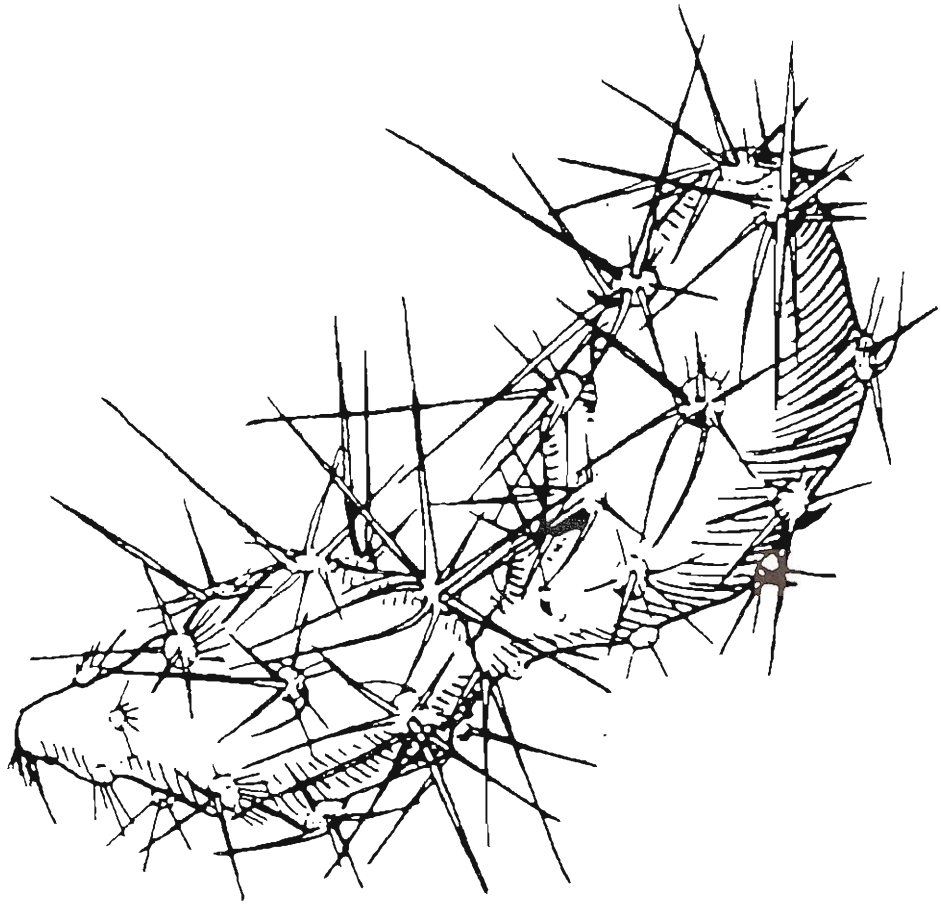


OPUNTIA

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ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia grahamii, by an unknown artist from the book THE CACTACEAE by N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose.

EDITORIAL: This issue is dated December but goes to the printer in January. The 16-day postal strike is the major culprit. I expect to have another issue in January, so I'll leave that date available. Another reason is that the sharp-eyed accessions staff at the Legal Deposit Office, National Library of Canada, are likely to write a letter in search of the missing ish if I jump straight from November to January.

Don't forget the World Wide Party #5 this coming June 21st at 21h00, your local time. Raise a glass on the appointed hour and day and toast your fannish friends around the world. The idea is to get a wave circling the planet of fannish celebrations. Have a party, do a one-shot zine (I'd like a copy), or celebrate some other way. Don't forget to write me an account of how you celebrated. The founders of the World Wide Party are Benoit Girard (Québec) and Franz Miklis (Austria).

8-TRACK MIND #93 (US\$3 from Russ Forster, Box 14402, Chicago, Illinois 60614-0402) A nice digest in card covers, with clipped corners to resemble 8-tracks. Some of the usual sorts of letters, plus rants from the angry side of 8-track collecting. In the obscure history part of this zine is a look at NASA's troubles in buying endless-loop tape recorders and the single tape recorder that cost \$2.2 million. I'm a cassette man myself but I can appreciate the angst of 8-trackers. This isn't the usual neo-Luddite pretensions; all digital sound via CD or DVD still has to go out via analogue speakers.

MICROPUERTO #2 (The Usual from Arturo Guzman, 1027 North Alvarado Street, Los Angeles, California 90026) A bit of everything, from poetry to fiction to travelogue, from handwritten to typed, mostly in English but some Spanish. The travelogue is an account of walking across the desert and I got a raging thirst just reading about it.

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY LITERARY STUFF #1 (\$6 from CJCLS, Box 53106, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1C5) Small-press magazine with slick cover for those newsagent sales. The leading editorial says it doesn't want to be yet another "poetry-prose-reviews-at-the-end", but comes off as one anyway. Not too blah though; the article on taking poetry readings to the people by staging them in buses and at boxing matches got my approval. There are several cartoon strips of the "Bookstore Clerk" series, in which the hero deals with customers such as skinheads looking for books on embroidery. From the Victor Borge Dept. is a variations-on-a-theme in which a phrase is rewritten as it might have been done by various Canuck authors.

GEGENSCHWEIN #79 (The Usual from Eric Lindsay, Box 744, Ryde, New South Wales 2112, Australia) Perzine of trip reports to the USA to attend some SF cons and apparently shop in every computer store west of the Mississippi.

LIME GREEN NEWS #17 (US\$2 or mail art zine trade from Carolyn Substitute, Box 771, Florissant, Missouri 63032-0771) Mail art zine with fiction, questions answered by Al Ackerman, John Held Jr on making your own postage stamps, and mail art listings. John's article on artistamps bears the cautionary story of a mail artist who used his stamps in lieu of legal postage and subsequently received a visit from the police: "He avoided prosecution, but he was given a big scare ...".

PHILOSOFY #7 (The Usual from Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge, San Antonio, Texas 78239-4022) SF and philosophy mix in this zine, with thoughtful writing on the ethics of governance, war, and not making war. Also reviews and locs, as well as trip reports.

BANANA WINGS #7 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA, England) Extended con reports, extended fanzine reviews, and a multi-part extended letters column. This certainly provides an extended look at how British SF cons operate differently from North American cons. There is no extended shagging going on, however, between the co-editors, as per advice in the colophon.

FIXED LINK #4 (The Usual from Brian Davis, 45 Charm Court, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 7J6) Maritime fandom has always been a black hole for news. There may always be something new out of Africa, but to get news out of the eastern provinces is a hard task. The appearance of this zine is therefore greeted with pleasure, and we can only hope that SFers out there will begin communicating steadily. This issue has a number of con reports and a notice of Judith Merrill's death on September 12, 1997, in Toronto.

FISTICUFFS #1 (The Usual from R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, #110, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) CUFF is the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, which sends a western fan to an eastern con or vice versa. Graeme won this year five days after being nominated.

THOUGHT BOMBS (US\$2 or so from Anthony Rayson, 27009 South Egyptian Trail, Monee, Illinois 60449) Not zines but rather a collection of typewritten essays on American politics and anti-racism efforts.

TRANSVERSIONS #7 (\$4.95 from Island Specialty Reports, 83 Royal York Road, Toronto, Ontario M8V 2T7) Semi-prozine of speculative fiction. Not recommended for ANALOG readers, but if you like ENGLAND SWINGS SF, then this may be of interest.

PROUD CRAY (US\$3 from Feh! Press, 147 Second Avenue #603, New York, New York 10003-5701) This is a chapbook by Al Ackerman who tells the story of an asylum keeper who calls himself Crowbar and has an invisible friend named Proud Cray. Not quite the case of the inmates in charge of the asylum, but close enough. The inmates are only a part of the background, as Crowbar struggles to keep the asylum going by renting it out as a flophouse and storage site for a dealer in stolen goods. Quite readable and the story moves along very well until the end, which rather spoils all that went on before because it stops without resolving how Crowbar escapes the police. The author seems to have written himself into a corner and then walked away from the mess, to the annoyance of the reader.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #49 (The Usual from Tom Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Now a zine of positively FOSFAXian proportions, with 30 pages of locs. SF reviews, trip reports, personal accounts, and editorials on stereotyping of SF fans and the fanzine Hugo award controversy. Nevermind what happens when an e-zine wins a Hugo, how about a CD-ROM novel?

THE GEIS LETTER (US\$2 or trade from Richard Geis, Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211-0408) Mostly American politics and conspiracy theories.

GRAMMAR Q AND A #4 (Free from Misti and Scott Crow, Box 1948, Fair Oaks, California 95628-1948) Single-sheet on questions about how to write alright (or all right).

OUTWORLDS #68 (US\$5 from Bill Bowers, 4651 Glenway Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45238-4503) It's been a few years since the last issue, so this 68-page zine is a clean-up issue of unfinished business. A Papernet version of a mausoleum, with several dead loccers writing from beyond the grave. Too many pages are taken up with verbatim e-mail threads which are trivial and boring. A few solid articles, such as the late Sam Moskowitz on an early SFish writer.

BROKEN PENCIL #6 (\$4.95 at newsagents or from Broken Pencil, Box 203, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7) Slick cover reviewzine with news of Canadian zinedom, excerpts from zines, and listings from across Canada. It serves the useful purpose of snagging newsagents browsers into zinedom. Most reviewzines only preach to the choir; this one gets out to potential converts who had no idea that people actual publish their own magazines.

SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG #8 (The Usual from Garth Spencer, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) A general look at how fanzine fandom and SF cons operate, using as an example the ill-fated Northstar I convention.

ROYAL SWISS NAVY GAZETTE #1 (The Usual from Garth Spencer as above) The successor to SPLF. The article of note in this issue is the socially retarded SF fan and what to do about him. On the one hand, someone should take the time to instill the social graces in these people, but on the other hand, experienced fans are entitled to enjoy themselves at a con, not work as a storefront social worker.

ERG #139 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) Nostalgic look at British SFdom, experimental aircraft, and packaging foods

04 AMUSING YOURSELF TO DEATH #8 (US\$3 from Ruel Gaviola, Box 91934, Santa Barbara, California 93190-1934) Reviewzine with longer than average reviews on a variety of zines. In the absence of FACTSHEET FIVE, this is as good as any other replacement.

MOSHASSUCK REVIEW, November 1997 (Zine trade from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) This zine is devoted to the life and times of H.P. Lovecraft. The issue at hand deals with HPL's involvement in amateur press associations. He was with United APA, but in 1922 suddenly found himself pressganged into the rival National APA as president in order to bring peace to the faction-ridden NAPA. Any modern zinesters who think they invented feuds should read apa histories such as this. The apas of the late 1800s and early 1900s fought each other as if apahacking was a blood sport.

LIMBO #5 (The Usual from Peter Stinson, 209 - 17 Avenue NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 1L9) Stories from the lives of working people, mostly cabbies. Also an artist tells of the time she decided to paint Refinery Row, Edmonton, and found most of the refinery workers disbelieving that anyone would see art in the massive complexes (most of Alberta's oil and gas is processed in that area).

PROBE #103 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine with the usual reviews, letters, and articles, but mostly a fictionzine. South African SFdom is at the stage that Canuck SFers were twenty years ago when trying to write fiction. One can anticipate that as time passes we will eventually see a strongly visible presence internationally, and this zine will have helped along the way.

BIBLIOZINE #57 (The Usual from John Held Jr, Box 410837, San Francisco, California 94141) Specializes in annotated bibliographies, each issue covering one particular theme. This time around it is the discovery of zines by mass media and university professors.

KNARLEY KNEWS #66 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine with accounts of dealing with cancer, a bicycle tour across Australia, the editor's newborn daughter, and lots.

GOTH SHMOTH #6 (The Usual from Paul Olson, Box 3472, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403) Fiction and stuff on the bisexual way of life, plus a few zine reviews.

IDEA #11 (The Usual from Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408-4315) This ish is mostly taken up with an account of helping a friend clear up his father's estate. Also cooking at consuites, giving Yanni a piece of one's mind, and the lighter side of fanzine fandom.

FOSFAX #188 (The Usual from Falls of the Ohio SF and Fantasy Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) The con reports on the 1997 WorldCon are the theme of this issue, challenging the usual letter column for length. Also book reviews.

NOTES FROM OBLIVION #29 (Trade for audiotape correspondence preferred as the editor has eye trouble, Jay Harber, 626 Paddock Lane, Libertyville, Illinois 60048-3733) Hand written partly, and mostly on Star Trek. Commentary on the television shows and a piece of fan fiction on Trek as it might have been written by Nostradamus.

SHORT FUSE #70 (The Usual from Holden, Box 90436, Santa Barbara, California 93190) Mail art zine that unfolds into posters with poetry and artwork. Best piece is a poem "Barbie worries she'll never get married", which goes together chillingly with a drawing of pumpkin-headed and skull-faced people.

PINKETTE #16b (The Usual from Karen Pender-Gunn, Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia) Bits and pieces, clippings, and odd lots.

INDY #4 (\$2 from George Sweetman, Box 523, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2J2) A two-part zine, the main section on Calgary's music scene (we don't all like country) and a 31-page supplement on the details of the Zapatista rebellion in Chjapas. The main part is listings of bands and venues, interviews, the editor's life working as a truck driver on the graveyard shift, and his brief spell as a homeless person (Calgary's vacancy rate is down to 0.5% and still declining).

MIND WALLABY #1 (The Usual from Ian Gunn, Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia) Miscellany on various subjects including staging video programmes at SF cons and the editor's struggle against cancer.

LET'S TALK #2 (The Usual from John Taylor, Box 511, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2J2) Subtitled "The Calgary People's Forum", this is an outlet for anyone to publish their rants. Trouble is, the mix of conspiracy theory, Book of Revelations theology, Tory-bashing, and I-hate-my-job essays creates a cacophony that nullifies any impact the essays might have. Too many different voices shouting to be heard in too-close proximity, like trying to talk in a sports bar on Stanley Cup night.

INK #11 (\$3 from John Degen, Box 52558, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V0) Small-press magazine with card cover. Essays on eating in Mongolia, a vegetarian's worst nightmare. A number of poems and an interview with an author who did an epic poem "Anchoress", about women who had themselves walled up in churches for the greater glory of God, and, apparently, to assert their control over their bodies.

THE SAVAGE ZINE OF PHILMAN #1 (The Usual from Phil Savage, Box 3472, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403) Rants on life in the Sixties, rock concerts, and Christianity.

WE NOW PAUSE FOR THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE: The Canadian Union of Postal Workers went on strike.

(16 days later)

WE NOW RESUME OUR REVIEWZINE. Thank you for your patience.

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION BULLETIN V6#10 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 68203, Nashville, Tennessee 37206-8203) The first zine through after the postal strike ended. This clubzine is a resource for SF fandom in the southern USA, with club and con listings, con reports, and news and notes.

CONTRACT V9#6 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2B9) Newszine specializing in Canadian SF cons, with listings and reports, as well as con-running advice.

SANDBOX #5 (US\$4.75 at newsagents or from Sandbox, Box 150098, Brooklyn, New York 11215-0098) Worse layout than WIREd or MONDO 2000, with three or four fonts per page, unnecessary underlines and boxing and text that was a chore to read. A typical example of an editor forgetting that a magazine is supposed to communicate with the reader, not show off the editorial desktop software. A shame, because there is good stuff in here. A look at the landmarks of art in this century, not the ones you would think. A Bill Gibson interview, which doesn't break any new ground for SFers but is a starting point for those not familiar with his work. Accounts of performance art, and a spread on the Burning Man event.

21-C #25 (US\$8.95 at newsagents or from International Publishers Distributor, Box 41010, Newark, New Jersey 07101-8007) A full-colour slick which has the sense to leave the text readable while displaying the editorial skill with Photoshop. Essays range from the future of language in the database age, to slave labour in the computer industry. Also thoughts on consciousness and why it evolved, and the

06 military-entertainment complex which has replaced the military-industrial complex that Eisenhower worried over.

RE:ACTION #7 (US\$1 from Neoist Alliance, BM Senior, London WC1 3XX, England) An extended account on how to annoy New Agers and the ley-line nutters by having sex at the many standing-stone sites across Britain. Advice on the practical details of how to do it, such as choosing sites that have to be approached by motorcar so that the sound of engines will give you warning time to zip up your clothing.

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS #41 (US\$2 from Jim Romenesko, 45 Albert Street South, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105) Newszine of the goings-on in zinedom. This issue reports on a libel suit that arose when a hospital sued after HARPER'S reprinted a zine article. HARPER'S caved in, but the zine publisher stood firm and won. Also the details of zinester Bob Black grassing on another zinester he got into a fight with. The latter was arrested by police, a plea bargain resulted, and a marriage broke up. Choose your friends carefully, seems to be the moral of the story.

THE JEZAIL #3 (The Usual from Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Avenue North, #103, Seattle, Washington 98103) News and zine reviews of SF fandom, with bits about fan funds.

INCISORS REPORT #2 (C\$20.03 or US\$15 from Toronto in '03, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1A2) Newsletter of the committee bidding for the 2003 World Science Fiction Convention. Starts off with a puff piece about Toronto, then a history of the two previous TorCons in 1948 and 1973, a list of pre-supporters, and finally the words to that Leonard Cohen classic song "First We Take Con Cancun (Then We Take Berlin)".

ANSIBLE #125 (The Usual from Janice Murray, Box 75684, Seattle, Washington 98125-0684) Dave Langford's jolly good newszine of British SFdom. Hilarious doings.

AMSTERDAM CHRONICLE #4 (US\$5 from Grace Hogan, Kanaalstraat 66-huis, 1054 XK Amsterdam, Netherlands) Various and lengthy accounts of the drug trade and police spying in the Netherlands. Many outlanders might think legalized drugs there makes the place a paradise, but the practical details of the situation are un-nerving.

SQUIGGLEDY HOY#2 (The Usual from Bridget Hardcastle, 19 Wedgewood Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 0EX, England) Perzine explaining what a hoy is, a look back at her childhood home as she moves out to start a new life with her betrothed, and numerous letters.

DRIFT #92 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) Poems and zine reviews, collages, a Nova Scotian rant, and a bit of detournement.

MIMEMEOW #3 (The Usual from Bill Bridget, 4126 Mountain Creek Road #6, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37415) A colour-printed fanzine that mixes TAFF electioneering with a children's story and why anger is bad for your teeth.

QUIPU #8 (The Usual from Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New Yoek City, New York 10034) Perzine with con-going reports, TAFF electioneering, and locs.

PUNK PLANET #21 (US\$2 from Punk Planet, Box 464, Chicago, Illinois 60690) 176-page zine on punk rock, but like SF fanzines, not ashamed to veer off into subjects quite unrelated, such as an account of what it is like to be a wanted fugitive on the run from Florida police. Columns, rants, letters, reviews of zines and music. Punk rock true believers have a DIY philosophy; sing in your own band, do your own zine, do your own record label. Like SFers upset at the flood of fantasy trilogies or passive con-goers, the punk purists are upset at record labels who press garbage or punk fans who attend shows but never help run them.

MORGAN SMITH #1 (\$3.50 from Colin Mackay, Box 61088, Calgary, Alberta T2N 4S6) Normally I don't do KTF reviews but I'm prepared to make an exception here. But on second thought, I'll give the guy the benefit of a doubt and assume he's still on the initial part of a learning curve. The first half of this issue is a comic strip that starts off with a few dark-fantasy clichés, goes to a Calgary mad scientist who subsequently wins the Nobel Prize for his work on the Bermuda Triangle, then takes a trip down there to prove the theory. Yes, I know it's supposed to be proven first, then published, but that wasn't what repelled me. The hero drives over to the village of Strathmore, just east of Calgary on the Trans-Canada Highway in the second-driest part of Canada. He then hops a Sunderland flying boat and is off to the Bermuda Triangle. I'm not saying that there has never been an amphibious airplane in the Calgary area, but it is not on any list of where to find them that any reasonable person would make. The second half of this zine is either a prose poem or a script for a play; I couldn't really say.

SNUFKIN'S BUM #2 (The Usual from Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkstone, Kent CT19 5AZ, England) Perzine with memories of fairground rides, thoughts on taking the first step into publishing a fanzine, and a few locs. Snufkin, by the way, is the household cat who has learned how to open refrigerator and garbage bin doors.

NEVER QUITE ARRIVING #6 (The Usual from Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, England) Back from her round-the-world trip, with a bit of practical advice for tourists, plus articles from candidates for the TAFF (Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund) race.

MAXIMUMROCKANDROLL #176 (US\$3 from Box 460760, San Francisco, California 94146-0760) About 200 pages of columns and reviews on the punk rock scene. Scene reports, band interviews, and a survey of infoshops.

ATTITUDE #12 (Zine trade of 3 copies for the editorial collective c/o Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF, England) This is the final issue of this zine which was part of a collective who staged a one-shot SF convention of the same name. Not surprisingly, most of the content is about what was and what may be, but mostly the fannish world. Angst about getting new SF fans to participate, and a TAFF trip report. (The latter type of report seems to be more common than popularly supposed.)

ANARCHIST INTEGRALISM: AESTHETICS, POLITICS, AND THE APRES-GARDE (£3 from Sabotage Editions, BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX, England) Written under the pseudonym of Luther Blissett, this chapbook has the worst case of footnote disease I have ever seen in a book; often the footnotes take up all but a few lines of the page. This, however, is just a minor nitpick. I quite enjoy reading the less academic literature of the anarchists, libertarians, and other fringe groups who would never attack a common enemy when they have each other to feud with. The seriousness with which they argue their history and factionism often distracts the reader's attention from the fact that the groups have no discernable effect on modern society or politics. It reminds me of Sam Moskowitz's book THE IMMORTAL STORM, a blow-by-blow account of an SF fannish feud which, to paraphrase Harry Warner Jr, is a book in which World War Two comes as an anti-climax. Blissett takes the right-wing anarchists to task and punctures their pretensions with deadly accuracy. He uses that most effective literary weapon, that of quoting people's own words back at them. Anarchists cover the political spectrum from left to right. In this chapbook, Blissett goes after the rightists who are trying to sneak in all the worst elements of racism and fascism. A tempest in a teapot, really, but great fun for the disinterested bystander. One could, for example, substitute British SF WorldCon bidders and their opponents in this text with surprisingly few changes; replace Jews with neofans, Freemasons with Corflu runners, and the revision is done.

VANAMONDE #235 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street, #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) A weekly apazine of two pages (single-sheet double-sided) with one brief topic such as a book discussion or SFdom discussion and mailing comments.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #76 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) SF clubzine with news and notes of fandom Down Under, counterparts of Dr. Who convention, history of the pubs that London (England) fans meet in, a progress report on the 1999 WorldCon fan lounge, which is followed by a discussion of the media versus literary fan feud, real or imagined, that is damaging the WorldCon image.

ON SPEC #31 (\$6 from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) Canada's SF prozine, perfect-bound digest with colour cover. Best story in this issue was "The Reality War" where magic comes at the price of a body part for each spell cast. When someone says they'd give their right arm to do a thing, it isn't just a figure of speech. "The Bone House" is a pact-with-the-devil story where he operates as an auctioneer selling souls as well as buying them.

FILE 770 #120 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, Box 1056, Sierra Madre, California 91025) Newszine of SF fandom. This issue is mostly taken by reports on the 1997 WorldCon at San Antonio, Texas. Also news elsewhere in fandom (too many cancer cases) and a few locs.

ESTRONES #1 (The Usual from Eunice Pearson, 2 New Houses, Pant, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 2AB, Wales) Introductory zine of a young mum transplanted to Wales. She lists quite a number of apa credits. The theme is alienation and she has a good take on it, having been bounced back and forth between New Zealand and England as a child.

MIMOSA #21 (The Usual from Nicki and Richard Lynch, Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885) Fanhistory zine, with articles on the late Sam Moskowitz, Baltimore fandom, a sharp-practice bookseller, a list of basic references in fanhistory for those who want to read up on it, various famous people in SFdom, and locs. Also an account of the English fanzine PLOY, whose editor decided to have fun with his readers by numbering the first issue as PLOY #2 and throwing in a few fake locs replying to the non-existent issue #1. Unfortunately this backfired on him, as the national library demanded copies of #1 for their deposit collection. He had a bit of a time convincing the Keeper of the Printed Books that it didn't exist and was just a gag. This is something I can relate to, for when I started OPUNTIA's fractional numbering system, I didn't foresee the problems I would have from the National Library of Canada dunning me for non-existent .3, .4, .6, etcetera issues.

PROPER BOSKONIAN #42 (The Usual from New England SF Association, Box 809, Framingham, Massachusetts 01701) Clubzine with lots of solid content. The majority of this issue is taken up by a report on the WorldCon in San Antonio. Also locs and a segment of the "Space-Time Buccaneers".

ERG #140 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) History of SF magazines with emphasis on the pulps. Also some wondering why superstitions came to be as they did, a continuing series on X planes, and locs.

ECURB: THE RETURN (The Usual from Bruce Barbarasch, 467 South 3rd Street, Apt. 1, San Jose, California 95113) A road trip from Baltimore to San Jose and an extended account of what urban sprawl did to the San Jose area, which leads to memories and thoughts about natural areas of one's youth.

MARKTIME #46 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, 300 South Beau Drive #1, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016) Mark has two hobbies, taping radio stations and driving through every county in the USA, which he combines in a travelogue. He also works in baseball and fast-food restaurants to his lists of where has been.

PLOKTA #9 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4RH, England) Best-scanned photos of any zine in the Internet, but you'd better like baby pictures because the editor's pride and joy takes the cover. Setting aside the lap-warmer ratings (baby, cat, laptop, book), there are also articles on being a hotel liaison at a WorldCon, and the disappointments of the wired future.

GALACTO-CELTIC NEWSFLASH Autumn 1997 (The Usual from Franz Miklis, A-5151, Nussdorf 179, Austria) Perzine of a professional artist, with accounts of a trip to Tunisia, celtic goings-on, World Wide Party #4, and locs.

TYPOGRAPUNX #3 (US\$1 from Dave Palmer, 15 Churchville Road, #115-163, Bel Air, Maryland 21014) Typographical philosophy and practice, not always setting a good example in the manner of laying out this issue. I'm still not sure whether to faintly praise or throw it against a wall and go into my usual rant about obstructing the reader by showing off by bad font choice. However, I can see where this chap is coming from, so on the whole will grudgingly recommend it.

SIDNEY SUPPEY'S QUARTERLY AND CONFUSED PET MONTHLY V6#2 (The Usual from Candi Strecker, Box 515, Brisbane, California 94005-0515) Synoptic reports from rural Ohio, thoughts on people who live on rural acreages, dressing lawn geese, and miscellany.

Being a review of Robert Pattison's book ON LITERACY (Oxford University Press, 1982). I've had a particular interest in this matter since I calculated from fact that at least 5% of my staff cannot read well enough to follow a route schedule or understand a map. I'm sure the actual percentage is higher if I count those who can struggle through text with difficulty. I had one operator I was so suspicious of that I had him read aloud a route list to me. He was 98% correct but unfortunately missed words like 'except', which explained why he mowed the wrong area.

The definition of literacy varies from person to person. At the most basic, it is the mechanical ability to read and write words. Some people understand it to include cultural overtones, and fret that lumpen cannot quote from Plato or write an essay on the use of the apostrophe. Many people moan about a supposed decline in literacy, but fail to understand that such a situation is a return to the normal level of literacy throughout human history. Pattison points out that literacy is not essential even in today's world of computers. Nevermind GUI interfaces; people are taught to operate machines by demonstration, and the vast majority of workplace instructions are verbal. ("Do you want fries with that?" or "Okay, George, lower it down.")

Intellect and oratory are independent of literacy. Rhetoric is a skill that has been used in illiterate societies to sway the masses and transmit cultural information to the next generation, whether in Greek life of two millenia ago or in an aboriginal tribe of pre-Conquest North America.

Writing is not a skill that brings peace in our time, just as the Internet will not ease tensions. Ability to communicate is not the same as ability to understand. The Americans and British spoke the same

But for all that it may be unnecessary, literacy still has a vital place in society. "Get it in writing" is a phrase that had meaning a thousand years ago to enforce contracts and treaties, even if those signing them had to make the mark with an X. Public scribes and letter-writers earned a living writing letters and petitions or reading them out loud for illiterate peasants (and from there, a short step to money lending, but that is another story).

Television, and radio before it, has been condemned for a decline in literacy. Pattison, however, presents evidence that the problem with airheads who can't write an essay is that they pay little attention to any type of communications media. Surveys show that heavy television viewers tend to be heavy readers later in life. The "rabbit feeders", as Pattison calls the functional illiterates, watch, listen to, or read very little media. Pattison gets this epithet from an incident with one of his students who couldn't write a 50-word essay. Upon investigation, he discovered that television was not the automatic villain; the student didn't follow any media. "But what do you do?", he asked. The student replied: "Well, mostly I feed my rabbit".

Literacy is not an end in itself, and does not make a person better for it. Pattison points out that rational thought and proper ethics do not follow with literacy. Nazi Germany, after all, was a highly literate society, while the Greeks of the golden age preferred rhetoric to writing (and kept literate slaves as scribes).

The one over-riding value of literacy is that it is a storehouse of cultural information, outlasting memory. It saves each generation the trouble of re-inventing the wheel, and allows a progressive buildup of knowledge. Literacy in a mechanical sense is often confused with literacy in a cultural sense, and as Pattison repeats through this book, too often confused as a step to utopia.

Zines have now reached the consciousness of mainline publishers and bookstores, and the deluge of books about them is underway. THE FACTSHEET FIVE ZINE READER by Seth Friedman (ISBN 0-609-80001-9, \$19.50) is an anthology of his reading. Subtitled "The Best Writing from the Underground World of Zines", this is of course not the case, for such is a matter of opinion. The brief history of zines is good enough to be aware that they were not invented in the 1970s, but are a confluence of different streams originating in the amateur press associations of the 1800s, the SF fanzines of the 1930s, and the underground newspapers of the 1960s. The anthologized articles are well picked as a representative sampling of the thousands that might have been picked. They are organized by themes such as pop culture, sex, music, politics, and work. This is a survey of the most recent decade of zines, not a historical sortation charting trends. If you read a wide range of zines, there is nothing new here, but the book does serve as a good introduction.

ZINES!: VOLUME 2 from V. Vale of RE/Search fame is now available (ISBN 0-9650469-2-3, \$14.99), and like its predecessor is a series of extended interviews with zine publishers. Geographically, most of the zinesters are from California, not too surprising considering Vale lives in San Francisco. Thematically, the zines run a wide range from schoolgirl punk rock to Tiki bar fans. I recognized some of the names I trade with such as Russ Forster of 8-track fame and John Held Jr of the mail art world. Vale knows how to do good interviews and present them in a readable manner that displays the subject's philosophy and point of view. This is much more interesting than concentrating on nuts-and-bolts issues or trivial details that do little to tell us why the zinester got into publishing in the first place. As a snapshot of zinedom in our times, it will serve as a useful historical document. Well recommended as with Volume 1.

THE SIZE OF THOUGHTS by Nicholson Baker (ISBN 0-679-77624-9, \$17.95) is a collection of essays on literary thoughts and miscellany. Many of them are not particularly remarkable, but the intended highlight of this collection and the actual highlight made me decide to buy this as I skimmed the pages in the bookstore. The essay on the origin of the word 'lumber', used in its original meaning of junk or useless clutter in a storeroom, and not its North American meaning of cut wood, traces the history of its use in literature. The essay meanders about coyly up and down false trails, through keyword-searchable CD-ROMs and ancient concordances, ending up as a pale imitation of Avram Davidson's Adventures In Unhistory series. Taking up more than one-third of this anthology, it could well have been edited by half. The actual highlight, however, was "Discards", the tragic and often horrifying account of how libraries across the USA and Canada converted their card catalogues to computerized databases. That online catalogues had to come into existence, no one can doubt; there are simply too many books to catalogue the old way. But as anyone who has used keyword or Boolean searches knows, the online replacements for cards have their own problems, the most common of which is that you either get no citations for the subject you are seeking or 12,376, of which 10 may be useful. In the rush to convert to computers, a lot of valuable information was discarded from cards simply because it was inconvenient to fit in into the new format. As an example, Harvard carefully microfilmed the old cards for archival purposes, but only the front of the card. Any notes carried over to the back of the card are gone. Humans can automatically compensate for minor typographical errors when filing or looking at cards, but a computer, told by a keypunch operator to file a book on Einstein under 'Einstein' will obediently do so. Then of course, software must be changed each decade or so, adding a fresh layer of errors during the migration, whereas paper is always compatible.

Lesley Choyce is a writer who should be better known amongst SF fans. That he is not appears to be due to him being a regional writer; most of his work is on Nova Scotian themes. But he has done fantasy, and his SF anthology "Ark of Ice" gives him SFish credentials. I've just finished reading his 1996 novel TRAPDOOR TO HEAVEN (ISBN 1-55082-157-1, from Quarry Press, Box 1061, Kingston, Ontario K7L 4Y5). Billed as a novel, the book seems more an anthology of short stories or at least a fix-up novel that pastes into one narrative a series of unrelated chapters. This is fantasy that reminded me of New Wave SF, the sort of thing one might see in ENGLAND SWINGS SF.

The Servant is the main character of the book, who is either condemned or honoured to live many lives and incarnations through the history of the Earth. Over and over, for when he reaches the end times, he starts again at the beginning. Each chapter is an account of a life, often quite bizarre, usually depending on mythology and dreamtimes. There is an interior logic to each life, and a regret at the end of each life for mistakes made. The things undone which should have been done, and the things done which should not have been done. The book is permeated with the regret of old people who wish they had been a bit better and politer when they had the chance. The Servant regrets his slowness in learning from his mistakes. But there is the hope of final redemption, even if the form of that redemption is not yet known. Well recommended.

WAR WITH THE NEWTS by Karel Capek was first published in 1936. I have the translation by Ewald Osers from Unwin Paper backs (1985); no doubt there are other editions to be found in secondhand bookstores. The book is a satire on the willingness of nations to cut their own throats through international weapons sales in the mad scramble for hard currency. The basic plot is the discovery of a species of intelligent newts in the Sumatran waters and their use as low-paid wage slaves. Humans are content to let them build dikes

and breakwaters to extend shorelines and create new land to colonize, in exchange for knives and food. They make little effort to understand the newts, which while serving their nominal masters have been making their own plans. The newts eventually build up a technology sufficient to start blowing up low-lying coastal areas and flooding them for fresh newt habitat. Too late, humans realize how helpless they are to stop the newts. As the novel was written in 1936, it was obviously done with the fascists in mind, but I couldn't help think that in our time nothing has changed except the players. Capek cheats by writing himself into a corner and then adds a final chapter in the authorial voice suggesting happy endings to the reader, but other than that fault, the novel reads well. It would make a perfectly clichéd Hollywood monster movie.

STILL LIFE WITH VOLKSWAGENS is Geoff Nicholson's sequel to his earlier book on underground VW Beetle life STREET SLEEPER. This one (Scepter, 1995, ISBN 0-340-61326-2) carries on with Barry Osgathorpe's aimless drift through England in his Beetle, encountering many of the same cast as the first novel, but with the addition of a neo-Nazi and his skinheads chasing about after Hitler's personal toy Kubelwagen. That plot is intermixed with the search for the madman who is blowing up Beetles with timebombs, to the distress of VW lovers, police, and neo-Nazis alike. New Age travellers and an insane Tory M.P. also work into the mixture, the former to conflict with the neo-Nazis, and the latter as one of the usual suspects required of all modern British farces (whether a novel, film, or the House of Commons). It all ties up neatly, just as STREET SLEEPER did, and it is not needed to read the first volume.



It is by now a commonplace observation that SF writers failed to predict more often than they accurately did predict. For every success in predicting communication satellites, there were countless stories which had starship navigators using slide rules. Rather than a giant world-dominating computer running this planet, we seem instead to be moving to a giant world-dominating network of computers keeping us busy playing games and e-mailing while no one runs the world, human or computer.

What this is leading up to is a review of a cassette of comedian Tony Hancock's two 1961 shows "The Blood Donor" and "The Radio Ham" (Laughing Stock Productions, Box 408, London SW11 6JJ, England). The latter show had me thinking of the Internet. In it, Tony is settling down to an evening of operating his amateur shortwave radio. The main plot involves him hearing a distress signal and trying to respond despite constant interruptions from his landlady and fellow tenants. It was the minor parts of the show that had my interest though. Tony defends his hobby as providing him with friends around the world, even if he hadn't any at home. He talks to his Japanese friend about the weather. Using the advanced radio equipment on which he has spent £500 (in 1961 currency), he plays chess with a European friend, talks food with another who sent him slivovitz, and arranges with an operator in Birmingham to nip round the corner to Tony's mum and have her send a bread pudding to a German friend. With other contacts around the world he plays poker and snakes-and-ladders.

Does this remind you of the Internet? Can you say 'Usenet'? Or 'IRC'? The SF writers of yore had believed that regardless of what form future communications would take, they would have useful content. Not even Arthur C. Clarke guessed that satellites of the 500-channel future would transmit mostly "I Love Lucy" and "Match of the Day" rather than madly teach.

BRAIN CELL (Ryosuke Cohen, 3-76-1-A-613, Yagumokita-cho, Moriguchi City, Osaka 570, Japan) Not a zine nor book, but a series of colour-photocopied posters, and quite nicely done. In Ryosuke's words: "Please send me your stamp design, rubber stamp, or 150 stickers or seals. I will print or paste these materials onto the A3 size paper, creating 150 sheets. I will then send a sheet back with a list of addresses to each participant. I will publish at intervals of 8 to 10 days and the issue at that time will include 60 people or so. BRAIN CELL is always seeking a change, does not intend to settle and care of its extension of the network. So don't mail a lump of stuff for several issues. Please send them to me for one issue at a time. Thank you."

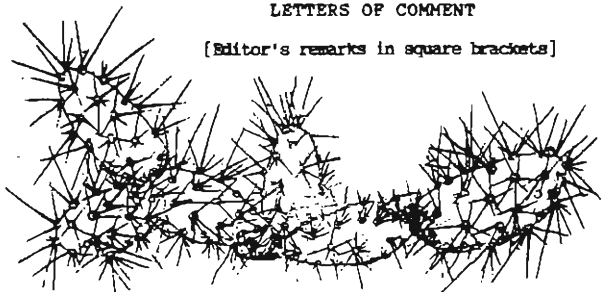
What this means is that you'll get back a poster with your contribution somewhere in the collage of work sent in by 60 or so people, together with a list of names and addresses of contributors to help you network with other people around the world. I have several of these. You can write in English, by the way; I've never had trouble with mail getting through and I assume someone in the Nippon Post Office does the translation for the postie.

AMUSING YOURSELF TO DEATH (Ruel Gaviola, Box 91934, Santa Barbara, California 93190-1934) "I'm looking for a few good stories for ... AYTD; the "old-school self-publishers" series. In past issues, I've focused on Frederick Douglass and Thomas Paine. Now, I'm looking to write about publishers from a more contemporary setting. I love reading about self-publishing "back in the days" and want to documents experiences, thoughts, views, observations, memories, anecdotes, history and opinions on self-publishing BEFORE 1980. ... What is different about self-publishing today? What is the best/worst things about zines? Complete this statement: "Back when I was publishing, I ...". AYTD is dedicated to preserving zine history. Please share with us and we'll share with others."

ARTIST TRADING CARDS (Don Mabie, c/o New Gallery, 516 9th Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2P 1L4) This is a trading session for artist cards on last Saturdays of the month; attend in person or send a batch by mail. Artist trading cards are the same size as the hockey trading cards (64mm x 89 mm). "Cards may be 2-D or 3-D; they may be original, a series, an edition, or a multiple. ATCs may be: paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubberstamp works, mixed-media, found images, assemblages, etc., the only stipulation being that the card fit in the standard plastic sheets which hockey cards are normally stored within."

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATIONS

An apa is a zine collective whereby zine editors send x number of copies of their issue to a Central Mailer, who then collates the zines into bundles and sends one to each member, including also an apazine for official business and to act as a table of contents. Apas began in the 1800s when the amateur journalism movement arose as a result of cheap hand presses becoming available. SF fans started their own apas in the 1930s and there are many others still going today.

FANTASY AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION #241 (Information from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Now in its 61st year. This bundle has 32 zines totalling 318 pages. Expect similar bundles quarterly for the annual US\$15 plus 8 pages minimum activity in 68 copies. Must have certain SFish credentials, but once in, the zines do not have to be on SF only; most are perzines.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1997-10-23

Rodney Leighton has my ideas about fanzines exactly backward. I do classify as fanzines the ones that result from someone being a fan of something or other, like wrestling or movies or Julie Andrews. I deny the right to be called fanzines amateur publications that are simply manifestations of someone's political views or hatred for some organization or advocacy of some cause like collecting rainwater in tubs and giving it to poor people. It is not correct either, that only fanzines resulting from SF fandom range far astray in their contents. Folk music fanzines, for instance, may concentrate on record contracts, singers' personal lives, or the iniquity of most radio stations instead of folk music. Newsletters published by large churches tell about vacationing congregation members' trips, the new baby just born to the minister and his wife, or facts on a coming box social, rather than about the last sermon and the Bible. Baseball fanzines go on and on about whether Pete Rose bet on ballgames instead of confining themselves to his exploits on the diamond.

FROM: Lloyd Penney
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

1997-11-21

Strange as it may sound, the postal strike is the perfect opportunity to loc some fanzines. At least there won't be more coming through the mail slot, and I'll have some feeling of actually getting caught up.

[I didn't realize how much of my reading is zines untill about the third day of the strike when I ran out of fresh zines. In desperation I started going into old philatelic periodicals and read through my Sherlock Holmes omnibus. Had the strike lasted longer, I might have had to read all my Stephen Leacocks.]

The Toronto in 2003 WorldCon bid pre-supporting numbers are swelling past the 550 mark, thanks to a series of popular parties at Toronto and Montréal conventions, and at the WorldCon in San Antonio.

FROM: Rodney Leighton
R.R. 3
Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0

1997-12-30

Two questions for you: 1) How many zines that you list as being available for "The Usual" have single copy prices of \$3 or less? 2) How many of the zines you list would send a copy to someone who submitted a poem or a piece of fanfic?

[For both questions I would say almost all. Before sending material for printing, however, it is wise to query the editor, just as with professional magazines, to be sure they print such stuff.]

You do realize, I suppose, that OPUNTIA does not fall within your definition? Will you still send out sample copies for \$2? What do you do if you receive fiction or poetry intended as a contribution?

[I don't get excited if someone is off by a dollar; they might, after all, have read an old issue. Inappropriate contributions are politely declined but still get an issue anyway. The only thing I don't respond to is the insulting letter "Send me a copy and I'll send money if I think it's worth it".]

I have never received a fanzine which I wrote away for, asked for, or sent money for, which turned out well. Except I just got PLOKTA, which is fun. Those that did arrive were either not much good or caused problems. Most simply didn't appear. All the zines I really enjoy showed up out of the blue or as a result of me loccing a copy someone had sent me.

[You have me on this one, as I haven't had trouble doing the same myself. Nowadays I usually initiate a trade by sending an issue of OPUNTIA, but before 1991, when I was just a fanwriter and letterhack, I had no trouble with sending dollar bills to get sample copies.]

Is OPUNTIA not, in effect three different zines? Would it not be more representative and fair to offer a three-issue set? Someone looking for zine listings with no interest in fanhistory who receives a genzine issue is not likely to return.

[People sending me money or trades get one of each back issue I happen to have in stock at the time. I won't keep three mailing lists by subject since it is too much work, so anyone who doesn't respond after a couple of issues is off the list.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Ned Brooks, Buck Coulson, Scott Crow, Ruel Gaviola, Russ Forster, Chester Cuthbert, Joseph Major, Carolyn Clowes, Bill Bowers, Rusty Clark, Murray Moore, Jay Harber, Bruce Barbarasch, Franz Miklis

MANIFESTO OF THE FANNISH PARTY

A spectre haunts fandom, the spectre of WorldCon. All the powers of fandom have entered into a holy alliance in order to get this spectre: pope and tsar, Metternich and Guizot; French radicals and German police.

Where is the mundane party which has not been stigmatised as fannish by those who wield power? Where is the WorldCon bid which has not hurled back this scandalous charge of sci-fi in the teeth of its adversaries, whether Cancun or Berlin?

Two things may be deduced from this:

1. Toronto in '03 is already acknowledged by all the fannish powers to be itself a power.
2. It is time for the Canfans to make open proclamation of their outlook, their aims, their trends, and to confront the old wives' tale of a WorldCon spectre with a Toronto in '03 party.

To this end, SF fans of various nationalities have foregathered in Toronto and have drafted the following manifesto, which will be published in English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Klingon.

Bourgeois and Proletarians: The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of WorldCons.



In support of Toronto's bid to host the 2003 World Science Fiction Convention, send C\$20.03 or US\$15 to:

Toronto in '03
Box 3, Station A
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M5W 1A2

