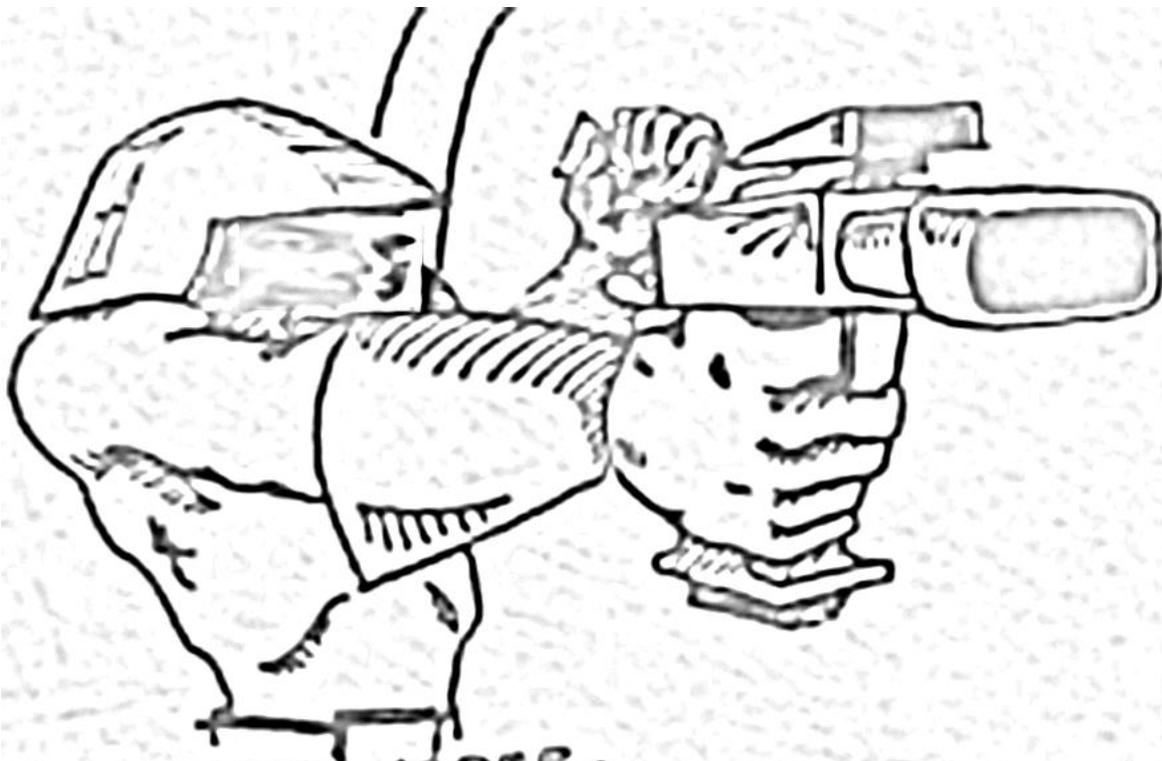


SWILD



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#21

Winter -- 2014

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SWILL

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Editorial: Shit-Kicking Space Opera

James William Neilson

I love space opera -- it has always been one of my favourite subgenres of SF. However, there have always been some very crucial problems with space opera that never, ever, have gone away; key assumptions that really, when you look at them closely, make all space opera (even the not-so-new New Space Opera) rest firmly within the realm of science fantasy.

First and foremost, realistically, space travel is going to be difficult. Even interplanetary space travel will be hard. As Douglas Adams stated so clearly and humorously decades ago; space is really, really big... Even if we were to develop a spacedrive that allows us to send out ships at a cruising velocity of .127 AU/day it will still take a fortnight to reach Mars at its furthest distance from Earth (factoring in say 3 days to accelerate and decelerate at both ends of the trip). Jupiter in about two months (with longer periods of acceleration and deceleration) and Neptune in about 8 and one half months, and the Alpha Centauri system in about 6,000 years.

And this "realistic" spacedrive is still a lot of handwavium bullshit -- I have just arbitrarily guesstimated how long the ship is going to take to accelerate/decelerate and confess without shame, that I couldn't calculate specific impulse, etc. to save my life. And I haven't even discussed energy and fuel, because in my head I have selected baloneium-based vacuum energy/zero-point energy as the fuel source -- something you don't have to haul along with you and I also haven't calculated for ship mass empty or when fully loaded with passengers and cargo. The sad fact is that interplanetary travel is not going to be a piece of cake. Even if we go the route of aborted Singularity magic box supertech brought to you by fully mature nanotechnology and friends, it remains just a lot of more "realistic"-sounding technobabble. In my teens, I used to feel that Clarke was very pessimistic when he saw humanity still

poking about the solar system three to four centuries from now -- now I see this as very realistic.

So, even with my more "realistic" baloneium spacedrive, you're not going to see any Solar Empire emerging even in our planetary system; probably an Earth/Moon/Mars Empire and perhaps extending out to Jupiter, but beyond; no. And even within a Jupiter and inward Solar Empire, there will be areas that are hard to control politically, like any asteroid settlements. But all that means is how easy it will be to send out the Imperial Space Navy to keep the colonials in line. We haven't even started to discuss why there are colonists out there and what resources, etc, they are providing that are dearly wanted back on Earth and all of that...

And we are still just talking about our solar system. Any possible interstellar empire is going to require FTL.

Lester had some comments about this last issue:

"Here are a couple of things that have Lester going "hmm".

1. Energy and fuel. Even assuming that a true FTL drive is

possible, how can it take so little fuel that it seems no more onerous to power an FTL starchip than it is to drive your '67 Chev Bicscayne Biscayne to the new plaza with the shiny K-Mart? The answer is, the fuel and energy needs are blithely ignored, in the interests of writing a story where shipping mangoes from Procyon to Betelgeuse makes some kind of economic sense. Lester has a story idea here. Suppose FTL travel was feasible, actually possible, but as the ship went to FTL tav travel, the drive gave off enough hard radiation to sterilize the system it was leaving? Kind of a nice gamma-ray burst. Maybe this has been written as a story, in which case Lester would place it in the early 1970-s when all was gloom and we suck.

2. Ever wonder why the USS Enterprise pulls out of orbit before going to warp drive? Why the average SF starship needs to "get out of the gravity well" before going to hyperspace? Why not

depart from low orbit, or in fact from the comfort of your living room?"

Energy and fuel as Lester points out seem to be a non-issue with FTL in space opera. But it should be a major issue as it is going to take a substantial amount of some form of energy to propel your protagonist's ship at superluminal velocities and that energy is also going to have to come from somewhere. And that whopping energy is potentially a hazard.

For example, we have currently developed an ultracapacitor for use in an average sedan that would give 120 km/hr over a range of 350 - 400 km (and only takes about 10 minutes to go from zero to full charge). Why is this vehicle not on the road? Because people drive cars and people get in accidents when driving cars and in an accident the ultracapacitor has a high probability of discharging all of its stored energy at once. At full charge the discharge would turn the vehicle into a fireball and make the rear-ending a fully fuelled Ford Pinto seem like a minor safety issue. Lester's musing about a massive gamma ray burst as your ship enters FTL when leaving a system is exactly what is theorised would happen when an Alcubierre drive ship drops out of warp as it enters a system - not a very pleasant way to say hello, but one certain to rid you of any difficulties with alien lifeforms more complex than bacterium.

Now I know, and Lester knows, that his grumbling about having to leave a gravity well to start up your FTL drive, is little more than a plot device to place some sort of limitation on the FTL drive or to give downtime for the main characters to interact with one another before they jaunt off to the far stars. Obviously for the later, there are different ways to accomplish this without having several days/weeks journey before the FTL drive can be turned on, and yes, this cliché does have its roots in the experience of ocean travel of the middle decades of the 20th century - actually, many of the tropes in space opera harkens back to the sea battles of the two 20th century World Wars.

The former, is so that the evil alien hordes of Vlashirma Prime have to drop out of hyperspace in the outer system and take a few days/weeks to arrive in Earth orbit (giving the protagonist some time to develop a plan). While I agree with Lester that the "no gravity well" rule is arbitrary and can be demonstrated (as he did aptly) to be nonsensical, I am in favour of placing limits on FTL travel. Whether it is no gravity well, or must be close to a gravity well, or that the ship must be travelling at a specific velocity, or that there are specific points of entry, I am kind of a supporter of this plot device, and I have used it myself. I have come up with some unique variations over the years that I haven't seen anywhere else...

The FTL drive has a 70 percent chance of vaporising the ship when it re-enters normal space - which means it would not be used for transporting passengers but insured cargo and the pilots would be suicidal or deeply in debt or possibly both. Where ship's mass is a limiting factor; a small 5 person crewed ship can travel at twenty c but your humungous space dreadnaught can only trudge along at maybe 1.1 times the speed of light. Or, my favourite, the ship has no control once it enters hyperspace; it takes a lot of energy to push the ship into the correct hyperspace current where it drifts to the chosen destination and where the journey for those aboard will take several weeks (zero time within normal space). Again, these limitations are simply arbitrary and reality may have already provided us with a limitation - FTL is possible though you will sterilise your destination upon arrival.

The thing is about space opera - it is not hard science SF - very little that is called hard science SF space opera actually really does contain hard science. Oh it may have AIs, nanotechnology, genetic augmentations, dyson shells/rings/swarms, and well thought out FTL drives, etc. that sounds all technological and scientific... But when you get right down to it, when you examine it clinically, it just sounds that way; in reality it is just technobabble for golems, magic, demigod powers, and magic lands near and far that can be reached only by swift elvin ships.

Yet, in spite of these flaws, I do still love space opera.

Thrashing Trufen: Meeting the "Bad Boy" of First Fandom

James William Neilson

I in particular and SWILL in general, have been so-to-speak called up on the carpet, for being nasty and mean to traditional fandom in these pages; especially in regards to that sub-segment of traditional fandom who claim that they are the one true fandom. I don't know what benighted thoughts were going through the "minds" of those who envisioned that by attempting to scold me (as if I was a naughty child or subordinate) they would insure good behaviour in the future. Whatever they were thinking, they were wrong - 100% wrong. This is SWILL. You read SWILL the Riot Act and you will get a Molotov cocktail thrown your way. And neither I, nor SWILL the zine, is going to knuckle under to politically correct, social-worker platitudes to "play nice". Not only does SWILL have its own historic reputation to uphold; there is extra pressure to maintain our reputation now that we have met the "Bad Boy" of First Fandom and introduced him to SWILL.

Now the term "Bad Boy" depends upon whose side you are on from the early days of SF fandom. Regardless of side, though (and had I been alive back then and living in NYC, I would have been a Futurian rather than a New Fandomite), he has been a fannish figure who has disturbed the shit, on more than one occasion, and been a trouble-maker, at times, and been involved in fanzines, conrunning, etc. since well before either Lester or I had been born. At SFContario 4, Lester and I met the famous (or infamous) Dave Kyle - the creator of the 1939 "Yellow Pamphlet" that resulted in the "Great Exclusion" at the first Worldcon, Nycon I. We invited him to attend the SWILL party that was taking place that evening (Friday) and (echoing the events of 1939) pressed a copy of the SFContario 4 Boycott Flyer into his hands two hours before we began to distribute them at the con. Kyle (unlike what happened at Nycon I) kept the early release to himself and didn't immediately take it to the concom - not that it would be any secret as to who the culprits were as the flyer was written entirely in the pudmonkey font. Now, it is our understanding that some of the concom was pissed regarding the boycott flyer and the rest didn't care or found it fitting the fan GoH.

Anyway, it would seem that the fan GoH liked it, or at least the spirit of the flyer, as he said when he briefly popped into the SWILL party before he retired for the evening.

Lester and I made a point of attending his kaffeeklatch at 9:00 AM the next morning - both of us a little groggy as the SWILL party had been the last party standing Friday night/Saturday morning. It was at the kaffeeklatch that Lester and I gave Dave Kyle SWILL 2011 and SWILL 2012 (the paperbound collections of all SWILL issues for those two years) and, of course, we signed the copies. I also talked to Kyle several times on Saturday and came to the following conclusions.

Here was a member of traditional fandom, a member of First Fandom, who while quick to launch into nostalgia and stories of the early days of SF fandom (that's why he was there as GoH) was not judgemental about my generation and those younger within fandom. Not at all -- any judgemental comments seemed to be directed at old adversaries (like Sam Moscovitz) but with humour and contextual explanation (for the actions of his adversaries) and without malice. And not a word about how those under 60 or those under 40 or those under 20 have "destroyed fandom". Now, he did use the term trufan when referring to traditional fandom a couple of times, but he was speaking in the context of the 1930s to the 1950s, with no subtext that this was when trufandom existed, never to come again. For all I know, he may have thought that and was too wise to actually say it; but I don't think so. Face it, Dave Kyle has had a long and full life; a life that has seen many changes in his soon to be 95 years. He has been a SF fan throughout his life and he wouldn't remain involved, even to his current minimal extent, if he wasn't able to adapt to the changes. I really do not think that he subscribes to the same worldview of the Toronto "Old Guard" of traditional fandom who view everyone under age fifty to be "fakefan" mundanes.

Oh, is he a fanzine fan -- damn right. There is no question about it. Is he interested in fan history, of course (he is walking and breathing fan history). Is he a social media, twitter-head, teen-love vampire fan? Well, I didn't ask that question, but would strongly speculate that the answer is a firm "No" -- though he has a Facebook page... Anyway, it was great to here him tell his version of fan history from the early decades, with a hint of mischief still in his eyes. I only wish he got the chance to finish telling the story (his version) of what happened when the Futarians found out he wrote the "Yellow

Pamphlet"... Nevertheless, both Lester and I received reproductions of the original "Yellow Pamphlet" from Dave.

With hope, Dave will enjoy the SWILLs he received; and Dave, if you're reading, you are always welcome to have your very own column here at SWILL (No pressure, just if you feel up to it...).

Note: We apologise to BCSFAzine that the above column was not befitting of SWILL's bully reputation. Don't worry, we'll give a thorough thrashing to someone next issue.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings

...a modest column by Lester Kinsford

In five years, science fiction will be obsolete.

Ha ha, Lester is just having a bit of fun. A whole pile of SF is already obsolete, and has been for years. And a lot of what's left is irrelevant.

'Obsolete!' you cry, like someone staring at a teletype that works no more. 'When? and how?' Well, space opera, and the whole general star-roving tales we're used to, became increasingly obsolete starting in the mid-2000s, and by 2010 you could put a fork in them. Yet the space opera part of SF keeps going on like a brontosaurus that's been attacked by a T Rex but not yet fallen over. The first fangs went in prior to 2010, as discussed above, and by now T rex is feasting on the brontosaurus' liver. The brontosaurus meanwhile figures it's only chance is to ignore the T rex and hope the rest of the day gets a bit better.

A whole pile of space opera and star travel and the light of distant suns over a hardscrabble spaceport is based on two assumptions and a resulting question.

Assumption #1: there are a reasonable number of solar systems out there like our solar system, with some combination of earth, Mars, and mercury-sized planets closer to the star, and gas giants further out. Lester recalls reading simulations based on planetary formation models, and this is about what was found. In ~~as~~ addition many stars had low angular momentum, presumably gone into their surrounding planets.

Assumption #2: star travel is reasonably easy, or at least somewhat feasible, but not impossible. This is not scientifically valid, but let's go with it.

Resulting question: where are aliens? If there are lots of planetary systems, why ~~are~~ isn't there intelligent life on

at least some of them? Combine with Assumption 2, and you have to wonder why the Groaci or the Posleen or the Regul havne't dropped by yet.

The question is actually Fermi's Paradox, and it's pretty old (and it's not exactly Asimov's Paradox, or Banks' Paradox). Fortunately it's an open-ended question, so there's lots of room to answer it however you want, and voila your plot is in motion.

Maybe there's something extra-unusual about our solar system and earth (like a very large moon), and therefore we are the only intelligent life. Well, the galaxy is mankind's! (Yes, it's a pretty Campbellian 'Man will inherit the universe' setting.)

Or, your story could be about first contact, which you do skillfully enough to palm the card that says 'but that should have happened back in the paleolithic' and, when no one is looking, throw it down the garbage disposal.

Or, maybe the aliens have been manipulating us all along. Lester can recall a few such stories, like some by Doc Smith, and maybe one or two by Philip Dick.

And then the astronomers had to come along and ruin it.

When the first few reports of extremely large planets in extremely close orbits came in, well it was pretty easy to dismiss that as "okay, we didn't expect that, but our detection abilites aren't very good. We have found a very wierd system, because that's the only kind of system we can find." The T rex was just a rustle in the bushes....

But as system after system was found, and basically none of them resembled anything we were familiar with, it became pretty clear that our models of planetary system formation were all wrong. Or maybe our models of how planetary systems work over time--there is evidence that those hot close super Jupiters ~~and~~ formed reasonably far out and then migrated inwards. Yes, Velikovsky was onto something! (Few astronomers will admit to this.) And the tRex was starting to dismantle the rib cage about then.

Don't even think about dark energy and dark matter. Astronomers don't know what they really are, and the implications are unknown (we're talking "unknown unknowns" in Dick Cheney's parlance).

If van Vogt was writing now instead of in the 1940s, you bet he would come up with all sorts of wild stories where the hero takes dark energy to twenty decimal places and becomes superhuman with tendrils, or something. But today's SF writers, a timorous and unimaginative lot, neither care to cope with this, nor are able to cope. So the space opera yard goods keep getting turned out, despite the fact that the universe is not like that; even more, not only is it not like that, it's stranger than anyone understands or imagines at this moment in time.

A huge opportunity for creative and exciting stories. We don't have them. Lester, once again, suspects that the series and yard-goods orientation of current SF is to blame. If you don't really understand what's going on, you can play with concepts in short stories and novelettes. However, if you are turning out multi-book series, you stick with what you know, and what you know is the two assumptions, and you write. Like the brontosour, you hope that your day gets better, and these pesky results will go away. In the meantime, the T rex of reality burrows deeper into your vitals. In five years, people will look back at current space opera, and it will be totally obsolete, kind of like stories that assume the Cold war with the Soviet Union is still going on in 2113, or that there will be one very big computer running on vacuum tubes controlling the world.

Well, Lester certainly hopes that this will be the case in five years, but the momentum of ~~irrelevant~~ obsolescence is very hard to stop. As Hari Seldon said (Lester seems to recall), when a brontosour, or huge old tree, is very big, it takes a long time to fall over. But when it does fall over, boy does it make a mess. That's why Lester hopes that it falls over sooner rather than later (plus Lester would love to read some interesting new stuff in short-story form). (Lester, too, chooses to ignore inconvenient reality.)

The astute reader may have noted that, while some SF is obsolete already, other SF is irrelevant. Lester will return to that anon.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Violating the Taboos Norms of Science Fiction

Part 5 of 8 – Mood Trumps Plot

James William Neilson

Malzberg's Taboos of Science Fiction or in my terminology, Norm Violations. These are story concepts and/or plots that if written -- if the norms are violated -- are unpublishable; no professional editor in the genre will touch these stories with a three-metre pole, and certainly would never, ever publish them.

NORM VIOLATION FOUR: Mood Trumps Plot

'Science fiction which owes less to classical, Aristotelian notions of "plot" - the logical, progressive ordering of events as a protagonist attempts to solve a serious and personally significant problem - than "mood".'

This is the type of story that leaves the traditional SF reader (and thus also the typical SF editor) complaining that there is no story. And they are correct, in a classical sense -- there is no central problem personal and/or otherwise for the protagonist to solve, i.e. no classical plot. The mood or atmosphere of the story overshadows the plot, and the plot tends toward the forms of stream of consciousness, a slice of life, and the vignette or vignettes. There is often no firm resolution at the end of the tale, or only a minor resolution. Instead, you get a portrait of the protagonist(s) and the world that they inhabit.

To which the average SF reader and editor are quick to say, "Fuck that literary fiction bullshit; give me some action, conflict, a climax, and some resolution, or else you can just piss off!"

Now, I do like stories where plot trumps mood, but I also like stories where mood trumps plot. I do not have any major preference overall, though stories where plot trumps do tend to be an easier read. However, what I really enjoy is in longer pieces (novellas and novels) when the author balances both, or at least alternates between the two poles. So, as a reader, I rather enjoy a good mood trumps story. I am not advocating a steady diet of this type of tale, only that I like it. And really, unless you are an action junkie, what really is wrong with the occasional mood piece?

As a writer, I am a frequent violator of this norm as well as norm violation two (introspective tales). I have also been guilty of these violations for many decades, even back in my radio days. The majority of my radio writing was 100% solid classical plot driven stuff, like the serials written within the subgenres of space opera (On The Rocks) and cyberpunk (Rhonda Riot and the Insurgents). But most of my miniseries (The Time Tracks Set) and single episode pieces (By the Shores of the Tranquil Sea) tend to have a greater emphasis upon mood. I am looking back to my time in radio, as evidence that it was not academe alone that influenced my constant violation of these norms; they were already present in my writing.

But, academics did push me further in that direction -- a good fieldnote excerpt within an ethnography should act as a portrait of the culture/subculture and/or the worldview of the people or a single person within that culture/subculture, their perceptions of, and reactions to, and the meanings that they attribute to the events that occur within the world that they inhabit. Thus, being a norm violator (in particular of number two and number four), although pre-existent, was encouraged and amplified in the course of my academic training. And this may be a stumbling block in my writing of short fiction (or at least a major detriment to selling that fiction) because I am a repeat offender.

Norm Violation One story, "Taking Care of Business", also violates Norm Two and may weakly violate Norm Four. Norm

Violation Two story, "Making Stones", also strongly violates Norm Four. Norm Violation Three story, "Back in the USSR" also violates Norm Two. Both of my Norm Violation Four stories engage in multiple norm violations; "Secondary Deposition of Cultural Remains" violates both Norm Two and Norm Four, while "The Last Children of Apollo" only additionally violates Norm Two.

So, there we are until next time. I will only report the progress of these stories should I happen to sell one of them (professionally).

Scribbling on the Bog Walls

Letters of Comment

James William Neilson

As I write this, there is only a single proper LoC this time around (from, of course, Lloyd) and a couple of email LoCs (sort of) from Taral. My comments are, of course, in glorious pudmonkey.

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December 17, 2013

Dear James:

Thank you for the 20th Swill, and congratulations on getting the word out about Swill to the unwashed masses at SFContario 4. Great party, and greetings to Lester! Comments follow, and I hope they make sense.

Ah, but this is SWILL, Lloyd -- LoCs that are pure gibberish rants are always welcome (though it has been a long time since we received one of those) and "making sense" is never a requirement... But yes, the SWILL party was a success and there will be one next year at SFContario. I was toying with the idea of doing a SWILL party at Ad Astra, but couldn't get a room on the party floor (or in the Sheraton for that matter, I'll be slumming it at the Best Western).

There are fans of all stripes around, mostly because there are now so many different interests encompassed by the simple term

'fandom'. I think older fans remember a past time, and wonder about all these new people with new interests, and aren't very accepting. I may be guilty of this myself, but I do remember a different time, and wish I could return to it. Traditional fans seems to be a good term to use to describe that older crowd.

Okay, I am going to eat my previous words regarding myself. I now do agree with Graeme, I am a traditional fan -- albeit an iconoclastic and heretical traditional fan, but a tradfan nevertheless. As I have mentioned before, my first involvement in fandom was not with "real fandom" but with other science fiction fans my own age in secondary school. When I discovered "real fandom", the majority of the people involved were tradfans and this really was the only fandom in the mid 1970s (other than Trek fandom). Even the non-Trek mediafens of the late 1970s (and some of the Trek mediafens) had been enculturated/socialised by tradfandom -- which definitely was the dominant form of fandom -- into adopting many of the norms and values of tradfans. Many, but not all.

I cannot recall that any of my fellow fans from that time period had a burning desire to turn the clock back to the late 1950s and live the fannish lifestyle of then. But we produced fanzines, we ran/participated in the running of conventions, were members of clubs/formed clubs, and participated in weekly/monthly fan socials. That some of our fanac was deemed improper or not "real fanac" by the uber-orthodox tradfans does not make that fanac "unfannish" even in the temporal context of the late 1970s/early 1980s. And within today's context, it was traditional fan activity.

As for the contemporary “young turks” of fandom and traditional fanac, more on that later...

I've tried to get friends interested in fanzines, but to no avail. They have their own interests, and I have mine. No renaissance for us, we are a niche interest, and that's the way it will stay, whether we like it or not.

I don't see any renaissance either. However, like Graeme, I see there being room for growth. Not big growth, just enough to sustain the niche. And that will require some tolerance on the part of the old guard. Any person under 30 who is drawn into fanzine fandom is entering in as a digital-native with full knowledge of all the internet and social media memes that they will probably attempt to port to the print medium in some form. They will experiment, etc. And that is to be expected. I experimented with audio fanzines in the late 1980s. When I first revived SWILL, I had an experimental model in mind that it would just be an evolving single issue that would grow in content as time went by -- kind of like a semi-static blog. That I changed my mind and switched to the traditional issue-by-issue fanzine format, says a lot about me actually being a tradfan. And where the Fanstuff set, and even Graeme, and I part ways is that I would view a multimedia fanzine that has a blog, podcasts, video content, and traditional print component as being a fanzine -- especially if it has separate issues.

Jump-cut to your next paragraph... Yes, I have seen a few of the steampunk zines and they are very good. I would not be surprised if some will actually be printed on paper (if I recall

correctly the old Dominion Dispatch first issue of each volume was only available in print) maybe even printed by mimeo.

Anyway, I have still not heard back from the programming gods of Ad Astra on doing a workshop on fanzines and an Ad Astra APA (digital, of course) at the con; but, there is nothing like hands on to generate interest.

My loc...I have expressed my opinions about fans being trained to be passive consumers, and lots of people have disagreed. They feel that there's plenty of people staging these new conventions, and creating podcasts and blogs. I have to agree with them, and see that they have their own activities. One old fannish phrase is The Happy Deadwood, those fans who did not participate in managing clubs or conventions or other fannish events, but who still put their money down to belong or attend or take part. Their cash is as important as any activity, for they help to make things happen, too. I am finding steampunk zines here and there...The Gatehouse Gazette, now ended, Steampunk Magazine, Exhibition Hall, Aether NZ, and recently, The Concordium. They are mostly if not all electronic zines, but the production values are just amazing.

Ah, I haven't done conrunning for a few decades, but I recall the term. Yes, the Happy Deadwood were your bread and butter as they would attend and spend money and their attendance was their fanac. The "young turks" are already holding their own conventions, etc. As an old fart, I can look back and say that this was very similar to the late 1970s and early 1980s when it was the fannish mediafen who were starting up the first fan-run media SF cons. The difference between then and now is that back then, this group was in the minority and today, they are a majority within fandom. Established fan-run SF cons need to tap into this group and their energy to revitalise their cons and

bring in the younger crowd. That will mean some changes and the old guards running these cons will have to adapt. It also means that part of the nature of fan-run conventions will change dramatically. <SHRUG> Look, you either change so that new blood is attracted to attending your con or your con will eventually die (usually by the con going bankrupt) and the youngsters will create a new con to occupy the same niche in their own image. By bringing in the youth, you at least have some possibility of socialising them or having them gain an understanding of what older fans want to see in a convention -- it doesn't mean that they will listen or not go and re-invent the wheel, but there is a possibility. The fact that the "kids" are creating their own fan-run conventions is a good sign; it means that trade show cons like Fan Expo are not enough and that they do want the face-to-face social time that exists at a fan-run con. Current conrunners should be attempting to capitalise on this (says the anarch-syndicalist, fully aware of the irony)...

The job hunt...I did find work at an agency in Etobicoke, but the contract I signed will not be renewed in the new year thanks to a shortage of work, so I must look again. The TCon Society may be staging another Polar Chill with more programming in it. That's what the grapevine tells me right now. We were never formally connected with TCon, but Yvonne was the founder of Toronto Trek Celebration / Toronto Trek / Polaris. Her initial goal was to stage a Trek convention, but to bring in the script writers and book authors. Well, THAT didn't work.. Many of the TCon people are right now quite tired. People come up to them with lots of ideas about what should be in the next convention, and from what I've seen online, they are quite tired, and would like to see someone else take over the reins, and run cons.

Good luck in the job hunt. Yeah, I did a few years of contract work. It sucked the big time with the constant insecurity, will the contract be renewed or not, etc. All I can say is keep at it, man...

Polar Chill with more programming may attract me to attend. I have little interest in attending a media SF relaxicon or actually any relaxicon these days.

If the TCon leaders are burnt out; see above. The con will change. It will tick off some of the older attendees, yes. But, if you want to sustain your con, you cannot only cater to an aging and thus, over time, dwindling population of attendees.

I'm trying to write as many of these letters as I can before the end of the year so I can get caught up on the pile of zines I have, either electronic or paper. Thank you for this one, and I hope you're working on the next one.

Best of Christmas and New Year to all.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Glad to hear from you, as always, Lloyd. I hope that you both had a wonderful holiday season and all the best for you both in 2014...

From: Taral Wayne
Date: Sun, December 1, 2013 5:08 pm
To: swill@uldunemedia.ca

Graeme tells me he believes you intend to be humorous, but after reading issue after issue on the same theme, I have come to doubt it. So I have begun to lose my own sense of humour.

From: swill@uldunemedia.ca
Date: Sun, December 1, 2013 5:55 pm
To: Taral Wayne

I understand from Lloyd you have a missive for SWILL. Will be happy to receive it regardless as to its humour.

As I said to Graeme; some of what we say is real and some of it is humour. Bottom line is that I do not accept the notion that only the "trufen" traditional fans are real fans and that all other fans (the majority) are "fake fans". Didn't accept it 30 years ago and I don't accept it now.

Neil

From: Taral Wayne
Date: Sun, December 1, 2013 7:04 pm
To: swill@uldunemedia.ca

Yes, but nobody is saying that anymore. Oh, a few hold-outs like Arnie, but no reasonable Old Schooler insists he's the only kind of SF fan ... or gives a damn, really, what the hell fandom is or isn't. Just because a person may be a Polish, left-handed or a Democrat is no reason to regard them as your bosom buddy who you welcome into your home. The collective identity is too large to be meaningful on a personal scale. At the scale fandom has grown

to, it is impersonal ... and not worth investing a huge emotional stake in.

So you are fighting against straw men, a battle far too easy to win. It's over. Move on.

Well, I never received from Taral the missive Lloyd had mentioned at SFCOntario 4. Anyway, here is my response to Taral's second email.

Okay, now I do not know Arnie, but recently, it would appear that he does now agree that fandom does include all fans, but his preferred fandom is traditional fandom -- which he still insists upon calling trufandom. My question is, have you also had a recent sea-change in opinion on this subject. I do recall that when we met at SFCOntario 2 and discussed the issue, that you were of the opinion that only traditional fans were fans and that SFCOntario was not really a traditional fan convention. Which I disagreed with, as I saw the con and still see it as a small scale primarily literary fan convention that definitely seemed to be very tradfan from my perspective.

And I don't think that you agree with my definition (or Graeme's) as to who is a traditional fan. I think that your definition is more exclusive and linked to subcultural memes that have largely disappeared. The whole concept of Fandom Is A Way Of Life, that SF fandom is your primary social network, that if someone says that they are a fan then that means that they-share-common-norms-and-values-with-you is gone. It has

been gone for a long time, actually. If someone says to me that they are a fan, all it means to me is that we may actually enjoy the same genre in fictional entertainment (and even that could be wrong as they may actually be a fantasy or horror fan who doesn't like science fiction) and that is it. That doesn't mean that we will like the same type of SF or share an interest in the same SF subgenres, or like the same films, or like the same television programmes, but we may be able to talk together about the genre.

Thing is, I am not looking for a new "bosom buddy... (to) welcome into (my) home." I don't see SF fandom as my primary social network, at all (even in secondary school when it was my primary network, it was that within the context of a particular secondary school and it was not my only social network, either). That said, most of my oldest friends are people that I met within the context of SF fandom.

From my perspective, upon which we do not now, nor have we ever in the past, agreed, you are an uber-orthodox or orthodox traditional fan. Your version of fandom has shrunk to a minority within traditional fandom and is but a miniscule niche group within all of fandom. And that shift from dominant majority to entering minority status began (in my opinion) circa 1970 with orthodox tradfandom becoming a minority between 1990 and 1995. It has never been my SF fandom and I have always been a FIJAGDH person, it is a part of SF fandom that will probably

go extinct over the next twenty years or so (in the form that you like it to be).

And yes, you are correct; growth of the genre is what killed orthodox traditional fandom (as well as new technologies). The growth of the genre in the 1960s and the linkage to the sharp increase in fantasy (we're still talking about the literature, i.e. print) increased the number of fans. The penetration of the genre into other mediums further accelerated that increase as did the increased popularity of the genre(s). More readers, more viewers, etc. takes away the small village feel that your preferred type of fandom required; a type of fandom which can only be maintained within a self-imposed ghetto within the big multicultural city that is fandom.

Again, I don't mourn this change of fortune any more than I mourn the loss of rotary dial phones -- I don't have any emotional investment within this niche of fandom. However, I do not have any desire to lay waste to orthodox traditional fandom and smite it from the face of the universe. I will continue to poke it with a stick, especially when members continue to make claims that they are the one-true-fandom, for entertainment. You may not find being poked with a stick (especially when it is a pointy stick) all that entertaining (I understand that) but it is also a SWILL tradition, which means that I am going to continue to do it anyway.

Endnote: The SWILL Stance

James William Neilson

Notice to All Readers:

SWILL has been condemned for:

- being nasty and mean to traditional fandom (in particular those members of orthodox traditional fandom who continue to insist upon calling themselves "trufandom")
- being a bully to traditional fandom for over 30 years (we have also been mean and nasty and a bully to comic book fandom and media fandom in the past -- we remain, a partially, equal opportunity bully service)
- polluting the precious bodily fluids of fandom (we really don't want to know more about this nor do we desire clarification...)
- associating with "known reprobates" (and we will continue to do so)
- and probably some other offenses/fannish crimes...

The official SWILL stance to these accusations is as follows:

So what?!!

Grow a pair of yarbles or a backbone. Otherwise, just fuck off. If you don't like SWILL, don't read SWILL -- nobody is forcing you to read this fanzine, are they? Are they? If they are, well then, have them email us and we will happily provide them with more-SWILLish content on demand (for a hefty price -- this would be custom-work after all).

Pith Helmet and Propeller Beanie Tour

The face-to-face participant observation portion of the research project is starting to wind down a bit(PO will continue via the internet, etc.). Here are the 2014 tour dates as they currently stand...

April 2014 Ad Astra 2014 -- Toronto

August 2014 Loncon 3 -- London, UK ???

November 2014 SFContario 5 -- Toronto

SUPPORT SCIENCE FICTION READERS' RIGHTS! BOYCOTT SFCONTARIO 4!!!

Every year, real science fiction fans are demeaned by a so-called "literary science fiction" convention that panders to those vermin scum -- the self appointed "trufans". These troglodytic living fossils (well, sort of living) shamble about muttering how everybody who is not them is a "fakefan" and not worthy of being permitted to read science fiction. That only they, the "trufen", are legitimate fans and that all the rest of us (a pretty big majority at that) are little more than shithead mundanes masquerading as fans who must be banned from ever attending a fan-run convention or even referring to ourselves as fans. That we should be cast out and damned to trufan hell, aka FanExpo.

This swinish miniscule niche believe that sf fanzines are of the same, no superior, literary calibre to the works of Clarke, Asimov, LeGuin, Silverberg, Vinge, Egan, MacLeod, Banks, Czernada, Stross, Sawyer, etc. That mediocre scriblings about convention trips, and fan fic, and who the assholes are in the East Wawa SF League, and why nobody under 40 is a trufan, and so on -- are more important than the genre itself. That the genre doesn't matter; only fanzines matter. And only the right type of fanzines matter -- fanzines edited by trufans. These australopithecine intellectuals claim that they are the ONLY real fans and that the rest of us are mere posers.

Look, it's time to deal with the undead of fandom -- time to purge them from fandom once and for all.

So rise up... It's time to kick over the walkers of these so-called trufen. Direct their scooters into oncoming traffic or down empty elevator shafts. Ream mimeograph stencils up their asses. Force them to guzzle decalitres of corflu. Beat them to a pulp with their own Gestetners, AB Dicks, and Rex Rotarys. Douse them in mimeo ink and set them on fire (but please, not in the hotel -- use the smoking area outdoors). Rid real science fiction fandom of these slothbrained archaic toad-spawn.

The convention conglom should be on the side of real SF fans but appear to be in conspiracy with these "trufen". That this convention is a "trufan" plot a ploy to engage in the malicious social persecution of real SF fans. And if the conglom wont stand up for real SF fan rights; should they be in favour of perpetuating these "trufen"zombies (complete with rotting flesh scent); well, then they should receive the same reward.

Stand up for real SF fan rights!!!

sincerely yours, Ottawa Fandom Ink.

the assholes

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