

SWIRE

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#10

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Swill @ 30

Issue #10 Autumn 2011

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Editorial: A Slightly Dysfunctional Time Machine

Neil Jamieson-Williams

It's a funny thing, memory -- it is neither as clear nor as correct as we often think it is. Especially when we are engaged in the act of self-archaeology; the excavation of our remembered experiences. At times, that which we recall as being deposited in a particular stratum can be in error. In absence of corroborating evidence, such as written documents and other records that bear a precise stamp of time, there is uncertainty. And yet, those pieces of our past that possess a strong emotive quality; these carry the pure essence of truth, even though they may lack precision in sequence and detail.

I remember fondly the first SF convention that I attended, but it is now quite clear that what I stated in my editorial in the last issue was in error. My first convention did not take place in 1974 and it was not a Star Trek convention; however, I did attend FanFair III in 1975 which the Toronto fan historians appear to be split on as to whether or not FanFair III classifies as a SF convention, though they do agree that it was not a Star Trek convention (though the convention did have a strong media -- mostly Star Trek -- component to it). Nevertheless, FanFair III was my first convention.

The errors in recollection here are minor. I was out one year and the fact that I perceived the convention to be devoted mostly to Star Trek probably has more to do with this being the recollected memory through the eyes of a teenage neofan and how I, at that time, classified what I experienced. Errors in recollection become more important with the next memory site -- the inciting event that would create the original Swill; the Maplecon Slandersheet.

Here the central question is: which Maplecon did the Slandersheet appear at? To be perfectly honest, I don't know for certain. I am certain of one thing, it was not Maplecon 1 in 1978. I used to be certain that it was Maplecon 3 in 1980, but I am no longer certain of that. Here is what I am certain of:

- Swill began in February of 1981 and had a reprint of the Slandersheet as its back cover.
- I only attended one Maplecon convention.
- Lester Rainsford and Andrew Hoyt attended only one Maplecon convention.

- The Maplecon convention that I attended was one of the first that we entered the droogs in as a group costume.
- The Maplecon that Lester and Andrew attended was the same Maplecon that the droogs won best group costume at.
- Noréacon 2 (Labour Day weekend 1988) was the last convention that we did the droogs at as floor costumes.
- I was not accepted into university for Fall of 1988 because two credits from my original high school in Brampton had not been transferred as university stream credits.
- I returned home to suburbia to complete those credits during the Fall of 1988.

Putting this all together...(here is where a copy of Swill #1 would be very useful)

In all probability, Lester and Andrew, as well as the droogs (including me) attended Maplecon 2. Here is why. Both parties have a recollection of there being two to three overweight Trekkies at the convention. They were in TOS costume and running around on the convention floor of the hotel shooting each other and others with phaser guns (one version has the weapons being phaser water pistols).

Headnote¹: Maplecon The Droogs

We had just finished what we thought was our only judging for best group costume. During the performance, we had beat Fritz so thoroughly that he had come apart. We were in the hall outside the judging room re-assembling Fritz when two overweight Trekkies came around the corner and pointed phasers at us. The tallest droog stared them down and shook his head, "No." The Trekkies got the message and turned and ran back the way they came. About the same time we were told that the judges wanted to see us perform a second time...

¹ A headnote is a mental fieldnote. For every written fieldnote there are a score of headnotes that connect to it. In some ways, headnotes are as important as fieldnotes; written fieldnotes serving as jogs for the anthropologist's memory.

Headnote: Maplecon Lester and Andrew

There were two chairs and an end table at each end of the hall that overlooked the ballroom. Andrew and I were sitting there. Then we noticed three very fat Trekkies running down the hall toward us. Andrew and I began to speculate as to whether or not they would be able to negotiate the turn and, if not, which one of us would be crushed to death under 900 pounds of Trekkie...²

I think that this is sufficient enough to support the position that the droogs, Lester, and Andrew were in all probability attending the same Maplecon convention.

So, the droogs and the Slandersheet took place in the Fall of 1979 at Maplecon 2. The droogs would attend many other conventions between Maplecon 2 and Noreascon 2 in 1980. So, the Maplecon Slandersheet had been written in my apartment in Toronto just days before the convention in 1979 (this makes sense as Lester and I lived within walking distance from each other at this time). The reason why I didn't hear any brouhaha from the BNFs of Toronto is because 1) I wasn't part of that inner circle and 2) after Noreascon 2 I moved back to the burbs to finish off those two high school credits. The only fan activity I was involved in during the Fall of 1980 was that I would come down to the monthly fan party hosted by one of the Toronto BNFs and it was there that I heard about the stir that the Slandersheet had caused. When I moved back to Toronto (albeit Downsview) in January of 1981 and told Lester, the idea for Swill was born. Swill #1 was published just in time for the February fan party; I brought about 10 to 15 copies of Swill to give away and I also printed up about fifty copies of the Slandersheet to hand out.

Or so I think.

It is the best reconstruction of events that I can create that fits with what I recall, what others have recalled, and the only supporting document that I have at hand (the date that I officially completed grade 13). A copy of Miriad #2 (which I think has a picture of me in droog costume in it) which was published in September 1980 would add further support as would a copy of Swill #1 as it would contain the Maplecon boycott flyer.

But memory is a fickle thing. This is a concern as my headnotes, based on my past activity as a fan, are a starting point for this research project. The question is; will my memory pass a CRC (cyclical redundancy check)?

² This incident would be the germ for the infamous "Fat Fan" article that ran in Swill #2.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings!

Notes and Queries on a SF Convention

Neil Jamieson-Williams

There is a book that used to be indispensable for social anthropologists planning their fieldwork entitled *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* that was published by the Royal Anthropological Institute.³ The RAI ceased publication of this book in the 1960's as theoretical perspectives had changed. *Notes and Queries* fit well with the paradigm (or theoretical perspective) of Structural-Functionalism which dominated British anthropology for most of the early to middle 20th century. In using the book, the anthropologist would classify the culture they were studying under headings such as Social Structure, Ritual and Belief, Social Life of the Individual, etc. There would be subheadings under each of the headings. Within the Structural-Functionalist paradigm, the anthropologist would identify and analyse the social structures of a culture and then examine how those structures function (or dysfunction) for the culture as a whole and for the individuals within that culture. As I have already said, nobody really works within this paradigm today; but, sometimes it remains a useful "jumping off" point. That is, it does not hurt to use this approach for categorising and classification -- so long as you remain aware that these categories and classifications are arbitrary at their worst and social constructions at their best (in other words, so long as you remain aware that you created them in the first place).

In terms of structure, a science fiction convention is really no different than any other annual public special event. The overall structure of a three-day science fiction convention is essentially the same as that of a three-day academic conference; some form of programming during the day (workshops, panels, lectures, presentations, sessions), some formal events in the evening (screenings, pub crawl, keynote speaker, dance, concert), and a culminating event -- that usually takes place on the evening of the second day (masquerade, dance, banquet, awards ceremony, keynote address). Informal programming will be organised by the participants to the event -- the attendees of the conference or convention -- that take the form of room parties, pub crawls, sing-a-longs, karaoke, etc. The structure of these types special event is easy to determine; most have a

³ I am a Fellow of the RAI.

printed programme book that is provided to the attendees and some special events retain the programme books of previous years on their website.

The primary function of an annual public special event is that it brings together a large group of diverse people who also share a common interest or interests together, face-to-face, for a period of a few days. It creates a kind of temporary community. For special events that have been running continuously for ten or more years, the event itself creates a temporally cyclical face-to-face community. There will be people who attend the event every year, who only really interact with the friends that they know through the event, at the event itself. However, there will always be people for who this event is their very first one attended, or the first event devoted to this specific interest, or the first event outside of their locality/region -- in other words, people who arrive at the event as strangers. Some events deal with strangers and newbies better than others. Academic conferences are not the best with this, there may be a "mixer event" the first evening of the conference (or often the evening before the conference as those attending from far away will tend to arrive the night before the conference starts) to act as an icebreaker. However, the general attitude is that you are a grown up academic, you will be able to negotiate this yourself. Newbies are often unconsidered because they are supposedly taken care of. A first year graduate student or senior undergraduate student will usually have attended because the professor who is their supervisor/advisor has suggested that they attend and that usually means that that professor is also in attendance; so it is assumed that there is a responsible academic present to instruct the newbies. Some of the larger conferences have programming and sessions specifically for undergraduate attendees -- which sort of acts as a "daycare" or "kiddie table". Science fiction conventions deal with strangers and newbies quite well, given that there is no assumption that there is somebody acting as "the adult" for these neos. Thus, it is seen as an individual choice -- the neo makes their own decision as to whether or not they attend the panels and/or events that are there to assist the process of enculturating them into a generalised version of the science fiction fan subculture.

My first impression, after attending Polaris 25, is that -- from a structure and function POV -- things haven't really changed very much. Does that mean everything is the same? No, it does not.

There is a greater age range than in the past, even for a media SF convention. Or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that the under 19's are staying on into the evening and night. In the past, this crowd would either vanish to the movie and gaming rooms after the regular programming ended around 7 - 8 PM or simply go home. Today, they are still about until the last panel ends (which in the case of Polaris is at 2:00 AM). With SF cons being not entirely an

adult event, this means that the underage attendees have to be accommodated with late, late programming, an all-ages masquerade, and no punk or heavy metal music played at the dances (unless the song has absolutely no swear words).⁴

There variety in type of mediafen has increased greatly. Of course, time has passed and there have been many successful SF franchises since the year 1986 -- back then, there was just Star Trek (TOS and animated), Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica, and Doctor Who. It was a time period when all mediafen could be lumped together as one group (note: the same could be said of the literary fen of the same time period). So, the "fragmenting" that everybody is talking about is real; this is prominent in the diversity among mediafen as everybody has their favourite television series and some people are exclusive fans of that particular series -- I am not saying that these fans will not watch any other SF series, but, they will only purchase items related to their series. This means that there are now more distinct segments within media fandom and that makes the task before any anthropologist more daunting; the effort to construct a holistic account of the subculture becomes more difficult. That said, the trend was already present in the early 1980's with the small, but noticeable divide between Star Trek and Star Wars fans; with more SF television series having been produced since then, it is a logical extrapolation that this segmentation would occur within mediafen. Yet, a loose unity exists overall -- everyone has a common interest in SF & F media.

One of the other differences from the past is that Polaris, a SF media convention, has made accommodations to the literary fan. There is some programming that is focused on the print medium, not a lot, but some. In a way, this is kind of a role reversal as I recall the days when at a literary convention there would be a few programming items put on to accommodate the mediafen.

Animé and costuming and cosplay are more separate, but allied fandoms, than they were in the past. As a side note, the term cosplay is not a term I recall from my old fan days. The definitions I have gleaned are that it is form of costumed performance art that emerged within animé fandom and spread to SF fandom. If I have the term defined correctly, then what we did, way back, as A Clockwork Orange droogs was more cosplay than costuming. Animé also has their own conventions, as does costuming, as does filk. Which brings me to another difference from the past -- a decline in filking, at least at Polaris. There did not appear to be an official late, late night filk room organised (I don't know if there was an unofficial one) and the official filking

⁴ I am making the assumption that the same care is taking place in regards to Rap family of music subgenres...

in the programme was in the early evening. There were not a lot of people involved and most appeared to be 40 plus years of age and singing filks that drew upon the Star Trek franchise only. Perhaps this is unique to the Polaris convention, or maybe it is a trend within mediafan in general (though it could be across the board -- I'll check that out at SFContario).

As a medium sized mediafan convention, Polaris was what I expected. There was the focus on seeing the stars, and lining up for autograph sessions, purchasing official merchandise, and all that which goes with a mediafan convention. However, the overall atmosphere was fannish. Different, but fannish.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Definitional Parameters...

Neil Jamieson-Williams

And now for something completely different... Something so very unSwill-like... Something that flies in the face of the original spirit of Swill... An admission of error and a retraction. The error? Native bias.

Back when I was a fan, I was a literary fan. I tended to see SF fandom through that lens. However, I also liked media SF and had friends who were media fans. So, even though I am examining SF fandom as an academic, I have to be wary of my native bias.

I am an outside-insider. I am a former insider who is now outside of the group. That means that I am still aware of a lot of the inner knowledge of the group, how it operates, its slang, etc. However, that insider knowledge is not current, is dated, and may no longer be valid. I am also, as being outside, not in the loop as to the burning issues of the day – though some of the old issues remain within some segments of the group population. So, although I am studying this group with open eyes and a clinical view; I retain some blinders from my days as an insider. One particular blinder has to do with the definition of “who is a fan?”

I have to retract, or at least be more inclusive, than I was in the previous issue. Some of my readers will not agree with me, but there is a strong precedent – outside of SF fandom – that I will be drawing upon. For the anthropologist, when it comes to defining identity (which is what the question is all about) it is a situation where the majority does rule. How the majority of a culture, or subculture, define their identity is the definition we go with. It is the definition of identity that is representative of the culture. Gone are the days when the anthropologist themselves defined the identity of the culture, or when they accepted the definition of the elite group within that culture. This means that different segments within a culture can have different definitions of identity – often this is central to what makes them a different segment. This is the situation within SF fandom, like it or not.

Before I go further, I want to provide an example from my earlier research on a different subculture that is very applicable to the situation within SF fandom. That subculture is Modern

Paganism, with particular emphasis on the Wiccan religion. There are two major groupings within the Wiccan religion; BTW (British Traditional Wicca) and Eclectic Wicca. The term BTW is a term created by British Traditional Wiccans while the term Eclectic Wicca is a term created by academics. Since, at least, the 1960s Wiccans have been debating among themselves, often vehemently, the question of, “who is a Wiccan?” The earliest Wiccans, BTW, claim that only those persons who have been initiated into one of their traditions (religious orders) can call themselves Wiccan. The later Eclectic Wiccans state that their traditions are also Wiccan – they include BTW into their definition of Wicca. Even though BTW are the founding traditions within the Wiccan religion, Eclectic Wiccans now far outnumber them. It is Eclectic Wicca that has the most influence and control within the Wiccan religion, more or less; it gets a little muddy and complex, so we will leave it at that for the purposes of this column.

Does any of this sound familiar?

The retraction I would like to make centres on the following comment I made in the last issue regarding the four male principles in the television series *The Big Bang Theory*. I said:

While all four have comic book collections, figurine collections, watch a lot of science fiction and fantasy media, play a lot of science fiction and fantasy based games, and appear to have read some science fiction and fantasy, the only “fan activity” that they participate in is that they attend ComicCon annually. Does this make them fans? In my view, no; ComicCon is a trade show. Trade shows are essentially events that act as temporary retail outlets targeted at a specific or at specific consumer audiences. Attending the Home Show does not make you a home decorating fan; neither does attending ComicCon. However, I am willing to be flexible and accept that perhaps, one could say the *Big Bang Theory* foursome are marginal fans – though I still think they are more heavy genre consumers than they are fans.

At Polaris, I had a lengthy discussion on this subject with a person on the concom. They related this story about an event he attended in New York City. I cannot recall the actual event, but it was a last minute event, and one that required you to wait in line all night – at least – for admission.

Headnote: Polaris 25 The NYC Event

The line was hug, it went around the building and further. Some people had arrived prepared with chairs and sleeping bags and other gear. Some had not. There was an excitement in the air. We felt bonded on some level. Those in line negotiated place-holders and people started moving up and down the line talking, sharing. Some of us began to call it LineCon...

Therefore, I would like to retract and reformulate some of my comments from Issue #9 on the subject of heavy genre consumers vs fans. As an anthropologist studying fandom it is not my role to answer the question "who is a fan?" anymore than it was my role to determine "who is a Wiccan?" when I was researching Modern Pagans. It is the population under study that actually makes those decisions; my role is to observe and describe how the subculture defines itself and illustrate that there are multiple definitions in operation within the subculture. As it is within Modern Paganism, there are multiple definitions of identity within the SF fan subculture. These definitions of identity are layered and many of the boundaries are blurred. I will start with the most inclusive and move to the most exclusive. The terminology I am using is provisional and open to further discussion.

Genre consumers: These individuals consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They may attend conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. People within this group do not identify themselves as SF fans.

Fans: These individuals consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They regularly attend conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. People within this group identify themselves as SF fans; the male foursome from The Big Bang Theory would fit in this category.

Active Fans: These individuals consume science fiction and fantasy content in a variety of mediums from print to television to gaming, etc. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They may attend or they may regularly attend fan-run conventions like Polaris and Ad Astra -- they may also attend conventions like Comic Con or Sci-Fi Fan Expo. They may participate the organisation and running of fan-run conventions.

They may participate in genre based online forums, newsgroups, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, etc. They may participate in writing fan fiction, blogs, networking sites, and fanzines. They may create crafts, visual art forms, and performance art forms related to the genre. They may network and organise within the fan community. People within this group identify themselves as SF fans. Most literary fans and media fans would fall into this category.

Traditional Fans: These individuals consume science fiction and fantasy content with an emphasis upon the print medium, though they may consume science fiction and fantasy content from other mediums. They may also have an interest in science fiction and fantasy collectables. They may participate in genre based online forums, newsgroups, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, etc. They may participate in writing fan fiction, blogs, networking sites, and fanzines. They may create crafts, visual art forms, and performance art forms related to the genre. They may network and organise within the fan community. They rarely attend SF conventions and if they do, they only attend fan-run conventions. People within this group identify themselves as SF fans.

All fans are genre consumers but not all genre consumers are fans; all active fans are fans, but not all fans are active fans; all traditional fans are active fans, but not all active fans are traditional fans. All traditional fans consider themselves to be true fans and all other categories to be fake fans or genre consumers. All active fans consider themselves to be true fans and include traditional fans as being true fans, while fans are viewed as being fake fans or genre consumers. Fans would view both active fans and traditional fans as being fans and may tend to view genre consumers as also being fans -- they have no notion of the concept of a true fan.



Uncle Swill's Guide to Creating Your Own Fanzine

Preamble:

Uncle Swill knows what some of you are thinking... Fanzines are so last century. That's how fans used to communicate before there was email, Internet, blogs, and Facebook. Why would you even want create a fanzine today? Well, why would you want to create a blog? At the core, the reasons are pretty much the same.

A web log (blog) is a type of website maintained by an individual (or sometimes a group) that contain commentary on a particular subject, descriptions of events, and other material -- usually a blog contains text, images, and links to other sites. Most, but not all, are emergent in that they are interactive; visitors are allowed to leave comments about blog content, comments left by other visitors, and instant message other visitors. In this respect, a blog can be seen as being atemporal.

A fanzine is a type of publication maintained by an individual (or sometimes a group) that contain commentary on a particular subject, descriptions of events, and other material -- usually a fanzine contains text, images, and LoC (Letters of Comment). LoCs allow for a form of emergent content to take place; however, at a far slower pace than what can occur within a blog. Most fanzines, but not all, tend to be static and sequential; each issue of a fanzine is a unique entity, followed by another issue that is itself a separate entity -- collectively, each of those issues combined creates the whole that is the fanzine. It is this that distinguishes the fanzine from the blog as a unique contemporary literary form.

So, here is the big question; Uncle Swill asks, "Do you want to do the same thing that over 150 million people are doing worldwide or do you want to do

something different, something that only several thousand people are engaged in?" If you answered that you wanted to do something different, fanzine publication could be for you.

Getting Started

So, what's it going to be, then... What do you want to write about? Only you know that answer. Perhaps you have a favourite SF television series, a favourite series of novels, an opinion on the casting of Actor X as the protagonist in the film adaptation of Novel Z, a grudge over something that happened at last year's convention, some original fiction/poetry you have written, an oped piece on the Hugo Award nomination process, a slice of life personal reflection, etc. It is all up to you; but, if you are going to publish a fanzine (or do a blog), you will have to write some content.

And in this you are completely and totally free. You can write a fanzine that is essentially a public diary or stream of consciousness segments, or it can have a specific topic range (e.g. the works of Larry Niven, or 1990's British space opera), or it can take a particular stance politically (with a narrow focus as in issue X within Canadian fandom or a wider focus as in issue Y within

SF fandom and its connexion to the Occupy Movement or just a general political stance that can be linked to fandom, to the works of particular authors, and events in the world), or certain themes that you devise (a cyberpunk issue, a Gor issue, etc.), etc. The doors are wide open.

You are going to have to give your fanzine a name. It would probably be good to take a browse of Bill Burns' site <http://efanzines.com> just to make certain that you don't choose the same name as a major fanzine of forty years ago. Once you have your title, you should come up with your fanzine's "masthead" -- the font and orientation that the fanzine title will appear in on your front cover.

Structure

The general structure for a fanzine is this:

Front Cover (usually has artwork, but not mandatory)

Table of Contents (optional)

Content (editorial, articles, humour, artwork/comics, poetry...)

LoCs (optional)

Back Cover (usually has artwork, but again, not mandatory)

Contact Information (email usually, or postal address) -- somewhere within the fanzine (your choice)

This is just a general structure of what would be in a typical fanzine. However, take or toss whatever feels right to you in this structure. The freedom to innovate is yours.

Publication

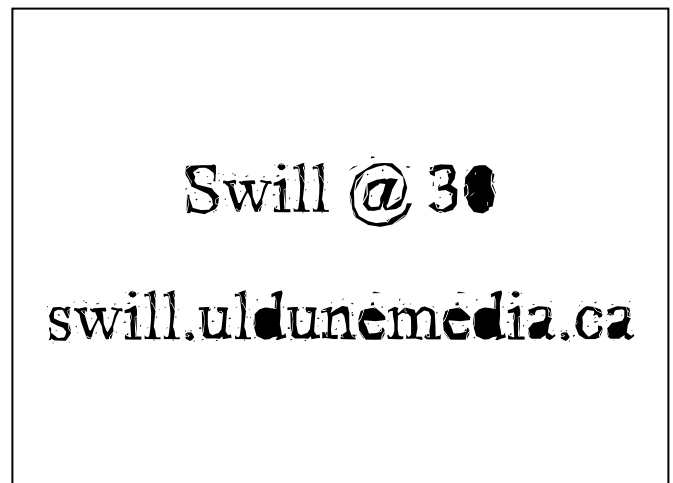
Once you have written/edited your fanzine, designed the layout and the artwork, and all that stuff; it is time to publish. This is easier than ever. In all probability, the software that has been used for editing, composition, and layout of your fanzine will allow you to save the final product as a pdf file (if it doesn't, there exists freeware converters that can be downloaded). Once you have your fanzine as a pdf you should contact Bill Burns at **billb@efanzines.com** about hosting your fanzine on the efanazines.com website (it's free). And voila, you have published your first fanzine.

Hybrids

Just because you have published a fanzine, doesn't mean that your fanzine cannot have a website, a blog, or a Facebook presence -- many do. If that

suits you and how you view your fanzine; then do it. A more low-tech hybrid are those fanzines that publish one or more issues a year that are only available in the print medium (the other issues being available online). There are also very few fanzines that occasionally publish an issue in another medium, e.g. an all audio issue as a podcast. Finally, while not a hybrid form, there are a few people out there who are so committed to the print medium that their fanzines are only available as printed on paper and sent via post.

So kids, that's how you create your very own fanzine. Fanzine publication is a contemporary hobby that is a part of many subcultures -- from sports fans to comic book fans, from punk rockers to wargamers -- which has a long history within science fiction fandom. Just remember to also have **fun**.



Scribbling on the Bog Walls

Letters of Comment

Neil Jamieson-Williams

As I write this, there are three long LOCs that have been received. My comments are in red.

Re: Swill @ 30 #9 Summer 2011 now available

From: "Taral Wayne"

Date: Tue, July 19, 2011 4:05 pm

To: swill@uldunemedia.ca

Having a little trouble sending. This make the third attempt.

Hi Taral. I did receive all three emails, though the second attempt was only partial. I guess that my mail server didn't like your mail server that day...

That has got to be the most off-putting and difficult to read type font ever. Except for maybe this, or perhaps this. But, yes, I got the joke. There were even one or two fanzines whose stencils were worse.

More mail server idiosyncrasies... I didn't receive your examples in the fonts you used, but I am very well aware that it is a difficult font. But, that is the whole point. The font is more readable if you enlarge it, one of the reasons for publishing Swill as a pdf. The font is set in stone for what will go up on the website; however, for the select few (such as yourself) who receive Swill via email, as of this issue you will receive it in both the real Swill version and Old Fart version – your choice as to which version you choose to read.

The issues you discuss are far from new. SF fans were questioning their identity and where fandom was going way back when I first got involved, and the tendency has grown. So, you may not be shocking people as much as you think. Much of my own fanwriting of late has been an attempt to try to understand traditional fandoms real place in the universe, both as in insignificant amount of signal noise and as something quite distinct from 100,000 people at San Diego Comics Con stampeding to buy the latest Star Wars action figure or Marvel comic adaptation of a movie adapting a Marvel comic book. There are no simple answers, as there might be for "who is a Presbyterian" or "what is the Nazi Party," unfortunately. Even the most hidebound old-timer in fandom probably enjoyed episodes of Star Trek. What he objected to

was the Trekkie who had no other experience with science fiction other than Kirk, Spock and McCoy, and mistakenly believed the TV show was the origin of everything from character humour to transporter beams.

I tackle the issue of "who is a fan?" again in the Flogging a Dead Trekkie column. You probably won't like what I have to say, though. Identity questioning has certainly been around for some time in fandom and I agree it is nothing new. I am approaching it from the position of an Outside-Insider (a former insider looking at fandom with an outsider's POV) and therefore I have to strive to be inclusive as well as rational, logical, and fair. I did not think my raising the question would be shocking at all; this incarnation of Swill does not seek to shock and disturb, though it will not pull back from making observations that some may find disturbing.

I, myself, am quite partial to various SF toys and model spaceships. If it didn't cost as much as a new Ford Focus, I've love to have all of Star Trek TOS, TNG, and DS9 on DVD. But, I recognized it as a addition to SF rather than an end in itself. Oddly, I'm more partial to Star Trek than anything that came after. It did have some unique features -- for media SF anyway. It was more thoughtful, and less dependent on huge explosions and mano et mano encounters between alpha male actors. It tended to accept the strange and novel, rather than cast it in the role of villainy. When it comes to TV SF, I far more enjoyed Red Dwarf to Stargate or the new Babylon 5, which mainly perpetuated science fiction stereotypes.

I am a heretic in regards to media SF. I really do not have a favourite series. Of the super-franchises I, like yourself, prefer Trek over Star Wars. I actually liked Babylon 5 and loved the first 4 series of Red Dwarf. My tastes in media SF are quite eclectic, though I do watch a fair bit of British fare.

The con you mentioned attending in 1974, was probably FanFair III in 1975. There really were no SF cons in Toronto in 1975. There was a comics con up in York University, but only FanFair II and III were held at the King Eddy. FFII was in 1972, I believe.

You are not the only one to comment on this and it would definitely appear to be FanFair III that was my first convention.

I have just about forgotten that nonsense with the fake "Boycott Maplecon" flyer. At the time, I think I may have been editing the OSFiC newszine again, and first we heard of the boycott was Ottawa fandom's outraged reaction. It was astonishing that they took your flyer at face value and never asked anyone what they knew about it. But the OSFS people already had a grudge against the Toronto club, that seems based mainly on misguided attempts to give them advice in the early days. They didn't feel they needed any advice, for one thing. For another, in recommending that a certain individual be take with a grain of salt, that individual took understandable umbrage, and was apparently greatly respected by the OSFS crowd. I guess they had to find out for themselves that he actually was a dork. Whatever... After a couple of years, nobody thought much of the hostility between Toronto and Ottawa fan groups. Some of the

people from T.O. went to Maplecon and enjoyed it, some from Ottawa came to Ad Astras and had a good time. Those of us, like myself, who were not greatly into cons, didn't go to either. Frankly, I had better things to do with the money than listen to people yatter about science fiction writers.

Okay, that adds some context to the Maplecon Slandersheet. I was always surprised that SFS actually believed that SFiC did write the flyer; the fact that there was an existing feud between the two organisations provides some rational – they wanted to believe that SFiC was responsible.

I think you exaggerate how pissed off anyone in SFiC might have been. We were likely more annoyed with SFS's jumping to conclusions.

I was pretty much out of the loop regarding what went on within Toronto BNFdom at the time. I knew that they were angry about the Slandersheet and about Swill, but all of this came to me third or fourth hand. It was only when I moved to Vancouver that I discovered what a big brouhaha I had created. However, I now believe that this was exaggeration and “broken telephone” of the news travelling the fannish grapevine to Vancouver.

Not really much more to say. Fandom is still around, and some form of it is little to persist – as you say, people still read books. A slightly younger crowd has taken over running the major conventions, and are eager to follow the same route that Locus and Starship did. They want to be big fish in a bigger pond, with attendance figures a little closer to what SDC and Dragoncon have. To this end, they've been ditching traditional fandom as fast as they can. You won't get any closer to kissing J.K. Rowling's or Tim Power's ass by associating with riff raff, after all. They already dream of the Hugo ceremonies being shown on Fox news. Oh hum. Been there, done that, not too exciting. But some people relish being in the spotlight. After all this time I find I prefer work over schmoozing.

Well, I wouldn't classify traditional fandom as “riff raff”. Exactly what do you mean by the term “traditional fandom”? Normally, I would assume that you are referring to literary fandom; however, your comments about SF conventions in general (an activity engaged in by literary fan) may mean you are talking about some segment within literary fandom.

It occurs to me to add that it's no surprise that academics study fandom, and get it wrong. They've been studying it at least since that yobbo, Fredric Wertham, wrote "The World of Fanzines." Presumably, fandom was beneath notice before that. His book was much dreaded when news broke that he had taken an interest in fandom. We assumed it would be a hatchet job, like the one done on comics in the 1950s. In a way, it was worse. Dr. Wertham approved of fanzines and fandom. Unfortunately, he also hadn't a clue about the difference between comics, film and SF fandom, and glibly confused them throughout the book. Like many another expert, he couldn't be bothered to actually ask anyone who might really know the subject to vet his manuscript.

Well, one of the purposes of reviving Swill is to use the fanzine as a form of dialogue between myself and the fanzine segment of SF fandom. In addition to participant observation I will also be conducting a two surveys and a series of formal interviews. Therefore, there will be input from several segments of the current Canadian SF fan community in my study. Wertham's research methods for the World of Fanzines appear to have been based upon an availability sample of fanzines people sent to him – largely from people who didn't know who he was (i.e. they didn't know him as the author of Seduction of the Innocent) – that he performed content analysis on. One of my issues with the entire discipline of psychology is the use of small sample sizes from which the data is then generalised to entire populations or all of humanity without factoring in social and cultural context.

There is, in fact, only one possible distinction that SF fandom has. Not "unity." As you rightly stated, fandom has never been unified, not even when its numbers couldn't possibly have topped a few hundred. But it didn't matter if you had never met Bob Tucker or if you disliked Sam Moskowitz or if you had never read anything by Francis Townner Laney. You knew of them. Likely they knew of you, if you had been around a while and done anything at all of note. Fandom wasn't unified, but it was a fairly tight little community. Other fandoms might be like that, for all I know. All it really takes is to be small enough that everyone is known to everyone else – like a small town. But as special interest groups grow large, this becomes impossible. The fandom goes on, but it becomes more like being a member of Beatles fandom, or table-top railroading, where it is one of maybe hundreds of quite separate communities. For better or worse, SF fandom has long since passed the tipping point.

Yes, that has long since passed. It had already losing that small town feel in the 1980s and had become regionalised. The success of the genre outside of the print medium has resulted in a substantial growth and change within SF fandom – I think that you will only find that sort of tight community within the segments of SF fandom that remain small, e.g. Canadian fanzine fandom or fans of an obscure (probably foreign) SF series.

Some elements of traditional fandom try to solidify on. But they don't control the major institutions of fandom, and are easily marginalized. Most fans have never heard of the names on the Hugo ballots every year, and have no idea who the fan guests of honour are. Many cons have stopped having fan GoHs and have filk guests or costume guests instead. This year's Worldcon in Reno has no Fan GoH. I don't know if that's the first time for a Worldcon or not. It is certainly the way of the future. Personally, I find little satisfaction in being one drop of water in a 40 gallon tub, and prefer the old fandom that was small enough that everyone mattered. It's still around, but graying fast, and no longer very influential with the so-called Big Tent fandom that is evolving.

Again, what do you mean by "traditional fandom"? Certainly literary SF fandom has become "marginalised" in that they are no longer the centre nor do they actively control fandom; they have become a segment of the SF fan subculture.

August 2

Kevin Davies

Hi Neil,

Great to see Swill is back! I've been reading swill@38_9. I agree with what you say about fandom today being "balkanised". It was already happening when we entered fandom.

Hi Kevin. Yes, I agree that the "balkanisation" was already underway when we were the "kids" in the Toronto fan community.

After running GVSTACON in 1979 I was taken aside several times by various 'in the know' fans and given their interpretation of the history of fandom and what was currently going wrong -- rarely what was going right... At that time the big threat was that media fans (of which I was considered one) were infiltrating fandom and 'polluting' *true* literary fandom -- of which the speaker was usually a representative. The other concern was that the new entrants into fandom constituted a 'disturbing force' that was affecting undesirable change to the established order.

Indeed, you evil mediafan. You were a polluter of the "precious bodily fluids" of literary -- therefore true -- fandom. And I was a fellow traveller; a literary fan that also enjoyed media SF and didn't understand what all of the fuss was about. However, I would take the literary "true fan" stance when confronted with mediafan who believed that series like Battlestar Galactica or Buck Rogers in the 25th Century were the epitome of what SF was and should be. However, I was also uncertain as to what the established order actually was and how one could become a part of it? As I remember, it was more of being part of an age set than anything else; even as a literary fan, one thing was certain, I was too young to ever become a member of the in-group.

This is typical of any closed 'society' or group. There is initially resistance, an attempt at discouraging undesirable activity and conversion ("Get those media fans reading..."), then finally a combination of 'feuds' and resignation (or withdrawal) as the changes inevitably proceed.

Quite correct.

Humans are a tribal species. We are most comfortable when we know the names of everyone in our community and are confident that their opinions and behaviours align with our own. Most also irrationally assume that their tribe is superior to all others -- it seems to be a human trait designed to comfort ourselves that we've made the 'correct' decision about who to associate with. As soon as any group's membership increases to the point where there are 'strangers in our midst', the social niceties break down and people become increasingly hostile to those they don't know -- also the dilemma of large population centres.

Agreement in part, such as the general concept; disagreement in specifics -- but this is not the venue for an academic lecture on the anthropology of social organisation.

As to the question of who is a fan, I believe that one must engage socially with others with shared interests (which may involve one or more fan activities) to be considered a fan (i.e., simply consuming the content that is celebrated by a group of fans is not sufficient to be a part of a 'fandom' for that content).

I have revised my position on this (see [Flogging a Dead Trekkie](#) column) which you may still agree with, or perhaps not.

As SF became increasingly popular to the masses through film and TV it attracted ever more people to conventions and clubs, thus accelerating the rate of change and increasing the disaffection experienced by the established 'members' of fandom -- especially as fans divided into smaller special interest groups.

The internet provided the means for all these desperate 'tribes' within fandom to interact without the need to seek the approval of the established fans. Everyone could do their own thing with whoever they wanted to. Special interest associations, 'zines, and conventions thrived. This was bad for the control freaks and those who wanted to see their comfortable status quo preserved (whatever it was); it was great opportunity for everyone else.

Agreed. It allowed for the "gatekeepers" and the control freaks and the fannish thought police to be completely bypassed.

I suspect that mass media and the internet have had this fragmentation effect on many other social groups (e.g., mystery fans, quilters, horror fans, gardeners, costumers, comic fans, car collectors, film fans, gamers, etc.). I see it as a perfectly natural progression of social interaction -- the result of greater access to other like-minded individuals.

Bye for now,

Kevin

August 7, 2011

Lloyd Penney

Dear Neil:

Many thanks for Swill@30 issue 9, and now to see what I can make of it. I have been involved in fandom for nearly 35 years now, and I think that gives me a look into how fandom thinks about itself, and how the older fans are reacting to the newer fans who have discovered this interesting social phenomenon, and are reshaping it in their own interests.

First of all... sorry we didn't connect at Polaris 25. I think we were both pretty busy with what was happening at the convention. I think we will have the chance at SFCOntario 2.

Yes, we both were. We should be able to meet up at SFCOntario 2.

I knew about Torcon 2 in 1973... I was living just north of Toronto in Orillia. Of course, I couldn't possibly go, no money, and no understanding parents, anyway. In 1976, I also heard about Toronto Star Trek '76, but I couldn't go, same reasons. A move out to Victoria brought VCon to my attention, but still no money. I know some people criticize those who go to various conventions, but the odds of hearing about conventions is greater than hearing about clubs or fanzines.

I don't get this, either. That's why I want Taral to give me a definition for what he calls a "traditional fan". As far as I am concerned, attending conventions is definitely fanac. And for those of us living in the burbs and further out from the cosmopolitan centres back thirty years ago, you would be more likely to hear about a convention than a SF club or fanzine. I only discovered the existence of Bakka through attending conventions in Toronto.

Genre consumers are all of what you list. Years ago, I talked to John Rosé, who was then the owner of Bakka Books, the SF bookstore that is still around under a slightly-changed name, and he said that fandom really didn't add much to his book-selling business. He estimated that local fandom gave him less than 10% of his annual business. Casual readers went to Bakka, and they would often leave with several hundred dollars in books. (Couldn't afford that then or now.) John never did think much of fandom, and we didn't really know how little he thought of science fiction until after he sold the store.

I have altered my viewpoint on the genre consumers, slightly... Similar, but also different, situation with the owners of the Occult Shoppe in Toronto; if they had to survive on only the annual business they receive from the Modern Pagan community in Toronto they would have gone bankrupt decades ago.

I am very interested in the psychology of fandom... why we act the way we do, why we treat each others as badly as we do, and why do we tear down each other's efforts. We could be so much better, and build on each other's successes, rather than feel envious and diminished. I have read some of Camille Bacon-Smith's writings, and I came away feeling that my limited time and involvement in Star Trek fandom was in many ways more positive and constructive than my 30+ years in general fandom. Some may complain about the emphasis on literary fandom, but it is the root of fandom as a whole, going back to Gernsback's magazines and the letter column in the late 1920s. Everything must start somewhere. While older fans may complain about fakefans and grouching about the way things used to be, the very first fans had strict membership requirements... You had to have read every book and magazine out there, and at that time, that was quite possible. You had to correspond with the SF magazines, and finally, you had to have a

working science lab in your basement. Not even the old grousing fans qualify for the original fannish credentials.

Hmm... I am more interested in group behaviour than individual behaviour; but then, I'm not a psychologist. Literary fandom is indeed the root of SF fandom. Fandom has expanded beyond just literary fandom. I don't except the concept of "fakefans" as it implies that one is pretending to be a fan. If you have been drawn into SF by the series Terra Nova and are now social networking on Facebook about science fiction, and you are totally ignorant about fandom; you are a neo mediafan, end of story. Grousing is of little purpose – it's just an example of the old "in my day, you had to walk five miles to get to school..." rubbish that is always a preamble to making, in one way or another, the statement that something is wrong with the "young people today".

You mention something about how the press will twist whatever is presented to them... no surprise there. I recommend to most conventions to list their conventions in newspaper and magazine listings, but not to invite a member of the press to the convention. The press is not your friend or PR representative. They are there half to get the story, but also entertain the reader; such is the modern press. The press, in covering any science fiction gathering or group will automatically think of us as nerds, geeks, freaks, etc. They rely on old stereotypes that are 40 to 50 years old, and even the young journalists quickly forget their objectivity to make fun of the goofballs in costume. The visual quality of the costume attracts the journalist and photographer, while the more serious and constructive science fiction fan, not nearly as colourful or attractive, will be forgotten, if the journalist and photographer ever knew they were there. Inviting the press to your event means inviting the press to reinforce their old stereotypes, not only for themselves, but to the reader. We are nerds and geeks only because the press has told their readers to think that way. (I have read (and own) the Moskowitz and Warner books you list in your references. Also, I am a graduate of the journalism school at Ryerson University.)

And you also work for the Globe, I think. The average fan is not very colourful; that goes for most of us in society. A buff male in his early twenties in a skimpy Barch the Barbarian costume is colourful for television as potential eye candy and a overweight male in his late thirties wearing a skimpy Barch the Barbarian costume is colourful as "look at the weirdo". The media at a special event are there for a possible interview with a name (e.g. well known author or television star) and for any "colour" – freaks in costume, etc.

I would agree that fandom has been Balkanized into small groups, and that came about by people demanding they the more general fannish groups pay more attention to their interest, and often devote more time and money into promoting it. When the general fannish group is unwilling or unable to comply, other groups break away to form their own clubs and conventions. It's ego and the surety that my interest is superior. When Yvonne and I were busier with local conventions, we tried our best to cross the gaps between the fandoms by assisting with their groups and conventions. When we helped with assembling a labour base for the Toronto in 2003 Worldcon bid, we were able to draw from all the local fandoms, and people who might never

have met actually worked together. We tried our best to positive and constructive; often, our efforts were scuttled by vested interests... while we were on the bid for Toronto in 2003, we were not on the committee for Torcon 3. The chairman of the board of directors took a great dislike to Yvonne and after some ridiculous announcements and disciplinary measures that didn't work, I was fired from the committee so he could get rid of both of us. We took the attitude that he really didn't hurt us, but only hurt himself, and we still believe that to be true.

Group politics and status climbing... Whether it's fandom, the SCA, or the Outer Wawa Curling Club, it is always there.

Like anything else society creates to express itself, fandom will change over time. A look at fandom every decade up to the present day shows that the fandom changes, and all the grouching and carping won't change a thing. I regret that some things have changed, but I have met and got to know many of the newer fans that have emerged over the past few years. When I got into local fandom around 1981, many of the established fans sneered at me, and others tried to explain to me why I wasn't a fan and never would be. I am determined not to be the same kind of grumpy old fan for the newcomers.

See what I said to Kevin. The only way I could have been a real fan was to have been born at least ten years earlier...

The letters... I will be digging again for past issues of Swill. I will see what I've got. I think I might have been looking in the wrong box. It is different people staging CanCon 2011, but they know the OSFS crowd, and might be members of OSFS. Good to see there are more issues here. I am trying to be as objective as I can here (my journalism training might help here), but I will try to relay what I feel are the good things about fandom. It's easy to take shots at the pompous and over-important types, but there are also many constructive types who have worked hard to make sure we all enjoy the good times we have.

If you can find some old Swills, that would be wonderful... I agree, there are good things about fandom and a lot of hard work that goes on behind the scenes to organise and run a convention. To be honest, I am still really lounging by the side of the pool with only my toes in the water. Even Polaris was not a complete immersion – as a gaffiated literary fan, SFCOntario will be more of a test...

I just made it to the third page, which is pretty good. Wish we'd gotten together at Polaris, but I think we were both too busy. I think we'll have the time at SFCOntario. Hope to see you then.

See you at SFCOntario.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Endnote: Quest for Swill

Neil Jamieson-Williams

Okay, here we go. I need to recalibrate my memory, just for my own piece of mind. To that end, I need some old Swills. In particular, the first four issues and especially issue number 1. Alternative texts that may be of aid would be issues 1 through 4 of Miriad and issue 1 (was there more than that) of Nuclear Bunnies.

As always I would appreciate copies of Swill issues 5 and 6 too. And if there are any surviving copies of issues 1 through 3 of Daughter of Swill, Mother or Scum I will gladly receive them.

While it is probably easiest, these days, to scan these old zine and send them via email -- I would be happy to reimburse any photocopying and postage costs if that is preferred.

Thanks in advance.

Research Project Note:

Due to the changes and new guidelines, I was unable to submit my application this Fall. I will have to wait until next Fall and hope that the Conservatives do not do to the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) what they have don't to the National Research Council; they gutted their funding. Perhaps SSHRC will do better as they do not do natural science research of the sort that doesn't support the Conservative Party ideologies that the Earth is a mere 10,000 years old and that burning fossil fuels is good for the environment. We will see where the axe will fall.

In the meantime, I will continue to conduct pre-research research out of pocket.

Planned "Pith Helmet and Propeller Beanie" tour 2011/2012:

- SFContario November 2011
- Ad Astra April 2012
- Polaris July 2012
- Sci Fi Fan Expo August 2012

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