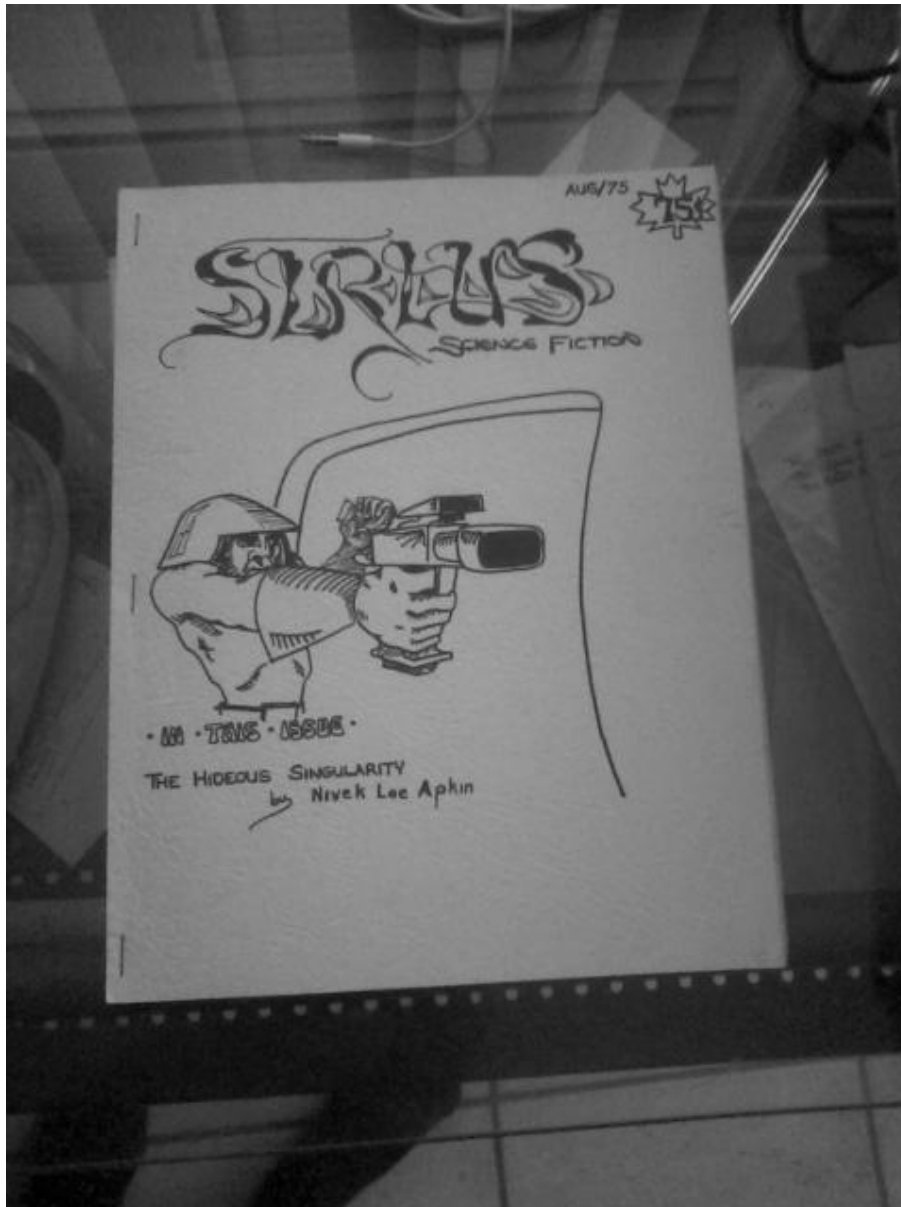
- Mimeograph stencils wrapped in newspaper (Globe and Mail March 28, 1981)
- Remained (and quite smudged) mimeo copies of page 3 as well as about 25 copies of page 6 (the Maplecon Slandersheet)

- 20 copies of the Swill #1 -- at least that is what is written on the paper bag; in actuality there are close to thirty copies. It is also stated on the paper bag that this is the first edition and first print run; that is incorrect it is the second print run.



Swill #2

- Mimeograph stencils wrapped in newspaper (Globe and Mail March 28, 1981)
- 20 copies of the Swill #2 -- at least that is what is written on the paper bag; in actuality there are close to thirty copies. In this case the rest of what is written on the paper bag is correct, it is the first edition and first print run of this issue.



●ther Stuff

- The 1976 issue of Reticulum; reproduced by ditto (spirit duplicator) and quite faded.
- Poem written by Jamieson-Williams; again in ditto and very faded.
- Issue #2 (and final issue) of Sirius Science Fiction, duplicated by ditto and very faded.
- Issue #1 of Sirius Science Fiction, printed via offset and a little yellowed.

Sirius Science Fiction #1 is the only document that could be scanned and converted into a pdf. However, I am not certain that I really want to do this. I have re-read the issue and to be blunt, my content really does suck, end of story. The only excuse (albeit lame) that I can give is that at the time that Sirius #1 was published I was 16 years of age; I would have turned 17 by the time issue #2 was published thus, the wise decision to cease further publication of the fanzine. Reticulum 1976 has no content of mine within it and although it may be possible to scan this as a pdf, I really have no legal rights to do so. The other two documents are far too faded and Sirius #2 is unreadable beyond the cover and table of contents.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings!

...a modest column by Lester Kinsford

Elsewhere *The Swill* has commented on the sequels to Schmitz's *Witches of Karrés*. It is true that I mentioned them to him but there's another point coming too. For the most part, I agree with *The Swill's* criticisms, but it seems to me that they are like launching a torpedo to kill a goldfish, expensive overkill. No one expects that a couple of books written by a various team of authors close to fifty years later will write something that is as good as the kind of original that actually prompts sequels fifty years later. A not too unpleasant experience is the best we hope for. Personally, my biggest problem with the second, non-Lakey book, was the amount of retelling and embellishing events that were barely mentioned in the original. *Witches of Karrés* was an original, and stands pretty unique even in Schmitz work. I don't believe even Schmitz could write an appropriate sequel (though he did try apparently), and I sure don't expect it from a team of Baen writers. However, they *should* get more creative and come up with their own ideas rather than endlessly rehashing someone else's.

Given that Swill has been giving Fuck You to sf and fandom since 1988. And given that punk as I understand it is to do shitkicking to the old and dumb and basically lame. Could *The Swill's* lament that the Karrés sequels don't match his reading of the original be.....antipunk? Waaah, sequels don't bring me back to my golden age of sf waaah waaaaah. Just the sort of pov that would be shitkicked by fuck you fandom all the way to Porlomma.

Ah but there is method to *The Swill's* work. This is a world where we get crappy prequels to entertaining films from olden days and now we are seeing a marketing blizz for the 3d **rerélease** of some crappy prequel to an entertaining film or two (yeah StarWars). Repackage and 'update' something that was good back then, and tell us that **these** are the good times, we're getting good stuff, as good as the originals, go out and consume, yay! We are getting sequels to Karrés and Herbert has taken up dune and is giving us more more more. but somehow these aren't the good times. Shitkicking them is the only answer really.

Yeah so much sf today is overwritten and endlessly elaborates itself to get a ikea-bookshelf-collapsing series out of a trivial event through more detail and pointless events than you can shake a broken ikea bookshelf at. Fuck you! Longing for the good old days of your own golden age and the good stuff from Heinlein and Clark and others? That's lame and should be shitkicked. The present sucks, not for quantity but for quality. Lester is a slow reader and reading

endlessly detailed details about a hero that the author obviously likes way more than Lester does makes Lester put down the book and refer to Lester in the third person.

HOWEVER. Going back to the golden age isn't the answer. I have an ingenious proposal that unfortunately is a little too long to be contained in the miserly column space allocated by *The Swil*

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Classic Butchery

Neil Jamieson-Williams

The original title of this article was “When Some Swine Guts a Thing You Love”, but I decided on this less emotional title instead. That doesn’t mean that there will be no emotion; there will be and most of it in the form of anger. The subject of this article is a classic SF novel, The Witches of Karres written by James H. Schmitz. I do not have a favourite SF novel, I have a small constellation⁹ of favourite novels and The Witches of Karres has been part of that constellation for longer than any of the other members. It is the closest I have to a favourite novel and it is one that I re-read at least once every three years.

Actually, it was Lester Rainsford who first clued me in on it being a novel. I had read the novella version that appeared in the book club edition of Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume 2 but had no idea that it had been expanded into a novel in 1966. It was also Lester who, at SFCOntario 2 last November, suggested that I read the sequels. I had heard of the sequels, I had read the backcover blubs in ChaptersIndigo, and a few professional reviews on the books; all together, this did not inspire me to want to go out and read these books. Since I knew Lester to have a liking for Schmitz’s work, I followed his suggestion and did so. While the act of reading both The Wizard of Karres and The Sorceress of Karres did not require an extended visit to the vomitorium¹⁰, it did have the effect of leaving one with the experience of consuming something that has almost, but not quite seriously, gone off. Hmm... that response is perhaps too cerebral. A more emotional and gut response would be that both sequels are absolute, pure unadulterated, chicken shit – in fact, faecal matter from diseased chickens.

The sad thing is that Schmitz actually did write a sequel himself, probably in the 1970’s, titled “Karres Venture” that was lost in a house move. From there, we have two versions of the story

⁹ Some of the other members of this cohort are: The Stars My Destination, Childhood’s End, A Clockwork Orange, The Left Hand of Darkness, The Shores of Another Sea, The Gods Themselves, The World Menders, Bug Jack Baron, Rendezvous With Rama, The Dispossessed, Neuromancer, The End of the World News, Always Coming Home, A Fire Upon the Deep...

¹⁰ Actually, a vomitorium is a series of entrance/exit passages in a Roman amphitheatre; I am using the term in its popular misconception form as a type of lavatory room used for the sole purpose of throwing up.

regarding the notes for the novel, perhaps both apocryphal. In one version, the notes were lost with the manuscript and in the other the notes survived, but nobody knows what became of them. Nevertheless, Schmitz never got around to re-writing the lost manuscript prior to his death in 1981.

Baen Books currently holds the rights (for those works not in public domain) to publish Schmitz works and Eric Flint has been assigned to edit these. I haven't taken the time to purchase the current Baen editions and then compare them to the earlier editions that I have, except for The Witches of Karres, and then not in a very thorough manner. I did do some comparison between my Ace edition¹¹ from the mid-1970's and the Baen edition; some of the old typos were gone but there are some new typos too. While this does not appear to be the case with the present Baen edition of The Witches of Karres (Flint's editing here is no more than copyediting and doesn't deserve the "edited by" credit on the front cover), I have heard from Schmitz fans that Flint has edited with a heavy hand some of Schmitz's other works. Where I am going here is that one would speculate, with some degree of confidence, that Mr. Flint would – with all this editing – have familiarity with the voice, the atmosphere, and the plot structure of a Schmitz novel. This would be a reasonable and logical assumption. Well, you know what they say about assumptions...

Based upon The Wizard of Karres and The Sorceress of Karres Flint does not have a strong familiarity with the works of James H. Schmitz. Ah, but maybe I am being a little unkind; these sequels are group projects, so other than a little bit of copyediting by Flint, I still have no firm data on how well he has edited other Schmitz material. I can however comment upon how competent Flint and friends are in creating new fiction in a Schmitz universe in a Schmitz style. The short answer; they are bloody fucking incompetent.

Where do I start? Do I begin with voice, or with atmosphere, or with plot? I will begin with voice as the cover blurbs for both sequels crow about how seamlessly F&F (Flint and Fiends) have recreated the writing style of Schmitz. This is complete rubbish. I will agree that the F&F writing collective have manufactured a style that does at times appear to be similar to or to bear a likeness to that of Schmitz, but it is not sustainable. It comes across as somebody pretending to be Schmitz and not doing a very good job of it. At best, they can sort of resemble the writing style of Schmitz, and perhaps they could even sustain this resemblance, if they didn't resort to cheap tricks that immediately disintegrate their construct. Cheap tricks? How about mining the

¹¹ This was easy as I had marked up the old Ace edition noting the typos in it. I did this because back in the late 1990's the book had been out of print for years and I was attempting to buy the publication rights for it from the current rights holder, Baen Books; who, at the time had no intention of selling the rights and no intention of ever publishing the novel again (sort of like a dragon with its hoard of gold).

original for what could be termed “quotable phrases” – phrases usually only used once in the entire novel – that are now rebranded by F&F as catch-phrases and clichés that they pepper throughout the two sequels. Another failure point is in place names. Schmitz place names tend to sound real, and for a good reason; sometimes they are actual real place names and other times Schmitz has anglicised those real place names in his own unique personal way.¹² Now, I have no idea as to what Schmitz would create as a name for a circus planet, should he ever have had the need to create one, but I can tell you that it would be, somehow, based upon a real place name; it would never be a moronic and complete fabrication such as Vaudevillia. The voice created by the F&F writers group project is inauthentic and false. It is as if they weren’t really actually trying. And yet, one would expect that Flint should know better, but there is no evidence of that.

One would also expect Flint, at least, to be familiar with the atmosphere of a Schmitz novel and, in particular, the atmosphere of the Karrés universe. Once again, this expectation is not met by F&F. It is as if the writing collective had not actually read the original novel; one could speculate that F&F were provided with a Coles Notes¹³ plot summary of The Witches of Karrés by editorial and given carte blanche to do whatever they wanted to with the material provided they produce a sequel manuscript in 90 days. It certainly does appear that F&F did not put in a lot of effort into writing their sequels as the atmosphere that Schmitz had created is not only absent, it has been rendered into a comic book greaves.

The atmosphere of Schmitz’s Karrés universe has a mild sense of mystery in a sense of there being the unknown. Much of this sense of the unknown is created through classic Schmitz understatement. Humans have been out among the stars for thousands of years – how many thousands is not stated – long enough that the location of our homeworld is never mentioned and simply referred to as Old Yarth¹⁴. We are informed several things about the past in general; that there are ancient¹⁵ legends of the Great Eastern Wars, that the Far Galactic East is unknown, that the Empire has, in centuries past, been at times larger and at other times smaller than it is today, and that in recent centuries the world of Ulduné had been the centre of a pirate confederacy that challenged even the military might of the Empire. Schmitz doesn’t give actual dates, only vague relative dates which serves to create a setting that contains both the known and unknown, as well as mystery. While the original novel takes place predominantly within the sections of the galaxy inhabited by humans, there is also the implication that the human “sphere of influence” is just

¹² Karrés is an actual village in Austria. Nikeldépain, Emris, Ulduné, and Chaladoor are all the product of minor Schmitz-morphing of the spelling of real place names in the Netherlands, Wales, the Middle East, and Indonesia.

¹³ Those readers from the US will be more familiar with the term CliffsNotes. Coles Notes were first published by the Coles bookchain in Canada in 1948 which licensed the US rights to Cliff Hillegass in 1958.

¹⁴ In indication of linguistic drift over the millennia.

¹⁵ The distant past, minimum 1,500 years ago.

one small part of the galactic whole. Entering into Schmitz's Karrés universe invokes an atmosphere similar to entering into a European inn that has existed continuously, in one form or another, as a hostelry for over a millennium; there is a sense of age and feeling of history about the place.

Of course, all of that atmosphere evaporates before a supernova wavefront when a pack of toad-brained troglodytes – in this case the F&F group project – make one single statement in their sequels; the Empire is a human-centric galactic empire, à la Star Wars. With one simple statement F&F vent much of the atmosphere of the Karrés universe and trivialise it into a cartoon-like tourist attraction or theme park.

Some of the remaining atmosphere is eroded away when, for no purpose, F&F make changes to Karrés universe starship propulsion systems. Schmitz, like many SF authors of his time period assumed that in the future spaceships would be propelled by some form of antigravity or reactionless (or apparently reactionless) space drive; rockets were just the most primitive way to get into space. While some authors gave their drives names (usually after their inventor) and others also provided some sort of explanation as to how the drive works; Schmitz does neither, period. The drives require fuel (unspecified) that supplies them with power (unspecified) so that they can propel the ship at different velocities using different drives. *Venture 7333* has a main drive, used in interstellar travel, which can be also be placed into overdrive. The secondary drives appear to be used for atmospheric and interplanetary travel and can, if necessary, be used for interstellar travel at velocities implied (but never stated) to be only a few times that of the speed of light. The underdrives are used in landing and take-off. A good take-off is described as a ship "...floating into space, as sedately as a swan..." This is so definitely describing some form of antigravity or spacedrive that the word obvious would be appropriate.

And yet, for some reason, this is not obvious to F&F; perhaps this is because nobody in the group project thought it was necessary to actually read The Witches of Karrés, or if they did read the book, to take any notes. In their australopithecine wisdom F&F have decided that the underdrives and the secondary drives are powered by some form of rocket? Why is this so? Beats me. I cannot think of a rational or logical or intelligent reason for making this change. According to one professional reviewer this was a great plot device. Uh; no, it is not. Any plot tension that arises from placing *Venture* and her crew in the position of running out of fuel and/or not being able to afford to purchase fuel¹⁶ does not automatically result in the ship being

¹⁶ Actually a less desperate version of this plot device is used in the original novella; Pausert has used up too much fuel during a prolonged run in overdrive and has to refuel at exorbitant prices.

powered by rockets. Again, this is further deterioration of atmosphere in the Karrés universe has no purpose; other than to cheapen the universe itself.

Then there is plot... I don't get what went on here on the part of Flint, et al; especially as Flint supposedly has edited all of Schmitz's work published by Baen – one would expect him to be familiar with the standard Schmitz plot structure. Yes indeed, Schmitz could be formulaic, but he had a very interesting formula that he tended to use in a unique manner. The standard Schmitz plot goes like this: the protagonist has a problem that they believe that they have resolved or almost resolved; it is a problem that is minor and personal, only affecting the protagonist and those closest to them. Either the resolution of the original problem or a decision made now adds to the original problem or hands the protagonist a larger problem. This process continues until the protagonist is now facing a world-changing, fate of millions/the world/humankind problem at the climax of the novel that they have to resolve – and sometimes the Schmitz protagonist only partial resolves the problem, i.e. removing the immediate threat to all but the problem yet remains; usually because it is something that can only be resolved by a large group of people or society itself, not a single protagonist and their cohorts. Neither of these sequels has an authentic Schmitz plotline; they have fairly standard, space opera, adventure plots, but they do not have Schmitz plots.

F&F remind me of Dexter from the first season. In the first season of the television series, once Dexter (a serial killer who hunts other serial killers) had taken his blood slide trophy from his victim, he would then proceed to carve them up, initially while still alive with his circular saw and/or other cutting tools. F&F have taken the still living and breathing body that is The Witches of Karrés (which unlike Dexter's victims is an innocent) and placed it on their table so that they can vivisect for their masters; who own the rights to this "property". These literary ghouls carve out pieces of dialogue, character, and numerous plot threads and fragments from the source text, which they combine with some chunks they have carved out of other victims, that they then use to cobble together their Shelley-esque golems. Without respect and with great abandon, F&F have eviscerated a much loved classic. The products of this butchery are the two Baen sequels.

Fortunately, this analogy, while it describes the process with great precision, is imprecise in regards to the end result. Unlike Dexter's victims, The Witches of Karrés is potentially immortal. F&F can carve chunks out of the original novel and use these pieces to construct their patchwork sequels; but they cannot harm it. The Witches of Karrés is a well-loved classic – the sequels just tawdry, tinsel, throw-away commodities that will be forgotten with the passage of time.

Scribbling on the Bog Walls

Letters of Comment

Neil Jamieson-Williams

As I write this, there is only two LoCs this time around. As always, my comments are in red.

Subject: Ré: Your latest Swill is now available
From: "Taral Wayne" <Taral@teksavvy.com>
Date: Tue, January 17, 2012 6:37 pm
To: swill@uldunemedia.ca
Priority: Normal
Options: [View Full Header](#) | [View Printable Version](#) | [Download this as a file](#)

Pissmonkey is bad enough, but in red my eyes watered. Fortunately, the .pdf was a little clearer than your site (for some reason) and could be blown up as well. After that, it wasn't so bad. It still seems to me to be an ill-advised idea to deliberately lay obstacles in the path of your readers, and it doesn't seem like good academia, either. Then again, maybe it is... When has academia ever wanted to be understood by the lay reader?

Academia is a sort of a "trufandom" in its in-groupishness, wouldn't you say?

Subject: Ré: Your latest Swill is now available
From: swill@uldunemedia.ca
Date: Wed, January 18, 2012 12:12 pm
To: "Taral Wayne" <Taral@teksavvy.com>
Priority: Normal
Options: [View Full Header](#) | [View Printable Version](#) | [Download this as a file](#)

Hi Taral,

You are correct that pudmonkey is clearer in pdf than in html (plus you can blow it up -- I prefer somewhere between 125 and 150%).

As for continued use of the font... FYI, I have been using it for Swill related stuff since 2001; the Tripod site was originally all in pudmonkey. So, it has sort of become a new Swill tradition. Perhaps, the difficult

font is an obstacle for the reader, but, I also like the font and find it aesthetically pleasing a a grunge sort of manner. Yes, I do realise that I am electing form over function. I will however consider one change, next issue I will (probably) not place my comments in red bolded pudmonkey.

The pudmonkey choice is one based on style and image and has nothing to do with academe. Academics often want to be understood by the lay reader, though this is a problem of juggling audiences as well as career advancement. Writing a academic book that is printed by a peer-reviewed publisher counts more for career advancement than a book written for a general audience. With limited time, academics will tend to put more effort into writing peer-reviewed books, which serve to increase their academic status (and salary) than they would to write books that popularise the subject material. It is still slightly frowned upon and usually does not count as an academic publication. Now, if your popular book is made into a BBC or PBS documentary series, you will score brownie points -- not with your fellow academics -- but with your college/university administrators which can be good for your career.

Also, many academics are not able to write for a general audience but only for their own peers -- usually this also means that they are poor teachers at the undergraduate level but excellent at the graduate level. Sometimes we will write a hybrid book that contains material that is accessible to the interested layperson while also possessing the rigour of the academic's discipline. This is not an easy task; I have tried it and been only partially successful at it -- usually both your general readers and your academic readers are left unsatisfied. I'll be trying this again this year and will let you know how that goes...

Academe is indeed full of in-groupness and "trufan" definitions; e.g. in sociology your choice of research methodology and your theoretical paradigm will place you within certain "trufan" groups and designate you as a "fakefan" in the eyes of others. However, these games are not over ephemeral status as in fandom but on real status that can effect reputation and career and salary.

All the best,
Neil

Subject: Ré: Your latest Swill is now available
From: "Taral Wayne" <Taral@teksavvy.com>
Date: Wed, January 18, 2012 3:15 pm
To: swill@uldunemedia.ca
Priority: Normal
Options: [View Full Header](#) | [View Printable Version](#) | [Download this as a file](#)

I can almost see replacing "academic" with "priest" and "academia" with "the Church" and the whole thing still working... But I understand. Pulling legs and tweaking noses is also fannish tradition... as long as no sharp implements are involved.

And there are harder things to read.

That comparison has been made before; it has some validity, but only some. It is an inexact comparison.

I agree that there are harder things to read. Much, much harder. No I am the first to admit that my penmanship is not very good, it is actually bad and I recall the pointer swats that were supposed to condition me toward better penmanship. That said, the general standard of penmanship has declined over the years. You think that the pudmonkey font is hard to read, try reading 120 plus pencil-scrawled essay question exams; pudmonkey will be a welcome relief after that.

Nevertheless, read further in the letters column to receive thy reward...

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

February 14, 2012

Dear Neil:

I have been dragging my ass when it comes to writing letters, but I am starting to get moving again. I have here issue 11 of Swill @ 30.

First of all, in talking to John Purcell, I find I must apologize to you. When I reviewed Swill @ 36 in my fanzine review column a while ago now, I thought I had all my facts straight. My training is in journalism. But it looks like I didn't, and I wouldn't have written what I did if I didn't think it was correct. My apologies, and in talking with John, he said he's giving you the opportunity to set the record straight, and explain Swill to a larger audience. You do say in the first paragraph that memory is neither as clear nor as correct as we often think it is...I may have just proved it.

Hi Lloyd,

No sweat, really. Nor any offence. I just want to make sure the correct information is out there... I don't mind being thrashed in print for something I actually did or said, but it is a pain when it happens over something that you didn't say or do or information that is wrong.

I don't have any problems with the Pudmonkey font...the real function of the font is to concentrate your focus beyond the relative illegibility of it, and concentrate on what's been written.

Read on...there are changes afoot.

Trufen...I have read a lot about the history of fandom, and so many of us hold our fannish forefathers in high regard. Today, some people I won't name seem to push themselves up by pushing others down. Trufen, trufandom...it is an excuse to be exclusive and snobbish. Such as it's always been, I gather, and such as it is in many other activities and hobbies. We're nothing new, and frankly, others do it better. Being inclusive and trying my best to accept new people and new interests are the main reasons why Yvonne and I have been around fandom, for all its good and bad, for about 35 years.

Yes, I will get back on this track in issue #13 (I promise this time). I personally prefer to be inclusive, up to a point; I will defer to expertise and become exclusive if the task at hand requires it. Unless you are talking about negotiating a hotel contract, or how to properly run the various AV devices, or how to design a really high end website (and these skills are not ones exclusive to fandom) there is no real fan expertise. There are those that know local fan history, those who know the complete list of all local conventions and the GoHs going back to the very first con in 194x, etc. Wonderful. And when I was head of shipping-receiving I had order-pickers who knew could identify any vehicle, tell you the year it was introduced, what came standard, etc. They were not snobbish or exclusive about this knowledge, self appointed trufen are.

Good to be able to make corrections on the record of past issues. SFContario 2 was fun, and we were on a variety of panels. Looks like voicework may be a future aspect of the convention's programming, and seeing I've done some, I'll have another way to have some fun.

SFCOntario was fun, I look forward to attending it again this year.

Poor Fritz? We saw the tolchocking Fritz got on a regular basis, and we laughed, but still, after years of that, poor Fritz! True, steampunk costuming will be done in some years, but in the meantime, we're having some fun. Our own costuming activities go back to the 80s. We know of some folks who have left the steampunk group, and are looking for something new to see and do, so there's the first sign that it may be close to jumping the shark.

Steampunk costuming won't disappear; it will just cease to be something everybody does. I think that it is an interesting sub-genre though I agree with Lester that sometimes things are not very well thought through – the science in the science fiction is often lacking and just gadgetry.

Done for now, I think...we wound up not going to Futurecon. We had paid for everything in advance, but money became so tight, we decided to ask for it back, and it paid some late bills. Things are a little better now, and we are starting to plan for Ad Astra. Looks like we'll see you there.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

See you at Ad Astra...

BCSFAzine 464 Review of Swill @ 30 #9

Neil uses my mention of Swill in my review of Graeme's Auroran Lights as a "LOC." I approve of this technique, since I'm too lazy to write both a review of and a LOC to any given zine....It sounds like the original

Swill was a cross between the punk attitude of the time and the present-day Internet trolls. This thought occurs to me partly because in the last few days I've wondered if I should invent nerd-punk.

Font criticism: As has been noted by other Swill @ 30 readers, the Pudmonkey font is hard to read. However, I can go a step further and recommend a more read - able font that should still achieve the desired effect: VTCorona.

Felicity, thank you for your input. Note to comrades Tara and the Graeme; one gets much further by making a criticism and then offering an alternative that one does by simply bitching and whining.

As of Issue #13, the pudmonkey font will be used for column/article titles and contributor names and VT Corona shall be used for content. For an example, see Endnote.

Endnote: Good Old Days

Neil Jamieson-Williams

In the Good Old Days... The hearing of this phrase should give one a chill as the utterance of it is usually the introduction to a monologue that one is about to receive concerning the flaws of any generation or age set younger than that of the person doing the uttering. In brief, the speaker will extol the virtues of another time, when all things were wonderful, during some form of golden age that has for ever gone. Often there is the additional jab that younger generations are too benighted to understand what has been lost and they are also one of the reasons why such a former utopian period will never come again. And typical nostalgic rubbish like that.

As is stated very well in the recent film, Midnight in Paris, golden ages are at best, very subjective. Two individuals from the same age set may have very different perceptions as to when the "golden age" was and, if one could go back in time to your particular "golden age" there would be people from that time period who long for a different time in the past. That is the thing with "golden ages"; they all exist in the past.

I do not suffer from any strong melancholic desire to reside in another period in history; though, a holiday would be interesting (so long as one had all their shots and took other precautions). Of course, causality probably prevents this from ever being a possibility. There is no period in my own life that I wish I could just chuck everything and return to -- again, there are some periods that would be cool to visit briefly (even if one could only visit via a recording device). But again, this is no burning desire. While I do have some nostalgia for particular books that I have read and re-read over the years -- I have no

interest in only reading old books¹⁷. There are no "good old days" when all was right with the world.

I have poked my head back into fandom for a year now. All I can say is that some things are much the same as they were thirty years ago and some things are not; almost all of these changes have to do changes that have occurred in the larger (mainstream) culture and impacted upon the SF fan subculture. I have no desire to go back to Toronto fandom of the late 1970's or Vancouver fandom of the 1980's. Those who do long for their subjective, fannish, golden age are free to do so; it is their own personal choice¹⁸ to make. I may not think it is a wise choice. I may think it is an exclusive choice. But otherwise, I really don't care. Except, should they take it the next step and cloak their version of a golden age as being synonymous with trufan membership; then, they become pain-in-the-ass shitheads that I personally don't want anything to do with¹⁹. And should they launch into one of their in-the-good-old-days monologues; it is time to move somewhere far, far away.

¹⁷ Likewise for music, a lot of the music on my iPod is from the 1980's and early 1990's, but there is a large segment that are much more recent; as well, there is some flux, there is what is on my iPod and what is on my playlist -- artists like Nick Cave and Crass are on my iPod but not on my playlist.

¹⁸ I am old enough to know people who, based on their music collections, are of the firm opinion that no new music has been recorded since 1979.

¹⁹ Though they do make good research informants, aka subjects.

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