

# OPUNTIA

## 70.1A

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### BOOK REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

**FALSE IMPRESSIONS** by Terri Thayer (2010, mass-market paperback) is the third in a series of murder mysteries set in rural Pennsylvania. I reviewed the first two in previous issues of this zine (**STAMPED OUT**, in #67.1D, and **INKED UP** in #68.1D). This

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Whole-numbered **OPUNTIA**s are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines. A cumulative subject index for all issues is available on request.

## We Shall Gather By The Hotel.

series is about April Buchert, a professional rubber stamper in backwoods Pennsylvania state. I mentioned in previous reviews that it seemed unlikely that a rural area could support even one, much less several in this story arc. The author seems to have realized this and the storyline is now more topical. The novel mentions Buchert's struggle to make a living, the local cop's worry about town council laying him off and contracting out to the state police, a realtor who deals mostly in foreclosures, and the town doctor who is running out of patients because the local factories have all been outsourced overseas.

The brother of the aforementioned realtor was presumed dead in a meth lab explosion, but he makes a short-lived reappearance in the first few chapters before suddenly departing this world a second time and for real, the victim of high-velocity lead poisoning. Buchert keeps tripping over meth addicts, the realtor isn't speaking to her, and someone torched her house. She does her best Miss Marple imitation, managing to alienate most of her friends and her fiancé in the process. Her biggest worry though, is that she is having trouble designing a line of rubber stamps for a commission she was given as the novel opened.

The ending wasn't too bad. The usual gunman holds the heroine hostage but she and a co-hostage manage to escape on their own. The loose threads are tied up, and the author performs a useful service by thinning out some characters from the story arc.

One of my sideline collections is novels set at conventions or other gatherings, usually of SF or mystery fans. My latest acquisition is NIGHT OF THE LIVING TREKKIES (2010, trade paperback) by Kevin David Anderson and Sam Stall. It is set at GulfCon, a Star Trek convention in Houston, Texas. Jim Pike is a hotel employee who is drifting through life after a tour of duty in Afghanistan that left him with problems. His angst was presumably thrown in to develop his character, which, while useful, hardly needs doing in a novel that will be read mainly by fans whose idea of in-depth criticism is "Kewl!".

As the convention begins, Pike notices that hotel employees are disappearing, and not long after re-appearing as zombies, soon to be followed by other zombies dressed in Star Trek uniforms. The hotel is under siege, and there will be no help from outside because the rest of the city has been zombified as well. It seems that one of NASA's satellites brought back an alien parasite that is taking over the planet. The zombie plague is in its exponential stage, and Pike and the few other survivors must fight their way to survival.

I bought this novel for completism and was prepared to write it off as nothing better than fan fiction. However, the authors succeeded in making it believable, with a logical reason for the zombies and

how they spread the plague by biting. I read through it in one sitting, something I seldom do with most novels these days. You don't have to be a Trekkie or even an SF fan to enjoy the book.

AUNT DIMITY SLAYS THE DRAGON (2009, mass-market paperback) by Nancy Atherton concerns a Renaissance festival set up near the village of Finch in the English countryside. Miss Marple, pardon me, Lori Shepherd, is hoping the festival will bring some excitement to the rural folk, and naturally it does. Aunt Dimity of the title has been dead for a few years but that is no hindrance because she communicates with Shepherd via automatic writing.

King Wilfred, of the Ren Fair, narrowly escapes death several times. It seems he has only to lean on a parapet or sit near a sandbag dangling on a rope for them to break loose and nearly kill him. Shepherd finds ropes sawed almost through and other sabotage. Who would want to kill the King? Dressing up in costumes to recreate the Middle Ages is one thing, but actual regicide is not very fannish.

The dynamics of the Ren Fair are a cross between a typical SF convention run by volunteers and a Creation Con business. The vendors and management work for money with one eye on the bottom line, but the events are staged by Rennies to whom the fairs are a way of life. Schisms result in offended committee

members going off in a huff and founding their own Ren Fairs in competition.

What surprised me about this novel is that no one is murdered, and the usual cliches are avoided. The perpetrator is not hustled off to a prison, because the King forgives him and arranges for him to receive counseling and a stay in rehab. Another bad guy is simply dismissed without references. It turns out that the police actually know what they're doing and didn't need any Miss Marples to crack the case. As far as the spirit of Aunt Dimity is concerned, she hardly comes into it. She seems mostly to be a way for Shepherd to sound off her thoughts, in the way that Spock and Dr. McCoy were used to verbalize Kirk's internal conflicts.

Many SF and mystery conventions have writers' workshops, which can be very addictive to a certain crowd who are always working on a novel in progress but never actually get published. DYING TO WRITE by Judith Cutler (1996, mass-market paperback) begins with Sophie Rivers attending a writers' workshop at a second-rank community arts centre near Birmingham, England. The rest of the characters all have something to hide, and in keeping with tradition the most obnoxious one is the first to be sent off. She was an alcoholic who ostensibly died in her sleep from a combination of gin and sleeping pills, but Rivers has a bad feeling about it.

She calls in a friend from the metro police when the local constable seems indifferent to investigating the case. Simultaneously with the death, an instructor for the course goes missing, and no one seems interested in looking for her either.

Other strange things happen. Japanese tourists keep barging in asking the way to Charlotte Bronte's place, which is puzzling because even with the language barrier they should be able to read a map. Someone is leaving threatening messages and decapitated rats as warnings, but against what and who? The culprit is hiding somewhere around the arts centre, but no one can find him. The police can't find anything about the missing woman, so Rivers does a Miss Marple investigation. The whole thing degenerates into a mess of unrelated clues which are only resolved by the realization that there are three different groups of criminals attacking three different characters for different reasons.

The first half of the novel is a predictable mystery fitting the template of such stories, and is an easy read. The second half is buried under all those conflicting clues and a telephone directory's worth of characters, so I found myself skimming at high speed and giving up trying to keep track of everyone. Fair to middling as a novel, but when you have to draw charts to keep track of everything, the quality goes down.

## The Nightmare.

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WHEN MONEY DIES by Adam Ferguson is the definitive history of the German hyperinflation of the early 1920s that destroyed the Weimar Republic and paved the way for the Nazis. The book was published in 1975 but was out of print for decades. Used copies were selling for \$300 when they could be found. A trade paperback reprint was finally issued in 2010, and is well recommended. It needs no updating. The lessons of the Weimar collapse have not changed, only denied by those who say this time is different.

The end of World War One was a shock to German people, for they had been told they were winning. The sudden abdication of the Kaiser and the return of the embittered troops threw the country into an uproar. At Versailles, the Allies imposed massive reparations on Germany that it could not hope to pay in full and, at the stubbornness of the French, were punitive beyond reason.

The cost of these debts started inflation in post-war Germany, slow at first, and eventually bursting into hyperinflation, defined as 50% or more per month. Initially the rise in prices was slow, and wages kept up. The German Reichsmark began to depreciate, but not as fast as wages went up. This created an initial burst of prosperity.

The rest of the world was suffering through a short-lived recession in the early 1920s, with high unemployment, but any German who wanted a job could get one easily. The German stock market rose steadily in nominal terms, and the volk thought it meant good times since stock markets wouldn't be rising otherwise. Using inflation-adjusted currency, the stocks were actually worth less, but the newspaper columnists and tipsters failed to mention this.

It always begins that way. Those of us who were adults in the late 1970s and early 1980s remember how inflation was low in the early 1970s, when \$200 per month was a good pension and \$5 would fill the gas tank of your car with change left over. Then inflation ticked up, and by the middle 1970s was in the 5% range. No big deal for wage earners getting pay hikes, but pensioners on a fixed income began to suffer. Each year inflation crept up, and suddenly it was over 10% and still rising. When I bought my house in February 1982, the mortgage was 17% for the first five years. It was a good deal; most people were paying 18% and later it went up to 22%. I got a 13.5% pay rise that year but my co-workers and I justifiably complained because it was less than the rate of inflation. We were fortunate that hyperinflation never kicked in; the Bank of Canada raised interest rates to 22% and Canada's economy was brought to its knees by 1984, allowing the bad debts to be purged and a fresh start begun. It doesn't always end that way though, and the Germans didn't have that good fortune.

There was no possibility of controlling the German economy because the country had to ship half its production to France and other Allies in reparations. The initial inflation smoothed things over until 1921. As wages and prices rose, the German government printed more banknotes, and the velocity of the money slowly began to rise. The public noticed that the price of bread and milk was slowly rising and grumbled about it but did nothing. The more astute Germans quietly began exchanging their surplus Reichsmarks for foreign currency or gold coins. Farmers started holding back their surplus crops until they actually needed paper currency.

Towards the end of 1922, inflation became serious. The Reichsbank began printing marks faster and in higher denominations. Their concern was to increase the liquidity of the economy, that is, the ease of obtaining currency and credit. Today, central banks do it by adding zeros into their computer databases, but back then there were no computers of course, so they had to do it by printing actual physical banknotes. Wages began to increase rapidly, and employers, merchants, and retail banks needed more banknotes to pay out to employees and customers.

The Reichsbank therefore stepped up production of banknotes and began a Red Queen's Race to keep sufficient banknotes in circulation to meet the demands.

It was and still is physically impossible to print enough banknotes during hyperinflation, so the Reichsbank contracted out the printing. Municipalities and large businesses were permitted to print their own money, called Notgeld, which the Reichsbank would accept in trade for marks. This allowed factories to pay their workers twice a day in wheelbarrow-loads of money, which their wives would collect and rush to the shops.

From the distance of almost a century, we look back and wonder how they were so foolish as to believe that printing more money would solve the problem, but it must be understood that to the Reichsbank the problem was a shortage of currency, not a surplus. The inflation and consequent hyperinflation were blamed on the war reparations and currency exchange rates, not the velocity of money inside Germany. The bankers never accepted or even considered the premise that inflation was a result of too much currency in the system.

Germans prospered in the early stages of inflation as the Reichsmark depreciated against foreign currencies and exports boomed. Businesses kept their profits overseas and used the foreign currency obtained from selling abroad to buy their necessary imports such as raw materials. This meant that inflation at home was irrelevant to them except in the matter of payrolls. Workers had trouble keeping up with inflation but eventually began winning pay hikes greater than the rate.

This caused German exports to become more expensive, and foreign income to thereby decline. The unemployment rate began to rise, and political unrest spread with the laid-off workers.

By early 1923, hyperinflation was underway and would not end until November 1923 when the Reichsmark, once exchanged at par with the British pound, had depreciated to 1,000,000,000,000 Reichsmarks to the pound. Anyone on a civil service salary or pension was the first to suffer. Those who had paper investments such as stocks initially did well, as the stock market rose for lack of any better place to invest. The increase in stock prices, however, did not fully compensate for hyperinflation, and speculators ultimately lost because sooner or later they had to convert their gains back into Reichsmarks and then into real assets. Businessmen and landlords began buying up property in the early stages of hyperinflation and then paying off in worthless currency a few months later. A factory that sold for 100 million Reichsmarks in early 1923 would be paid off by summer, when 100 million Reichsmarks might buy a meal in a restaurant. Bank accounts and term deposits dwindled into worthless numbers. A 100,000 Reichsmark term deposit made a couple of years prior and paying enough interest to live on, wouldn't even buy a newspaper in 1923. Farmers felt hyperinflation least until the very end because food was a real asset, but in late 1923 starving mobs left the cities and pillaged the farms for food.

As 1923 dawned, foreigners swept into Germany and the tourist trade boomed because of the incredibly cheap exchange rate. Ernest Hemingway, at that time a reporter for the TORONTO DAILY STAR, visited with his wife. They changed a single British pound note into Reichsmarks each day and lived like royalty, with change left over. Germans on fixed incomes were destitute, and began selling off their valuables one by one: paintings, antiques, furniture, stamp collections. Those who had gold coins or stockpiled food got by quite well, as long as they were discreet so as not to become targets for burglars.

Hyperinflation meant hourly price changes. A meal in a restaurant, once costing 10 Reichsmarks, would be 50,000 Reichsmarks at the time of ordering and 70,000 Reichsmarks when the bill was presented. Cheques were quickly done away with because even if the bank cleared the cheque in a day it would be worthless by the time the amount was settled and paid in to an account. The banking system ground to a halt since any cash deposited would be reduced to nothing in a week.

Hyperinflation is always accompanied by political chaos. The French occupied the Ruhr, the Nazis began their initial rise to power, and the Communists did their best to cripple industry by strikes and riots. Anti-Semitism became virulent, and the Reichsmark was referred to as Jewish confetti. Famine spread across Germany. Farmers had to fight off angry mobs from the

towns stealing food. But the French were unyielding in their demands for reparations, and in being so, laid the groundwork for World War Two. Indeed, most historians consider WW2 (at least the European theatre) to be the sequel to WW1, as essentially a two-part war.

Hyperinflation finally staggered to an end in November 1923 when all debts were repudiated, and Germany began anew with a clean slate. Those who owned paper such as stocks, bonds, or banknotes lost everything. Those who owned gold coins, land, or income-generating buildings such as apartments or factories, suffered but survived with some or most of their assets and lifestyle intact. When the Reichsmark finally collapsed and was replaced by a new currency called the Rentenmark, there were 1,211,000,000,000,000 Reichsmarks in circulation. The Rentenmark was valued at 1,000,000,000,000 old marks. The latter were essentially worthless paper and everyone who held them lost the complete value.

Fergusson includes numerous quotes from diaries and letters of common people in Germany, the ones who suffered most. The victims were those who thought, until it was suddenly too late, that the economy would turn the corner and their wages would keep up. Many Germans bitterly regretted not having bought gold coins or stockpiling food, the two basic forms of real money during the height of the hyperinflation in 1923.

Fergusson quotes from the remembrances of one woman who ignored the advice of a friend and kept her Reichsmarks in a bank account instead of buying foreign currency. She ended up with nothing as the bank account dwindled into worthlessness from hyperinflation in a couple of weeks. The trauma of the hyperinflation and its ultimate end result of WW2 still remain with Germans even today.

**The Crackers.**

OUT OF THE INNER CIRCLE (1985, hardcover) by Bill Landreth (with Howard Rheingold) is the autobiography of a pioneer computer hacker who worked in the early 1980s before being busted by the FBI at age 16. Using a computer that had 16 kilobytes of memory, in the days of green text screens, he went exploring on the networks when a friend gave him an old modem and dumb terminal. 1985 in computer years is positively Pleistocene, yet it is astonishing how many of the techniques he describes for hacking are still useful. The first time he broke into another network, he did it by guessing names and then using the name as the password as well; the third try got him in. Once into the account, he then learned how to work the system simply by using the Help command and reading through the instruction manual. Although the technology he used has long since gone to the junkyard, the techniques are still applicable.

Landreth discovered on-line bulletin boards, and soon found out which ones were the best. Newbies were a problem because they would break into computer networks, leave obscenities, and mess up accounts, resulting in a crackdown in security that shut out other hackers. The best hackers were the ones who entered quietly, changed little or nothing, acted like a normal user, and as a result were able to operate for years at a time. Landreth and a small group of other high-level hackers formed their own bulletin board called the Inner Circle, which was not open to newbies or anyone who behaved boorishly. They traded information, and explored networks of, for example, newswire services and bank fund transfer systems. Credit bureaus have the leakiest computer systems because so many people have to have access to it, whether a salesman selling a stove to a couple, or a shipyard selling a yacht.

Landreth supplies a brief history of hacking, which arose in the 1970s from the confluence of two different groups, computer programmers and telephone hackers. The former deliberately tried to crash their computers so as to eliminate bugs in the software before shipping, and discovered that it was also fun trying to crash their colleague's software as well. Phone phreaks discovered that the telephone system used tones of specific frequencies to switch calls around, and developed whistles or electronic tone generators that could get them inside the system for free calls.



When computers began communication with each other via telephone lines and modems, the next step was obvious, and hacking was born in its modern guise. Landreth discusses the computers of that day and how they operated, what ASCII is, and the types of hackers. From there, he goes into methodology. Gaining access during the dial-up days could be done by calling a computer via telephone modem, cracking a low-level account by guessing the user id and password, and then leaving the account open for the next, genuine user to call. They would mistakenly think they were in their account, and type their user id and password, which would then be recorded by a word-processing programme left running by the hacker. If a hacker had basic address to a computer system, he would collect names of employees, which are often their user ids, and then guess what their passwords might be. Even more valuable was finding additional information about a user, such as their children's or pet's names, which often feature in passwords. Landreth noted that hackers don't just send a string of random letters hoping to hit on the right password. They narrow down the possibilities and try to think like the user.

The best hacks, however, were by what is now known as social engineering. In large corporations it is often possible to walk in to a office, particularly at lunch hour or the night shift, and find a terminal easily accessed and unchallenged because the network identifies it as a legitimate internal connection. Another popular

wheeze that still works today is to phone an employee and ask them to read off the computer serial number as part of an inventory check. Landreth goes into detail about how to recognize and deal with intruders into a computer system, some of which are obsolete and most of which are still valid. In those days the warning was not to leave floppy disks lying about where someone could copy them. Today it is not to leave cellphones and laptops sitting where someone could steal them or, more subtly, load them with spyware from a memory stick.

## **SHERLOCKIANA: PART 7**

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 3 appeared in issues #63.1B to #63.1D, Part 4 in #67.1D, Part 5 in #68.1C, and Part 6 in #69.1E.]

### **Short Story Pastiches.**

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE KING'S EVIL (2010, trade paperback) is a collection of five pastiches by Donald Thomas. The first story is "The Case Of The Tell-Tale Hands", which begins with a young nobleman sneaking into his own house to apparently steal something. There is also an apparently unrelated case where a clergyman with no connection to the nobleman receives the gift of an exploding clock.

The nobleman is foolishly under the influence of a palmistry fraud artist who is blackmailing him. The author does a good job of tying the unrelated threads together into a clever denouement.

“The Case Of The King’s Evil” has Holmes and Watson being called to investigate the disappearance of the lighthouse keepers on the east coast of England. They were quarrelsome brothers, and they vanished on the mud flats surrounding the lighthouse. The investigation reveals that one must have murdered the other and then was lost on the estuary as the flood tide rushed in. A piece of a gold crucifix with five jewels is found, thus providing the motive as being a dispute over hidden treasure in the mud flats. So seems the conclusion, but Holmes finds another, and there are a series of twists, although a few of them are *deux ex machina*. There is a good dollop of history about King John and how east England’s geography has changed over the centuries, but it is done well, without intrusive info dumps or “As you know, Watson” lectures.

“The Case Of The Portuguese Sonnets” opens with a blackmailer named Augustus Howell justly murdered in the streets and un lamented by those who knew him. Holmes and Watson receive a visit from the son of the poet Browning, who had been offered papers stolen from the Browning estate by Howell. The detectives make a trip to Venice to examine the remaining papers, and the author detours the story through an infodump about forgery,

followed by another one about how to date a piece of paper by the type of manufacture. The papers are denounced as forgeries and the story ends with Browning fils much relieved at not having to retrieve the fakes.

“The Case Of Peter The Painter” begins with a Mrs. Hedges visiting Baker Street in the matter of a yellow canary. Some foreigners have moved in next door to her, not even colonials, but Russians, who had her daughter run errands for them, including buying a yellow canary. Then a piece of iron drainpipe from the house went missing while the daughter was away. Before you can say Red-Headed League, Holmes deduces that the canary is an excuse and the drainpipe, cut into sections, has become a pipe bomb. Lestrade is called in, and events devolve to a shoot-out at a Houndsditch warehouse after an attempted break-in is discovered in progress. The anarchists are up to something and Holmes and Scotland Yard are on the trail, with no prizes for guessing who is doing the most effective investigation. The climax is a siege of the anarchists’ hideout. The Scots Guard were called in for the shooting because the police at that time were unarmed and poor sharpshooters. After the bloody battle, the story trickles to an end with the tying up of loose threads. Not a satisfying conclusion for a written story, although this would be suitable for an action-adventure television episode.

“The Case Of The Zimmermann Telegram” is a World War One story about one of the most famous telegrams ever sent, when the Germans tried to have Mexico start a war on the American border to keep the pressure off them in Europe. (Google it if you’ve never heard of it.) As the world staggers into the war, Holmes is recruited to work as a code breaker. The story is an account of several episodes, starting with Watson helping to leak fake codes to decoy German intelligence, a fake invasion of Belgium, and, of course, Zimmermann and his famous telegram, decoded, of course, by Holmes. There follows an exercise on cribbing, the method by which most coded messages are broken. From there, the story runs out of steam since it must conform to the real facts instead of becoming an alternative history. In real life, Zimmermann admitted the telegram was true, Germany began unrestricted submarine warfare, and America entered the war.

“The Case Of The Honest Wife” by Lyndsay Faye (THE STRAND MAGAZINE, 2010 June) begins with Holmes and Watson receiving a visit from Mr. Treadwell, who is suspicious of his wife Alice and thinks she may be having an affair. She is hiding some particular thing from him and he wants to know what and why. In the guise of insurance inspectors, Holmes and Watson visit the home, where Holmes fakes a house fire a la Irene Adler to see what Alice will run to preserve. It transpires that she is an abused wife who is making ready to solve the problem of Mr. Treadwell once and for all. This is a politically correct story

but it does have a couple of neat twists to the plot.

### **Pastiche Novels.**

THE SCROLL OF THE DEAD by David Stuart Davies (2009, trade paperback) begins with a case of murder and theft from the British Museum. Only an apparently common Egyptian papyrus was taken from the museum, but Holmes and Watson discover that it contains the secret to a Scroll of the Dead, which supposedly has the secret to immortal life. A professor who can interpret the papyrus is kidnapped, a suspect is identified, and the hunt begins.

The chase quickly zig-zags with double-crosses back and forth, twists in the plot, and a major sleight of hand. One of the double-crosses is by the ancient Egyptian priest who wrote the Scroll, who set false clues to keep away all but the most determined. Holmes and Watson narrow down the search to a country estate, with two of the criminals following closely behind on the assumption that Holmes will lead them to the Scroll. As Holmes remarks, it is ironic that the pursuit is the opposite of the usual and the criminals are hunting for the detectives. Everything comes together with an action scene, shots fired, a manor house set alight, and bodies littering the countryside. Strangely, there follows a lengthy epilogue which takes up a quarter of the novel to tie up the loose ends.

The novel reads well and easy, although the author indulges in not playing fair with the reader by excluding too much information, to be revealed suddenly as needed. This was, however, also a failing of Doyle in the original canon. This book is one to read in a single sitting.

### **Alternative Holmes.**

The novel *THE VEILED DETECTIVE* by David Stuart Davies (2009, trade paperback) is a re-boot of the Holmes canon. Everything is a plot by Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime, who spots the young Sherlock Holmes as a potential adversary of the future and decides to do some long-range planning. He can't just kill Holmes, because then there would be no novel, so he maneuvers the great detective into a flat in Baker Street. Mrs. Hudson is an agent of the Professor keeping watch, as indeed is Holmes' brother Mycroft. Dr. John Walker is recruited to keep an even closer watch on Holmes under the name of Watson. Walker, late of Afghanistan, was cashiered from the army after abandoning his patients during the Battle of Maiwand, and was sent home in disgrace. With no chance of ever working again or being admitted into polite society, he is an easy recruit for Moriarty, who provides him with a new identity.

The first third of the novel is the set-up to get everyone settled into Baker Street. It does complete violence to the canon, but

once the reader accepts it as a re-boot into an alternative history of a fictional world, then the premises follow logically.

The next section is a re-write of *A STUDY IN SCARLET*, re-told from the other characters' points of view, as Jefferson Hope seeks revenge against the Mormon men who stole his beloved Lucy for their harem. Events twist into a new timeline when, instead of Hope disposing of both men, he only gets the first one before the suspect dies of an aneurism sooner than he did in *STUDY*, and Holmes must act as judge and executioner on the other culprit. In the original canon, Holmes did let natural justice run its course on several occasions. This one merely extends it further as Holmes and Walker/Watson discuss the difference between justice and the court system. The two, as we all know, are not synonymous.

The final third of the book rushes through various cases, with Watson marrying and moving out but still in thrall to Moriarty. The novel concludes with a variation of the struggle at Reichenbach Falls, where Holmes supposedly met his death and Moriarty actually did. The events, as viewed from a distinctly different perspective, keep reasonably close to the canon, with only the interpretation varying. The novel, which I was prepared to dis-like, turned out to be a good read. It was an interesting exercise in how different people view the same events.

## ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world. SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive, and a genzine is a general zine]

**BCSFazine #444 to #450** (The Usual from British Columbia SF Association, c/o Felicity Walker, 3851 Francis Road #209, Richmond, British Columbia V7C 1J6) SF clubzine with news, event listings, convention reports, fan history, reviews, space news, and letters of comment.

**Challenger #32** (US\$6 from Guy Lillian, Box 163, Benton, Louisiana 71006) Doorstop-category zine, starting off with the newly-reconstructed Fritz Lang movie METROPOLIS, then onto the SF writers Ray Lafferty and Gregory Benford. Convention reports, both present and past, and some case reports from Guy's career as a defence barrister, plus letters of comment.

**The New Port News #251 to #254** (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with commentary on a wide variety of subjects.

**Zine World #29** (US\$5 from Jerianne, Box330156, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37133) Review zine with multiple reviewers, hundreds of listings, and some essays. One essay is about the term "zinester", which apparently some people take offense to. This surprises me because I don't see how it is anything in the league of arguments over sci-fi versus SF, or Trekkie versus Trekker.

**Marktime #97 to #99** (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 1051, Orange, California 92856) Perzine of a transit fan, including baby's first tram ride, letters of comment, and zine reviews. #98 is a themed issue about how others started in zinedom and their thoughts about the hobby.

**Show Me The Money #31** (The Usual from Tony Hunnicutt, Box 48161, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55448) Devoted mainly to economics, with a lengthy essay on the history of the damage done to the world's economy by the Wall Street banksters and their cohorts. I wish more zines would pay attention to the underside of economic life rather than just interviewing punk bands that no one has ever heard of before or since.

**Statement #373 to #379** (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) SF clubzine with the usual news and reviews but always heavy as well with astronomy reports.

**As The Crow Flies #10** (The Usual from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8 Avenue SW, Seattle, Washington 98166-1953) Perzine with trip reports, horse racing, and the history of a local SF convention.

**The Fossil #344 to #345** (US\$15 from The Fossils Inc, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan, Denver, Colorado 80209) Devoted to the history of amateur press associations. Issue #344 has articles on a zinester with connections to H.P. Lovecraft and a history of zine collections in public libraries. #345 covers an apazine from the Great Depression era and if Mussolini's sons published zines.

**The Ken Chronicles #15 to #17** (The Usual from Ken Bausert, 2140 Erma Drive, East Meadow, New York 11554-1120) Perzine with articles about troubles with Apple computers, trips to various American cities and Mexico, some reviews, ancestor hunting in Germany, a visit to a psychic, and letters of comment.

**Riding On The Rails** (The Usual from M.P.I., 255 South 3rd Street, Apt. #4, Brooklyn, New York 11211) Mini-zine about busking on the subway and being nailed by police for singing on a train. Includes copies of the actual summons and judgement.

**Alexiad V9#2 to V9#5** (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, candy reviews, convention reports, tracking the oldest living veterans, and letters of comment.

**Amapra #25** (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Brief apazine with comments about the 2009 meeting of the American Amateur Press Association.

**Banana Rag #40** (\$15 for two issues from Anna Banana, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Mail art newszine with reports from the network, and news items about bananas, including a giant banana statue at Melita, Manitoba.

**Narcolepsy Press Review #5** (The Usual from Randy Robbins, Box 17131, Anaheim, California 92817-7131) Letters of comment and various reviews.

**Probe #143 and #145** (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) SF clubzine which carries the usual club news and reviews, but also has a large proportion of fiction by South African authors in every issue. #143 has a brief history of South African SF, which was subdued during the apartheid decades and is now struggling to come forward.

**Cherry Monocle (2010 Summer)** (The Usual from Phlox Icona) Phlox is moving house, which means she has to replace all her decorated light switch plates with the old ones. She illustrates some of the switch plates. A neat idea.

**Christian New Age Quarterly V19#3 to 3+** (USS\$5 from Catherine Groves, Box 276, Clifton, New Jersey 07015-0276) V19#3 is mostly taken up by a lengthy essay on the biblical canon, that is, how the Bible was compiled. Some books were excluded by early theologians, and others were included that should not have been. There had to be some selection for reasons of practicality, for there is a physical limit to how big a scroll or codex can be. What has kept theologians arguing lo! these many years is how the canon should have been done. Issue #3+ is a supplement dealing with the controversy on building a mosque at Ground Zero, where the Twin Towers fell.

**EOD Letter #14 to #15** (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine for the study of H.P. Lovecraft. #14 is the celebration of the 150th mailing of this apa and discusses the wedding of HPL and Sonia Greene, with a copy of their marriage certificate. #15 is mailing comments and a trip report where Ken and his wife visited Québec City and followed in the footsteps of HPL's visit there.

**The Knarley Knews #136** (The Usual from Henry Welch, 15290 Upper Ellen Road, Los Gatos, California 95033) Back in publication again, as the Welches were buying a house and having van trouble, hence the delay. This genzine includes a discussion about capitalism and a trip report to Mount Baldy, California and letters of comment.

**Zap!!omania #5** (The Usual from James Dawson, Box 292, Malden, Washington 99149) Extended discussions about the Papernet vis-a-vis the Internet, via letters of comment and apazine mailing comments. Zine reviews as well.

**Luna! #8** (The Usual from Christopher Carson, Box 1035, Fort Worth, Texas 76101) Single-sheet foolscap-size zine advocating colonization of the Moon. In this issue, he discusses the commitment of various space advocacy groups, and why government agencies such as NASA have budget problems in actually getting anything done.

**Abused** (US\$15 from Peter Netmail, P.O. Box 2644, D32383 Minden, Germany) Colour chapbook with poems and art about child abuse. A grim read, and not for those of a delicate mind.

**Vanamonde #833 to #852** (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly single-sheet apazine, ranging from literary SF to vembietroon poetry to various etymological comments.

**Ethel The Aardvark #147 to #149** (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 8005, Australia) SF clubzine with news, reviews, puzzles, and reports. A very active club from what I read here.

**Banana Wings #42 to #43** (The Usual from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) 60-page digest size in card covers, with considerable musings on SF fandom. Also convention reports, awards voting, the fall of the Berlin Wall, an English beer report, Canadian coffee, and a review of ASTOUNDING STORIES for 1934.

**This Is Visual Poetry** (The Usual from Carol Stetser, Box 20081, Sedona, Arizona 86341-0081) Colour poetry zine with visual poem collage.

**FOSFAX #216** (US\$4 from Timothy Lane, c/o Falls of the Ohio SF and Fantasy Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) Doorstop-class zine with 84 pages of microprint reading. Lots of book reviews, American political commentary, and letters of comment.

**Lamplighter #20 to #24** (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Discussions about constitutional affairs and activities in the National A.P.A., founded 1876. Guy points out the success of an organization is not how many members but the number who will do actual work.

**Silent Type #2** (US\$5 from Cheryl Lowry and Brandon MacInnis, Box 182, Woodinville, Washington 98072) Poetry zine with colour collages, on the theme of typewriters.

**Xerography Debt #27** (US\$3 to Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) Nicely printed reviewzine with card covers. The zines are a wide range of underground and alternative zines, reviewed by several different columnists. This issue also has interviews with lapsed zinesters explaining why they haven't published their issue in a while.

**You're An Angel, You Li'l Devil #4** (The Usual from Randy Robbins, Box 17131, Anaheim, California 92817-7131) Mini-zine of clip art and cartoons of women dressed as devils.

**The Pterodactyl #5** (The Usual from James Dawson, Box 292, Malden, Washington 99149) Apazine, with comments on horror movies and novels, Calvin and Hobbes, and miscellaneous.

**Rigor Mortis #3** (US\$3.50 from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) A nicely-produced digest-size zine for horror movie fans, with articles on monster movies as a reflection of society's fears, reviews of various zombie movies and books, and an extensive look at zombie Nazi movies, of which there appear to enough to establish their own sub-genre.