

SWLDA

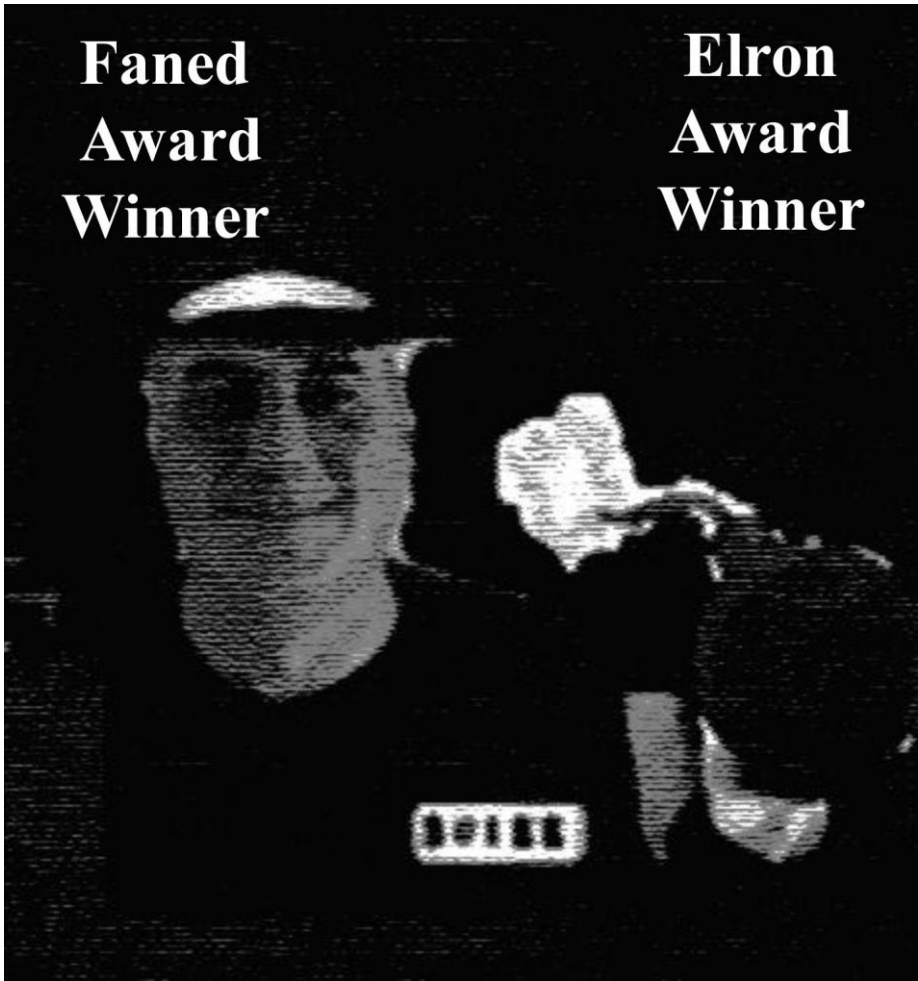


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SWILL

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Editorial Triumph of the SWILL

Neil Jamieson-Williams

**** We interrupt this zine to present this editorial in Pudmonkey ****

As you may have noticed on the front cover, SWILL recently received two fan awards given at VCON 37 in late September. While one award was expected, the other was a surprise.

The Elron Awards are fandom's longest running spoof awards -- awarded for the worst contributions to science fiction/science fiction fandom during the previous calendar year. The awards are presented annually by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association (BCSFA) at the VCON convention. Way back in 1983, I was nominated for an Elron award for "Worst Fanzine Editor". I didn't win and I don't know who did. Interestingly, the nomination was not for Swill, or for Daughter of Swill (which was published in 1983); it was for my one year tenure as editor of the clubzine BCSFAzine. Not everyone in the club enjoyed by editorial style to put it mildly. I brought a mild Swillesque attitude to the tame and tepid clubzine. There were Swill-like editorial rants, some Miriad-like (Miriad was the semi-prozine published by the other three droogs) droog material, and lots of filler material gleaned from the contemporary punk subculture of the time. In my defence, I did raise the production values on the zine, published it on time, included all the material that came from the club, and (memory is hazy on this one) but I recall actually moderating the LoC section of the zine -- keeping a lid on things rather than pouring petrol on the fire like other BCSFAzine editors. Not everyone liked what I did, hence the nomination.

In email with the current SMOE (Secret Master of the Elrons) I suggested that I be awarded an Elron for "Worst Fanzine Editor of all Time" or "Lifetime Achievement for Worst Fanzine Editor" at VCON 38 -- being 30 years after the original nomination. The SMOE suggested that SWILL win a "Worst Fanzine" award which would be awarded at VCON 36 last year, but secret master things intervened; nevertheless, I kind of expected that SWILL would win some sort of Elron this year, and it did. SWILL won "Worst Fanzine" for the use of the pudmonkey font.

What I didn't expect was to receive a Faned -- the Canadian Fanzine Fanac Award -- for "Best Fanzine". This is actually a bit of an honour as it means that at least some people out there like what I am doing, here. It makes a nice counterpoint to those out there who have commented that SWILL is not and never has been a fanzine and that I am not and never have been a fan.

Now, these comments are rooted in the context of those fen who subscribe to the worldview that only the traditional trufan faan is a real fan. Definitely, from this perspective I am not and never have been a fan. I have never been part of the trufan faan sub-subculture where faanishness is paramount, eclipsing the genre itself, and I never will. From my perspective, the genre is central and always will be. I am a fan of the science fiction genre, first and foremost. Am I a fan of fandom? That is a more difficult one to answer.

What I am not a fan of and never will be a fan of are the superior than thou, lord high arbitrator of fannishness, protector of the precious bodily fluids of trufandom, fughhead trufan faans and their version of fandom. As for fandom in the larger perspective, I have no issues. Am I a part of it? I once was and now...I am marginally part of it. Yes, I have been pubbing SWILL, I have been attending conventions, I have been participating as a panellist/moderator, I have donated some of my time to convention volunteering; all of which could be viewed as fanac. However, as the traditional trufen faans have pointed out, this is all in connexion to my research project and thus cannot be counted as fanac; I am either a non-fan or an ex-fan who is researching fandom. I beg to differ. As a researcher, I didn't have to revive one of my old fanzines to use in part as a means of communicating the progress of the research project. As science fiction conventions are public events -- if you find out about it and pay your membership, you can attend -- I technically didn't even have to notify the organisers that I was studying the convention and those attending it (it is good form to do so, but ethically, it is not required for public events). I did not have to do any volunteering, sit on panels, etc. I chose to do this, because I asked myself the question; back when I was active in the fan community, as a fan, what approach would I like to see from a researcher? Maybe my answer is a dated one -- so be it. Am I currently a part of the SF fan community? Yes, but only marginally. Look even when I was heavily involved, I was more a FIJAGDH fan anyway; the hobby

has simply moved down several strata over the past 30 years to being just a step above gafia.

Also, the traditional trufan faans have tarred me with the brush of crudzine -- as if that was a concern. Look losers, I knew how to put together a decent -- not killer, but decent -- layout back in the days of electric typewriters and electro stencil and mimeograph. Guess what, like everything else today, with the technology available in your average office productivity software, it is an even far simpler task to do so. It is not that I cannot do so; it is because this is a conscious, definite choice being made by moi, the editor of this zine. As was the choice of the pudmonkey font. For a moment, just a moment, over clock the atrophying grey matter in your skulls and consider the standard dictionary meanings for the word chosen as the title of this fanzine. This is still an old-school punk, pare-down-to-the-basics, content over form, in blessed text alone, zine being written by a middle-aged punk/academic/sf genre consumer-marginal fan that has a slightly gentler tone than 30 years ago due to the fact that the editor and columnist (Lester Rainsford) are no longer in our twenties. Do you traditional trufan faan fuckheads actually believe that I am going to give a shit that you call SWILL a crudzine?

SWILL is a crudzine by intent and design and proud of it. SWILL won the Elron for its crudzine aesthetics and yet, surprisingly, won the Faned for its stripped-down, no whitewashing content. Perhaps the traditional trufan faan gatekeepers might consider pondering this... But no, there are more serious matters to be dealt with, such as, why everyone in Third Fandom Transitional B were a bunch of assholes...

**** We now return to this zine in VT Corona, already in progress... ****

Thrashing Trufens

Fen, True and Otherwise

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Okay, here we go again...

Traditional Fans:

Also known as trufans, fanzine fans, and other names. I prefer the term Traditional over fanzine fan -- not all fanzine fans are Traditional fans. The term trufan is loaded and implies that Traditional fans are the only real fans and that everyone else is a fakefan. So, what is a Traditional Fan? In the context of the present, a Traditional Fan is a faan; a person for whom science fiction fandom is of primary and central importance, overshadowing interest in the genre. Traditional Fans place emphasis upon the older tropes and memes within the science fiction fan subculture; tropes and memes that emerged prior to the mid-1990s. Examples of this would be the primary importance placed upon fanzines, the fannish exchange systems, clubs, and regular face-to-face community. While fandom itself (usually capitalised by Traditional Fans) is central, for most Traditional Fans the genre itself continues to have importance, albeit secondary or lower. Traditional Fans consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They may attend or they may regularly attend fan-run conventions like Polaris and Ad Astra -- they may also attend conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. They may participate the organisation and running of fan-run conventions. They may participate in genre based online forums, newsgroups, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, etc. They do participate in writing fan fiction, LoCs, and fanzines. They may create crafts, visual art forms, and performance art forms related to the genre. They may network and organise within the fan community. Traditional Fans often like to call themselves trufans and do tend to view all other fans as fakefans or genre consumers. Traditional Fans are a declining segment within the science fiction fan subculture.

Active Fans:

In the context of the present, an Active Fan is someone who is not a Traditional Fan who has some level of fan activity within the science fiction fan community-at-large, i.e. not necessarily bounded to a distinct geographic fan community. While most Active Fans have multiple fan activities and often engage in those fan activities within a distinct fan community (e.g. Star Trek fan community in Toronto); one can be an Active Fan even if you have a single fan activity (drawing cartoons) that only appear in SF convention programme books. Active Fans tend to view themselves as being simply fans. Active Fans consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They often attend or they may regularly attend fan-run conventions like Polaris and Ad Astra -- they may also attend conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. They may participate in the organisation and running of fan-run conventions. They may participate in genre based online forums, newsgroups, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, etc. They may participate in writing fan fiction, fanzines, networking sites, and blogs. They may create crafts, visual art forms, and performance art forms related to the genre. They may network and organise within the fan community. For the Active Fan, the genre is central and fandom is secondary; though for many Active Fans the fan community remains important. Active Fans place an emphasis upon the tropes and memes that emerged within the science fiction fan subculture between (roughly) 1980s and 2004. As a segment within the science fiction fan community, Active Fans are beginning to decline in numbers.

Digital Fans:

This term is being used (borrowed from Arnie Katz) for lack of a better term. This term describes those people who self-identify themselves as fan but have little or no fan activity within the established fan community. For the Digital Fan, the genre is primary and established fandom is tertiary or lower. However, most Digital Fans engage in fan activity outside of the established fan community through social networking and other digital means. While they perceive themselves as fans, while they interact with other fans like themselves, they rarely interact within the established fan community. Digital Fans consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They tend to attend trade show style conventions like Comic Con

or Sci-Fi Fan Expo and rarely ever attend fan-run conventions like Polaris and Ad Astra -- and if they do it is to see a particular guest or to go to the Dealer's Room. Their primary fan activities tend to be digital or digitally mediated; e.g. writing blogs, newsfeeds, fan fiction, and sometimes digital fanzines. This form of digital fan activity tends to run separate and parallel to that of established fandom. Like other fans, Digital Fans may create crafts, written/visual/performance art forms related to the genre. Fans of this type will often be viewed as being "mundanes" by both Traditional Fans and Active Fans, though Active Fans may exhibit more tolerance for the Digital Fan. Digital Fans place emphasis upon the tropes and memes that have emerged in the science fiction subculture since 1998 (roughly). Digital Fans are a growing segment of the science fiction fan community.

Genre Consumers:

These individuals consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They are the major audience for conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. People within this group do not identify themselves as SF fans. These persons would be viewed as "mundanes" by Traditional fans, Active Fans, and Digital Fans. While these people exist outside of the science fiction fan community, the majority are strong fans of the genre. It is from this population that the majority of the people who make up the science fiction fan community emerged from (while there are a few cases of individuals discovering fandom first and then the genre, for the majority, they discover the genre and then fandom). As the genre continues to grow, this population of genre consumers is doing the same.

So, what does this all mean? Well one thing it means is that Traditional Fans are a very small and shrinking segment of the science fiction fan population. It also means that Active Fans are a segment of the population that is aging and beginning to decline in numbers. Yet, Digital Fans and Genre Consumers are on the rise. That means that, as I have said before in this zine, fandom is in transition; that fandom is changing. The big question is what fandom is changing into; that has yet to be determined, all that is certain is that it will be a different fandom.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings!

...a modest column by Lester Kinsford

I am pissing on a pile of old Amazings. The urine arcs, braking into blobs, shimmering. It splashes on the pile of pulps. The yellowed pages of the old magazines become yet yellower. Arc, shimmer, splash, yellow.

The sound is like bumblebees in summer. The drops, pulled together by surface tension, throw out rays of light like liquied amber. The yellowing stain on the Amazings has the suspect sheen of neantechnology nanites gone bad. The drops freeze in their arcs, turning into merrygorounds with pink ponies. The buzzing of bees intensifies into the roaring of a Saturn v on launch.

Some of a bitch, it's a VR scene. And if there's anything Lester does not approve of in "today's" SF, it's VR. Becasue, well, the authoer can spin on this kind of crap for pages and pages while the story doesn't get anywhere. I cyould have gone on for pages, but The Swill would have dealt with me.! In slomo. Like a John Wu film. The bullet would slow down, we could see it spin as it ambles towards my forehead , then the entry would and worse yet the exit wound.

Why does VR devolve to either a HonkGong ganstger film slo-mo or into the writer's last RPG campaign? Damned if I know but it sucks.

To that end, I have recently read The Quantim Theif and at the end I was no more enlightende but a few hours older. In addition, all I can say of Revenge of the Ners is, would have made a great rasfw joke but really, there was no need for an entire book. No need at all. the vacuum of ideas in VR is obvious, because it gets replaced by stream of consciousness just like this colum.

Years ago Ze3lazny threw in all kinds of filler in the Amber series-the transitions between worlds. I skipped it. and you, reader, should skip today's vr storeis. You, and the Sf field, will be better for that.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Triumph of the "Mundanes"

Neil Jamieson-Williams

I am going to restate something that appeared in Fanstuff #21 because I like it and because it is useful. It is what Arnie Katz calls The Epoch Theory of Fandom -- though I think that it would be better termed the Epoch Approach to Fandom/Fanhhistory. This is looking at fandom through a wide-angle temporal lens. Katz's Epochs are:

"The Eo-Fandom Epoch (- 1932). Science fiction became a genre, individual fans contacted each other and local and national fan clubs appeared.

The Fanzine Epoch (1933-1973). The first fanzines appeared in the early 1930's and quickly became the focus of fan activity.

The Convention Epoch (1974-2004). Conventions proliferated exponentially in the 1960, which gave birth to a much larger Fandom in which con-going and conrunning assumed a central position in Fandom.

The Digital Epoch (2005-). Desktop publishing, the Internet and Social Media are in the spotlight today."

I would also add to this that the rise of Mass Fandom would appear to have taken place during the Convention Epoch and is a dominant factor in the Digital Epoch.

Katz's Epoch Approach overlaps, in my view, quite nicely with my classification of fandom. The Traditional Fan is a product of the Fanzine Epoch and those who still hold onto the dominant subcultural traits of this Epoch are the Traditional Fans of today. As the Convention Epoch grew dominant the subcultural traits that characterise the modern Active Fan emerge; I think

that fan-run conventions and the style of fandom practiced by Active Fans go hand in hand. The explosion of what has been called Mass Fandom was fuelled by the increasing acceptance of the genre within the entertainment industry and the "big-tent" approach (something for everyone) that started to become common in the latter years of the Convention Epoch. The Digital Epoch, I think, has less to do with desktop publishing and the Internet (though both are important), and more to do with social media, texting, and mobile technology. Most definitely the type of fandom that I have classified as Digital Fans is fully at home in this particular Epoch.

While the dominant form of fan activity persists into later Epochs, they cease to be dominant. The dominant form of the Digital Epoch has yet to be determined other than it will be mediated by social media and mobile technology. We are still only eight to 12 years into the transition. Nevertheless, the shift has occurred and it is not going to go away. From the fannish point of view of Traditional and Active Fans, Digital Fans are most definitely not fannish; in that Digital Fans have less interest in established fandom. They appear to be in the process of creating their own version of a fan community, but a fan community that is ever shifting and mutable -- for ever in the now, and just as ephemeral as a moment. It is not the sort of fan community that Traditional or Active Fans are used to. It is not the type of fan community that has a strong traction in the face-to-face physical world.

Tradition Fandom was rooted in physical community, regions, and face-to-face meetings (local club meetings and socials, collating parties, pub nights, etc.), where conventions were events you attended so that you could actually meet face-to-face the fans that you knew only through personal lettermail, LoCs, or the telephone. Active Fandom retained that face-to-face aspect of Tradition fans, but with less emphasis on the local community and more emphasis on the local and regional convention circuit. In a way, the conventions were the community; a community more bounded in cyclical time that gathered together in one locale for a few days before it dispersed to the winds, to re-form again in another location on the convention circuit. Digital Fandom as a community is like an electronic haze that manifests itself into

small face-to-face groups for a few hours before returning to an electron state. Only at events such as Sci-Fi Fan Expo or Comic Con does it materialise en mass, yet even then it remains in a state of flux.

Digital Fandom is different. Personally, I'm not certain if it is my type of fandom -- I feel more at home within the Active Fandom of the Convention Epoch -- but, regardless, I am not about to disparage Digital Fandom. While it may not be a type of fandom that I am comfortable with -- look I still prefer email and voice over text and Facebook -- but it is where fandom is going. You may like the trend; you may not. However, you cannot stop it. And it serves nobody to sit upon your self-appointed throne and decree that, "Thou art not fandom, thou art mundane." Seriously, it doesn't. At best, you get to preach to the converted (those who think just like you do) but it is not going to make Digital Fandom disappear. Not at all. Go ahead, call them all mundanes, for all the good that that will do. Consider this, Traditional Fandom is greying and shrinking fast; Active Fandom is aging and starting to decline in numbers and influence. Guess what type of fandom is attracting the young people? Guess what type of fandom is growing in numbers and influence? Guess what type of fandom is going to become dominant and triumph? At least until the next Epoch begins...

Scribbling on the Bog Wall:

Letters of Comment

Neil Jamieson-Williams

As I write this, there is only a single LoC this time around. My comments are, of course, in glorious pudmonkey.

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

September 12, 2012

Dear Neil:

Swill 14 has been sitting around and stewing the last few weeks...life gets in the way when you're trying to get things done. That's my explanation and I am sticking to it. Here are comments on this issue.

More and more, I am finding that modern SF, what little of it I read, just doesn't do it for me. Even a book like *Among Others* by Jo Walton, which won the Hugo and Nebula this year, I've started it, and am having trouble continuing with it. It's not the book, it's me. I think I'd rather read the galaxy-exploding stuff from the 60s and 70s. That's my own Golden Age. I've aged right out of current SF's demographic. Genetic engineering and nanotech are hard SF, but perhaps not as hard as those golden years' tech. Somehow, they seem just a little softer. Any future today may be difficult to deal with, given how negative our outlook may be. And, given that we live very much in an SFnal future today, can we imagine that our own SFnal future would look like?

*** Everybody has a "golden age"; mine would sort of correspond with yours temporally and then again not. The same time period, the 1960s and 1970s, had a definite influence upon my SF tastes. Some of what I read during that time period was old like *Childhood's End* and some was brand new such as *Rendezvous with*

Rama. I read Clarke, and Schmitz, and Anderson, and Chandler, and Dickson and Niven, and Ballard, and Brunner, and Ellison, and Malzberg, and Silverberg, and Spinrad, and so on. Quite a mix, I just liked SF. In the decades since, I have encountered the new authors (especially, back in the day when I subscribed to one or more of the print magazines) that I have added into my constellation and I am still pretty eclectic in my tastes, with a slight lean toward hard SF. I read very little fantasy and I am less forgiving with fantasy than I am with science fiction. I expect a fleshed out world in fantasy and strong character-driven plots (after all, although you are creating a whole new world, it is not a world that has a brand new technology, just classical to early modern technology that may be mixed and matched) -- there should be a sense of history and solid characters. I tend to read good fantasy and only after the work has been established as worthy by the community of readers.

I like Jo Walton's work, in particular the Small Change trilogy, but I have yet to go out and buy Among Others. Primary reason, it is a fantasy novel -- though one could also (I am basing this statement on the backcover blurb) say it is slipstream, which may get me to purchase it post-Christmas.

I wouldn't say that hard SF is less hard today; that depends upon who you are reading. Vernor Vinge and Kim Stanley Robinson are about equal in hardness, but Greg Egan outhards them both. Hard SF does tend to be slightly more character-driven today than in the 1970s and 1980s -- contrast the works of Robert Forward or Geoffrey Landis with those of Peter F. Hamilton and Alastair Reynolds. The more current hard SF also tends to have a better understanding of the social sciences than in the past, which adds to its realism. And yes, everything is darker today. That's just the way things are; we are no longer positive about the future, which tends to grow more grim every day (unless you ignore all news except that which has to do with celebrity, shopping, and gadgets). It is not surprising to have this reflected back in our art, especially in the genre that is expected to deal with exploring the future. And it is really hard to even grasp what the near future is going to be like; case in point, as of this year, it is now possible to 3-D print a working firearm -- what does that do to gun control? How do we contain the American insanity to their side of the border now that anyone with a 3-D printer

can download the blueprints for an automatic weapon and have one made in their own home? ***

I am not falling out with fandom as we know it, just some of the older fanzine fans who are coming across as grump old pharts who can't seem to deal with the fact that fandom changes as time goes on, and they seem stuck in time, and fandom is moving on without them. I am finding it myself, and attempting not to be left behind, so we are moving forward with new interests, and making new friends. I have used the term passive consumer to describe more modern fans, while the fans you refer to are more active and constructive.

Any literature should be fun. If it is good enough and lucky enough to have an interactive fandom like SF does, all the better, but fun still has to come with it. And, any common interest that a large number of people share will often generate an interactive fandom. SF fans fooled themselves for many years that they were unique. Any group that can trace itself back to the 1930s will do that, I suppose, but there are fandoms for many interests, SF or otherwise.

*** I have had a peek within Fanstuff in recent months and now better understand what Taral has tried to articulate to me -- however, I still cannot accept his argument. He is not going to change his point of view on fandom any more than a "hard-Gard", Long Island Gardnerian Witch would be willing to accept that the Alexandrian Tradition is a valid tradition of the Craft. That it is all well and fine for Taral and his social group of trufen to set up their boundaries of exclusivity; at present, it still remains a free country. It is also their right to claim that they are the only real fans and everybody else is a fakefan. However, they should not expect the majority -- who actually self identify themselves as being fans (regardless of how they have been designated by some trufen clique) and have some investment in that identity -- to agree with the locked in a temporal warp view of a small minority.

I continue to work with defining the boundary between genre consumer and fan. A year ago, I thought it was quite simple; but, it is not. In 2013, I intend to collect data (or attempt to) from this segment of the population. ***

Polaris is its past format the past 15 years or so is dead. I think they were losing money while trying to compete with the

pro-run cons in terms of guests of honour. The relaxicon seems to be a little nebulous; I think they don't really have a relaxicon model to follow, so they are playing it by ear. More has been planned for the Whocon they advertise, and they have set a weekend in November 2013 for that. I wouldn't really call Ad Astra a big-tent event, but they have slightly changed their focus over the years; they catered to the literary audience, and they still do, to a lesser extent. SFContario is nearly exclusively literary, and I think they do a better job. Ad Astra has the advantage of being the first convention in the spring, and acts as a springboard for the rest of the local cons to advertise, and for local fans to shake off some cabin fever.

The local...I think Canadian fandom was always fragmented, or Balkanized was the word I used, and that was just because of the geography. We tried to bring the local fandoms together when we assembled an interested group for the Toronto in 2003 Worldcon bid, and that held many fans together for a while, but many will today say that Worldcon is not their big annual convention, and they have no interest at all, but they will aim their calendars and wallets at San Diego Comicon, or DragonCon, or Fan Expo.

*** We will see how things go with TCON. I still see Ad Astra as a mixed literary-other media fan-run event nowadays, whether you call that big-tent or not is semantics -- they are attempting to appeal to everybody without going that final step and bringing in actor guests. SFContario is definitely a literary SF convention. Canadian fandom has suffered from regionalism in the past due to geography, demographics, and language. Today, like society itself, everything is more fragmented (I tend not to like the term Balkanised as it implies that the fragments are hostile to one another and unco-operative, when they may just be indifferent to one another and unco-operative). Toronto as a geographic centre appears throughout fan history to have been Balkanised. But other geographic centres have been able to have greater unity. As I said in the last issue, many of the younger fans do not view the face-to-face social networking of a fan-run convention as being important -- they want the programming that they cannot get via social media or elsewhere online -- that is why they prefer events like FanExpo.

Bring on that new survey, and we'll respond to it. Looks like you will have a table at SFContario again. Ah, but will you have a

pith helmet? If you need one, I expect there might be a dealer in the dealers' room who could sell you one.

I blethered on again, I see. Added column-inches for you. We might be pretty busy at SFContario, but we will definitely see you there.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

*** Thanks for blethering, otherwise, this time around we would have no LoC column. See you both at SFContario... ***

Endnote: Acceptances...

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Neil Jamieson-Williams Acceptance Speech for Winning the Elron Award for Worst Fanzine

Hey Scummos,

It is with fucking turgid thoughts that I viddy your malenky gullivers burning brain cells all crispy-like to come to the bezoomy decision to give this award to SWILL. It has been starry temporal wait. I would like to thank the SMOEs and re-commit to continue our original mission; to keep tolchocking fandom. Thank you, you vonny twits, and good night.

Neil Jamieson-Williams Acceptance Speech for Winning the Faned Award for Best Fanzine

Greetings,

To the Canadian Fanzine fanac Award Society, I would like to thank you for this honour. I would also like to thank Lester Rainsford for his great wisdom and perceptive analysis, Arne Hannover for being present, Andrew Hoyt for his inane nattering and phoney British accent and being a toadspawn (which is only normal for one who is a chemist), John Goobly for his tales of the colonial office and bad typing, and I would also like to thank the following persons, tossers, and swine, beginning with... what, I'm out of time!!! Fuck off