

SWILD



#17

Annual — February April 2013

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

SWILL

Issue #17 Annual 2013

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Editorial: I'm Tardy; So?!

James William Neilson

By the time this issue is uploaded, the SWILL Annual will be two months late. While, I am usually very good at meeting deadlines, I am not always good at meeting my own deadlines (i.e. one's that I have imposed upon myself which I will only disappoint myself if I fail to achieve them). SWILL is very tardy; and your problem is? It's not like you paid a subscription and the zine didn't arrive on time as expected; it's free and you are not a customer (certainly not a paying customer).

In some circles, zine tardiness carries with it an aura of fannishness. In other circles -- e.g. the Fanstuff Set -- it only serves as evidence of my lack of commitment to fandom and hence my inherent unfannishness. I guess it all depends upon the eye of the perceiver. As the first week of April dawned and SWILL being over a month late I did have some minor anxiety of this state of affairs. However, that miniscule uneasiness quickly evaporated on the road to Ad Astra.

During the hurley burley of getting out the door to an early morning meeting at work before heading to far Markham, I forgot my Kobo at home. Though, I did have my Kindle. However, I am not a major Kindle user, for a variety of reasons that have more to do with Amazon than the technology. I was an early adopter of the Kobo and still use my first generation Kobo which as over 350 books on it. My Kindle was packed to go since it is later generation technology that allows me to surf the net if free WiFi is available on a much bigger screen (albeit monochrome) than my smart phone. Why this is important is that while there are numerous magazines on my Kindle, there is only one book. That book being *Breakfast in the Ruins: Science Fiction in the Last Millennium* by Barry Malzberg. For those SWILL readers who have failed to notice that Malzberg's essays in *Science Fiction Review* (many of which made their way into *The Engines of the Night: Science Fiction in the Eighties* -- reprinted as the first half of *Breakfast in the Ruins*) had a major influence on me and the SWILL attitude, let me come clean; they did.

So with the QEW backlogged for no other reason than Oakville volume the one hour trip from downtown Hamilton to downtown Toronto became a two hour trek. Plus, I still had another hour and thirty minutes to travel by TTC to the back of beyond, aka

Markham. Thus, I had a long stroll down memory lane as I re-read *The Engines of the Night* and any issues/concerns of fannish identity or even the importance of fannish identity dissipated in the harsh light of *Engines*.

It didn't fucking matter.

I have attempted to excavate from my wetware what the fannish perception was of *The Engines of the Night* when it first came out back in 1982, but memory fails me. I do recall that the book was controversial, that many of the pros didn't like it, so it would be fair to speculate that many fans also didn't like *Engines*. After all, it was very critical of science fiction and contained criticism of science fiction editors and writers, as well as some pull-no-punches shots at science fiction fandom. But what the general fan view of this book was back in the day, I cannot recall; it wasn't important enough to be saved to my permanent mental archives or, if it was, has long since been overwritten by more important data. The only recollection I can extract is a vague memory of some Big Name Fan (not that big name as I cannot recall their name or physical features, just a still visible tag that they were supposed to be someone of importance but not a writer or editor) made a comment about my copy of *Engines* (and I actually bought the hardcover) saying, "Why are you reading that shit?" Thing is, I didn't think that it was shit and I actually think that a lot of it was fucking brilliant, and some of it was not very interesting. Malzberg has his hobby horses and axes being ground and some of them are of interest, to me, and some of them are not. It is very obvious that the Fifties were important to the genre and to Malzberg. They really aren't very important to me and my perception of the genre other than the historical impact of the implosion of the pulp magazine market at the close of that decade. So, overall, I liked *Engines* then, and I still like it today and I like *Engines* better than the second half of *Breakfast in the Ruins*, though that probably has more to do with nostalgia than actual critical review.

So reading *Engines* en route to attend a science fiction convention, may add distortion to the reader's bias or may bring the reader's focus into sharp clarity. Bottom line, crux-of-the-matter, is that really, when you really and honestly think about it, science fiction doesn't matter. Science fiction is never going to "save the world". Science fiction is very rarely ever predictive. While it has the potential to inspire technological development, and the potential to offer cautionary tales, and the potential to assist the individual to adapt to ever changing technology, most of the time, it does none of the above. It is

just entertainment and escapist entertainment¹ at that. Science fiction is my preferred genre to read, and to watch, and to write and that is not going to change, period. But, although science fiction does have the potential to examine the human experience within the simultaneously expanding and shrinking technosphere that we live within and are completely dependant upon -- with the stage of all time and all places available for its settings -- most of the time, that potential is relinquished, only the veneer is scratched, or worse, forgotten, and what is produced is just another commodity. It isn't important.

And if science fiction isn't important, what does that say about science fiction fandom and the importantness of fannishness?

It says that it is fucking unimportant.

¹Just a note on escapist entertainment. Science fiction is often wrongly tarred with this brush as the only offender. It is not; in particular with our television and film entertainments. Anybody who has seen a real CSI lab, a real emergency ward, a real police station, a real court room will know that what appears on television, and on film, are partial escapes from reality and sometimes strong stretches of reality. Science fiction is singled out because it starts with a purely fictitious reality which places the onus upon it to make that reality appear real -- in television and film this fails more often than not (and we are often more forgiving of a film seen in a cinema on first viewing than we are of a television series that is broken up with commercials).

Thrashing Trufen: Wallowing in the Shallow End...

James William Neilson

Upon arrival at Ad Astra, I got myself checked in, dumped my bag, went down to get my registration package, and set out looking for food. The hotel restaurant made it quite clear that they wanted me to opt for the expensive buffet not a la carte and hotel buffets may be okay for breakfast/brunch but I have yet to have had a good one for dinner. I went off site for some real food and when I returned to the hotel, it being still early -- around 7:30 PM -- I popped into the hotel bar for a drink. There I ran into one of my old droogs and his spouse. They had managed to convince the hotel restaurant to serve them a la carte -- not that I couldn't have, I just decided that my desire to eat expensive crap was low and the effort required to force the issue would be more inconvenient than the effort of walking over to the nearby British pub for some moderately priced, moderately good food. Regardless, I joined them and we immediately and briefly began talking about the convention and fandom before moving onto more important topics such as work, how our kids were doing, outsourcing manufacturing, and 3-D printing. In the short discourse about fandom my droog said this about the average attendee of the convention, "We don't exactly fit this demographic." And I agree.

Even back in secondary school, science fiction fandom (such as I knew it) was not my only social network. I will agree that it was a major part of my social network, but my core social network was my friends and acquaintances who attended the same secondary school. And I also had friends and acquaintances from my part-time job. As a young adult, science fiction fandom was a part of my social network but never my only social network. There was only one time in my life when science fiction fandom was my sole social network, and that was during my first year in Vancouver. I had moved to Vancouver, knowing nobody there, at all -- no friends, acquaintances, or relatives -- and had timed my arrival for the V-Con convention. So although science fiction fandom was my only social network for most of my first year in that city, by the end of the year it had reduced to being my major social

network along with the additional social networks that I had established.

So, only for a brief moment in time was science fiction fandom ever my only social network. I don't think that science fiction fandom has ever been the sole social network for any of my old droogs.

As for my droog and I, both of us were attending Ad Astra for less than fannish reasons. True, for both of us, there was the social aspect of meeting people that one only sees at this type of event. More so for me, as I live outside of the GTA. Less so for my droog who does live within the GTA and travels into Toronto more frequently than I do. Both of us were moderating or on some panels. However, both of us were attending the convention for business purposes; for my droog commercial, for me a mix of academic and commercial. But, at the end of the day, the convention had a primarily pragmatic purpose with the social aspect being secondary or tertiary. We were there to promote, network, sell, and for myself, collect research data.

We certainly were not attending because science fiction fandom is our primary, or sole, social network. Nor were we attending because Ad Astra is a major annual event in our social calendars. It makes you wonder about the people for whom those two last statements are the affirmative. It calls to mind the quote from *The Engines of the Night*, unattributed by Malzberg except by the tag 'ex-science fictioner' (he is talking about a writer not a fan), who said, "You know, you can get a great deal of attention, real reverence at these conventions for sure. But you know when the trouble begins? It starts when you ask who in hell you're getting this attention from."

Yeah, I really don't fit this demographic.

Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings:

...a modest column by Lester Kinsford

Robert "Bob" Heinlein had at least two books early books published after his death, For Us the Living a novel, and Tramp Royale a travelogue. Lester is here to summarily dismiss the first, and to make unhappy report of the second.

For us the Living is indigestible, a utopia of the kind you've read before, only by Bob, so there's some kind of swinging involved. Sixty pages of this was all Lester could stomach.

Tramp Royale is a travelogue, and Lester doesn't mind travelogues. However reading this one shows why it was not published in Bob's lifetime. Travelogues can be about the place, or about the writer interacting with the place, but it's got to be interesting. Here's how Tramp Royale goes:

Bob: Rio has the most amazing harbour. San Francisco is nice and Sydney is nice, but Rio is way better. It's fabulous. I won't describe it any further; you must go see it for yourself.

Reader: Well fuck you too Bob.

In fact, other than an interesting visit to the inaccessible island of Tristan da Cunha, well almost visit, there's not much in the way of foreign lands of interest described in the book. However, we do learn a lot about Bobk, and it's not very nice.

Bob's a whiner. Everywhere the custom officials have strange customs that would not be tolerated in 1950s Colorado (which calls into question why travel at all?). The British Commonwealth is apparently actively working against the interests and desires of a fine red-blooded American traveller. Australia sucks. Bob spends pages and pages describing his indescribably awful hotel room in Sydney (this after not telling us nothing about Rio harbour, mind you).

It's not even clear how reliable Bob is. In the Brazilian section, he talks about taking a bus that goes through some mountains. The road is modern, it seems, and so is the bus. Bob breezily describes it as "doing nintety ninety into the mountains, until the road got steeper and it slowed down to seventy". Well, since he also talks about "Ticky" (his annoying name for Virginia) doing nintety at home, he's not exactly talking km per h. Now, in Colorado, maybe if the Heinleins owned a newer Oldsmobile with the Rocket V8, or one of the hotter Hudson Super Hornets, Ticky may have been able to drive ninety, for a while at least (Lester does not know much about the condition of roads in Colorado in the early 1950s). But sure as shootin', ain't no way a Brazilian bus did 90MPH into the on a flat road, never mind into the mountans. Bob's shittin' us here. Maybe hes shittin' himself at the same time, but for sure he's shittin' us. For someone supposedly with a technical background, this is the kind of exaggerated incorrectness that really calls into wquestion everything else.

The other thing Bob does that doesn't help the travelogue is to potnificate. The politics of Panama, of Chile and Argentina, of South Africa, of Australia and New Zeland ("those commonwealth bastards hate Americans, of course") he explains to us, kind of like Lazarus Long. It gets tiring, and Lester completed the book by not rolling eyes too much at all the explanations Bob provides of How The World Workds. (The world where buses go 90MPH.)

You can also tell that he was a perfect nuisance on a cargo ship (where there's not a whole lot of places to go) to other passengers. He "Shakes the British couple out of their reserve" in a day or two. They must have thought, "there's that horrible American, let's try to be polite and smile". Maybe he suggested wife swapping. It's obviously something he was thinking about back in the 1930s when he wrote For Us the Living.

ALso annoying is the supposition of American superiority because HE FOUND OUT THE NAME OF THE HELP AND ALWAYS USED IT. Unlike the COMmonweathers and other goofballs such as those euro Dutch. After all, if you call the help by their name, it SHOWS that you are superior civilization.

In a few places, Bob defends the McCarthy thing. Feeling defensive any, Bob? The funny thing is that he claims that the people hauled in front of the unamerican activities committee aren't hurt all that much if at all, and after all this is a small price to pay for their 'treason'. He uses that word. How many people actually were convicted of treason before being hauled in front of McCarthy? Lester doesn't think there were a whole lot. Maybe not even one. Lester also feels that glibly assessing 'treason' is a pretty serious charge, especially in America. The Bob of Starship Troopers is peeking out!

At the very end, instead of summarizing why he and "Ticky" travelled around the world, and what their experience was, and what they'd seen that was the best--you know, the things that the reader of a travelogue is interested in--he comes in out of left field (right field?) and declares that America needs to stop apologizing and work for its own interests. Be strong, and don't listen to anyone else. Apparently that's the lesson he learned dealing with customs agents in Indonesia or something. The reader thinks, "well, that will get you through customs quicker if everyone hates you".

Under the veneer of sophistication and worldly wisdom, Bob turns out to be the Ugly American on tour. It's something that the reader of the travelogue grasps, maybe not immediately, and not for ten or twenty or thirty pages, but the book is almost three hundred pages long and that's plenty enough.

Needless to say Bob has no idea. He's just ~~chat~~ shaking the reticent Brits out of their aloofness. He's just pointing out how much better a hotel room would be in Boulder Colorado or ~~SOMEplace Iowa~~ Idaho than in Australia. Now maybe that's true or not. But as a travel book it's not. Good. As a character study, as penned by an unreliable narrator, of that unreliable narrator, it's probably worth reading.

Maybe Bob was working that angle all along.

~~Mind you, anyone who has read any of his disastrous later books will kind of doubt that.~~

Ha ha! April fools!

(*This column is early.*)

** And this zine is late ed. ;) **

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Violating the ~~Taboos~~ Norms of Science Fiction

Part 1 of 8 -- Introduction

James William Neilson

In keeping with The Engines of the Night theme; in the essay "Tell Me Doctor If You Can That It's Not All Happening Again" Malzberg discusses, among other things (like the Fifties), the 7 Taboos of Science Fiction. Well, Malzberg is a bit inconsistent as to whether these are actual "taboos" or "limitations" or "dangerous plots", though he uses the term taboo the most. Regardless, he is talking about story concepts and/or plots that if written -- if the norms are violated -- are unpublishable. No professional editor in the genre will touch these stories with a three-metre pole, and certainly would never, ever publish them.

Here they are, in brief.

NORM VIOLATION ONE: "Bleak, dystopian, depressing material which implies that the present cultural fix is insane or transient and will self-destruct . . . that the very ethos and materials of the society...will bring it down."

NORM VIOLATION TWO: "Material which is highly internalized. That is, science fiction written from the point of view of a meditative and introspective central character whose perceptions are the central facet of the work, whose reactions to the events of the story are more important than the story itself."

NORM VIOLATION THREE: "Science fiction which implies that contemporary accepted mores of sexuality, socioeconomics, or familial patterning might be corrupting, dangerous, or destructive."

NORM VIOLATION FOUR: "Science fiction which owes less to classical, Aristotelian notions of "plot"-the logical, progressive ordering of events as a protagonist attempts to solve a serious and personally significant problem-than "mood"...that is, the events for their own sake..."

NORM VIOLATION FIVE: "Science fiction truly at the hard edge of contemporary scientific investigation..."

NORM VIOLATION SIX: "Science fiction which questions science fiction; work which questions the assumptions of the category and speculates on the effect it might have upon its readership."

NORM VIOLATION SEVEN: "Genuinely feminist science fiction; that is, science fiction in which women are perceived to react to events and internalize in a way which is neither a culturally received stereotype nor a merely male stereotype projected onto female characters."

So, for the next seven issues we are going to play with these themes here in SWILL. Or at least I am going to play with them; we shall have to see if anybody else has an interest. And I am also going to experiment with each of these norm violations or taboos by writing a story that breaks the taboo and see if I can get it published. That will be the challenge.

That means that I am going to go all out and write, what I consider to be, good stories for this experiment. Big deal, you are just some old fan/old fakefan nobody's ever heard of; what makes you think that you can write?

The fact is that, there was a time when people did actually pay me, professional/near professional rates, to write fiction. Not in prose, but for radio and occasionally film. Writing in radio during the Eighties was akin to what Malzberg describes about writing for the pulps back in the Fifties and earlier; you ground

the stuff out, often under several pseudonyms, with little time for editing script, numerous re-writes once it got to production, and far more anonymity than that a pulp writer -- at least someone may have old yellowed magazines in their collection that contain one of your stories -- once your radio play is broadcast, unless it is rebroadcast, it's gone.

As for film, many of the film scripts that I wrote never made it beyond Development -- I got paid, but the film was never made. Of the three films that I wrote the original script for that did get made, I received no credit for those scripts; they had been re-written up to ten times therefore the original writer's credit drops off as the re-writes go on. Not that I have really cared up until recently, because two of those films sucked so bad in the final product that it didn't really matter and the third was okay but really only the central premise remained of the original script. And yes, I used to be a member of ACTRA, when the writers were part of this union and long before they separated to form the Writers Guild of Canada.

So, can I write prose fiction? Well, let us experiment, shall we...

Scribbling on the Bog Wall: Letters of Comment

James William Neilson

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

From the SMOTE (Secret Master of the Elrons) R. Graeme Cameron -
Jan 8th, 2013

Hi Neil!

In SWILL #15 you wrote:

I kind of expected that SWILL would win some sort of Elron this year, and it did. SWILL won "Worst Fanzine" for the use of the pudmonkey font.

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

An Elron is awarded tongue-in-cheek as a spoof award and is not meant to be taken seriously. The pudmonkey font seemed to generate the most criticism and, everyone in fanzine fandom being aware of the infamous pudmonkey debate, was the most convenient excuse to award an Elron.

On the other hand the 'Faned' (Canadian Fanzine Fanac Society Award or CFFS Award) is given out on the basis of genuine achievement. SWILL is not only a 'new' zine on the scene (all new zines welcome!) but a breath of fresh air that has shaken up the somewhat stale self-image of Canadian zinedom by injecting new life into the question of what zinedom is all about, indeed, what fandom is all about. Huzzah!

Hi Graeme, as I have stated before, I am rather uncertain as to how widespread in fanzine fandom is the view that SWILL is "a breath of fresh air". I will agree that t but I will agree that the zine does raise "the question of what zinedom is all about".

OF COURSE SWILL counts as a fanzine (though it may have other definitions, research tool for instance) and of course you were and are a fan. You edited BCSFAzine from issue #108 (May 1982) to issue #120 (May 1983). You took part in panels at VCON 10 in 1982 (PROPAGANDA IN SF, along with Evelyn Beheshti, Steve Wodz and Ed Hutchings, plus THE PUBBUG STRIKES BACK with Robert Runte, Fran Skene and Lari Davidson). Not to mention the earlier SWILLS and a bunch of other fanac. Once a fan, always a fan. "Death will not release you."

But cynicism may... To be honest, I don't know where I fit any more and in writing this issue, ceased to care. When you think of it fandom has been debating who is and who isn't a fan since at least the 1930's, with no resolution in sight...

In issue #15 you devoted a great deal of thought to defining the various types of current fandom, namely 'Traditional', 'Active', 'Digital', and 'Genre consumers.' I don't dispute these labels, they are as convenient and useful as any. But why bother with labels, some may ask? You can't debate what fandom is and was without terms defining this or that approach or purpose within fandom. The trouble is, everyone has to agree on what the various labels mean, and they don't.

Recently traditional fandom has been active on a number of Facebook sights debating the meaning and function of traditional fandom. Labels like 'Fandom,' 'Faandom,' 'Trufen,' etc. are tossed into the fray to no good result because of two problems: 1) there are too damn many terms and when you confront a neofan with one they've never heard of, you have to pause to explain, and 2) explanations vary according to the explainer's individual take on fandom. This tends to create circular arguments based on thorough misunderstanding. No wonder it's hard to attract neofen into the fold. The old pharts give the impression they don't know what they're talking about, or at the very least, have a mindset of a positively Byzantine nature (forever arguing over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, as it were...) In other

words, the baggage of traditional fandom acts as an impediment to recruitment. Sad, but there it is.

I agree. And I choose not to side with Byzantium...

Being as obsessed with promoting fanzine publishing as I am, I've decided to divest myself of as much as the baggage as possible and simplify, simplify, simplify... I intend to stick to the following three terms:

FANDOM: Anybody who likes SF&F stuff.

ZINEDOM: Them as loves the art of publishing SF&F fanzines.

OLD FANDOM: Those who still cherish the lore and practices of early fandom.

Yep, I think that I will play with these from now on as major categories of fandom, with sub-categories within each. With two changes...

FANDOM: Anybody who likes SF&F stuff and self-identifies themselves as a fan. GENRE CONSUMER: Anybody who likes SF&F stuff.

Naturally all three terms encompass each other to some degree, but you will note I divorce Zinedom from Old Fandom. This allows me to concentrate on Zinedom as a current, contemporary phenomenon free of historical baggage. I feel this is very necessary if fresh recruits are to be attracted.

I agree absolutely.

Mind you, I will still sprinkle arcane faanish terms throughout my promotional writings in the hope it might spark an interest within readers in past traditions, but when it comes to proselytizing mundanes into zinefen, the above three terms will be the only labels I will use.

Lester Rainfield's two paragraph description of the act of 'Pissing on a Pile of Old Amazings' is quite lyrical and the best part of his article. The rest, admonishing readers to ignore Virtual Reality literature, is wasted on me, since I have no idea what he's talking about. Never assume a reader is *au courant* in

SF lit. I certainly am not. I echo Lloyd Penney's assertion that there is little in modern SF to attract old-time readers like myself who imprinted on SF stressing 'sense of wonder' as opposed to the darker 'sense of impending doom' so prevalent today which, as you point out, merely reflects contemporary knowledge that the future will be worse than current reality, not better.

I still think there are 'sense of wonder' works being done, but they tend to contain some elements of darkness too. I don't know if anyone is still publishing happy-happy, things will only get better and better stories.

On to SWILL #16:

On your editorial re the idiocy of the Conservatives in America, I note their current mantra is *"The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."* What they fail to mention is the reverse is equally true, hence the recent spate of cops being killed or wounded while 'attempting' to take out bad guys. The NRA seems to assume criminals are incompetent with guns. Taint necessarily so.

Besides, many bad guys were good guys all along, taking proper training courses, proud members of the NRA, etc., but when they impulsively decide to kill their families or whatever, are magically transferred to the bad guy status without any reference to their former good guy status. Anybody keeping tabs on how many members of the NRA commit criminal actions fatal to their victims? That's one stat I'd love to see.

Furthermore, any society which encourages its members to treat each other as potential enemies rather than fellow citizens is doomed to failure. No wonder they're in decline.

Me, I believe only police, the armed forces, hunters, farmers, and sports target shooters should own guns, with the most powerful being reserved strictly for the first two categories. I firmly believe in the concept of communal citizenship (one for all, all for one) where accepting neighbours as fellow citizens is taken for granted, where criminals are viewed as the exception and not the presumed norm. Rather than blather on and on, I will simply state that I firmly believe our Canadian system is superior to the American system. Period.

We are both in strong agreement on this issue and I also prefer the Canadian Way...

Re: your comments on Taral's comments. The only thing Taral is guilty of is being convinced that he's right. I envy that. I tend to stumble along wondering if I know what the hell is going on. I'm not always convinced that I am right in my views, but tend to be convinced I am usually not entirely wrong. It works for me.

Taral is easily as passionate about zinedom and old fandom as I am, probably more so, but has his own perspective on things (as do I). That said, I thought you defended yourself rather well. In fact, one of the useful aspects of Taral's criticism is that it produced your explanatory outburst wherein you clearly define yourself and your purpose, and that's a good thing. Differences of opinion expressed in endless debate is both a virtue and a curse for Old Fandom, but is very much a cornerstone of same. I wouldn't have it otherwise.

I really don't get old fandom. As I have mentioned in previous SWILLs, it was really before my time when I arrived on the scene in the 1970s. It persisted, fairly strongly, but it was a closed club, not open to new members. I certainly wouldn't define it as the majority group within SF fandom; it hasn't been that for a few decades at least.

SFCOntario 2012 must have been a real horror show for Lester. There were aspects of the con he actually liked! What a bummer! Sort of spoils the intent of his article. Still, there are the Old Fandom fans to fall back on as a target. That most of them haven't changed in decades is of course correct, but that's a human failing, most adults stop changing once they become adult. It takes much effort to embrace change, it needs to be the hobby of choice, and most people prefer other hobbies. In my case I choose to be a retro fan, a twentieth century kinda guy, and reject modern times as irrelevant to my enjoyment of life. I'm not entirely brain dead though, I remain intrigued with change, but prefer to be an observer rather than a participant. Ghu knows what Lester makes of that, but I is what I is. Anyway, I enjoyed his report.

Lester is Lester, what can I say... Actually, he likes this con and it is the only one he attends regularly - he's been to all three and I've only been to the most recent two. Lester will either give me a LoC to your LoC or use your comments as material in one of his columns.

Re: the Leninski reprint: one slight flaw, 'Dirigible' does not mean 'not rigid'. The one thing that distinguishes a dirigible from other airships (like blimps for instance) is that it possesses a rigid internal framework. However, the basic point that a kilometre long airship travelling at 500 km/hr would tear itself to pieces is quite correct. In fact, the whole review of THE PROBABILITY BROACH is bang on. 'Preaching to the converted' indeed, only nowadays this has been extended to journalism, alas.

Actually, you are both wrong. 'Dirigible' means capable of being steered, controlled, or directed; literally from the Latin it means able to be directed.

Not all Americans are idiots by the way, just the ones who've taken the American concept of individualism to the level of crank extremism. Most of the others are rather decent blokes I believe.

In his LoC Lloyd writes: *"In the long run, you've got to find the fun you want."* Absolutely, when it stops being fun and becomes a burden, it's time to gaffiate. It occurs to me that one of the advantages of the increasing diversity of fandom is that there is more to pick and choose from. The multiplicity of choices is not a catastrophe, but a blessing methinks. Certainly an opportunity.

On a personal note, I've grown increasingly tired of the ephemeral nature of Facebook communication and debate. Here today, gone in the next few minutes. Not very satisfying. I'm toying with switching to LoC writing instead. I may become a SWILL regular. Call it a New Year's resolution.

Cheers! Graeme

You are more than welcome to become a SWILL regular. Next deadline for your column is June 16th. Neil

Endnote: Nom de Plume

James William Neilson

So, here is where I was supposed to trash the winner of last year's poll, Ad Astra. This will not happen. Is Ad Astra not worthy of being trashed? Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. I have other topics more important to address.

The more observant of our readers will have noticed that nothing in this issue has been written by Neil Jamieson-Williams, not even this Endnote. All of the contents of this issue have been written by the editor and publisher of this zine, except, as always, the column by Lester Rainsford. There are some of our readers who believe that Lester is just one of my pseudonyms which is incorrect (Those who attended SFContario 3 may have actually met him, in person). Unless an article was a collaboration between SWILL contributors, the editor and publisher has always used his real, legal name, until now.

My employer (I endeavour, as per orders by my employer, not to make my employer public and therefore emphasise my Lecturer status at McMaster University; most of my teaching load has been assigned, by my actual employer, to McMaster. I am stating this as I want to make clear that the policy I am about to discuss is NOT a McMaster policy.) is not a university and in Ontario, only university faculty have any academic freedom (okay, since the most recent government imposed contract, Ontario secondary school teachers now have limited academic freedom). For the past five years my employer has prohibited me from making use of my academic affiliation for any and all forms of publication (academic, fiction, and non-fiction) or when presenting at conferences/congresses/conventions/symposia. I have endured this and found some work-arounds, but for academic, peer-reviewed publications, they do not work. It did allow me to present at a handful of conferences, which I did until recently.

What changed? My employer has instituted a new policy regarding their brand and brand protection. Under this policy long term employees (currently not specified but I've been working at this particular institution for over 12 years) and their legal names are considered to be associated brands to the employer and therefore the employer has some control as to how the employee uses that associated brand, in particular, if the employee uses the associated brand in a manner that may negatively impact the employer's brand.

Thus, if any employee (not just faculty) writes, say a letter to the editor that advocates that the Tar Sands should not be further developed, and that letter gets published in a newspaper, using the employee's real, legal name; they are in big trouble. Some of our corporate partners are in the petroleum industry; some of our partners are major donors to the Conservative Party of Canada, etc. This letter to the editor could be perceived as an associated brand harming the major brand. Penalty for violation, immediate termination. In all probability, this policy wouldn't stand up under the collective agreement, or the legal system; however, both of those systems for redress take years.

And so, this zine is now edited and published by James William Neilson. Mr. Neilson also writes textbooks, fiction, and academic works. James William Neilson will be attending SFContario 4 later this year and probably also Ad Astra 2014.

How was my associated brand being detrimental to my employer's brand? The most recent subculture that I had studied were Modern Pagans (previous groups being particle physicists, software developers, open mike musicians, BBS communities) and I am currently researching science fiction fandom and science fiction writers. According to my employer, I "only study freaks and weirdoes" and therefore the subject material of my research and publications are potentially harmful to the employer's brand.