

FLAG

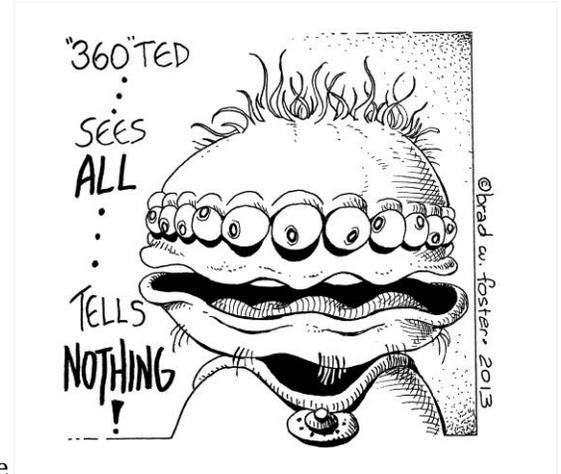
This is issue #3 of FLAG, a frequent fanzine published by Andy Hooper, from 11032 30th Ave. NE Seattle, WA 98125, email to fanmailaph@aol.com. Member fwa. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production. First copies mailed on March 16th, 2013. FLAG appears only in printed form, and is available. The next issue will appear in April, 2013. Time to send in the FAAn ballot that came with issue #2; deadline for the 2013 FAAn awards is April 6th. Also, vote Jim Mowatt for TAFF! Art Credits: Brad Foster. page 1.

“Susan,” said my Department Chair, raising a practiced sardonic eyebrow, “*all fiction is speculative.*”

In Defense of Wonder: Being in part a review of *MATTER* by Iain M. Banks

The Black Insurgent Banner

Trufans and Insurgents have been fighting like Mods and Rockers between my ears for the past few weeks, and once again, Arnold J. Katz is to blame. In recent issues of his FANSTUFF, Arnie traced the history and meaning of “Insurgency” in fandom. To Arnie, “Insurgency” is a shorthand term for all the skeptical, critical and fractious elements of fandom’s personality, while the more obedient, credulous and mutually-nurturing parts are best described as “Trufannish.” My first reading of Arnie’s overview thoroughly confounded me – his description made Insurgency sound like mundane bullying or an ideology embraced by self-identified fakefans, who held our pretensions, rituals and obsessions in general contempt. After reading more of Arnie’s sidebars, it’s clear he believes Insurgency arises as a necessary reaction to an excess of gormless Trufannishness, which tends to suppress criticism and standards of quality in favor of rosy self-indulgence. It may be that Insurgents have a pre-disposition toward contrarian or critical reaction, but they would never express these tendencies so memorably if fandom did not tend to revel so indiscriminately in dreck.



The thing that gave me intellectual whiplash was that these ideas come on the heels of other editorials in which Arnie lays out the basic case that fandom is no longer, and indeed should not be, interested in science fiction. He has, in so many words, taken Francis Towner Laney’s fundamental question “Why don’t you leave fandom?” and restated it as “Why don’t you leave science fiction?” And to judge from similar sentiments expressed by correspondents to this and other fanzines, Arnie’s opinion appears to be shared by many fanzine fans.

It’s something I’ve been dealing with since I began to read and publish fanzines. There has always been a tendency for many of fandom’s best writers to become jaded and impatient with the genre of literature that brought most of us into the subculture. To them, it just isn’t very cool to read or particularly to write about science fiction. Part of it is just the crabbiness of older fans, who inevitably feel that contemporary fiction has to be a pale shadow of the works they enjoyed in their personal golden age. But Arnie genuinely believes that mere science fiction readers are not particularly likely to meet his personal definition of a “Fan.” In his estimation, a persistent devotion to the genre itself is likely to delay or deny the social connections that mark mature participation in fandom. In the Katz Universe, being attached to a single interest can keep an “Interest Group” from ever making the critical evolutionary step into being a fandom.

At best, fanzine fandom now seems to smile indulgently at fan writing inspired by science fiction, before returning the
[Continued on Page 2]

See these eyes so green? I can stare for a thousand years.

A Key to the links published in FLAG #2

Page 1: “Sisyphus has nothing on this guy”

An ESPN anchor reacts to tape of Denver Nuggets Center Timofey Mosgov being repeatedly dunked on in NBA play.

Page 1: “I thought your pseudonym was ‘Gorgeous Randy Flamethrower’

A *Family Guy* exchange: It turns out to be Stewie’s pseudonym, but only for Dodgeball.

Page 2: “And I put my hands up and said, ‘Demonic Raisins, I rebuke you!’

Jan Hooks portrays televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker on a decades-old episode of *Saturday Night Live*.

Page 4: “We’re all the Peace Faction, you prick.”

Djan Seriy Anaplian reacts to a Culture citizen who disapproves of Special Circumstances, in Iain M. Banks’ *Matter*.

Page 5: “Get my tub of chalk. I’m going to write swear words on the driveway, blow off some steam.”

Steve Smith reacts to disappointment on Seth MacFarlane’s *American Dad*.

Page 6: “Like most ethnic foods, our desserts are disappointing”

More breathtakingly insensitive humor from *American Dad*.

Page 7: “Tonight’s Episode: ‘Sweet Home Al-Jazeera’”

Playful faux title to an episode of Conan O’Brien’s talk show.

In Defense of Wonder:

[Continued from Page 1]

Reviewing *Matter* by Iain M. Banks

returning the conversation to cats or sports cars or convoluted psychohistoric theory devoted to fandom itself. At worst, SF readers are casually belittled, and ascribed a metaphorical coonskin cap to go with a taste for the aforementioned dreck. And “Fan History” is seen as having only oblique connections to the history of science fiction, most of which were broken sometime around 1970.

So despite feeling a bit like a nerd (that word again) for doing so, I’m going to spend a significant part of FLAG talking about science fiction for a second consecutive issue. And not just extra fan-friendly works of magical realism like *Among Others* – I mean thick, epic space operas with glossaries and appendices necessary to explain all the different varieties of talking space squid that populate their pages. If you find this too terrible to contemplate, I invite you to turn briskly on to page 6, where five pages of correspondence and fanzine review should provide squid-free ego-scanning.

Cultural Exchange

It isn’t as if I can claim to be an especially prolific or ardent SF reader myself. I’ve not been a regular reader of any of the SF magazines for nearly 30 years, and have seldom even heard of most of the works nominated for awards each year. I have devoted an increasing amount of reading time to history over the past several decades, and then had all my reading habits severely curtailed by the problems that I had with my vision from 2006 to 2009. My eyes are stable now, and I am finally able to read nearly as quickly as I did before my vision needed correction, And the experience of reading and thinking about Jo Walton’s *Among Others* has acted like a shot of science fiction adrenaline to my sense of wonder – just a little of Mori’s zeal for the genre has rubbed off on me, and I’m looking hungrily at all the science fiction that I have been piling unread upon the shelves for years.

We’ve even embraced parts of Mori’s reading list, now famously findable at Amazon and other online venues. Carrie feels certain she has never read LeGuin’s *The Dispossessed*, while I don’t think I have ever actually read Delany’s *Triton*, although I think I’ve seen more words analyzing the novel than are contained in the work itself. We’re supposed to undertake them more or less simultaneously, but one of us will probably have to abandon something else in progress to make that effort a success. I also had a scheme to re-read George R.R. Martin’s *The Armageddon Rag* in time to write something about it for a March 21st deadline, but that’s been revealed to be another mad dream. Because I’m 300 pages deep into *Surface Detail*, a “Culture” novel by Iain M. Banks, and there’s no way I’ll stop now.

If I have a “favorite” sf author, it must be Banks – I have generally kept pace with the prolific Scottish novelist’s work for more than 25 years. One of my earliest brushes with real writing talent was acting as Banks’ liaison during his first American Guest of Honor turn, at Wiscon 14 in 1990. It was a memorable weekend – John Jarrold was along to spend

a bit of promotional money on a flash young novelist, and he made sure the action was perpetually hilarious. We drank a great deal of Madison's first micro beer, Capital Gartenbrau, I ate a little acid, and John introduced us to the terror of the "Black Hose of Calcutta."

You indeed had to be there, but I also tried to listen to everything Banks had to say on the subject of writing. I think by that time I had read *The Wasp Factory* (1984) and *The Bridge* (1986), both termed "Non-SF," and the first three "Culture" novels, *Consider Phlebas* (1987), *The Player of Games* (1988) and *Use of Weapons* (1990). I was frankly dazzled by those books, and thought that I heard echoes of Graeme Green, Michael Moorcock and James Blish in Banks' voice. And the vivid, teeming galaxy of The Culture seemed one of the most inventive settings in the history of the field, a vast integrated interstellar society of panhuman and machine intelligences, living completely free from the issues of scarcity, disease and ideological oppression. He has called it his "secular heaven," and living vicariously within it for the span of several hundred pages at a time has been one of the most profoundly pleasurable reading experiences of a lifetime spent looking for exactly that.

In the subsequent 23 years, I did my best keep up with a very respectable volume of work. Banks issued three Culture novels between 1990 and 2000, the inventive and quizzical *Excession* (1996), the subtly passionate *Inversions* (1998), and the dramatic, eye-popping *Look to Windward* (2000). A collection of shorter works, *State of the Art* (1991) featured three shorter stories involving the Culture, including one in which Contact agents choose to leave Earth to itself as a sort of control group in their study of panhuman societies. Whether this is a tragedy or a narrow escape from one depends on your opinion of the Culture.

Over the same span, Banks' presented two SF novels not set in the Culture, the adventurous *Against a Dark Background* (1993) and *Feersum Enjin* (1994), notorious for the Glaswegian dialect employed in one of its narratives. He returned to the universe of the former work in *The Algebraist* (2004), another spectacular space opera that received a well-deserved Hugo nomination. And if I were to list his 14 mainstream novels, and the intoxicating travelogue *Raw Spirit* (2002), this essay wouldn't fit in an ensmallled fanzine.

There was an 8-year gap between *Look to Windward*, and the next Culture novel, *Matter* (2008). This was the beginning of a three-book outburst in five years, continuing with *Surface Detail* (2010) and *The Hydrogen Sonata* (2012). But this wave began at the moment my eyes were probably at their worst. I found it challenging to read a four-page fanzine article, so 500-page novels were not on my reading list. Even after my eyes improved, I was slow to begin reading longer works again. But in the galvanic afterglow of reading *Among Others*, I had a powerful urge to "catch up" with science fiction, and immediately thought of the stiff six inches of Scottish space opera standing on the shelf. I had read them all in order so far, so I began with *Matter*.

By the Falls of Hyeng-zhar

In almost all writing workshops that I've attended, the population has been evenly split between writers who emphasize the creation of characters in their work, and those who concentrate on plot, often using the words "action" and "story" to describe the same thing. Maybe two writers in 25 are most passionately devoted to the settings of their stories, weaving descriptive passages into their character's experience, always trying to make you see it for yourself.

I think, for good or ill, that I'm one such, always obsessed with context, even in fan writing. To me, the popular observation that setting is like an additional character in a narrative is one of the most desirable goals for a storyteller. And in this capacity, Banks never disappoints. *Matter* introduces another incredible setting to the Culture universe, already populated with enormous Ringworld "Orbitals" and starships so vast they could easily accommodate the entire state of Connecticut inside them. The "planet" Sursamen is an Arithmetic Shellworld, an artificial body composed of concentric spheres with considerable void space between them, a structure preserved by thousands of enormous supporting pillars, termed "Towers" by the world's inhabitants. Different levels of the Shellworld are filled with different forms of atmosphere, including levels composed entirely of liquids or preserved as a vacuum. Heat and illumination are provided by "Rollstars" and "Fixstars," artificial nuclear reactors, mobile or static as their names

That was the worst imitation of Harlan Ellison I've ever seen.

Usually I don't see my ex-girlfriends, unless their hard drives crash.

imply. To travel between “levels,” one must use travel tubes contained within the Towers. The exterior of the Shellworld is also heavily populated, in natural and artificial craters filled with artificial atmospheres. The variety of environments allows a Shellworld to have a population composed of many different genera of beings. Sursamen is home to at least five different species identified by name, and many hundreds more that are not specified. Most of these sentients are quite aware of one another, and Sursamen hosts a complex network of patrons and clients that mirrors its concentric structure.

The origins of Shellworlds are obscure; they form a rough net around the perimeter of the galaxy, but some eons in the past a race known as the “In” destroyed a large number of the spheres. They can be unpredictable places to live; in the past, Shellworlds have activated automatic defense systems that exterminated the populations living inside them! Most are now under the control of one or more advanced races, which have developed methods for “disarming” their defenses – or so they hope. Many have one or more particularly advanced beings living in their cores, in retreat from galactic society – naturally, these beings are revered as gods by the other inhabitants of the Shellworld.

Sursamen is home to at least two races of humans, occupying large portions of the 8th and 9th levels of the Shellworld. As the book opens, they are at war with each other, and the inhabitants of the 8th have inflicted a decisive reverse on the forces of the 9th level. But the victorious King is treacherously killed by his most trusted lieutenant; and the novel details the subsequent reactions and experiences of the former King’s three adult or near adult children. What complicates the picture dramatically is that the King’s daughter has taken service in the arm of the Culture known as “Special Circumstances,” the galaxy’s most badass espionage and midnight-black ops specialists. Her skills could reverse almost any calamity – if the Culture will let her use them.

This superspy Princess, Djan Seriy Anaplian dam Poulr (Banks names are always an entertainment unto themselves), soon resolves to return home and see what she can accomplish; her point of view begins thousands of light years from Sursamen and steadily grows closer. Her youngest brother, Prince Oramen, is trapped in the Court of his murdered father; his Hamlet-like point of view remains focused on the relevant levels of Sursamen, first the 8th, then increasingly the 9th. His elder brother Prince Ferbin was meant to die in battle, but survived to witness his Father’s murder, and begins a flight upward and outward to Sursamen’s surface and beyond, hoping to make contact with his fabulous sister.

It gradually becomes clear that many parties of increasingly advanced power and accomplishment are behind the conflict between the people of the 8th and 9th levels. The web of manipulation and outright extermination grows wider and more terrible, until there is no coherent moral argument against intervention by the Culture, through Djan Seriy and one of their gloriously sentient spaceships. And while the star-spanning perspectives are a familiar feature of Banks’ work, he also hits tones of claustrophobia and eldritch dread that are positively Lovecraftian. There are sections of *Matter* that have the elements of a “Mythos” story, lacking only the Old Ones themselves to qualify for the canon.

All this takes place in relentlessly vivid and exotic settings: An impossibly vast artificial water world, home to more creatures of one sentient species than all the Culture’s citizens, real and artificial. Dizzying rides on huge flying reptiles that are smokeless dragons in all but name. And most haunting, an immense, pulverizing waterfall, created by the drainage of a sea from one level of the Shellworld to another. The action of the water progressively reveals and destroys a buried city composed of improbably strong and beautiful glass. The city and something that may lie beneath it unite all the narratives, and then drag our perspective even deeper into the Shellworld’s past. The book ends spectacularly, but it’s important to press on through the Appendix to the Epilogue to receive the full impact.

Shipbuilding

To the veteran reader of Iain M. Banks, there is a special satisfaction in passages that advance our general appreciation and state of knowledge regarding the Culture. In *Matter*, this is mostly accomplished through interactions with the spaceships that are its most mobile and memorable citizens. The Culture is not a society conducted through the use of spaceships; it’s a society *composed* of spaceships, and other Minds with similarly star-spanning perspective. Some contain populations measured in millions, while others typically have no humans or other passengers on board at all.

Humans are altered and augmented in any way they can imagine; Djan Seriy's mentor in *Special Circumstances* is currently living in a body that resembles a large tumbleweed. But the demands of interstellar travel and other advanced manipulations of reality require Ships and Minds to extend their awareness into "four dimensions." (Shellworlds also exist in four dimensions, which may suggest some of their value as a galactic defensive grid.) This perspective is distinctly outside of human experience and presumable tolerance; so in a manner of speaking, the Culture's spaceships bend reality so you don't have to. How can I not love them, when they are setting and character rolled into one?

The Ships of the Culture name themselves with the sensibility of a fan editor selecting an interlineation. They are equal parts non-sequitur and oblique portent, sometimes warm, less frequently cold. Much of the later action of the novel is aboard or abetted by the secretly heroic ship *Liveware Problem*. And there are encounters with ships including *Lightly Seared on the Reality Grill*, *You Naughty Monsters*, *Xenoglocissist* and *You'll Clean That Up Before You Leave*. Other races have some remarkable names for their vessels too. The crab-like Oct provide passage on a ship titled *The Hundredth Idiot*, while the watery Morthanvelders ply the stars in *Now, Turning to Reason, & Its Just Sweetness*.

Science Fiction has always indulged itself in alien monikers and languages composed of clashing syllables, but Banks is never willing to stop there, to simply characterize something as inscrutable and move on. Every different race and polity of the galaxy is inexplicable in its own particular way. **Matter** doesn't have the multiple alien viewpoints of *Look to Windward*, but its human protagonists have such different mindsets that they might as well be of different species. The Culture doesn't see itself as embodying the interests of all humanity, nor does it require that "mankind" dwell entirely within its borders or follow its mores. But the option is always open.

It's by no means a galaxy free of conflict. The Culture and its peer civilizations have reached a scale where warfare no longer makes any economic sense, inevitably consuming far more resources than it can possibly secure. Yet warfare remains an important profession, a pastime, and a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon. The advanced races of the galaxy, the Optimae, can sometimes be satisfied with ritualized or virtual bloodletting. But most allow clients and proxies to do the bleeding, in the manner of Terrestrial superpowers in late 20th Century. At one point, Prince Ferbin and his long-suffering horse Patsy man Holse meet the renegade Culture agent who once gave his father critical insights on his path to power. They find Xide Hyrlis directing one side of a nightmarish war on a pock-marked high gravity world. The conflict is conducted entirely for the pleasure of allegedly more advanced alien clients, providing a form of "War Porn."

The audience with him seems like a grim echo or parody of the meeting between Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and Slartibartfast, the Magrathean architect of Earth's fjords in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* cycle. Hyrlis is convinced that his every word is overheard and recorded by tiny devices, and subsequent evidence shows that he is probably right. Prince Ferbin, coming from a technical complex charitably described as Steampunk, presumes he is simply insane. But the endlessly voyeuristic appetites of the Galaxy's Players make such monitors commonplace, a fact that enables Djan Seriy to know much – but certainly not all – of what has taken place on levels 8 and 9 while she is still many light years away. In Banks' hands, scale is a palette, used for making pictures out of time. After developing with unruffled deliberation, the book begins to accelerate at a steady rate, until it is literally speeding toward its own center at thousands of kilometers per hour. The many still mysterious and unknown levels of Sursamen, its purpose and history, pass in a blur as the story streaks toward its resolution. Like so many fantastic and speculative settings, I was far from ready to leave when I ran out of novel.

Yet I also exult; two more Culture novels to read, here in my hands! And beyond those, and the other titles figuratively queued up in paragraphs above, I have a decade of new writing to enjoy, as well as all that work that had not yet risen to the front of the line before my vacation from the field. I wouldn't want to lapse totally into Zen on you, but this is all quite wonderful, in that it is so full of Wonder. Your experience may always be different, but I recommend a good Clydeside Space Opera to clean out the cobwebs, and set your internal controls for the heart of the sun once more.

- **Matter**, by Iain M. Banks, Orbit Books, New York & London, 2008

Remember kids, you're never alone in the Fortress of solitude.

“So here I sit, painting my toenails in chocolate syrup, so that when I put my foot in my mouth it’ll taste good.”

Color Party:

Readers’ Letters to FLAG

I received just as many letters and trades in response to FLAG #2 as came following FLAG #1. The total volume of words received decreased by a few pages, but it was just as hard to decide what to cut. Your letters are presented in 10-point Georgia, like this, while my comments, mysteriously, are executed in Poor Richard, like this.]

Frank Denton

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Many thanks for the two issues of **Flag**. It’s been a long time since I’ve received two issues of any zine so close together. I wish you luck in sustaining this pace.

It occurred to me that postage costs may have a lot to do with the demise of frequent and small zines. There was a time when Ted White, and it might have been Dan Steffan (?), produced a small zine every week for a while. First class postage, as I recall, was 5 cents at the time. Today postage is probably the biggest cost of producing a zine on paper. It still is a truism that the young, most energetic and lively of brain, are also the least able economically to own a copier, afford the paper, envelopes and postage to produce a zine. Old timers like myself can afford it but increasingly have nothing much to say. So Ghu bless those who still pub their ish, I say.

Thanks for trying to inject a little life into the world of fanzines.

[My plan is to stay with the monthly pace for a while – probably through six issues, and June of this year. I might slow down somewhat after that, but the Fanzine Countdown would be less compelling on a less frequent schedule, so I may resist that. It may become difficult to find something to say every four weeks, but I’ve been fascinated with fan writing for 30 years now, and my interest shows no sign of abating. And I can always fall back on reprinting my own or others’ work in fanzines, and it isn’t laziness, it’s Timebinding.]

R. Graeme Cameron

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Writing locs is like recording dreams, if you don’t do it right away your original impressions disappear...

Thanks for the FAAN ballot. I will nominate. Your FAAN ballot is so clear and succinct, point system so uncomplicated but useful, I will (shamelessly steal) base the first ever CFFS Awards ballot on yours.

On fanzine auctions. At your auction at Ditto 8 in 95 you referred to me as “that man in the corner.” 75% of cash raised came from me. I successfully bid against Jerry Kaufman for HUITLOXOPETL (mainly cause he’d gone to the washroom), and also bid against myself... ”Fine, whatever...” you said as Jerry came racing back. “Damn, Damn, Damn!” said Jerry. I did let him hold the zine though...

[Graeme, I’d forgotten all about that auction, but I certainly recall your enthusiasm in snapping up most of the material on offer. You were very generous, and completely unfazed by the number of Canadian zines that had been gleaned from Alan Rosenthal’s collection. Who is eligible to vote in the Canadian Fanzine Fanac Awards? If I’m eligible, I’ll be happy to cast a ballot.]

William Breiding

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I’ve been disappointed by the price of old fanzines in the era of eBay. I sometimes go on binges of buying fannish material – mostly fanthologies, trip reports and one-author retrospectives. I’ve never seen a copy of Ah, Sweet Idiocy! One of these days. Robert Lichtman offered me a copy of Fancyclopedia for some oddly high price – 50, 75 dollars? – and I had to turn him down. I’ve never asked Robert how much he paid for the issues of Starfire he bought on eBay, ut I doubt it was for a quarter! (Probably through the Bill Bowers estate, via Mike Resnick.)

I like your idea of fanzine tables, and The Temporary Hucksters. I would certainly take advantage of such a thing.

I’ve been reading all of Zelazny’s old novellas & novellettes, in chronological order. He has a certain magic, and the opening lines of *Damnation Alley* are classic, but overall, I’m finding he doesn’t stand the test of time. A sad thing, and a proud and lonely one, too.

[As a seller, it has been quite delightful to receive such generous bids on many of the fanzines I’ve put up for auction. But these prices are set in an open market – virtually all of my auctions have an

opening bid of 99 cents, and plenty of items sell for that price in the end. I try very hard to avoid any assumption about what a fanzine “should” sell for. A lot of classic fanac can now be found online, making it fairly ridiculous to pay hundreds of dollars to secure crumbling original copies. Robert Lichtman is a ubiquitous figure if you buy or sell fanzines online – yes, it can be a bit creepy knowing that he watches every single auction you post, but he is also a peerless source of information on whatever you may have to buy or sell. He has a fairly strong interest in seeing the “value” of fanzines remain high, as he has a pretty enormous volume of stuff he’d like to eventually liquidate. I’m still interested in raising money this way, but the desire to see old fanzine dispersed to parties that find them interesting is a strong secondary motivation. While FANCYCLOPEDIA I is probably always going to be at the higher end of the price range, I’m sympathetic to any collector’s agenda, and I’m always willing to look at your want lists.

Speak of the Lichtman, and he appears:]

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The one thing that really resonated with me in “The Land That Our Grandchildren Knew” was your time-traveling fantasy dream: “I tried to imagine myself as a teenage neofan in the 1970s, reacting to Foolscap’s tradition of serving the convention *un fond du chocolat* on Friday night.” That took me to memories of how awed I was, when I attended my first worldcon after returning to fandom in the early ‘80s, and found that huge chocolate consumption orgies (also ice cream) were commonplace. I gladly got in line.

In “The Curious Market of Doctor Corflu,” I liked your idea of having a “table auction,” something I remember happening in some form at some Corflu in my personal past. I have no interest in having a table at Portland, but since Carol and I will be driving up rather than taking the train or flying I have every intention of having old fanzines in some undetermined quantity in the trunk along with our luggage.

I don’t share Taral’s notion that “Perhaps fanzine fandom has been dominated by big extravagant zines for a little too long and the time for a swing in the other direction is overdue.” Thanks to time taken up with The Lists, I can get behind in reading fanzines of any size— and casting a glance at the fanzines I’ve received in the past four months the only ones that could be said to

match his disparaging description are mine and yours. Speaking just for yours, I wouldn’t want you, Randy and Carl to discontinue it since it’s one of the best around. I agree with your response to Richard Lynch that in its time *Mimosa* “created a new focus that then let many participating fans find a haven from bickering.” That made me think of Harry Warner Jr.’s *Spaceways*, which did the same in its time as a refuge from the fiery machinations of the Futurians and from the beginning of the World War 2 years. Of course that’s hardly the only example over the years—I think of zines such as *Grue*, *Innuendo* and *Energumen* in other times.

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I haven’t been to a Corflu in nearly 20 years but back then I remember there was a third option for fanzine sales besides the two you mentioned (auction and individual flea market-style sales tables). Back then the convention itself provided sales tables, with a portion of the proceeds going to TAFF and DUFF and the rest to the fan publisher. There was a sign-up sheet for people to man the table throughout the convention. This was also done at some of the Worldcons of that era (in the fanzine lounge area), and it seemed to me pretty successful. I remember that the fanzine sales areas did attract people who were relatively new to fanzines and fanzine publishing. It was a pleasant place to spend part of the convention.

[First of all, I hope you will end your Corflu drought by attending Corflu 31, which will almost certainly be held in Richmond, Virginia. And I certainly recall those sale tables at early iterations of Corflu – they made going to the con just as expensive as attending a big convention with a well-stocked huckster room. I think the room at Corflu XXX will bear a strong resemblance to those early exhibit rooms.]

Howard Waldrop
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Flag #1 came (what? Two weeks ago?) while I was finishing up afterwords to the stories in my next collection (coming from small Beer before Worldcon sometime) so you didn’t hear from me on it yet. Now comes #2 (delivered, of course to someone else’s mailbox by the rookie postperson working this week, and found dangling on the note clip by our door at 9 pm.)

I’m sure the fanzine table has stirred up both nostalgia & calumny – of course there’ll be long overlap (think of SF Five Yearly) between epochs and eras.

She soon saw that I was previously unsullied by fanzines

Nor has any con party I have been at ever put out candied fish heads or stuffed hamsters with onion dip.

Last night as I was reading about the quotes in FLAG #1, the syndicated 30 Rock came on with Jack Donaghee 's quote about Reagan's suit....

Keep up the frightening Jezail-like regularity.

Murray Moore
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I am confident that I would attend a Potlatch and a Foolsap, if either was more conveniently located to Mississauga. I've yet to read *Among Others* but I commend to your attention, if you've not read it, Walton's *Small Change* trilogy.

I have been following the availability of fanzines on eBay since late last year. Maybe you see more listings. I am slowly sorting my since-1968 accumulation and separating duplicates while creating a spreadsheet with these column headings: editor by last name; country; title and number; notes. I am determined to know what fanzines I have and to be able to put my hands on an issue easily, else I might as well not have it.

Slowly, as in I have finished the fanzines edited by persons with last name beginning with A; in the B names I am up to Berry, John. I was grateful for last year's Corflu auction, during which I bought the WRINKLED SHREWS. During Worldcon in Chicago, Chris Garcia, John Coxon, Mark Plummer and I, sold items in turn during the Fan Funds Auction.

I expect the Program people of Loncon 3 would be interested in your Albacon Club, because of both the base of it being Jo Walton's popular and prizes-winning text plus the additional references to British fans of yore. Perhaps a program sheet of bios of the characters could be provided to audience members.

[As it happens, I have already been approached by parties attached to Novacon 43, asking if they could possibly produce the play for performance at the convention, where Jo Walton will be in attendance as the Guest of Honor. The moment this issue goes out the door, I will open up THE ALBACON CLUB and begin fixing the problems I saw in the first performance.

I've always found live auctions a pretty good time too, but since having trouble with my eyes, it's much harder for me to identify and sell items without making some notes in advance. This is made much harder when people just dump boxes or piles of zines in my lap the morning of the event, and expect that I'll be able to sell everything

they've brought by the end of a 90-minute auction. That's why I wanted a break.]

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Several people in #2 have described *FLAG* as 'ensmalled' although it seems to me that a fanzine should be reasonably large first before it can be ensmalled (which sounds like it should be a verb, not an adjective), otherwise it is just small.

I initially read "I do a dozen apazines a year" for "I do a dozen apas a year" and wondered where on earth you found the time to do anything else, like eat or sleep, never mind co-editing *CHUNGA* (which, incidentally, is not "lumbering" at all. In fact *CHUNGA* strikes as almost perfect size for a fanzine: big enough for some solid articles and a good sized loccol; small enough that it can be read and enjoyed on bus journeys to and from work.)

I think you catch one of the essences of a focal point fanzine when you write "none [] operated without frequent reference to one another". A focal point fanzine operated not just as an isolated group of writers and readers, but in part as a clearing house for other fanzines and events happening around it, evidenced in its articles, reviews and letters. A quick and dirty test for focal pointness might be to flick through a fanzine and see how much evidence it showed of being one part of a wider community of fandom. On those grounds, *Pulp*, *Apparatchik*, *Banana Wings* and *Mimosa*, certainly, though I'd argue also *Attitude*. I've always thought of *Ansible* more as a newsletter than a zine, and it lacks a letter column, which I think is a necessary part of a focal point fanzine. Similarly I'm not sure about *Plokta* as a focal point rather than a hugely entertaining group zine largely for and about that group and their friends. But I suspect you can't really define what makes a focal point zine; it's more a feeling you get when you read one.

[I think we're still fumbling with the basic definition of a focal point fanzine, which makes an argument for almost any fanzine with a reasonably wide circulation to be recognized as a focal point. The fanzine PLOKTA was just the portion of the Plokta World Empire that intruded into normal space – the great majority of the fanac behind it took place on lists and newsgroups and in semi-public email exchanges that outweighed the words published in the fanzine.

I'm only in one apa these days, the Madison-based Turbo-Charged Party-Animal Amateur Press Association. I average between 6 and 8 pages per month; trying to maintain that while composing 8 to 10 pages for FLAG should be interesting.]

Joseph Nicholas

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The fanhistory you've outlined (in FLAG #1) offers a different schema from that which might be constructed for the UK -- but this is scarcely surprising, since yours/Arnie Katz's will of course be derived principally if not wholly from the trajectory followed by US rather than UK fanzine fandom. Even so, there are -- for a Briton -- some bizarre intrusions into US fanhistory from this side of the Atlantic: for example, you have Greg Pickersgill listed as an important fan for the period 1983-1990, whereas he was (in the UK) mostly active in the 1970s. (I believe that was active in, an apa in the 1980s, but by definition an apa is a less visible activity.)

Even if we discount such intrusions, there seem to be some odd omissions: for instance, your evolutionary milestones (which would perhaps be better if renamed just "notable milestones") omit from the 1970-1990 period any mention of *Star Wars*, which was surely responsible for a large influx of new fans....and indeed omit any mention of SF films in general, which in due course was responsible (partly) for the rise of Comicon. Indeed, your milestones omit comics entirely, even though from the mid-1980s re-imagining of Batman onwards comics fans have been a significant fan group and comics themselves have had a major impact on how the science fiction genre is perceived by the world at large and thus how the world reacts to fans as people -- no longer the nerds to be laughed at, but people who might have an idea about how the future will look.

[UK fandom is part of my personal fanscape, and I would like Fanhistory Mk. II to reflect events outside the United States. Greg belongs in both the periods in question -- he may have been most prolific in the 1970s, but published into the 1980s (RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK), stood for and won TAFF, ran the fan room at Second Brighton and First Glasgow and had a great deal of impact through online fanac. None of that happened in the 1970s. Comics fandom came into existence in The Golden Era, but probably became an important force during The New Wave, and belongs in the table. *Star Wars* recapitulated many of the same changes in fandom that *Star Trek* inspired, and might mean more to mundane society than to fandom. What of *Dr. Who*, equally important to fandom, and of possibly more enduring appeal?]

John Purcell

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You know, I hadn't even tried to figure out the linos in the first issue, but seeing the listing of their sources was a bit of fun. Thank you for this feature, and keep it running. And also keep that Fanzine Countdown going, too. It is always good seeing what is being pubbed - as in, which zines haven't I read yet?

I also like the idea of a "Fanzine Market" at Corflu. In fact, it's a good enough idea to ~~steal~~ borrow the idea from you at LoneStarCon 3's fanzine lounge. I want the proceeds from the fanzine auction/sales to go towards the fan funds, and the structure of your Fanzine Market sounds like it would work very well towards that end. I will have to think about this more and discuss it with you in the months running up to the WorldCon. After all, It Just Might Work.

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Personally, I still like science fiction. I even like talking about science fiction. I realize that is sort of weird for someone who has been around fandom for more than half a century, but it's true. I have no reason to exclude sercon zines from con-sideration. I note that Science Fiction Review is included in this chronology, and it was definitely sercon. Were *Algo* and *Outworlds* too sercon for inclusion?

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I echo the comments made by Dan Steffen in the letter column when he makes the analogy to fandom being a flowing river. I think his earlier observation that fandom at all points in its history has really been more like a stew with a tremendous variety of different kinds of zines and personalities existing together at the same time is more nearly correct. Trying to assign trends, and focal points may be essentially useless.

[And even with an extra page, that's all I've got room for. I also received replies from Lenny Bailes, Paul DiFilippo (Cool small press trade!), Nic Farey, Brad Foster, John Nielsen Hall, Jerry Kaufman, Terry Kemp, Hope Leibowitz, David Levine, Gary Mattingly, Marc Schirmeister, Paul Skelton & Taral Wayne. Thanks to you all!]

Be sure to ask questions and attempt to join in conversations even if you are rebuffed the first 6 times.

1.) BROKEN TOYS #13 & #14, Taral Wayne, 243 Dunn Ave. Apt. 211, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6 CANADA, email to taral@teksavvy.com. It can be a challenge to tell the difference between Insurgency and garden-variety crabbiness, but Taral is, in his way, working the same vein of fannish philosophy as Arnie Katz. His deconstruction of the convention report in #13 genuinely made me laugh, and conveyed all the reasons why they usually make such dull reading. And now I'm laughing again imagining Taral being forced to read one of Rob Jackson's hour-by-hour travel reports. A gift that keeps on giving. Yes, Taral's perspective is typically somewhat jaundiced, but his writing is energetic and inventive – he's the most entertaining curmudgeon in fandom today, and you know that's a crowded field.

2.) BW#6, Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES United Kingdom, email to fishlifter@gmail.com. As its title suggests, this is a shorthand version of Brialey & Plummer's genzine *Banana Wings*, with a few lighter editorials and a token contribution from Randy Byers, in praise of TAFF candidate Jim Mowatt. Working within this slimmer, dare I say ensmallled format seems to be good for both the editors, who would likely admit to a tendency to ramble in the pages of their genzine. I enjoyed Mark's meditations on TAFF, Claire's summary of the award landscape, and felt tempted by her wish that the next Novacon will not seem as haunted as the last one. But how many tons of Carbon will I have to offset in order to attend two British conventions in less than 12 months?

3.) OUTLIER #2, for FAPA #302, Earl Terry Kemp, P.O. Box 6642, Kingman AZ 86402. Although the expense of producing this FAPAzine is kicking Terry's ass, the results are unique. Issue #2 has a memoir by Paul Bradford Johnson, son of the prolific author George Clayton Johnson, first of a series of articles by the children of noteworthy fans and writers. Lavishly illustrated again, particularly studded with book covers in Terry's lengthy excursion into genre publishing history. Closes with reaction to other FAPAzine and reviews of a pair of genzines. Terry is discursive to a fault at times, but his perspective is unique.

4.) FANZINE #0, Kim Huett, P.O. Box 1443 Woden ACT 2606 AUSTRALIA. Kim Huett is one of those unique characters that have always thrived within the Bohemian precincts of fandom. He is the primary reason

that the increases in overseas postage rates have been so frustrating to me – if I could afford to, I would send him another package of treasures and rarities every week! Here he covers the history of the "Home Worldcon," his insidious practice of putting unwanted paperbacks on the bookshelves of friends, and an anecdote about the much-missed Andrew Brown. Kim has no idea if this is the first of a series or a one-shot – perhaps trades and letters would help him decide?

5.) ASKEW #3, John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845, j_purcell54@yahoo.com
This 4-page perzine seems to match its editor's affable, knowledgeable personality perfectly, and includes a bit of fanzine autobiography, in case you weren't aware that he has been involved in publishing for nearly 30 years. He too seems to be trying to prove the point that people actually read and respond to paper fanzines more readily than e-zines, so here I am doing my part.

Also Released:

ALEXIAD #67, Joseph T. & Lisa Major, 1409 Christy Ave. Louisville, KY 40204-4020, email to jtmajor@iglou.com

THE BANKSONIAIN #19, David Haddock, 84 Foxhollow, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB23 8ES United Kingdom, c/o eFanzines.com, email to banksoniain@gmail.com

BCSFA ZINE #476 & 477, c/o efanzines.com, email to Felicity4711@gmail.com

DITKOMANIA #90, Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307 Southgate MI 48195, email to robins@yahoo.com

THE DRINK TANK #338, Chris Garcia, c/o efanzines.com, email to Garcia@computerhistory.org

EXHIBITION HALL #24 & #25, Chris Garcia and James Bacon, c/o efanzines.com, email to Journeyplanet@gmail.com

FANSTUFF #31 & #32, Arnie Katz, 909 Eugene Cernan, Las Vegas, NV 89145, available at efanzines.com, email to Crossfire4@cox.net.

LIFE OF RODNEY #2, Rodney Leighton, 11 Branch Road, RR #3, Tatamagouche, NS B0K 1V0 Canada

THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN Vol. 72, #2, David Speakman, c/o eFanzines.com, email to cabal@n3fmail.com

SCIENCE FICTION SAN FRANCISCO #138, Jean Martin, et al, c/o efanzines.com, email to SFinSF@gmail.com