

MARCH 2017

Askew #19

The usually paper-only (and yes, the dead tree versions will be mailed Real Soon Now) ensmallled personalzine from –

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This is a Mythical Publication. That figures.

Art Credits: Alan White – 1; Nic Farey – 3, 4, 8;
pulp cover scan by ye editor – 6.

People Everywhere Just Want To Be Free

Or at least run for TAFF this year. **kaff, kaff**

One of the neat features of Bill Burns' excellent website, www.efanzines.com, is the Site Tracker application, which Bill will put on your fanzine so you can track how many people are reading/viewing your online fanzine and their location. Occasionally I like to check this feature to see how many visits my fanzine(s) get on efanazines, and sometimes it is remarkable how many people around the world are at least glancing over my zines. When I checked on the afternoon of February 8, 2017, the statistics were rather enlightening. Since the site tracker was set up on my zines on August 17, 2006, a total of 7,824 visitors have viewed *...in a Prior Lifetime, And Furthermore, Askance*, and now *Askew*. In the first seven days of February, there were 24 visitors, most of those being from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the ever-popular Unknown Location. Digging back a little further into the site history, of the last 50 visitors to my fanzines as of that date, the nations represented (with their total number of visitors) were USA (17), Unknown (14), United Kingdom (7), Canada (3), and Germany (2), with single visitors from Mexico, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Going back another 50 visits, three more countries were added: Colombia, Romania, and Australia.

This is pretty cool. What this tells me is that people all over the world are at least aware of my fanzines and feel compelled enough to look them over. Hell, some of them actually *read* the damned things, and then some of those people are compelled to actually do the unthinkable and actually **WRITE** a frigging letter-of-comment! It's enough to give me a heart attack. But not until after this year's TAFF election is over with. First things first, you know. And speaking of which...

"We're gonna be spending nine hours in the air?!? Holy Jet Lag, Batman!"

Last call, gentlefen!

After much gnashing of teeth and sleepless nights, TAFF administrators Anna Raftery and Curt Phillips made the decision to extend the voting deadline for this year's TAFF campaign to April 17, 2017, to coincide with the end of EasterCon, which has traditionally been the end of each year's TAFF race. By doing so, however, that puts a bit of a time crunch on the candidates because once the voting is all done and the winner determined, that means there are only four months to make reservations and plan out a trip to Helsinki and other locations in Europe. So that was a major consideration to deal with, plus the fact that airfare is likely to increase the closer one gets to the departure date. Well, the problem is this year's late Easter. So whoever wins will do what has to be done.

In the meantime, that gives the candidates more time to beat the bushes for votes and the like, so here is one more brief, shining *Askew* to whet your collective whistles. This particular issue is being mailed during the last week of March and first week of April 2017 in order to refresh memories of fans who have not yet voted in this year's TAFF election; a copy of the ballot has naturally been included in the envelope Just In Case recipients haven't yet done their fannish duty. Should I be the recipient of this honour, I will take copious notes and photos during my trip and produce a trip report as quickly as possible. I don't know if Sarah and Alissa – my opponents this year – are aware of this, but the Fan Fund receives a \$500 gift donation if it is done in a specified time frame. Here is an excerpt from the FAQ section on www.taff.org.uk :

The fan history organization FANAC offers a further \$500.00 donation for reports published within five years (originally \$100.00; increased to \$250.00 in 2006 and to the present level in 2007; all announcements made by Joe Siclari), and \$250 for those appearing after this period of grace. The FANAC bounty also applies to other international fan funds like DUFF and GUFF. Spread the word.

This is a wonderful gift. Jacq Monahan, the 2012 TAFF delegate, just published her trip report, so the donation was made. Since I enjoy writing, I definitely will do my part to make this donation happen. All of the fan funds deserve this support and promotion. I am up to the challenge. Administering the TAFF fund for the next two years doesn't bother me in the slightest. In fact, I am looking forward to it. I have long supported the fan funds, and shall continue to do so even if I do not win this year's race. After all, the next West to East TAFF selection will be in 2019, when Dublin, Ireland hosts the WorldCon. That's a no-brainer to me.

Oh, and speaking of fan funds, the 2017 DUFF winner is Paul Weimer. He will be journeying to Australia and New Zealand in June to attend Continuum 13, the 56th Australian National Science Fiction Convention, to be held at the Jasper Hotel in Melbourne on June 9-12, 2017. Congratulations, Paul! Have a safe and enjoyable journey.

So once again, here is the website to visit: www.taff.org.uk; just click on the 2017 TAFF ballot and follow the instructions to submit your vote. Thank you for supporting the fan funds. Without your support, they would no longer exist. This is probably one of the reasons why I have stayed active in fandom for so long: these interpersonal connections mean everything. Ergo, let's stay connected.

From www.File770.com:

Alisa Krasnostein, who had been running as a [Get-Up-and-over Fan Fund candidate](#) in tandem with Alexandra Pierce, [announced March 11 on Facebook](#) that she has dropped out. Pierce remains a candidate, along with Donna Maree Hanson, Sam Hawke, and Belle McQuattie.

Holt, Nathalia. *Rise of the Rocket Girls*. Little Brown & Co., 2016. 323 pp.

You may not believe this, but I also read non-fiction. For example, this particular book is about the women who were the original number crunchers – literally human computers – who did all the computations *by hand* during the formative years of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, during World War II. See, the military wanted to develop jet and rocket powered airplanes, and the crazy young men at Stanford and Cal Tech – who were dubbed the Suicide Squad for their dangerous experiments in propulsion – ended up getting a commission from the United States government. Well, while these guys risked life and limb experimenting with different fuels and propulsion systems, they needed people to compute out ratios, trajectories, speeds, drag... the works, in other words, to predict and evaluate these systems. This is where these women come into the picture. If it had not been for these women and their love of all aspects of mathematics – and the men they were married to and/or worked with – there would not have been successful jet and rocket development in the 1940s. Well, there eventually would have been, but the contribution of these women is phenomenal. This book is a fascinating look into the origins of not only the JPL, but of NASA as well. Note: this book is not the inspiration for the movie *Hidden Figures* (2016), although Mary Jackson does figure prominently in *Rise of the Rocket Girls*. I strongly recommend this book. Now I should rent the DVD of *Hidden Figures* and enjoy it, even though it is mostly centered on John Glenn's orbital flight of 1962.

Howard, Robert E. "Beyond the Black River." First appeared in *Weird Tales* (May/June 1935).

Here is a classic pulp era hack-and-slash, sword and sorcery tale of our favorite Cimmerian, Conan. Face it: after reading and grading college freshman English essays, something like "Beyond the Black River" is fun to read. If you are a fan of Conan, this is worth reading; I found it online in the Project Gutenberg science fiction listing and downloaded it to my Nook. Fast reading, and yeah – much needed as a palate cleanser.

Poole, W. Scott. *In the Mountains of Madness*. Soft Skull Press, 2016. 236 pp.

This is the most recent biography of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) that I know of, and it is definitely interesting reading. The opening chronological biography section – his childhood, early efforts at writing, his amateur press years, massive correspondence, his quirks, and eventual fame (which he apparently didn't really desire) – is followed by two in-depth sections that cast new light on the HPL phenomenon. The middle section of the book deals with his male interpersonal relationships (friendships with Robert H. Barlow, Samuel Loveman, Frank Belknap Long, Donald Wandrei, August Derleth, Robert Bloch, and so on) hints very strongly at Lovecraft's hidden homosexuality, despite his

Purcell for TAFF!



A classical choice!

brief marriage to Sonia Haft Green. The third section of *In the Mountains of Madness* follows the posthumous popularity of HPL and the eventual social impact of his stories and creations on popular culture. Poole's book is a well-balanced presentation of Lovecraft that I think is much better than L. Sprague De Camp's HPL biography, and meshes very well with the work of S. T. Joshi that chronicles Lovecraft's life. If you are at all interested in the fiction and life of perhaps 20th century America's most influential supernatural writer, this book is one you should check out of your local library.

Rohmer, Sax. *The Bride of Fu-Manchu*. Ttan Books, 2013. 282 pp.

There is something refreshing about the simple, straight-forward story-telling of the pulp era. I picked this one off my bookshelves in the living room without looking and just started reading it. Two days later I was done. First published in 1932, *The Bride of Fu-Manchu* is classic pulp writing. Yes, it is very fast, enjoyable reading. Like I said earlier in my Robert E. Howard capsule review, sometimes you just need to read something like this. The plot is easy to follow. Once again, the evil Doctor Fu-Manchu has concocted a scheme to subjugate the world: this time it is through the use of biological warfare, which I find rather interesting nearly a century after this was published. Anyway, the protagonist, Dr. Alan Sterling, gets caught up in Fu-Manchu's nefarious web, and is aided by the great detective Sir Denis Nayland Smith. Together they attempt to find the antidote to the plague ravaging the French Riviera, and threatening the world itself!

Rymer, James Malcolm. *Varney, the Vampyre*. Wordsworth, 2004. 1166 pp.

This is not a review, but notification of a much larger article that I am writing for the pages of Robert Jennings' excellent fanzine, *Fadeaway*, which often provides in-depth articles about old time radio programs, pulp magazines, and books. In fact, two weeks after I bought *Varney, the Vampyre* at our local Half-Price Bookstore, an issue of *Fadeaway* plunked into my mailbox, and it contained an article about the penny dreadfuls of the 19th century, and lo and behold, this book was mentioned therein. So naturally that led me to begin researching and reading books and articles about 19th century vampire novels to end up as an overview article for *Fadeaway*. *Varney* is currently being read, and at the rate I'm going, I might have it done by the end of the semester (mid-May).

skewed remarks

Purcell for TAFF!



Bringing the Heat to Helsinki

Yes, there are letters to run as a result of the 18th issue of *Askew*. Fancy that, eh? Not very many, but getting fanzines and letters and emails (oh, my!) are appreciated. As before, missives will be in Calibri size 11 font like this, and my responses be in **bold-face Calibri size 11 font**. That should make things easier to figure out who is yelling at whom here, even if few and far between here. No matter. Let's get into it.

oo

Rich Dengrove
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February 19, 2017

Late as usual. I am answering *Askew #17*, December 2016 the TAFF issue. However, the 2017 TAFF does not seem to be lost or won yet. So I guess I can still wish you good luck. Irvin Koch once claimed that TAFF was not needed anymore. It's needed as other things are needed. There is the chance to get egoboo. There is also the chance to show solidarity with foreign fans; and, since they send people to the US, to mingle with them.

On the other hand, would it give you as a Taff member a chance to see action if the Russians invaded Finland, like Teddy Harvia suggested might happen? I thought the Russians have given that up since the end of World War II. Instead, they just stand thuggish like; and tell the Finns they better knuckle under or something will happen to their coastline. Perhaps give them water pollution. In any event, the Finns always have buckled under since World War II. They're too close to Russia and too far from God to do otherwise.

Anyway, there are other countries in Europe, and you will be traveling through them by train. A suggestion which, without my telling you, you may have looked into. I am talking about the Eurail Pass. The prices range from 5 days travel a month (\$427) to three months of continuous travel (\$1,492). I guess you can sleep on the train. I remember, when I was in France during the early '60s, students were getting Eurail passes and living on the train for a while. At the time, continuous travel for three months was only \$199.

We go from Europe today, and the Eurail Pass, to a Steampunk England of the 1850s. You review *Etiquette & Espionage* by Gail Carriger. I love Gail's novels. They have two contradictory virtues. One is a sense of humor, primarily by satirizing the Victorian mind. The second virtue is consistency: her werewolves and vampires always have the same natural history. In fact, her plots depend on it. To a lesser extent, she keeps her technology consistent. In this manner, she has written two series for adults, the Parasol Protectorate and the Custard Protocol. Also, she has a series for young adults, the Finishing School series, which *Etiquette & Espionage* is a part of. I didn't think I would like her young adult novels. However, I loved them. They resemble her adult novels except that I suspect they were dashed off faster.

Before I leave the subject of Gail Carriger and her novels, I have to tell you about an oddity in her Finishing School series: the girls go to a school for spies while the boys go to a school for evil geniuses. In your *Skewed Results*, Milt Stevens found a more puzzling backdrop than Steampunk England: namely, new fandom. It may not be as sensawonda, but it is puzzling a lot of oldsters. Milt can't figure out what new fandom is interested in. I have this impression. There are two types of new fans. First, there are the fans we know about who are actually active in fandom: reading science fiction, collecting comics, gaming, convention running, costumes, filking, etc. Second, there are the mass fans. They are not mundanes only because science fiction is socially acceptable. Unlike actual new fans, they don't participate; they only wish to be entertained.

Perhaps, I shouldn't talk about new fandom being so puzzling because old fandom is puzzling enough. At Corflu, John, you talked to Don Fitch about fishing and he focused on that in his Corflu 6 report. I am not

YET ANOTHER SPECIAL TAFF 2017 ISSUE!

as puzzled as you, though, because the story sounds fishy to me. He should cut bait. I have quite a few more comebacks but I imagine, for what little I have let out, your reaction is Booooooo!!!

With a bit of 'pungent' humor, I end my email. Unlike a lot of zines I review, this one had an overarching theme. Not apparent in most of the articles and letters to the editor. As fans, we meander a lot. However, if I wish to get to this zine's center, I have to discuss TAFF. I guess you know by now I voted for you and I am rooting for you. It doesn't seem on the web that the TAFF winners have been named; so I wish you luck and popularity. I am also looking forward to *Askew 18*, even if, like this issue, it's somewhat askew.

Sincerely Yours,

Rich Dengrove

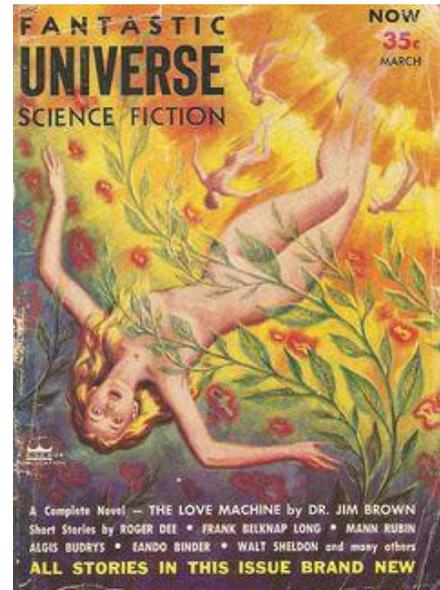
{Well, pretty much everything I do these days is a bit off, so "somewhat askew" is the new normal around here. (*) Valerie and I have already checked into the Eurail Pass, mostly just the one-month rates since we'll be eventually wending our way up to Helsinki. Depending on the package we get, the prices do vary quite a bit. So the research continues (*) Yeah, the "new fans" that Milt Stevens wonders about do present a bit of a conundrum for us much older, traditional fans. While there is definitely a solid, literary core to Steampunk fans, for example, it does seem as if most modern "fans" should be more properly labeled as "mass media fans" mainly because there is extremely little cross-over into the SF&F fandom that birthed them. I think you are right, Rich, in that contemporary mass media fans really do "only wish to be entertained." There really aren't that many who branch out into the fandom that thee and me have known for so long. This is a good topic for an article in *Askance*.}

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February 20, 2017

First of all, thank you for the latest *Askance*, and I look forward to cracking open the .pdf. But, that's not what this loc is about right now. I have *Askew 17* in paper format, and *Askew 18* in .pdf, so I will clear those up right now.

17...You've had our nomination and support, John, and now, we have to get with it, and actually get our votes and US\$ to Curt Phillips. I wish you the best of luck, and wish I could do something like that myself. Sounds like you've already quite the trip planned. Helsinki is simply out of the question for us, unless we are burdened with untold wealth by the provincial lotteries.



I admit that I have read few steampunk books; they are beyond my meagre means, and they are not carried by my local library. Any Gail Carriger recommendations? I could buy a few e-books and read them on my tablet, but even that's a financial stretch.

18...I guess the Stiles illo makes it official. I wish I had similar artistic talents, but I couldn't draw a straight line.

Perhaps I should download some e-book software, and see how easy it is to read such a thing on my Samsung Tab E. I see Murray Moore has changed the voting procedures for the FAAn Awards, and there are separate nominating and voting forms. I haven't seen any of the bitching and whining I expected to see with this, but then, there's lots of websites and groups I am not on.

Jerry and Suzle will not be the last living to use the postal service for TAFF voting, as long as Yvonne and I are around. Besides, our cheques aren't processable by American banks, so it's simply easier for us to send cash, which we will do.

Ah, I have two weeks as I write to get the ballots out! After I mail them, I will warn Curt that they are on the way, and to expect them.

All done, and off it goes. I promise to tackle *Askance 39* asap.

Lloyd Penney

{How do, Mister Lloyd! First off, I wish to thank you and the missus for the TAFF support. You and Yvonne are very kind, and Valerie and I thank you deeply. (*) Gail Carriger recommendations? That's easy: anything! If you enjoyed the Parasol Protectorate books, I do recommend reading *Curtsies and Conspiracies* just because it's fun stuff. Pretty much anything she writes is worth reading. You might want to try two books I just found at our Half-Price Books, written by Cherie Priest, that are based on the Lizzie Borden case. The series is logically called the Borden Dispatches, and the books are *Maplethorpe* and *Chapelwood*, and look really interesting.

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February 1, 2017

Thanks for the copy of the electronic version of *Askew #18*. I don't do so well with print publications these days. The purpose of this issue was to encourage people to vote in the TAFF race. In my case, you were too late. I've already voted.

I voted for you, since I know you. That's how things usually work in fan fund races. I have nothing against the other two candidates, but I don't know them. There is no reason I would want to vote for Hold Over Funds in any position. In some fan fund races, I don't know any of the candidates, so I don't vote. In many races, I know one of the candidates, so I vote for them. I've never encountered the

situation where I knew one of the candidates but disliked that person. There have been very few cases where I knew two of the candidates. Then I have to consider which person the people in the other country would be most interested in meeting.

Purcell for TAFF!



A classical choice!

Fan fund races were sometimes more contentious in the past. One TAFF race was used as a referendum on the Boondoggle of 1964. The candidates were Walter Breen, Bill Donaho, and Terry Carr. Terry Carr really was the best candidate, and he won. The results also indicated that most of the voters didn't want to use fan fund races for other political purposes.

Another issue was whether fan funds were exclusively for fanzine fans. Some people thought so. Some disagreed. I can think of some non-fanzine fans who would have made good candidates. If Jay Kay Klein had been sent over to

the UK, he probably would have produced a photo album of British fandom at the time of his visit. Fans on both sides of the Atlantic would probably have liked that.

Milt Stevens

{Milt, thank you so much for your support. Whether or not I do end up being the North American TAFF delegate to the Helsinki WorldCon, it is all for a good cause: promoting fannish camaraderie and friendships across the Atlantic. This is a rich tradition that I firmly believe should continue for as long as possible. (*) The Breen Boondoggle happened a decade before I became an active fan, but I am very aware of what that was all about; then there were the TAFF Wars of the mid-80s, which I knew all too well. Plunging all fandom into a holy war is not my idea of a fun time. Personalities do clash, no matter which group one is involved. The thing is, it is almost impossible to keep politics out of fandom. You are well aware, I am positive, of how political fans were back in the late 1930s and on through the 1940s, and so on. It can't be helped. I forget who said it – Don Wollheim? Sounds like something he'd say – but some notable member of Eofandom said that science fiction fans are ideally suited for politics because they are so forward thinking, so he encouraged fans to seek political office. For that matter, fans on Facebook these days are constantly engaged on political topics - which is healthy, I believe – so this kind of behavior has not changed much over the decades. (*) As for the fan funds being “exclusively for fanzine fans,” I think that is now changing. My “opponents” in TAFF this year are two young women who are mostly convention organizing fans (which is very good!), but neither one seems to be too interested in fanzines. The Fan Funds have been mostly fanzine fan oriented, which is to be expected considering their source. However, as fan activities have broadened into the mass market media (comics, gaming, cosplay, movies, etc.), fans involved in those areas have moved into the traditional convention and fanzine realms. Sarah Gulde and Alissa McKersie are not well-known to fanzine fans, but don't be surprised if more media-driven fans slide in front of our view screens in the near future.}

Whow! That brings this issue to a close, and just in time, too. Remember, folks, that TAFF voting ends on April 17, 2017. For those who are In The Know, the voting extension was granted because it has long been **Tradition** for TAFF voting to be held at EasterCon in England. So be it. Let's have fun with this. Thank you!