

SWILD

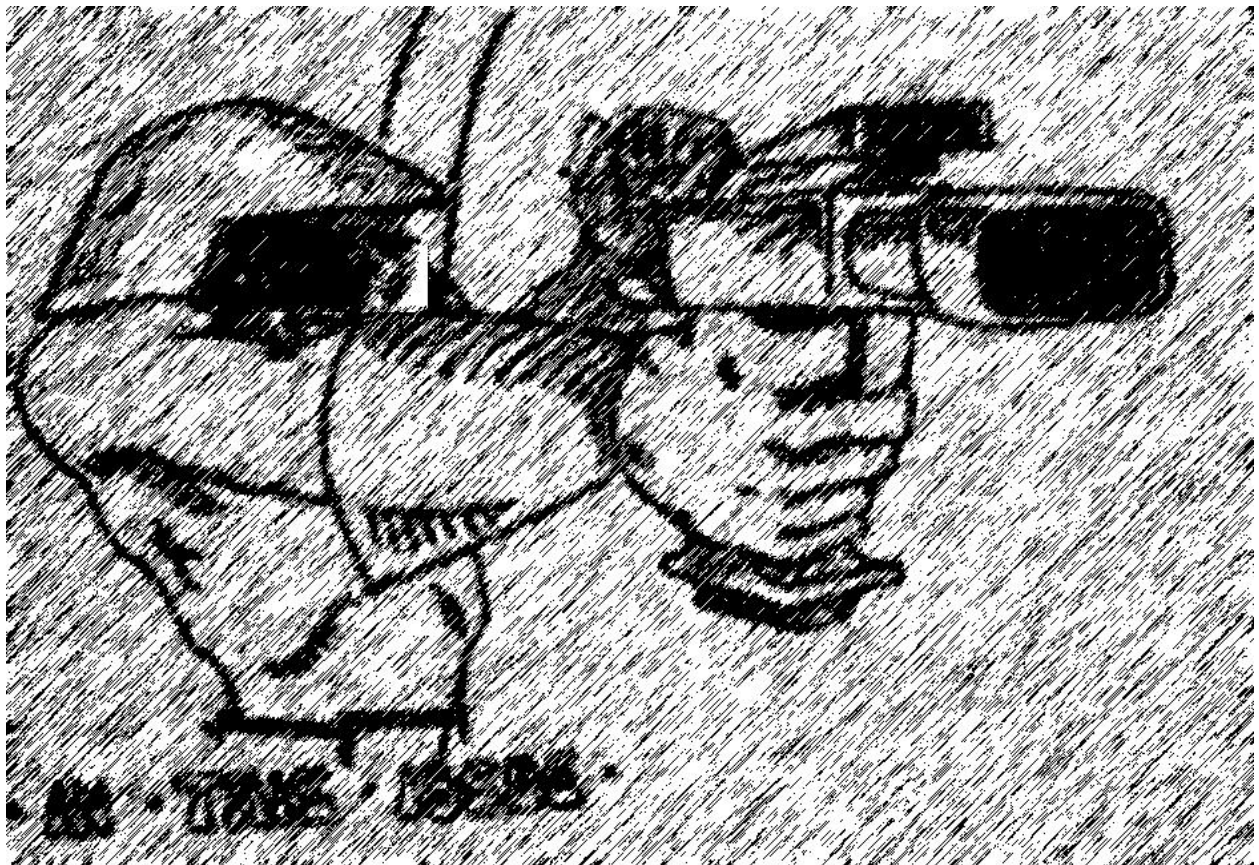


Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Editorial: | Dumping the Body |
| Thrashing Trufen: | Whose House is This Anyway? |
| Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings: | a modest column by Lester Rainsford |
| Flogging a Dead Trekkie: | Pre-empted Programming... |
| Special Feature: | Book Reviews |
| Scribbling on the Bog Wall: | Letters of Comment |
| Endnote: | A Boot-to-the-Head |

Front cover art by Rob Murray and Barb Winkler 1975 for Sirius #1; modified by the editor. Back cover photo taken in 1979/1980 by unknown and originally published in Miriad 2; modified by the editor.

SWILL is published quarterly (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) along with an annual every February - in other words, five times per year.

SWILL

Issue #22 Annual - February 2014

Copyright © 1981 - 2014 VileFen Press

a division of Klatha Entertainment an Uldune Media company

swill.uldunemedia.ca

Editorial: Dumping the Body

James William Neilson

What's it going to be then, eh?

That is the question. As far as I am concerned, as far as SWILL is concerned, traditional "trufan" fandom has already been so thoroughly tolchoked that it is just a bloody, pulpy mass that by all rights should be dead, but persists in croaking out, "But we're the only real fans." Now, I can continue to beat and poke and pummel it more until it loses cellular integrity and is reduced to a goo, but it's getting a bit boring. It's like attempting to have a discussion with a member of the federal Conservative Party -- nothing more than "party-line" parroting and without thought behind it. Same thing, the "trufen" minority will not change, they will not alter their position, they are firm in their belief that they are the one true fandom, and the only ones on the path to fannishness (enlightenment?), and the only ones who can be called science fiction fans. There is no discussion, this lot are like cultists, they have brainwashed themselves.

So be it. It's not worth anybody's time. Most of this lot are ten years older or more than I am, and I am no longer a young malchick myself, so let nature take its course. They are a very small minority anyway and thus, very easy to ignore. And for now, that is what we shall do here at SWILL.

Note: this only applies to the "trufen" minority within traditional fandom, not traditional fandom itself.

So, what axes shall we begin to grind next issue? I am open to suggestions...

In the meantime, what to do with the body??? Shall I use the Fargo wood-chipper, a nice acid bath, or the good old shallow grave with a heavy layer of lime...

Thrashing Trufen: Whose House is This Anyway?

James William Neilson

Taral writes the following in Space Cadet #24:
(<http://www.efanzines.com/SpaceCadet/SpaceCadet24.pdf>)

"Must we become someone else to belong in our own house?"

Oh, but I forget ... it isn't our house anymore. We let everyone in, and now its as much theirs as ours - maybe more so."

To paraphrase my response that appeared in Space Cadet #25 (you can find that here -- <http://www.efanzines.com/SpaceCadet/SpaceCadet25.pdf>). No Taral, you don't have to become a Trekkie, or a member of geek-culture, etc.; you can just be yourself, a tradfan. Fandom is no longer the private exclusive hangout of traditional fandom... There is a tone of regret/self-pity/hoist-by-our-own-petard in the statement "We let everyone in..." that suggests that tradfandom executed themselves. This is just rubbish -- with the growth of the genre, there was no way to keep "them" out. There is no way to keep fandom the sole property of traditional fandom, other than bunkering yourselves off from everyone else. Cons like CorFlu are an example of this -- nobody is going to attend this convention who isn't a tradfan. So you can bunker yourself off, in your very own house, but it is going to be a very small or very empty house.

But what is this "house", after all. Is it fandom? Is it science fiction? Is it both? I believe for Taral, it is just fandom and in particular, fandom as it was prior to 1990 (or possibly prior to 1980). That is all well and fine, but without being able to teleport yourself back in time to "the good old days", you cannot turn the clock back, nor can you force your will upon everyone else; your only alternative is to engage in self-segregation and exist apart from the rest of the "barbarian" horde. Kind of like becoming the fannish equivilant of Amish or Old Order Mennonites. Fine, go ahead, fandom is, essentially, a democracy, and people can vote with their feet. If you want to self-segregate, if you want to bunker yourselves away, or live

out on the "trufan" compound, then do so. Just don't snipe back at the rest of fannish society.

My viewpoint, of course, is very different from that of Taral. I am not a fan of fandom for fandom's sake. For me, the centre, is, and always has been, the genre itself. I am a fan of the genre of science fiction (okay, speculative fiction with a strong preference for science fiction). Fandom exists only within the context of the genre itself having existence; thus, the genre is primary and fandom is a secondary phenomenon. So, from my POV, if the house belongs to anyone, it belongs to speculative fiction, not fandom.

LeGuin had a brilliant description of this house -- she wrote this waaay back in 1974 in the article, "Escape Routes", that was published in Galaxy magazine and collected in The Language of the Night (1979). She says:

"What science, from physics and astronomy to history and psychology, has given us the open universe: a cosmos that is not a simple, fixed hierarchy, but an immensely complex process in time. All the doors stand open, from the prehuman past through the incredible present to the terrible and hopeful future. All connections are possible. All alternatives are thinkable. It is not a comfortable, reassuring place. It's a very large house, a very drafty house. But it's the house we live in.

And science fiction seems to be the modern literary art which is capable of living in that huge and drafty house, and feeling at home there, and playing games up and down the stairs, from the basement to attic."

That is a really cool, wonderful, enticing, distrubing, and scary house; and I love it. And it is a house that many creators, from outside of the print medium, have come to inhabit in increasing numbers over the past forty years. And not everything produced has been fantastic (but some of it has been) and often (unfortunately) it is subpar in comparison to much of the speculative fiction in the print medium (in particular, in regards to scientific literacy). And there are many reasons why that happens¹ and as genre consumers, we often have lower

¹ It happens, because the other mediums must be collaborative and content production is much more expensive. The content for the print medium is inexpensive to produce, so the individual creator (the writer) remains in near complete control. That is not going to happen in film and television when the production costs are going to be in the millions -- there will be decisions

expectations in that regard for film and television SF -- we give an extra suspension of disbelief. But the central point is that there are now many mediums (print, graphic novels, television, film, webseries, podcasts, etc.) all producing speculative fiction content complete with subgenres and subsubgenres. There was a time, back in the mid 1970s when it was possible to read and view all the content produced within the English language for a given year (and even then, there was enough published in print that made this difficult); this is impossible now, even if you are unemployed and all you do is watch and read SF. As has gone the genre, so has the genre's fandom.

Fandom has split into distinct subfandoms, etc. And fandom has changed. Yes, there was indeed a time, in recent memory, about thirty odd years ago, when fandom was still primarily devoted to the print medium and thus still had a small community feel about it -- not really small, but say a town of twenty thousand. That has disappeared and it is not going to come back. The house has changed, or at least the perception of the analogue for that metaphorical house has changed. Forty years ago, that house would be the size of your average mansion -- a wierd combination of architectural style ranging from the gothic, to surreal, to industrial, to medieval, to futuristic, and so on, with multiple wings leading off the main structure that (like the stairways in Hogwarts) unexpectedly move. Today, it is more akin to a quantum haze that the observer (reader or viewer or both) resolves into some confabulation of strange mansion, theme park, and consumer megaplex. And the only constant, is that the house will continue to change.

Whose house is it? It is speculative fiction's house but, it is also the home of speculative fiction fandom, all of them -- even though their name is not on the deed (a "communal property" sort of common-law arrangement). And on the main floor, in part of the science fiction staging area, at the very, very back by the moulding pulps, is a small, narrow, obscure wing that smells of mimeo ink and old paper inhabited by traditional science fiction fandom -- who try and pretend that the rest of the house doesn't exist.

made (rightly or wrongly) that can impact the science, plot, character, the world created, etc. that have more to do with whether or not the money-people think that the average Joe and Jane are going to "get it"; because if they don't "get it", they won't watch it, and there is a hell of a lot more money invested in production than the average \$5,000 advance for a novel.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings

...a modest column by Lester Kinsford

Lester goes to cons for the panels. Sure, there are other things to do, like hang around at parties munching on chips and drinking what's to hand, or avoiding filk, or smirking at costumes. But panels are where it's at.

Ninety percent of everything being crap, there need to be rules to get to good panels. Alas, ninety percent of rules are not foolproof either, so Lester recently walked out of a panel that was surely going to become a horror like....here Lester's imagination and recall of horrible scenes fails him....horror like the previous evening's panel when the same person basically trashed it. Horror that would be Lovecraftian if Lester had read a lot of that.

Lester has some pretty simple rules when looking through the programme.

1) The title and description of the panel.

1a) Criticism in SF--probably ok

1b) The Infoulnce of Academic Criticism in SF--uh oh, DefCon 3 and prepare to escalate as necessary

1c) Marxist and Feminist Criticism ruinde SF!--run away, run away!

2) Who is on the panel that Lester recongizes? This cuts both ways. If Lester recognizes the name, it means good or bad, depending.

2a) Some panelists such as James Nicoll and Karl Schroeder are always interesting. Lester will go to their panels with less regard to the evaluation of 1) above.

2b) Some panelists like to hear themselves talk; some panelists have strange theories that they insist on propounding, some panelists have to have the first word, the

final word, and all the words in between. Panelsits who have a been-in their boennet are best avoided.

This is not to say that the rules are sacrosanct, or disobeying them will be deadly. Lester has seen Charlie Stross in panels, going way off topic and taking over the panel. Then again, Charlie Stross doesn't routinely show up in the sort of local cons Lester frequents. Therefore this is not a long-term problem.

Lester does ~~wit~~wish--and has suggested this--that con goers ~~ean~~ should be able to rate panels and/or panelists for the edification of the ConCom, who after all are too busy to actually attend a lot of panels themselves. If we can use the magic of data to get less of what we ~~like~~ don't like, and more of what we do like, things can only be better, yes?

Lester presumes that his likes and dislikes will be mirrored by all the other fans who like to go to panels. Hmmm.

A good panel will leave everyone, on both sides of the table, thinking new thoughts and seeing new points of view. This is good. ("Science Fiction is a genre of imagination!") A bad panel will leave everyone ready to kick horse in the wall, probably not what the ConCom would wish. So good panels are better than bad panels! All round!

In conclusion, Lester also want s to thank SFContario for getting in guests of honour who are actually worth listening to (at panels, natch), and not just squee-bait celebrities. It's beneath Lester's dignity to squee, anyway. Now, about those panel evaluatin sheets....

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Violating the ~~Taboos~~ Norms of Science Fiction

Part 6 of 8 – Truly Hard Science

Pre-empted Programming

James William Neilson

Okay, I am taking a single issue break for the SWILL Annual from Malzberg's Taboos of Science Fiction. For those who demand that this action be justified, somehow... Piss off!

But, for those who asked nicely: I am busy writing three stories -- all of which are for anthologies that have deadlines -- that don't fit the Malzbergian norm violations (or if they do/might, were not written as a violation of those norms). I also haven't come up with a good idea yet for a NORM VIOLATION FIVE story.

But, I will in time for the next issue...

Special Feature: Book Reviews

James William Neilson

SWILL hasn't done any book reviews for some time, and I thought that it was time that there was some. Book reviews were a regular feature in the original SWILL -- well, sort of... In the original SWILL the book reviews tended to be either of fictitious books or of fictitious parodies of real books. With one single exception, the infamous review of *The Probability Broach*. Since the revival of SWILL there has been only one book review, *Classic Butchery*, which ripped apart the Baen sequels to *The Witches of Karres*. So, here is an experimental trial of real reviews of real books - this may be a new regular feature/column in future SWILL annuals.

Over the past twelve months, I have read a fair bit of new Canadian specific (and all of it fantasy, believe it or not) among other things (I'm still playing catch up on MacLeod and Hamilton and others...). Now, I will state that I don't normally read fantasy works - too many LoR rip-offs in the 1980s have soured the well in that regard. So, that means that I usually only read a fantasy novel after it has been out a few years and everyone is still talking about how good it is. So, it is a bit of a rare event (like a SWILL book review column devoted to real books) that I read fantasy novels within two years of the publication date, and even more rare when two of them I have read within months of their release.

Night's Edge: A Turn of Light

Julie E. Czerneda

DAW 896 pgs. ISBN 978-0756407070

I tend to like Czerneda's work, not all, but most of it. I really liked *In the Company of Others*, loved the *Species Imperative* trilogy, and enjoyed the *Trade Pact* trilogy (but not enough to try the *Stratification* trilogy). So, a solid enough

track record to encourage me to consider embarking on the reading of a Peter F. Hamilton length (almost 900 pages) fantasy novel -- Czerneda's first novel in the fantasy genre. I do this with some trepidation, though. I actually know Julie as an acquaintance and I had also won a copy of this novel in a contest. Thus, I knew that there would come a time when I would have to review the book somewhere, or at least send Julie an email on the subject.

Now, reading this novel did not get off to a smooth start; I hadn't realise how spoiled I had become as a Kobo (like a Kindle for American readers) user over the past four years -- I am rarely an early adopter of new technology, but I bought my Kobo Original within the first week that it came on the market. I found the act of reading a large, trade paperback book to be a tad daunting and so the poor tome languished on my bedside shelf for a couple of months before I finally decided, this is not going to happen, and purchased the Kobo epub of the novel.

Once I actually started the novel, I was captured within the first chapter and drawn into this world. In brief, this is a bildungsroman or coming-of-age tale, centred around the protagonist Jenn Nalynn and the village of Marrowdell. The novel has been described as a romantic fantasy, which in part is a misnomer, at least for me; there certainly is romance, but there is a great deal more as well. The general pace of this novel begins at a quiet and slow pace, like a lazy summer afternoon walk in the country, as you soak up all the local colour -- of which there is an abundance -- before it quickens. Brilliantly, nothing seems forced, everything happens within a strong internal logic and context of the created world. The novel is strongly plotted and engrossing; it fills you and pulls you along with it.

All of the characters are very well developed in the novel, even the very minor characters, and it is difficult for me to pick any favourites. I will confess that, at first, I didn't care too much for the protagonist Jenn Nalynn (though that has more to do with Czerneda's skill in accurately creating an 18 year old character), but over time, Jenn did win me over. Again, all of the characters in the novel are, well people, and by possessing this level of depth, they aid in the construction of making this fictional world appear real.

As this is a fantasy novel, it does involve magic. I really like the magic as depicted in the novel. Marrowdell, and this is as far as I am willing to venture down the path towards spoilers, is by its very location a site of natural magic. The natural magic

that infuses the village is not, in my view, well defined -- it kind of works with the natural flow of things -- and that is perhaps the greatest strength of the magic of Marrowdell. We are made aware of other types of magic, common outside of Marrowdell such as folk magic and ritual magic, both of which either don't work within Marrowdell or do work with unexpected and unforeseen and potential dire consequences. I like the way that magic has been done in this novel because it has a level of realism built into it while still remaining ambiguous and situational.

I said earlier that I didn't have a favourite character in the novel, and that is true in the regular use of the word. I would say that my favourite character in the novel is the world that it takes place in. Czerneda has created a world that is wide, old, and real. Even though the setting is the village of Marrowdell in the remote north of Rhoth, we get a strong impression of what exists beyond the borders of the village. Not enough that we can say that we know Rhoth, or the neighbouring realms of Ansnor and Elad, or even the capital city of Rhoth, but we can say that we know of them. We also know of some of the politics, the court intrigue, the technology, bits of culture, and history of this world that Marrowdell is located within. There is no sense that this world is simply a set or backdrop; no, this is a living, breathing world filled with good and bad, justice and injustice, and so on. It is a lived in world and a very well constructed world.

So, to sum up, this is a well written, well plotted novel with very strongly developed characters, world, and system of magic. Yes, it is more pastoral than action-packed (but that doesn't mean that it is devoid of action, but there is no action simple for action's sake). Yes, it is a romantic fantasy rather than a heroic fantasy (and yet there are heroic acts and sacrifices). But it is also, in my mind, a unique fantasy novel and an excellent one; it is definitely worth the read.

What, no negative comments?! How can this be a SWILL review? Well, here we go, though this has to do with a reoccurring theme in Czerneda's work... Hair! Maybe it's just me, maybe it's because I'm a guy, I don't know... It is a minor irritant the amount of time Czerneda spends talking about hair, in particular the hair of her protagonists. At least Jenn didn't have semi-sentient hair that was almost a prehensile appendage as does Sira in the Trade Pact trilogy. There, negative comment made.

Wolf at the End of the World

Douglas Smith
Lucky Bat Books 352 pgs. ISBN 978-0991800735

Doug Smith is an excellent short fiction writer. I may not like all of his stories, but I like the majority of his work and he is a writer who can, apparently, transfer without effort across the boundaries between fantasy, and horror, and science fiction. Smith has written a novelette "Spirit Dance" (collected in *Impossibilia*) that takes place prior to the events of *Wolf at the End of the World* and involves some of the major characters in the novel. I have not read this novelette. I thought of doing so before reading *Wolf*, but decided against it; I wanted to come to this novel as fresh as possible for someone already familiar with Smith's work.

Wolf is Smith's first novel and it is a strong first novel. This is an urban fantasy and also a coming-of-age story (in part) and thriller. Smith has drawn upon First Nations myth and legend (in particular Ojibwe and Cree) for his novel centred around the Heroka -- shaper-shifters linked to a totem animal (e.g. a wolf) -- and the black operations division of CSIS (the Tainchel) that hunts the Heroka. Added into the plot are contemporary issues of First Nations policy and treatment as well as strong environmental themes, plus, more First Nations myth in the form of the Wendigo and the Trickster figure Wsakejack.

What Smith has done well is to make use of First Nations mythology in, what I believe (wearing my anthropologist hat), is both an honest and respectful manner. He is not engaged in the usual cultural-appropriation rip-off that other authors have done. He has also intentionally made it a point, as a Canadian of European descent, to be very aware of this issue. His depiction of Ojibwe culture, modern lifestyle, and beliefs is as true as possible for an outsider to paint. This is one of the strong points of the novel.

Both the characters and the world created in *Wolf* are strong and believable; Smith has done an admirable job here. However, on reflection, they lack the same level of depth that exists in Czerneda's *A Turn of Light*. I say, upon reflection, as the pace of *Wolf* is far more rapid than that of *Turn*; you don't notice it during the course of reading, only after the fact. That said, the story-telling is superbly crafted, strongly plotted, with good twists, that pulls you along with ease -- definitely a "page-turner".

My negative comments are slight, this is a first novel -- a strong first novel -- but still a first novel. While, I would like to see more of this world, I would also like to see Smith try his hand with something different before he returns to write another Heroka novel. My other criticism is that Wolf seems at times to attempt to play hagazussa in that it appears to be trying to cross-over the boundary into Young Adult while still remaining Adult. If indeed this was a goal, it didn't work for me.

Nevertheless, this is a book to read and I look forward to Smith's next novel...

Nukekubi

Stephen B. Pearl

Dark Dragon Publishing 254 pgs. ISBN-10 0986763365

Sigh. I have known Stephen Pearl for over twenty years. Over those years I have read his fiction, I have not liked it, I have been polite, I have offered suggestions, and so on...

When I read the reviews of Nukekubi, I thought that maybe he had begun to develop and decided to give the novel a try. You win some, you lose some...

In a rather un-SWILL-like fashion; I defer to the words of Thumper's father; "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all".

Scribbling on the Bog Wall:

Letters of Comment

James William Neilson

As I write this, there is one LoC from the usual suspect (Lloyd) and an uber-long LoC from Taral. My comments are, of course, in glorious pudmonkey.

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

February 11, 2014

Dear James:

Many thanks for another Swill, issue 21, and it's time to see what you and Lester are kvetching about now. Given it's fandom, there's lots to kvetch about.

Fortunately, otherwise what would we kvetch about...

Ideas like FTL travel and transporters and ansibles are great, but are science fantasy. More than anything else, they are plot devices to move the action along to where you want it to be. At one point, SF readers liked the newness of these ideas, but the ideas aren't new any more. We need new plot devices, or if you can't accept the old ideas, it may be time to find another genre of literature to read that has plot devices you haven't seen before. Who knows, maybe SF is obsolete, like Lester says in his column.

SF may or may not be obsolete, just yet. However, there is the risk that this will happen in one way or another in the very near future. One could say that this process is already in progress as

the present and future becomes more and more science-fictional and most of science fiction become indistinguishable from "mainstream" fiction; leaving only obsolete artifacts like space opera, military SF, etc. behind to populate the genre...

Dave Kyle is probably now our most elderly elder statesman when it comes to SF, given that great writers like Fred Pohl have now passed away, and the SF field seems to me to be full of relatively unfamiliar names. I did get a chance to talk to him, wonderful old ideas, but I got the feeling he was perhaps being his age...his memory is affected, and he asked me the same questions about six or seven times within a half hour.

As an elder statesman, Dave is, well elder. Yes, he did wander and repeat himself a bit in conversation with me as well. That is why, I never did get his version of what the Futurians said to him when they found out wrote wrote and printed the "yellow pamphlet". <shrug> Dave was older than I am now when SWILL was first published 33 years ago -- I will cut him some slack and not tolchock him, but I would still like to hear the story (his version)...

The boycott flyer that you circulated at SFContario 4 may just show that fandom is generally humour-impaired. So much of fandom was at one time mostly concerned about fun and a few pranks, but now, we're too serious. I am kinda feeling my age, and seeing that SF and fandom have changed so much as to have left me behind. I could kvetch about that, but I do remember when I got into fandom finding older fans who didn't like me being there, and told me so, but I stuck around. Now, I am one of the older fans, and while I may not have much in common with newer fans, I am determined to not say they shouldn't be there.

Both of us are now, older fans... At times this is scary and at other times, just the way things are. Fannish pranks serious and frivolous do go back to the days of First Fandom and i

remember them in my youth as well. While some of the SFCOntario 4 ConCom were upset about the boycott flyer, others on the ConCom were not and took it as the humour intended. So, not everyone is humour-impaired; thank the Gods...

Why haven't aliens visited us yet? Yes, they are more advanced than we are, but I suspect they are also smarter, too smart to deal with the likes of us. I suspect once our planet is destroyed one way or another, the local extraterrestrials will breath a sigh of relief, and will go about their usual galactic business with us out of the way.

Oh, so pessimistic... Yes, we may destroy ourselves and we (or our elites) appear to have selected this as our primary strategy (because it allows for our elites to continue to maximise profits and because they honestly believe that they will somehow survive the impending doom that they create). As lots and lots of money can buy you lots and lots of power and resources, it may be only the majority of humanity that is wiped out and our elites will carry on.

As for aliens, who knows for certain? Their strategy or planning or policy could be, very alien. They are probably more advanced, but probably not too much more advanced (otherwise, we would have already been colonised, their presence would have been detected, etc.). The gamma-ray burst phase transition hypothesis (that gamma-ray bursts have slowed to a rate that it now permits complex multi-cellular life to evolve and potentially develop high technology before another sterilising burst occurs) would explain our present observations. It could

also mean that we are at present, the most advanced technologically.

Of course, it could also be that advanced Type I civilisations do not attempt to explore and/or colonise the galaxy, that the cost/benefit ratio stops this from occurring (though I don't actually buy that argument, in its entirety, though I do in part -- space travel is hard, difficult, and expensive, interstellar space travel even more so...)

I suspect Yvonne and I will be at Ad Astra for only the Saturday. I also suspect the registration team has been setting aside memberships for us, and know they would be into trouble if that was ever revealed. Nonetheless, we will be there Saturday only, no matter what the badge says. We can't afford hotels any more. I know Ad Astra has had to change hotels and move from Markham to Richmond Hill, but we asked for information on being a dealer at the con, and have received no information, so we have decided to just attend. There are better shows for us to be a dealer at.

Ah, good old Ad Astra. I do not know all of the details with the Ad Astra ConComs, but I do know one thing -- disorganisation is king when it comes to this convention. As for their Dealers' Room, they have fucked things up three years in a row for my old droog, and one year their screw-ups cost him a lot in money (he is NOT attending or having a table this year), so you are probably dodging a bullet there... I have only had to contend with double booking for panels, and stuff like that -- a mild annoyance, only. I have yet to hear back regarding panel suggestions, etc. and I probably won't know for certain anything until Friday of the con when I arrive. If I am on no panels, so be

it; I've already paid full membership anyway. So, I will see you both on the Saturday...

Oh, yes, Swill is just so nasty, and is the stick up the arse fandom often needs, so keep going with it. I'll keep responding, but as long as others think, that may be the only other response you'll get. See you next time.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Actually, I don't think SWILL is nasty enough (and neither does Lester) but I haven't hit upon the burning issue to unleash full SWILLness upon (except for Taral, but that IS kind of akin to senior-abuse; definitely droogish, though not entirely SWILLish). SWILL prefers victims that can actually fight back.

However, for nastiness, do read on... Well not the next bit, the bit after that.

SWILL 20 -- I forgot to include this brief exchange with one of my old droogs, Adam, via Facebook.

Adam Smith Yay!! I'm a "known reprobate"!!

1 December 2013 at 17:30

Swill VilePen Press Indeed you were...probably still are in the eyes of that crowd

1 December 2013 at 17:33

Adam Smith Quite likely!

1 December 2013 at 17:42

In SWILL 21, I mentioned that Lloyd told me at SFC Ontario 4 that Taral had a missive for me. Supposedly Taral sent this, but I never received it. His response to SWILL 21 was to resend it with the request that I not make any comments on the piece in-text. <Shrug> Yeah, well, okay. In my opinion, this is not good form, but what the fuck, I will comply...

Loc on Swill 20, 26 Nov 2013

(I don't really expect this to be published, but under the circumstances, if you intend to, it would be best published in entirety, rather than just cherry-picking points you want to refute. Let me be judged by everything I have to say, or not at all.)

I really think that far too much is being written about the nature or definition of fandom and not enough is being written that you might call "fannish." That is, you, Arnie Katz, Graeme Cameron and even myself have been guilty of late of trying to describe something without borders or exclusive character, for purposes that are impossible to fulfill. I would much rather read what fans are doing than what they should be doing.

At this point, I'm just about worn out on the topic. I've written to Arnie about the same issue of *FanStuff* that you wrote about. I've written to Graeme about his "rant" in the most recent issue of *Space Cadet*. And finally I wrote to Andrew Hooper and his reaction to all this fuss about fandom in *Flag 10*.

Rather than write all the same old stuff about the same old subject one more time, let me just quote myself from my letter to Arnie's *FanStuff*:

Graeme and I have discussed his various projects to infuse new life into fanzine fandom for several months ... if not years. He can't be faulted for enthusiasm or for lack of ideas. Just as I can't be faulted for not being overly optimistic about his chances of

success. The Canadian fanzine archive he began - <http://www.cdnsfzinearchive.org/> - is only the latest project. While he's made a good start, it's hard to predict how extensive his reach will be. To live up to Graeme's goals, it won't be enough to store a mere smattering of *DNQs*, a few *Monthly Monthlies*, a handful of *Lights*, the *Energumens* and *Amors* that I scanned a few years ago, and a glut of recent zines published only in the last few years. But can Graeme find a significant source of *Queebshots*, *A Bas*, *Macabres*, *CanFans*, *OSFic Quarterlies*, *Orcas*, *Simulacrums*, *Winding Numbers*, *Brazzors*, *Thangorodrimms*, *Pantekhnicons* and all the dozens of other Canadian fanzines that made at least some ripple in the ocean of fanzines in their day?

There is the question, too, of whether such an archive serves fandom best by specializing. It's your opinion that an archive serves fandom best by ignoring national boundaries. On the other hand, it is Graeme's particular interest to compile Canadian fanzines ... and it does no harm. Who, after all, is fully knowledgeable about all of fanzine fandom? In my own writing about fanhistory I've mainly focused on Canadian fandom because it was what I knew about ... and who else would write about it? Everyone else is busy immortalizing their particular corner of the fannish universe.

Will Graeme's archive bring any new fanzine fans to the fold? I doubt it, and have said so forcefully on several occasions. But Graeme claims that his site enjoys a large number of hits - certainly more than my defunct blog ever did, or it might not be defunct. What neither of us can answer, though, is whether people searching for fanzines are looking for *ours* ... or looking for fanzines about pop music, breeding goldfish, collectible antiques, modern poetry or model railroading ... and likely going away disappointed. So far, Graeme hasn't discovered a single newbie for fanzine fandom out of all those hundreds of hits. I don't find that encouraging.

But *Graeme* is ever hopeful.

There is also Graeme's Canadian annual fanzine achievement award. This has been problematical from the start. There are so few Canadian fanzine fans that there is a real danger of giving the awards to the same half-dozen or so people every year. The first two year's were selected by Graeme himself, and were as predictable as you might expect. With one or two eccentric choices of Graeme's, it was the same the year after. There was an actual ballot this, the third year, but, for the most part, the names were still

familiar. I'm not sure what can be done about it. In Canadian fandom there are only two clubzines and three faneditors such as myself who anyone outside of some tiny enclave is likely to ever know about. (And our fandom is *itself* a tiny enclave!) There is only one fanartist, three fanwriters and two letter hacks. Another three or four Canadian fans attend Corflu when they can ... for what that's worth.

But *Graeme* is ever hopeful.

It all started, of course, with his massive encyclopedia of Canadian fandom, online at <http://canadianfancylopedia.shawwebspaces.ca/>. Although incomplete and likely never to be finished, it is a treasure trove of information about Canadian fandom that I suspect is sadly underutilized.

Graeme's latest attempt to revitalize fanzine fandom lies in his regular fan column at Amazing Stories, <http://amazingstoriesmag.com/>. To present date, they've run 8 or 9 or Graeme's articles, and I have to admit they have been brisk and entertaining. They would look good in any fanzine ... for that matter, they might raise the quality of Graeme's own fanzines, if he'd care to dwell on the irony of doing his best writing for someone else. Also writing for the "club house" section of Amazing stories are Steve Fahnestalk and Earl Kemp. Graeme has even suborned me into lending a hand, though so far my involvement has been limited to a single, as yet unpublished cartoon for one of his upcoming columns.

Surprisingly, the "club house" columns at Amazing Stories might just reach receptive souls among the readers. I don't have great expectations, mind you. Just because a fan reads science fiction, and reads *about* science fiction, it doesn't follow that he wants to write about it, or - even less likely - write about the subculture that formed around science fiction. But I think the columns at Amazing Stories have a better chance of finding fresh blood for fanzine fandom than any other plan I've heard lately.

And Graeme, for once, may have reason to be hopeful.

Now from my letter to Graeme's Space Cadet 23:

To begin with, when I try to argue with someone wearing two different hats, I have trouble knowing who I'm arguing with. Is it

Graeme the scold, putting Old School fans in their place for not opening their homes and hearts to 15-year-old zombie enthusiasts? Or is it Graeme the sage, who is philosophical about the graying and gradual extinction of the fandom he knew and loved?

No matter. I intend to talk entirely about myself and my point of view, anyway.

From my perspective, fandom was a fairly welcoming place in the past ... up to a point. All you had to do to be welcome was show an interest in science fiction - which was just about entirely the printed word in those days - and to mind your manners. Demanding a place of honour the moment you set foot in a club, or insisting that everyone adopt your revolutionary new spelling reform, would get you labeled as a geek, of course. Even geeks got over it sometimes, though, so if eventually the rough edges of your personality wore smooth, you would finally fit in. Up to a point. There were still personal cliques that, for one reason or another, you would never be at home in - and if you were sensible, you realized this and had *no desire* to force your way in. It was easy to imagine that closed circles were elites, and that you were barred because you weren't one of the Beautiful People, but, in fact, it was more likely because you didn't play poker or couldn't talk publishing shop. Easy to mislead yourself about this, mind you. I tended to.

However, fandom today isn't what it was in 1975. Throwing the door open to all-comers won't necessarily bring in people who want to talk Cordwainer Smith or Theodore Sturgeon with you. It's more apt to bring in people who want to talk about *Game of Thrones* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. When that happens, what do you do? Smile, try to make some inane comments in reply, and watch helplessly as your home fills up with more and more strangers, who haven't the slightest interest in your reading or your hobby?

That's the predicament I see Old School fandom in. It isn't that older fans are unfriendly, or that we believe there's something inferior about people with an interest in Japanese animation or the SCA. Hardly that. But it isn't *our* interest. Attracting such people isn't why we hold open house. If it was, where *do* we draw the line? Martial arts? Viniculture? Go-Kart racing? Fandom can't be for *everyone* ... or it isn't *anything*!

It would be just a format for doing whatever you like. Now, *oddly enough*, that is exactly what I've been arguing lately: that as fandom disseminates into the mainstream, it has ceased to be about

anything in particular, and is increasingly just *a way of doing things*.

For years, this development has been hidden by the fact that most fans actually *do* have more interests than just reading science fiction. Most will *watch* it, either on TV or the Big Screen. Some also enjoy costuming, gaming, arts & crafts, comics and what-have-you. Collecting other kinds of genre-fiction is also common. So, despite the influx of people into fandom over the last two or three decades, many of whom have had little interest in books that aren't about *Dr. Who* or the starship *Enterprise*, it has been easy for Old School fans to accommodate them. Up to a point.

At some point, however, the newbies began to outnumber the establishment. More to the point, as they demanded more and more attention paid to their particular interests, there has been greater and greater reluctance to cater to a minority interest - which is what Old School fandom is becoming. The very nature of fandom, its purpose and identity, has become the stakes between two conflicting views. Was it a fandom about science fiction, primarily the written word ...or fans of the written word just a modest splinter group among many groups that make up popular "geek" culture?

In other words, is the hit TV show, *Big Bang Theory*, the model for modern fandom?

None of this really has much to do with me, however. You see, my dirty little secret is that I'm *not* a science fiction fan. Not in the classic sense of reading it every day, caring deeply about what happens in the SF sub-culture or feeling any urge to proselytize it to the uninitiated. SF is everywhere. Everyone who is under the age of 35 and speaks English (or French, in Quebec) is saturated with science fiction images and ideas, whether they read SF or not. SF is able to look out after itself without my zealotry.

What I've had to face up to is that I'm a hobbyist. I like to draw, write and self-publish. It happens that my background is science fiction fandom of the Old School, so that is my natural idiom. I frankly don't know what I'd do without it. Still, I wouldn't care if the last Arthur C. Clarke novel was burned in a bonfire, if *Analog* went bankrupt or if the Scientologists bought a life-time achievement Hugo for L. Ron Hubbard. Okay ... I'd care about *that* ... but only because it would be in such deplorable taste, not because it would hurt science fiction. As far as making it more acceptable to the general public, it might even *help*.

Anyone who is interested in my hobby - fanzine publishing - is perfectly welcome to take the same pleasure in it that I do. It's just unfortunate that few do. Gawd knows, I've tried to use new information technologies to reach new readers ... but I've only had limited success. The fact is that few people find printed material very exciting - most printed matter that the average person is exposed to is crumpled up in a ball as soon as it is extracted from the mail box, and immediately thrown in the recycle bin. What's exciting about *that*? Especially when, for only \$319.95, you can have a pair of interactive sunglasses that connect to the internet, let you leave voice mail, plan a vacation in Disney World, download the present location of everyone you know and score a fix - all while live-streaming your wait in line for a latté at Starbucks. Maybe the only reason I don't have the iCrap to do all that is that I can't afford it.

I do what I can. I publish digitally, and email to my readers. I keep up a lively presence on a couple of artists' sites and on *FaceBooger*. Probably a third of my readers are people I've reached out to who are *not* members of conventional fandom. My blog was a failure, never gaining more than !! regular readers, as far as I could tell. But I'm not alone - Brad Foster seems to have abandoned his as well. I'm not altogether unhappy with the situation as it is. The other side of the coin is obvious, however. Millions of readers *could* download my fanzines, write to me, talk about me all over the internet, or - more creatively - become involved in my hobby by publishing their own fanzines. Clearly, however, millions of people *don't*. I've tried to deliver the message ... we've tried ... fanzine fandom has tried ... but it's just not being received. This is why I think no amount of welcoming newcomers will work. They're. Just. Not. Interested.

It's worth saying again. They're just not interested.

What more can we do? Put on a steampunk outfit, learn Klingon and chatter about *Elfquest* incessantly ... and *deny who we are*? Must we become someone else to belong in our own house?

Oh, but I forget ... it isn't our house anymore. We let everyone in, and now its as much theirs as ours - maybe more so. And I nearly forgot ... at best, I'm only a casual science fiction fan, so it's no concern of mine. I just publish fanzines about myself and, at present, I think that's the best possible thing I can be doing.

Finally, this succinct little squib from my loc to Andy's Flag:

I feel as though I have been writing entirely too much about fandom lately ... why, I just wrote to Graeme Cameron's *Space Cadet*, expressing my thorough disinterest in spreading the fannish gospel to the fans of tomorrow. Seeing how they don't seem interested, it appears to be a waste of time. We old folk can adapt all we want to the new digital media, but they aren't going to adapt to us by one single pixel: so we can become them or we can remain ourselves. I opt for remaining myself.

I wish I had thought of saying just that to Graeme ... it would have saved me more than two entire pages of typing.

It is, I think, the happiest distillation ever of my thoughts on the recent development of fandom. Had I been able to say it this way a few years ago, I would have saved myself far more than merely *two pages* of writing..

You were somewhat off base in your description of OSFiC, I think. You saw a single cross section of it at a particular time, and have characterized the entire club throughout its 17-or-18 year life as it appeared to you from one, brief encounter. Suppose instead of a science fiction club, OSFiC had been a tribe of native Indians in Brazil that you met on a canoe trip up the Amazon. Would you feel justified in describing their society as one that wore blue jeans, spoke Spanish as a second language and practiced a form of nativistic religion heavily influenced by Roman Catholicism just because that was how you saw them in 1976? Or would you be more likely to be aware that their lifestyle had probably changed many times over the centuries? Granted, a science fiction club rarely lasts more than a decade or two, but the era of OSFiC you were familiar with covered a short period of time in which the club was run by a handful of people who you didn't know well. You likely knew much less about the club before that time, and fairly little about OSFiC's latter years. There were about four quite distinct phases in its short history.

It's unlikely you knew much about the less prominent cliques in OSFiC either. But though they didn't fill the club's newsletter or plan the meetings, they had their own foibles and pursued their own purposes.

You are also completely inaccurate in your remark about the club's harassment of fans with professional or semi-professional ambitions. Among the in-group were Robert Charles Wilson, arguably the best science fiction writer in Canada. As was Patrick Nielsen Hayden, one of the editors at Tor Books. Barry Kent Mackay was a noted columnist in The Star and a well-known naturalist painter. Jim Allan had a book published on Tolkien languages. Although it was a few years later, and a different clique, Robert J. Sawyer was program director of OSFIC for a time. Phyllis Gotlieb was a personal friend of mine and honorary member of the club. I think John Robert Colombo might have been an honorary member as well ... as have been other noted writers like Donald Kingsbury and Karl Schroeder. This is what I mean by saying you didn't know OSFIC well enough to intelligently comment on it.

And do you really think it necessary to descend to the level of calling people "sloth-brained" and "assholes."² There's a time and a place for such passionate language, but surely not in a piece of writing that is pretending to be impartial ... even scholastic. Frankly, Neil, coming from a sociologist, I find it unprofessional.

Number one, despite what you may believe; SWILL does not cherry-pick our LOCs. If it is a LOC, we print the whole damn thing and insert my commentary as the LOC goes along. Only social media "LOC's or reviews in other zines are edited, as they were not written as an actual letter.

As to your LOC to Fanstuff #41, my response in part will appear in Fanstuff #42 -- which I had expected to be out before SWILL

² Second last paragraph, page 8 of Swill 20. "Our only point of difference is that I think that the traditional fen of Toronto have taken exclusivity and assholery to the level of a high art form. Though, that could just be because they are Torontonians, who view Toronto as the centre of the universe ... "

Page 22, first paragraph. "Then, they either launch into nostalgia about the "good, old days" or into diatribe about how this subcultural trait is lost on the sloth-brained "fakefans" (everyone who is not them) of today."

#20 -- and the first two thirds of the Editorial on SWILL #20 is what was sent to Fanstuff.

As to your LoC to Space Cadet #23, I had my own comments regarding that issue and both of our LoCs appeared in Space Cadet #24 and my responses to your LoC can be found in Space Cadet #25 (<http://www.efanzines.com/SpaceCadet/>). In addition, it is dealt with in "Whose House is This Anyway?" within this issue.

In regards to your LoC to Flag #10, I have only one comment. Nobody is going to adapt to your version of traditional fandom, because nobody (okay, hardly anyone) is going to choose to live as if it was 1984 in 2014. Especially if they were born after 1984. Yes, as I have said before, do be yourself; just don't be all "superior-than-thou-looking-down-your-nose" at the rest of fandom.

As for your commentary that appears below the

I will attend to some of that here and the rest within the Endnote.

Regarding OSFiC, which I know that you were heavily involved in. It was not just "one, brief encounter". I used to go down to Toronto three to four times a year to attend OSFiC meetings in

1975 and 1976 (I was in the UK for 1977 and the first half of 1978) and when I moved to Toronto in mid-1978, I was regularly attending OSFiC meetings for a while. I quickly tired of it because, I did not find it a welcoming environment and even though I was now living in the city, I was still treated as if I did not. As I have recounted in SWILL and Space Cadet, I began to hang out more with people my own age, some of whom I met via OSFiC. In my crowd, there were a couple of people who continued to attend OSFiC meetings and reported back on what news there was. Most of us found what was going on was irrelevant. And to ourselves and our interests within fandom as we saw it, it was. Who the fuck cared about some fan feud that happened back in 1970 and shit like that? We were interested in what was happening in the genre?

So, no: I am not basing my view of OSFiC from a single teenage encounter. It is based upon multiple encounters from my teens to my early twenties and not just my views, but the combined views of others plus my own. Were any of the people in my crowd members of the prominent or less prominent cliques within OSFiC between 1976 and 1982; no, I do not think that they were. Whatever view we had was a "laity-eye" view of the organisation at best and never that of the "clergy", like yourself. It is the view from those outside of the inner circle and outside of the circle period as well of that organisation -- it is no less a valid POV than that of those within the inner circle (incomplete albeit, but nevertheless, valid).

Okay, you are very, very defensive of OSFiC. You missed part of the context in the article -- true I do not cue the reader in this short piece, which maybe I should have. Paragraph One introduces the concept of the term exchange culture, with some digs at traditional fandom, while speaking in the general. Paragraph Two is also speaking in the general, but offers the specifics of observations of the exchange culture as it was practiced within OSFiC in the mid-late 1970s. Paragraph Three is general and not specific (i.e. not about OSFiC) -- it is tarring tradfandom in general for this behaviour that was taking place in fandom at that time period, because the writers were all bitching about it -- in particular Ellison. Paragraph Four links the exchange culture as portrayed in Paragraph Two to fanzine fandom and states that the decline in fanzine fandom has resulted in a decline in the exchange culture.

My questions are, as someone who was not really a part of the exchange culture in traditional fandom, was my depiction in Paragraph Two mostly correct or mostly in error? Do you agree with the statements in Paragraph Four of how there is a strong connexion between the exchange culture and publishing print (on paper not pdf) fanzines? Do you not? With the near absence of print fanzines today, do you think that this has had an impact on the exchange culture within traditional fandom? Or am I in error for making this connexion?

As for making up the word, “assholery” to describe the exclusive attitude of tradfandom in the mid-1970s -- this is aimed at OSFiC but also at the rest of traditional fandom from that time period. Note, that I do offer a potential excuse, that this was not a traditional fandom attitude, but just a Torontonians attitude (even though I personally think that the exclusive attitude was indeed a traditional fandom attitude that was compounded and amplified by being Torontonians).

As for the use of the word “sloth-brained”; FYI, that was not directed at OSFiC or traditional fandom, but how traditional fandom, in general, views anyone who is not a traditional fan. Either as some poor sod who has suffered brain damage and is to be looked down upon or avoided, or as an ignorant fool who just has to be placed upon the right path and/or villified should they decline the “assistance”.

As for the rest; read onward to the Endnote...

Endnote: A Boot-to-the-Head

James William Neilson

The Editor (Evil Arch-Anti-Fan) has been Charged by the "Saintly" Advocate of Traditional Fandom (Taral Trufan) with Committing Behaviour Unbecoming an Academic - therefore a crime against society, an act of unprofessionalism, and bias.

In response to these charges I state most definitely that I use words like "sloth-brained", "toad-spawn", "assholery", "fuck", and other not nice and sometimes negative and off colour made-up words in SWILL. Is this behaviour unbecoming of an academic, an act of unprofessionalism, or evidence of bias - within the context of a textbook, an academic paper, or an article in a peer-reviewed journal - it would be, but this is not a peer-reviewed journal, a paper presented at an academic conference, or a textbook, is it? This is SWILL, after all, and SWILL is not an academic work for an academic audience, it is an amateur magazine, a fanzine. It may not be the kind of fanzine Taral is used to or likes or even wants to consider as being a fanzine; but, at the end of the day, it is a fanzine. Or as Graeme wrote of the original SWILL in the Canadian Fancyclopedia years ago and before the current revival; SWILL is "A perzine... What would normally be called a crudzine, but in this case it's not due to lack of ability but rather deliberate policy. Opinionated and rather rude, depending on 'shock' humour. Lots of swearing. Agressive satire."

In other words, SWILL is a fanzine.

And while SWILL may blur the lines between academic journal and a fanzine by using footnotes and occasionally citing sources, that doesn't make it a scholarly journal; not at all.

Look here, Taral, as in the quote from Graeme above, SWILL is a "perzine", a personal fanzine. In other words a fanzine that contains and/or reflects the personal interests of the editor; obviously, one of my personal interests is giving traditional fandom, in particular self-professed "trufans", a boot-to-the-head, or two. Yeah, I am an anthropologist, and a sociologist, and an academic, and a professor, and a fan of science fiction, and (I think just because I pub SWILL) I am marginally a traditional fan, and I am an anti-fan (in regards to self-proclaimed "trufans"), I'm a parent, a middle-aged anarcho-syndicalist, and so on. As the editor of SWILL I juggle my many hats - like Goffmanesque masks and frames - and sometimes a column or editorial is written with one of my academic hats. But that mask does slip or is exchange for another and that nihilistic anti-fan persona is revealed - this is SWILL, after all.

There is a reputation to uphold and all that (as it is, Lester finds the current SWILL too wimpy). Yeah, self-created "trufen" have been SWILL's preferred target since its inception - you may not like that (since you're the one who is being poked with a stick), but that is just tough shit - and the "trufen" tradfans will remain in the gun sight as SWILL's favourite Fritz to tolchock. Just the way things are and that is not going to fucking change.

SWILL may, from time to time, appear quasi-academic, but that is an illusion; for SWILL is simply a cross between an op-ed piece and personal reflection, with a punkish attitude and identity. SWILL, the fanzine, is not academic journal.

Here is an actual sample of academic writing:

On the other hand, there is the question raised by postmodernists - is there such a thing as definitions and terms that have "universal" or "wide" acceptance? And this is a good point. In Bakker's version of Pierce he presents as the INSOR model - Interpretive Network, Sign (or Sign System), and Operationalised Representation. Interpretive Network is what Pierce called the Interpretant - an interpretive community or

network of individuals who share a common sign system. The Sign System, or Sign, is the set of symbols - the code - shared by members of an Interpretive Network. Operationalised Representation, what Pierce termed as the Representant, is a semiotic system of representations that are known by almost all members of an Interpretive Network. At the end of the day, all of our knowledge are signs. All of our definitions and terms are also signs (Bakker, 2005, 2008).

This was written as a paper presented at an academic conference, so it is a less formal style than that of an academic journal. Had it actually appeared in a peer-reviewed journal, it would be even drier (phrases like "on the other hand" and "at the end of the day" would have been edited out as too colloquial). This passage is quite readable and senior undergraduates in sociology or anthropology should be able to read and comprehend its content. So this is an example of academic writing. What Taral refers to as being academic gibberish which he would lampoon as "Opportunised Reformatation of the Internalive Newark in the socio-economic technobabble, blah, blah, blah." or something like that. Well, you can't have it both ways fanboy...

You cannot damn SWILL for not behaving as a peer-reviewed journal and also rubbish it for the times it appears quasi-academic. And you cannot tell me, the creator of SWILL what this zine is or what its tone should be, either. It is not as if the tone of SWILL is any surprise, right. One would hope not. Frankly, Taral, you're asking for a right tolchocking, you're asking for a boot-to-the-head.

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.). They shifted my teaching time for the summer so Loncon is now a no go. However, I will be attending...

April 2014 Ad Astra 2014 -- Toronto

November 2014 SFContario 5 -- Toronto

