

Journey Planet



Issue 2

Journey Planet 2- September 2008

James Bacon - Editor (The Brawn)

Chris Garcia - Layout Editor (The Begger)

Claire Brialey - Copy Editor (The Brain)

Yes, you can email us at
Journeyplanet@gmail.com

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I really want to LoC or Zine in Trade and I'm in the UK/Europe. Send to: Journey Planet, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES, United Kingdom.



I really want to LoC or Zine in Trade from North America. Send to: Journey Planet, 962 West Weddell Dr., Apt. 15, Sunnyvale, CA 94089, USA.

BAD TIMING

by Claire Brialey

I feel rather a fraud.

No, this isn't Impostor Syndrome, although I still get that in a fannish context quite often. I've just put myself into a difficult position about this very fanzine that you'd be holding in your hands right now if you were an old-fashioned paper fanzine devotee like me who still prefers to print off efanzines to read.

James emailed me about *Journey Planet* when he and Chris had decided they wanted to keep it going as a frequent genzine.¹ Since it had started out as a fanzine-in-an-hour project for the Eastercon as part of our fan programme stream, showcasing Chris on his TAFF trip, James wanted to check that we, and Liz Batty as deputy head honcho for programme, were content for them to let it fly away free into uncharted realms of their joint imagination where there may well be dragons but it seems more likely there are zombies and scantily-clad women.

And that was the only thing in James's email that bothered me: the bit where he described *JP* #2 as 'the girlie issue'. There were only two prospects conjured up by that phrase and either seemed plausible with the Non-Stop Publishing brothers at the helm. Liz clearly had the same thought about as quickly as I did.

So what you're reading now is actually the less bad option. And although James was propositioning both Liz and me to write for it, my main preoccupation at the time was persuading James and Chris collectively to let me retrospectively proof-read and ideally more extensively copy-edit their first issue, which had some great material but which I felt wasn't entirely doing it justice as a result of the haste with which it had been put together.

Since this is Chris and James it turned out that haste was only one of the challenges and so – despite some lingering anxieties that I was muscling my way into a fanzine project where the skills that I was offering were not merely considered unnecessary window-dressing but were actually antithetical to the whole concept – I found that I had joined the editorial team. And then I remembered that this was going to be the next issue.

So, let's be clear: this issue was not my idea and it is not a consequence of a woman now being involved with this fanzine. In fact I don't agree in principle with this approach.

Oh, and while I think of it there

is no other subtext to my involvement. I am still co-editing *Banana Wings* which remains my top fannish priority; Mark and I are still a couple who are living happily in the same house; I will still from time to time but at doubtless erratic intervals afflict perzines on those people I suspect will like that sort of thing. And – learning here from experience – I am only going to say this bit once because I expect never to need to repeat it: I am not shagging either James or Chris and it is none of my business what they may or may not be doing with one another either or what they choose to tell anyone about that except that if they do so in this fanzine I am first going to turn it into coherent English with relevant punctuation and yet somehow contrive to ensure it still reads in the authentic authorial voice. Because that's why I'm here. Because – allegedly like the Bishop of Southwark and yet really not – this is what I do.

You see, I think *Journey Planet* could be a pretty good fanzine. It's got the apparently boundless creative energy of Chris and James behind it, for both issues so far that's resulted in a wide range of contributors (including people saying interesting things who you wouldn't expect to see in fanzines usually), it's clearly going to have a reasonably frequent schedule (if I don't accidentally delay every issue as I have this one, in which case one or both of the co-editors will probably burst), and all that seems likely to lead to the high engagement and response that I personally think a genzine needs to keep it vibrant. And so here I am, trying to help it fulfil its potential, despite the bad timing that means I start properly with this issue.²

I'm not expressing as principled and extensive a set of reservations here as you'll see Max has. There are some circumstances where I really do feel uncomfortable about or hostile towards gender (or any other) segregation but others where I think it can be justified. I was educated at a all-girls secondary school, for instance; I know some research suggests such segregation isn't particularly good either academically or socially for boys, or indeed for some girls, but I'm absolutely convinced that it was best for me, and in that context I am selfishly grateful for the opportunity rather than feeling socially responsible. (In fact I think it's helped me become an adult who is generally socially responsible and in a position to try to act on my impulses. But that's not really important right now.)

What concerns me about this is



perhaps better explained by the context. James clarified that after this 'girlie issue' the next one will be about SF. And that was when I really started to feel excluded and patronised: my immediate reaction was that James and Chris must consider SF and women to be mutually exclusive. And of course I realise that doesn't automatically follow, and I happen to know it's not what either of them thinks, but it was how I reacted instinctively.

But it's more than that; for me it's personal. Some people might be inclined to tell me that the political is always personal, or vice versa, but in this case I don't mean it in quite that way. Whatever the reasons for it, I was a bit offended that Chris and James hadn't asked me to write anything for their first issue. (Because this was in practice a rather carefully planned fanzine-in-an-hour with a lot of advance commissioning and, indeed, some subsequent editorial work although the way that much of this seemed to be done while one or both of the co-editors was on another programme item may explain one or two things.) Being too self-interested, I thought my exclusion indicated that my fan writing star is really falling. So what I heard James as saying to me about this issue was, Never mind; you can be in our next issue, because that's just written by girls. And that rather felt as though as I was being told I wasn't good enough for the real fanzine, but I'd get over the bar to be in the ghetto. As it happens I believe I was being protected, or – as that presents itself to me – not allowed to make my own decisions about what I am capable of or what is best for me; I actually don't want to start describing how I feel about that because I will become enraged and even less able to express myself as coherently and rationally as I'd like to. I do know it's not all about me – except that being a woman is one significant aspect of my personal identity, so actually I still feel that it is.

The theme of the next issue³, though, is going to be SF. And that means it's going to be *about* SF. It won't feature people who create or appreciate SF writing about some of the other things they do – not least because that is pretty much the basis for most fan writing anyway.

And yet this issue is about women. No, hang on; it's *by* women. But also to some extent about women – about female SF authors (why is that not in the SF issue?) or the experience of being an SF reader who is female (ditto), or about being a woman in SF fandom (why is that not just, y'know, in any issue of the

fanzine?). Maybe some contributors will tell me that they genuinely liked the idea of an issue of a genzine being turned over to women, redressing the balance or creating a specific space, and that's why they were moved to join in. Maybe some didn't consciously think about it being a women-only issue and were just interested in what they were being asked to write about or even in the novelty of being featured in a fanzine at all. Maybe some of them didn't even realise or actually care. Only the individuals involved can really tell me.

But that is, of course, part of the point.

**And yet this issue is about women.
No, hang on; it's *by* women. But also
to some extent about women...**

We are all individuals. Yes, we are, even you – unless you just mentally quoted *The Life of Brian* in which case you may be a sheep. But why does any fanzine need to have an issue that only features female voices? And were James and/or Chris expecting that this should inevitably mean that what women are interested in is simply, y'know, being women? Because to me that would imply that the rest of the fanzine isn't for women, or that the originating editors assume that female readers and contributors are women before they are fans. And maybe that's true for some people – what with us all being individuals – and maybe the equivalent is true for some male fans too. In the case of Chris and James we can know more about that, and about their motivation for this issue, because I asked them; their full answers appear at the end.

In practice it seems likely to turn out that there will be articles in the SF-themed issue about female SF writers, although that may be by accident rather than design; that issue and others will obviously include articles by women as well. The first issue of *Journey Planet* clearly did feature both male and female writers, and undoubtedly also had both male and female readers, as well as some for whom gender isn't a big deal or is a sufficiently big deal that they really wish I weren't now implying that gender identity has to fall at one of those two poles.

Nonetheless I still wonder what existing or potential readers of this fanzine, whatever

their own gender identity or lack of it, feel about having a women-only issue – or about that not being the case in future. I hope that those of you who are reading this will tell us, although I also



hope that you'll engage mainly with the subject matter of the fanzine more than with this concept. But obviously you're a self-selecting sample; we may never know if anyone was put off. And I initially wondered whether it means we should now have a men-only issue, and how different that would be to a women-only issue or to any other issue or this or any other fanzine, and whether it makes a difference if it's overt.

James mentioned in his replies to my questions that I partly started this, since I wrote something in *Banana Wings* about apparent lack of responses from women. What I wish I had been in time to suggest, if this was still something Chris and James really wanted to do after being argued with, is to have commissioned an issue's worth of material from women without stating explicitly to any of the contributors or anywhere in the fanzine itself that this was what we had done. And then see whether it felt any different, and indeed whether anyone commented.

It did bother me that this fanzine was commissioned by two men from a pool of women. They'll have had criteria for their initial selection, even unconscious ones; that's inevitable for any fanzine, and is also as true about, say, my choices and Mark's for programme participants for the fan stream we ran at this year's Eastercon. But I was more bothered that James and Chris would then be potentially sitting in judgement over all their female contributors – who they'd invited to take part but then might reject. In practice they didn't reject any submissions they received, but I didn't know that would happen when I first heard about this issue and I was concerned about the balance of power in a way that rather surprised me. I also found it surprising and very interesting that, when I asked them about it, this isn't at all how Chris or James read my question. Editors obviously need to decide whether the contributions they receive are good enough, and what they then do about that; but that power relationship felt a bit different to me, at least, when it became so clearly gendered. I'll certainly do my best to ensure that in future we only discriminate on the basis of talent – which can, in most cases, be nurtured anyway.

Actually I suspect that both James and Chris might be inclined to favour female contributors in future. Partly because we are still a rarer breed in fandom, but partly because they both like women; you'll see that James explained in response to my questions how much

he admires women in general and particular. And that's all fine, I suppose. I like women – well, some women. And some men. And many Australian fans, for instance, although that wouldn't make me plan an all-Australian issue of a fanzine⁴; it would just make me inclined to encourage Australian fans to write for me. And not just about being Australian or about other things that are Australian or associated with Australia, at that – although I would expect a bit of Australian identity and experience to show through in many of the articles, because good fan writing for me is rooted in that personal connection.

So let us, now, make the best of what we have here, because I do think that there is once again a lot of good stuff. It happens to be written by women, apart from some thoughts from Chris and especially from James, and for some articles it is specifically significant that they are written by women. But they are all interesting and engaging pieces of writing, opinion and/or experience, by science fiction fans: a personal connection from them, and from us, to you. In the end this is, y'know, just a fanzine, written by and for fans; and I hope you enjoy it.

Claire

(Endnotes)

¹ Randy Byers writes in the most recent *Chunga*: '...we have to keep publishing just to try to remain relevant in the brave new world Chris seems to be defining single-handedly. (Ghu help us if he has formed an alliance with James Bacon!)' Prayer may not be enough. Break out an extra crate of Alice Lawsons.

² A revised edition of *JP #1* is also now available on the FAAn award-winning website efanzines.com. It doesn't quite have the raw immediacy of the original version, by which I mean it also has fewer typos.

³ Or possibly, now, the issue after next, since James has another Big Plan for a specific themed issue that apparently needs to come out before the end of 2008. But this point still applies.

⁴ Admittedly, this is because it could be a doomed enterprise from the start; my experience of Australian fandom, fabulous though I've found it to meet Australian fans in person and especially

in Australia, is that getting their input to fanzines is not easy.



THE MALE GAZE TURNED INWARDS

Questions set by Claire Brialey; answers given by James Bacon and Chris Garcia

The answers given are set out with Chris's first partly because I received his reply first, but also because Chris identifies James as the prime mover on this theme; although both sets of opinions are obviously personal to their authors it may help for clarity if James has the last word. Also in the interests of clarity, these words have been edited only for mistakes or syntax confusion; I've also checked the final product with both James and Chris to ensure they're saying what they really meant and don't feel misrepresented. The title is also mine, and added after asking the questions.

What would you say was your original motivation or Big Idea in having an issue by and/or about women? (If that's not quite how you'd describe it, what is your concept for number 2?)

Chris: Wow, these are actually deep questions. James will have to answer most of them (his was the idea of the Women issue, though I thought it would be interesting since the stereotype from those on the outside looking in seems to be of Dirty Old Men at typewriters).

James: I want this to be a stupendous fanzine. I wanted to kick off with something different.

Genderisation or whatever is much talked about. I have no idea how it is being a woman, but I love many women a lot, respect a load and enjoy the company of gazillions of them. I just thought it made sense. Women are a huge part of SF and fandom.

You wrote in your zine how hard it seemed to get responses out of women; it suddenly became unattainable so I wanted to do it – be careful there. You see, I never notice if it's a man or a woman writing; I just enjoy reading fanzine articles, and it's interesting to see who wrote but the gender is not an issue (I don't count the balance at the end of each fanzine). But then I am suffering

England flag syndrome¹: I haven't had to fight for it, so it's not such a big deal. But you did.

So I thought it might be a good idea, and I wanted to approach women in a way I hoped they might engage with – especially those who I have never seen in print yet really respect – and I wanted to know simple things, like what SF are people reading now and what was their first con like.

I wanted a stupendous zine and I have faith that it could be done.

Has any of your thinking about that changed as you have commissioned or received articles? (And if so, what, how and why?)

James: There are some real untapped sources of fan writing out there. (You will see this yourself in response to my dumb questions.)

I regret asking such basic questions and at the same time am happy I did; I have found reading the responses fascinating but can see that some fans who I normally don't associate with fan writing have some real writing skill and entertainment value. I think next time I will ask some real 'issue' questions. I should have varied the questions, to get a more broad spectrum of responses.

My thinking has not changed – stupendous!

Did you consider at any stage what the specific pros and cons of this approach might be? If so, what are they from your point of view?

Chris: I will admit that I questioned for a moment, not a long one but a brief moment, that doing an all female issue might just be seen as a ghettoisation, but then I looked over the previous issue and more than half of the content was from women (Ang, Max, Tubewhore, Flick, Yvonne, etc.) and it seems like it'll make an interesting note on things.

James: Cons? Initially, er, no, not really; I just had my fingers crossed that my idea wasn't bullshit and people wouldn't write or think I was being gimmicky or patronising. It's a concept, an idea; and it's one issue, and it's our zine, and



I *want* to read what people have to say. I think that came across in my approach.

The pros are just that it's different; I thought it was a neat idea, so why not – what's the harm and wouldn't it be just cool? It's not a statement; it's just for fun. If other people are impressed or have a moment of attitude realignment because they have to admit that, well, women are damn fine writers – well, that would be lovely, but I already know that.

Thinking again now about the cons – well, one person, a very good friend, reacted

in an unexpected way; that's her right, but I felt it was not in the spirit of what I was trying to achieve. But I know this person very, very well; she is a true friend, and I am not going to question her on her feelings on this matter. I may discuss it with her, but at some later point when we can both have a longer time to discuss our reasoning, meaning and understanding.

I didn't explain what it means for me, and I think that's good. I think the idea means something different to each contributor and it would be wrong to impose 'why I think it's cool' onto the whole zine. The real questions are: does it matter? And is the zine good?

Do you think of yourself as a man first, or an SF fan first, or are they equally important (or unimportant) parts of your identity?

Chris: I don't think of myself as a man first; why would I? In fact, I don't really think of myself as anything at any time until someone asks me to take a moment and think, and then the answers varies according to the exact moment. There are times I think of myself as a fan first, others when I think of myself as a dude first, and other times when I think of myself as a Mexican above all. It varies. I have no solid sense of continual identity, a product of being a kid from the BArea I think.

James: I am a train driver first. Husband second. Then SF fan, maybe. I think for those choices you gave



I am an SF fan. I don't see myself as being 'a man'; I see myself as being me, James Bacon, who happens to be a man. It depends, though: I am obviously a man first when I was chatting up women at conventions but I was there for the SF, so SF was first even then. Again it's an England flag thing; I don't care that much.

What hurts me most is if people do not see me, for who I am; I tire of being mislabelled. This week I am someone who has a bad attitude towards people who take books seriously,

apparently. Does that sound like me?

I think I don't have the same fight as women. Like there is no gender imbalance in many areas for men as with women, no Alan Sugar to ask me if I will get pregnant, no glass ceiling. In SF fandom, I think that's different, but in SF as a genre I think representation of women is below their participation percentage; but I have some figures on that elsewhere.

Look, I am tremendously lucky. I have upset a few women; I have broken hearts. But I know I have been good for women too; I have looked after some and been good friends and boyfriend to quite a few in troubled times. I am a man, but I do care.

Did you decide not to use any submissions you received and – without breaking any confidences or identifying people unfairly – why? And is that in line with your usual editorial approach?

Chris: As far as the usual approach, I leave that to James. I just put the things where they fit. I think the idea of doing themes is a good, and any hatchet you use will either be too rough or too fine.

James: Nope. I think I will be open to most things. I think I would baulk at outright bigotry

or racism. I also think that a right to reply is important. I think the only problem I have would be boredom; it must be an enjoyable read. So far so



good.

People who know me know my intentions are good and although that's my paving stone way to hell, I think that people will bear that in mind. They know I care and am not patronising, although I may be blunter than most. If someone is really unpleasant, I may ask them to be objective and impersonal.

I don't like censorship much.

Are you writing something to appear in number 2?

Chris: I'm not planning on writing anything. I was kinda toying with the idea of having Evelyn write a tiny something with words I feed her, but I don't think it'll happen.

James: Wasn't going to. Well, intended to do a small editorial but was hoping that a last minute stupendous article was going to explode from right field at any moment. It just came out of the blue via an email, so will need to see if permissions are forthcoming.

Any other thoughts or comments provoked by these questions that I haven't enabled you to say yet?

James: Women are vital to me.

My Mom was the second driving instructor in Ireland who was female. She is vice president of the European Federation of Driving Instructors. It infuriates me when people say women are bad drivers. She gave me a break when it mattered.

My nan was left a widow quite young. She had five children. She held down two jobs, more sometimes, and ran a family household in Ireland in the Sixties. Most children in that situation would be sent to a religious institution. She would not let that happen. Thank goodness.

My wife is an amazing woman. She has had to deal with many bad things; but one aspect was the stepmother from hell, who was in total control of her life during her teenage years, someone who *hated* her – not disliked, but despised.

Women are amazing, much tougher

than I. I am unsure I could be as strong as those three.

And women have been incredibly important to me in SF fandom. The first

person to talk to me at my first ever night at the ISFA was Bobby McLaughlin: a wonderful lady. She was an Eastercon regular and in a number of APAs and also was counsellor for people who suffered torture. I haven't seen her for a long time. Anna Casey was one of my bestest friends in the ISFA: so clever, intelligent, beautiful and an SF reader on top of all that.

There were also a bunch of amazing women on the committees of my first Octocons. They were good con runners and good to me. Maura McHugh was on my first con committee when I was 18, and I was her co-chair at 21. Another woman, Lorretta Culbert, was equally as powerful in other ways and also on the Octocon committee. Today it's Cat McGrath who is chair and I do as she says.

Fran called me and I said yes. Alice spoke to me and I said yes. Then I spoke to Alice and she said yes. So I am on an Eastercon committee, an area head at a Worldcon and I am a co-chair of an Eastercon.

A woman said, if I don't have anything positive to say, best not say it. It was a good word and soon after that I am sure she has regretted all the wrong words I have written...

Women are important to me. So are men: Dad, Stef, Mick O'Connor. But it's equally so.

So maybe some day we'll have an all-man issue to equal things out; but I reckon that might be boring, so I dunno.

(Endnote)

¹ Clarification by Claire: this refers to a conversation James and I have had several times about national identity, in which I tried to explain why I don't feel patriotic and associate only negative things with displays of the England flag or even the Union flag. My expectation is that in the countries that were historically subjugated by England (or any other country) being now able to assert your nationality as Irish or Welsh or Scottish or whatever is a matter of pride and indeed a matter of principle. Instead, I feel British more than I feel English or any of the other nationalities that may contribute to the mongrel that I actually am.

You'll notice Chris is far less wordy than James. The reason for this? He really didn't have anything much to say!



Particles of Participation

commissioned and collated by James Bacon

I am aware that there are many fans who are active in various areas but who don't always contribute to fanzines. It's fair enough; not everyone is excited by writing, or maybe they're too busy doing other aspects of the hobby that is SF fandom. I thought, though, that by asking some fans whom I hold in great respect a selection of questions that it might get a nice group of responses – fan writing by stealth.

Throughout this fanzine you will see a selection of responses; some came as direct answers and some were formulated into essays. I didn't mind, and to be honest I was very impressed that people were prepared to write at all but also that they wrote so well. Can you see how easy it is to be a fan writer? No one needs to be amazing. There is no such thing as lame or not worthy; it's just really nice and interesting to see what people read and enjoyed.



Contributors

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Naomi Wiener

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

It was fantasy, and the first proper book I have ever read all by myself: *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. Stole it from my elder brother. When Lucy emerged out of the closet to the world of Fantasy, I went there with her; haven't got out yet. My first SF book was *Dune*: my elder brother lied and told me it's actually fantasy in the future, because I was prejudiced against SF at the age of 12. He knew what he was doing.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

Funny, but it was IRC. I was rather sure that if I'm not the only SF&F fan in Israel it's because (a) my brother is one, too, or else I wouldn't have all these books and (b) somebody had to publish all them books. And then came the miracle of internet, and there was light.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

I was 16. It was one of the most important events in my entire life. It was called Sector 972 – 972 being Israel's international telephone code, and it was the first convention organized by the fresh and brand new Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy. There had been a few separated little cons in Israel before, mostly organized by people from the US temporarily living here, and that was the first big con. It started the annual Israeli Convention – ICon.

It blew my mind. I was a very, very shy girl. I haven't had any problem with my self confidence; I simply didn't have any. And suddenly there were people like me! Lots of them! People that actually understood what I mean and how I think, not only about books and television but about the world. It was like discovering there are aliens on the moon: we are not alone. That was back in 1997. By the first ICon, a year later, I was elected a board member of the Society, and by 1999 I was co-chair of ICon. Imagine the effect on my

previously non-existing self confidence.



What's your favourite fan moment?

One?! You must be kidding. I'll pick three; if you don't want them all

you choose.

My most important favorite fan moment was in 1998, during the first ICon, when I decided to help a girl I just met with a poll asking “Which actor from *Babylon 5* would you like ICon to bring to Israel?”. Actually, we couldn’t afford to bring one, but we hoped that if enough people answered the poll and we had a definite answer, we can persuade a sponsor to bring one. Ah, the naivety! Never mind that, being a very enthusiastic 17-year-old, by the end of the con half the convention knew me as “the kid with the Marcus poll” (I wasn’t really objective, and didn’t see a problem with having my opinion heard...). Apparently, it got me elected to the Society board, and the rest is history.

My most touching fan moment was after I screened a short movie I’ve done as a film student during last year’s ICon. It was a fannish take on the usual growing up movie: a 16-year-old girl – fan, obviously – deciding she will not give up her fantasy world to become normal, obtaining some self assurance from the decision. Even though it was pure fiction, it was very personal at the core. I was very nervous about screening it in front of people who actually know me. And then, after the screening, this guy who used to be my volunteer when I was in charge of volunteers, a great guy, comes to say “Thank you” about it, and it’s absolutely clear he understood what was it about. I wanted to cry.

And my most victorious favorite fan moment was when Neil Gaiman was here, as the GoH of ICon 2006. I was part of the liaison team, and being a huge *Sandman* fan I was more than a little nervous around him. And took my job VERY seriously: my co-liaisons laughed at me forever about how seriously I took it, like my printing both a big, detailed schedule and four little pocket-schedules (for different pockets!) for him, and getting gluten-free snacks in advance (what if we can’t find any around the con area?) etc. But *then*, after being teased for three days straight – in Hebrew, mind you, our esteemed GoH couldn’t know what we’re talking about – Gaiman stopped in the middle of the street, and said he just realized yesterday night that he took for granted how “thoughtful and considerate and organized” I was (his words, not mine!) and that he ought to stop and say thank you, and he just remembered it now and it seemed like a good place to stop. I was speechless, which is very rare, and teased my fellows back for the remaining two days.

And there was my first

WorldCon, but I haven’t quite grokked that yet.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Plenty. Mainly co-chairing a con at 18: looking back, I was obviously not ready. Actually, I heartily regretted each and every time I chaired a con. I do other things so much better, and without letting the pressure get to me.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

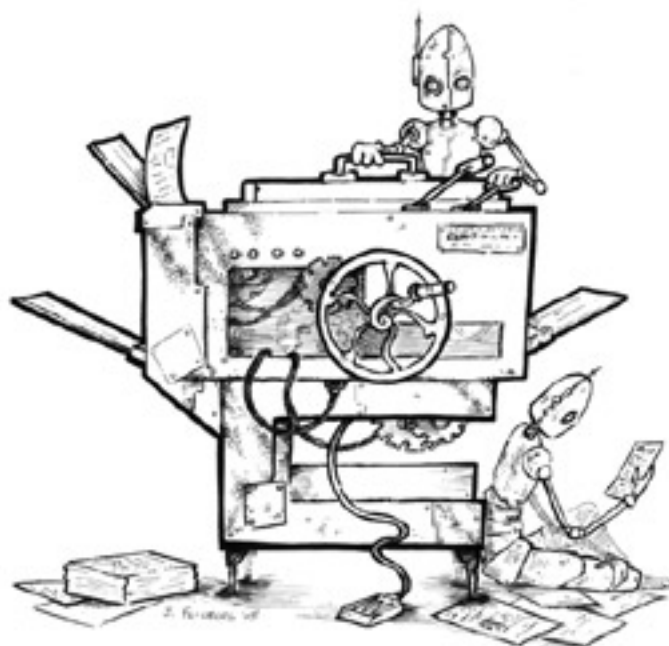
SF – oldies, lately. We just had Larry Niven here, and it got me re-reading a few of his classics. I tend to follow new fantasy more than SF; it also gets published here more often. Carol Berg and Naomi Novik are my favourites of late. And in both genres, Tim Powers. “Powers to the people”, as we say round here.

What convention are you looking forward to?

I really want to get to another WorldCon, though it will probably have to be a Europe one (UK?) to make it possible for me... And I heard lately that my good, dear friend Tamar will be involved in Eastercon 2009, meaning I have *got* to be there!

A question of your own?

I think I bored you quite enough. Best of



Though hundreds of women have participated in fan writing, only one woman has ever won the Best Fan Writer Hugo: Susan Wood Glicksohn (1974, 1977, 1981)



Robbie Bourget

What science fiction books did you start with?

I think it was *Star Surgeon* by Alan E Nourse that got me started, but I began with Robert Heinlein's juveniles and Isaac Asimov's Robots.

Just thought of something. My first SF books came about because we were living in a town with a second hand book shop and there was a whole section of someone's books which were SF. Can't remember if he moved or died, but those books were my source for SF since there were no book stores in the town for new books. So I started with mostly '30s, '40s and '50s books with only a few from the '60s, which is what I was in at the time. So I didn't see any "adult" Heinlein for example.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

I wrote a letter to the BBC about *Doctor Who* and they referred me to a group called the Doctor Who Appreciation Society in the UK who referred me to other *Doctor Who* fans in Ottawa and from there I became involved with Ottawa SF fandom.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

It was in Ottawa, a Maplecon. Very odd because I could only attend part days as my partner of the time was not a fan. It was in the mid '70s, but I cannot remember exactly.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Probably meeting Tom Baker, but maybe just the whole convention. I was working the photograph line for Tom Baker at Timecon and as it got closed off the person in charge pushed me forward, taking my camera off me. Mr Baker asked if it was my camera and I said, "Unfortunately yes," whereupon he tried to comfort me and the camera flash went off. It should be understood that I already had a really bad migraine so the flash did not help. So, staring at his chest as any attempt to look up at his face was likely to cause me to fall over in pain, I said: "I just want to tell you that you have a very sexy nose and I'm leaving now." Which I did. Apparently he laughed uproariously and still remembers the incident. I can obviously never meet him again ;>

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Not sure...

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Re-reading McCaffrey's dragon books, also the 'March to..' series by Weber and *Oath of Swords*, and, well it's never-ending really.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Well, Anticipation in Montreal in 2009, of course. First time co-chairing a Worldcon, although I did Vice Chair for LA Con III. Also Gallifrey next year. That's the *Doctor Who* convention I run in LA. I get to be Chair and Treasurer for that. Lucky me.

Sorry, no, I refuse to take part in this. from Max

As a matter of principle I do not take part in anything that is "female only" if I can possibly help it. I despise discrimination, positive or otherwise, and hate being excluded from things (mailing lists, stag parties, general get-togethers etc.) on the strength of what shape my genitals are and whether I can pee standing up. When people say "girl" or "woman" and generalise they usually wind up making statements that I don't feel are true of me. My gender is a tiny part of who I am, a totally unimportant part, and I am incredibly uncomfortable with things that highlight it as a difference between me and many of my friends. As such I think it is hypocritical for me to take part in anything that I am invited to be a part of based on such criteria, and I always turn them down – both within and outside of fandom. I am not *comfortable* in female-only environments; I don't seek them out but actively avoid them. I won't take part in something that deliberately constructs gender segregation whether the discrimination is accidental or deliberate, no matter how well meant.

You're welcome, if you're so inclined, to quote my reasons for declining to take part.

Several other people turned us down to write for this issue. Max was the only one who cited Gender as an issue. Well, at least to us.



Into the Heart of It: Some Thoughts on the Hugo and The Company They Keep by Diana Glyer

It all started when I read Humphrey Carpenter's book about Tolkien, Lewis, and the Inklings, and I got really, really mad. It's so well written, so *interesting*, and it's about two of my favorite authors. What's not to like? Just this: Carpenter keeps saying, over and over, that even though Tolkien and Lewis knew each other for 37 years, worked together at Oxford for 28 years, and were in a writing group together for 17 years, they didn't influence each other. Huh? How could this guy be right about so many things and so completely wrong about this? That didn't make any sense.

But when you are doing scholarship, a gut-level hunch just isn't good enough; common sense won't take you very far. What I needed to figure out was whether or not there was any evidence that these two authors made a difference – a real, substantial, measurable difference – in each other's lives. I decided to start reading through their letters, published and unpublished, looking for clues. What did they say about how they wrote their books?

What did they say about each other?

I was about two years into my research when a very good friend, a college mentor, took me aside and told me to give it up. "You are exactly right, you know," he said. "Of course they influenced each other. *Everybody* knows that. But they didn't take minutes at their meetings, no one took notes, they never wrote any of this stuff down. No matter how hard you try, you'll never find any real, hard evidence. Quit now, before you waste your time."

He rattled me. I was barely out of school; I hadn't published a thing. He was older, wiser, so well known.

I was tempted to give it up. Almost did. When someone tells you something like that, you have to take stock and figure out if you are serious.

He shook me up; but now, looking back, I consider that conversation a great gift. I thought about everything he said; then I took a deep breath and told myself that wherever the evidence took me, I really, really wanted to know the answer to my questions. Not taking a superficial look. Not buying into long-held assumptions. Not making educated guesses. Everyone knew that Tolkien and Lewis talked and joked and read rough drafts and critiqued them and argued and laughed and criticized and edited each other's work and collaborated and even wrote poems and stories about each other. For years. I wanted to find out what that process looked like. I wanted to know what difference it made. And I told myself that I would sift through the evidence as carefully as I could for as long as it took.

It took 24 years.

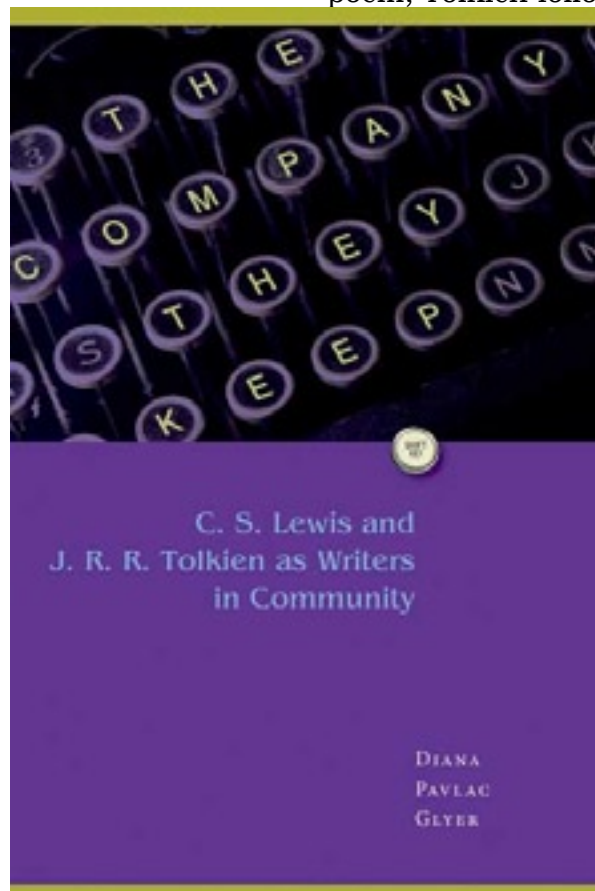
The records were scattered, but when I really dug into it, I found that there was more material than anyone guessed. Casual comments in diaries. Debates in their letters. Attributions in forewords. Credit in footnotes. Scribbled notes in the margins of their manuscripts. I collected and cross-checked: Tolkien drafted a poem, Lewis critiqued the poem, Tolkien followed Lewis's advice and

revised the poem. This was getting interesting.

Other evidence accumulated. Tolkien got stuck on a writing project; Lewis pressured him to continue. Lewis needed an idea for a novel; Tolkien supplied it. Tolkien added too much dialogue in a scene; Lewis told him to cut it. Lewis had trouble getting a manuscript accepted; Tolkien wrote a letter and the book was published.

It dawned on me that what was happening here was different from typical studies of literary influence. When we say that Tolkien was influenced by Norse mythology or Lewis was influenced by Platonic philosophy,

we mean that they are in some way imitating these things, or incorporating them into their own work. Lewis *read* Plato, and he learned a lot from what he read. But Lewis *knew* Tolkien,



walked with him, talked with him, read rough drafts of manuscripts to him, got ideas, got inspiration, got criticisms, got suggestions. It was influence, to be sure. But not the kind of influence we usually think of.

The turning point came when I started looking at other groups of writers and the way that they talked about their mutual influence. Clearly, it had nothing to do with imitating each other. It had nothing to do with becoming more alike or doing more of the same kind of thing. It had everything to do with learning to push and challenge and encourage and critique and listen and correct.

Here's the really interesting part. When writers work together like this, they don't become more alike. In fact, if they are doing it right, each of them will produce work that was more unique, creative, distinctive, and authentic. Having others around who knew how to support them and challenge them helped them to find out who they really were, to find their real voice. It's ironic, but true: having help from each other freed up Tolkien and Lewis to write more like themselves.

These men – the whole group of them, the Inklings: all 19 of them, not just Tolkien and Lewis – were really interesting characters, and I loved what I was learning about them. And as I wrote about them, the book grew. I discovered that it was becoming less and less about these authors in particular and more and more about how the creative process works. Things shifted as I came to appreciate the magic and mystery and the mess of it all. Like a lot of projects, the concept for this book just kept getting bigger. At the end of the day, it turned out that *The Company They Keep* is not so much a book about Tolkien, Lewis, and the Inklings as it is a case study in how to cultivate the imagination. Or, to put it another way, it doesn't tell writers, artists, musicians, and others how to be more creative and productive. It shows 'em. It shows exactly how one small circle of ordinary writers worked together and, in the process, went on to accomplish extraordinary things. And because it shows how, it gives hope that maybe others can learn how to do it, too.

I really like what Tom Shippey said about the book. He said *The Company They Keep* "is an indispensable account not just of friendship, but also of the paths of creativity." Exactly. Or as a friend of mine said, just the other day: "Here's the thing about this book: It talks about them. They inspire you."

As I wrote, my own project

became a living example of the kind of collaboration I was writing about. Mike Glycer read chapters and made suggestions. Josh Long tracked down obscure articles, letters, and reviews. Linda Spitzer edited the heck out of my prose.

David Bratman encouraged and scolded and corrected and ROARED his terrible roars, and GNASHED his terrible teeth and SHOWED his terrible claws and made the whole thing a whole lot better. Then he sat down and wrote the appendix and index to boot.

So I pressed on. A quote from Cory Doctorow inspired me. A prayer from Lynn Maudlin sustained me. A gift from Geri Sullivan revived me. A comment from Ed Green encouraged me. Even remembering the words of that Big Name Scholar provided the kind of challenge I needed to toughen up and commit to hanging in there for the long haul.

It's been quite a journey. I've spent half my life working on this thing – evenings, weekends, through the summertime – wondering if I'll ever finish, hoping it turns out okay, praying that someone somewhere someday will pick it up and see what I am trying to say. *The Company They Keep* was published in March of 2007. And right from the start, the response has been simply overwhelming. Wonderful letters from fans. The kindest notes from readers. It's been nominated for a number of awards, and in December it won the Imperishable Flame Award for Tolkien Studies.

And now it's up for a Hugo award. A Hugo! I've been a fan for more than 30 years, and I never, ever in my wildest dreams thought that something like this could happen.

It's a dream. Gotta be. Or maybe a great big fairy tale. Once upon a time in southern California, in a desert land drenched in sunshine and possibilities, a college professor wrote a book about a couple other college professors. A writer wrote a book about a couple other writers. A science fiction fan wrote a book about a couple other science fiction fans. All of it as ordinary as ordinary can be. But somewhere, somehow, magic started to seep into the heart of it. And before you know it, just like any time magic is on the move, Very Big Things started to happen, here, there, and everywhere, things bigger and more astonishing than anyone could possibly ask or think. Especially me.



The Inklings would meet for Tuesday lunch at the Eagle and Child pub, also known as The Bird & The Baby, in Oxford.

Janice Gelb

What science fiction books did you start with?

Classic: Asimov, Bradbury, Heinlein, etc. probably in third or fourth grade.

What brought you into the general world of fandom? What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

The answers to these two questions are the same, which makes knowing my fannish anniversary very easy! In 1977, a friend who knew that I was going back to my hometown of Miami Beach for a high school friend's wedding over Labor Day weekend spotted an ad at the back of *F&SF* for something called SunCon, the "science fiction worldcon". I joined and attended.

Needless to say, I was totally astounded by fandom in general and the Worldcon in particular. Especially since, in my childhood, one couldn't walk into the Fontainebleau Hotel lobby after 6 pm without being properly attired. (If you weren't, you had to use the pool deck entrance.) And there were all these people in obscene T-shirts or walking tribbles! I was very lucky in that I bumped into very friendly people who helped explain the fannish world to me. I managed to sneak into Worldcon fandom just in time to attend The Last Hugo Banquet, and see the Slave Boys of Gor. As you can imagine, attending a suburban Jewish wedding on Sunday after three days of my first SF convention (and a Worldcon to boot) was quite a surreal experience!

Also, I'd moved to Atlanta only a month or two before so I changed my badge to say "Atlanta, GA." Fandom in Atlanta was fairly small and insular back then, so when the few attendees from there saw my badge, they were curious as to why they didn't know me. They provided contact information and when I got back to Atlanta, I got in touch with them. The rest, as they say, is History.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Wow, tough one! Not sure I could pick just one absolute favorite but the Hugo Awards ceremony at Aussiecon 3 in Melbourne in 1999 stands out for a couple of reasons. I was the DUFF delegate and had been asked to present a Hugo award. I chose the category Fan Writer in the hopes that Dave Langford, who was in attendance thanks to a special fan fund, would win and I could present one to him in person, a rarity.

Sure enough, he won and when he came on stage he whirled me around before heading to the podium to make his acceptance speech. The combination of being in a position to be presenting a Hugo, and knowing the person to whom I was presenting it, was a fun moment. Having MC Michael Jordan express his thanks from the stage for my help on the ceremony and with the convention was another high point.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

There have been some Worldcons where I've been part of a last-minute tricky rescue mission but nothing really terrible. Or at least nothing I'm willing to share in a fanzine :->

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

I blush to admit that I read more mysteries these days, mostly historical, than SF. On the speculative fiction front, I'm catching up on my Pratchett, just finished Jo Walton's *Ha'Penny*, and am really enjoying new author Daniel Abraham's *Long Price Quartet*. On the mystery front, I'm reading contemporary series by Simon Brett, Anthea Fraser, Veronica Heley, Barry Maitland, Julia Spencer-Fleming, and Cristina Summers. I'm also reading historicals by David Dickinson, C M Harris, P B Ryan, and Victoria Thompson.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Hmmm, different question to "What convention are you attending next?" :-> Luckily, the answer is the same: ConQuest in Kansas City.

A question of your own?

One that I get asked fairly often but have no answer for: why do we help run conventions? It's frequently exhausting, periodically aggravating, and not only doesn't pay but costs us money. If we do it right, no one notices, but if we do it wrong, we get told in no uncertain terms. Shared insanity is the only answer I've been able to come up with...



Liz Batty

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

I started out reading Point Horror, piles and piles of YA horror brought out by Scholastic and sold through the school book clubs. They were mostly generic, formulaic stories about US high-schoolers, an alien environment of letter jackets and cheerleading and valedictorians, but they also put out some short fiction anthologies with names like Colin Greenland and Phillip Pullman involved. I read the odd bit of science fiction (1984, John Christopher's *Empty World*, a couple of Heinlein juveniles), but then I found an Anne McCaffrey novel my dad left lying around, and spent the next few years reading everything of hers I could get my hands on. I branched out into Discworld novels, but it wasn't until I was 15 or 16 I started picking up SF, and I've read mostly modern works. Having not started out with Clarke or Asimov or Bradbury as a lot of SF readers seem to have done means there are massive gaps in my knowledge, but really it was chance that I started out with fantasy and horror – I read every book in the house, and that was what my dad left lying around.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

The internet. More precisely, Usenet, which I found aged 14 after a mention in *SFX*. It was fans I met from uk.media.tv.angel (predominantly Niall Harrison and Andrew Hogg) who persuaded me to come to Picocon in 2003, and shortly after that I bought membership in the 2005 Worldcon. I was still on the fringe of things at this point, and didn't know many people outside of my small social circle until the 2004 and 2005 Eastercons, where I met a whole lot more of UK fandom.

What was your first convention like and where and when was it?

Picocon 2003 was my first convention, although I was only there for five or six hours. My first full weekend convention was Concourse, the 2004 Blackpool Eastercon, and I had a brilliant time. I had no way at that point of knowing that it was unusual not to have everyone in the same hotel, or that there were behind-the-scenes difficulties; I was too busy trying not to buy all the books in the world.

What's your favourite fan moment?

I have to pick one? Drinking and eating and playing with glowsticks at the anonymousclaire party at Worldcon. A meal out with friends at the 2007 Eastercon where with hindsight the jokes were not at all funny, but managed to make several members of the party cry with laughter all the way back to the hotel.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Hangovers.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Science fiction or literature? It can't be both at the same time?

I'm re-reading the *Baroque Cycle* for my online reading group and remembering exactly why I love Neal Stephenson, with his digressions and anachronisms and loose approach to history.

What convention are you looking forward to?

I want to go to the 2009 Worldcon in Montreal, which would be my first overseas Worldcon and my first visit to Canada.



Persephone Books by Flick

There's a wonderful little publishing company called Persephone Books. I found out about them a few years ago, when they reprinted a fabulous children's book called *The Children Who Lived In The Barn* by Eleanor Graham. It's about five children whose parents have to take a short-notice trip to Europe, leaving them at home to look after themselves. Then the plane crashes, the landlord turns up and evicts them, and they end up living in a nearby farmer's barn for six months, before the parents are rediscovered by a friendly journalist in a shepherd's hut in the Alps. It's terribly silly, but also a really good book.

I'd never heard of Persephone Books before I saw the review and bought that book; but they've been going for a while now, reprinting overlooked books, mostly by women and mostly originally printed in the twentieth century.

Some of the books are overlooked parts of well-known authors' back catalogue: they've reprinted *Flush*, Virginia Woolf's biography of Elizabeth Barratt Browning's spaniel, and a couple of Frances Hodgson Burnett's less well known books, like *The Making of a Marchioness* (about a girl who unexpectedly married far above herself) and *The Shuttle* (about one of the five hundred or so young American heiresses who married into the impoverished English aristocracy around the turn of the century).

Most of them, though, are by far less well-known authors, like Molly Hughes's autobiography, *A London Child of the 1870s* – which is only otherwise available in an abridged form as part of *A Victorian Childhood* – or *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* by Winifred Watson, which is about to get suddenly far less forgotten: it's just been made into a film, already showing in the US but not so far on release in the UK, and it's getting good reviews. I'm not sure if I want to go to see it, because I'm sure that it couldn't be nearly so charming on the big screen as in a book. The story is of a poor, mousy

governess who accidentally spends a day as the new best friend of a rich, beautiful nightclub singer and in the process finds herself an even richer husband; I have a nasty feeling that that will translate into something not dissimilar to *Pretty Woman*, although hopefully with a bit less sex.

As well as being wonderfully chosen reprints of Just The Sort Of Books I Like, the books are also fabulous objects. They're all small grey paperbacks, but the paper is lovely and the endpaper images are all reprints of period fabric designs. Like the name and the choice of books, the design emphasises the mixture of domesticity and creativity that was very much the lot of many women in the early twentieth century. One of the most common themes in the books is that of young women who stay at home, looking for a husband and, if they fail, become governesses. It can be a little depressing at times, but also fascinating to realise how the lives of middle class women could be if they failed to marry or inherit enough to provide a living.

All of the books also have either an introduction or end notes, often by an expert on the field or author and also often by the person who "discovered" the book and sent it to Persephone Books for consideration. I'm not a big fan of introductions, but I do actually read most of these. They're very well-written and interesting. There's also a bi-annual newsletter, with articles about the latest books, fiction and an updated booklist, and even regular cream teas, in the UK and now the US as well.

There are about eighty books in the range now, and there's something for everyone: I really recommend trying them out, either online (<http://www.persephonebooks.co.uk>) or at their shop in central London. Their books are also available through Amazon, in the UK and the US, so there's really no excuse!



"The Runaway" by Elizabeth Anna Hart is available from Persephone Books. It's a classic story that My Mom used to read to me as a little Chris.

Inger Myers

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

My Mom started reading me fantasy before I could read it myself. I remember her reading the Pridane series and all of the Narnia books out loud. The first science fiction book I read was *A Wrinkle in Time* followed closely by the rest of the series. I then got into Anne McCaffrey's *Dragondrums* series and Ursula K LeGuin's *Wizard of Earthsea* series..

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

My first convention was StarCon, a *Star Trek* convention held annually in Denver. My first exposure to literary fandom was in 1995 at ConQuest in Kansas City, MO. I was encouraged to attend by several friends who belonged to a local book club that discussed science fiction and fantasy novels once a month.

What was your first convention like and where and when was it?

My first literary convention was ConQuest in 1995 at the Park Place Hotel in Kansas City, MO. I don't remember many specifics about the convention but I remember having fun and that everyone was happy with the boxes of cookies I brought to help out with the volunteer feeding. I met a lot of new people and was pleased to find out about the Masquerade.

What's your favourite fan moment?

I remember meeting Octavia Butler during the Authors' and Artists' reception at ConQuest. The room was fairly quiet, so I took the opportunity to talk with her one on one. We discussed a book of hers I had recently read. She was very attentive and seemed genuinely interested in my questions and had several questions of her own about my perceptions of events in the book. It was a great evening for me. I've always held authors in very high regard and it was nice to meet one individually.

The second most memorable moment was at a World Con. I had been collecting author and artist signatures on a T-shirt for a charity benefit to help out a friend who needed a heart transplant. I was waiting in line to have Spider and Jeanne Robinson sign the T-shirt. The line was very long and I was afraid that their time would be up before I got there. One of the line

monitors asked what I had to be signed, since I obviously didn't have a book with me. He then went behind the table and talked with the Robinsons. He came back and told me that if I didn't make it to the front of the line to meet him at the table. Spider and Jeanne had told him to make sure that I got their signatures on the T-shirt. I really appreciated them making the extra effort. I did make it to the front of the line by about four people.

Third on my list of favorite fan moments is all of the wonderful international characters - people I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know. I have broadened my horizons through these people and look forward to seeing them when I can.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

The worst experience I ever had at a convention was seeing a fan with too much body hair in too little clothing. I've tried hard to erase the image.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

I am currently reading *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett, about the building of a cathedral in medieval England. Next on the list is *Boundary* by Eric Flint.

What convention are you looking forward to?

My next convention is Demicon in Des Moines, IA where my husband Joe and I are Fan GOHs. This will be our first time as Fan GOHs and I'm sure it will be fun. They have some fun things for us to do.

A question of your own?

What has been your greatest challenge in dealing with conventions?

Delegate, delegate, delegate. I tend to try to do way too much on my own and run myself into the ground by the end of a con. I know I need to trust other people to carry out my ideas and plans, but I have a hard time writing things down in a way that completely conveys everything I want them to know that is running around in my head. Fortunately there have been people around who have helped me out whether I thought I needed it or not and have done a splendid job. Here's to friends and volunteers who are competent, willing to try and good at ignoring a very stubborn imp.



Fiona Scarlett

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

Pure SF – probably some Asimov. But I think the first time I actually called it SF was the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, or it might have been the official *Return of the Jedi* sequels (both of which arguably are also fantasy). The first definite fantasy I read was the Narnia books. I was about 8 I think.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

Talking with a colleague at work in 1996 we discovered a mutual love of Blake's 7, and she said, "There's this mailing list called Lysator that you should join." So I did. Which led me to joining Redemption 99, as most of the members of the list were either going or in some cases actually running it! But I'd been a fan for a lot longer than that; I just didn't know it.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

Redemption 99 was my first con. So I'd really not been a con-goer long before I got into con-running – about minus three months if running a programme item counts as con-running. I ran the Chaos Costume workshop at Red 99 and got sucked further in from that point on! Redemption 99 was at the Ashford International Hotel in February 1999, oddly enough.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Oooh. Lots to choose from. Mainly meeting the amazing friends I've encountered through fandom I think. I've got loads of actual favourite moments but some of the highlights are from the Redemption cabarets in the early days. The Reduced Blake's 7 company is the one that sticks out the most. It was a long sketch written and performed by a group of fans, including Iain Coleman and Una McCormack, where they put the *Blake's 7* characters into the *Big Brother* set-up, only when one of them gets voted out they actually got killed just like in the show. This was some years before new *Doctor Who*, remember! It was hilariously funny and full of in-jokes and

While Iain M. Banks and Iain Banks claim to be the same person, Ian Banks is a character from the TV series "One Tree Hill" who happens to be a stalker.

topical humour.

Another highlight was being on the first programme on the BBC digital channel (I forget the channel's name: Choice, maybe? But it became BBC3, I think), which was a programme about *Blake's 7* fans and showed a couple of the episodes. We got to run around Herstmonceux observatory with Patrick Moore and a BBC film crew for a day. It was great fun and I got to embarrass myself talking about Steven Pacey's bum to camera.

I probably should also mention singing the Steve Kilbane filks here. Steve writes fantastic lyrics and they've gone down very well at the Redemption cabarets and other places where we've performed them. Feels a bit weird to be trumpeting something I've done myself as a favourite fan moment, but since all the credit should go to Steve K because he writes them, then I think it's OK. I just try not to murder them on stage too much and mostly that's worked out OK.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Yes – having taken my VCR up to Una McCormack's house to make copies of the only tape of the programme mentioned above, the bloody thing managed to mangle the tape. Needless to say I was mortified. Luckily, Una is a very forgiving person and is still talking to me.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Mostly I read fantasy for relaxation . And almost all of that is of the "Vampire Bodice Ripper" variety. So that's supernatural romance stories to the uninitiated. But I'm also about to embark on a catch-up of Terry Pratchett that this time I will see through to the end. (I will, I will, I will!)

I'm a bit crap at literary SF, if truth be told. I'm a literary fan in principle but more of a media fan in practice. I just don't get the autograph thing at all, and GoH talks at media cons bore me senseless – I'd much rather see the guest do a panel, which you only tend to get at lit or hybrid cons (like Redemption), so that explains why I like Eastercons despite being more of a media fan. That said, I've read and enjoyed a little bit of quite a few people

(e.g. to name a few – Lois McMaster Bujold, Philip K Dick, Iain M Banks), and read and enjoyed loads/all of some other people's work (e.g. Gaiman, Pratchett, Adams) but since I tend to



read to switch off, I mostly go for things I can lose myself in a bit and that don't require too much actual thinking. So that's where the Laurell K Hamiltons etc. come in. I've also read all of the Harry Potter books and enjoyed them, and I am utterly unapologetic about it. I know that among fans that's a fairly safe thing to say, but out in the Real World™ it's dicey to say the least.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Well, I would plug Orbital here but Orbital is over. So firstly I'm looking forward to Conrunner in June (www.conrunner.org.uk), then Redemption 09 (at the Britannia Coventry in Feb 2009 – www.conventions.org.uk/redemption), then LX (Eastercon 2009 at the Cedar Court, Bradford – www.lx2009.com) and then Odyssey 2010 (Eastercon 2010 at the Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow – www.odyssey2010.org).

And I may also do a few others this year if I get my backside in gear and book up. I didn't manage it in time for Discworld and so it looks like I'll be doing something else that weekend!

A question of your own?

This weekend a friend, in fact the same friend who introduced me to fandom all those years ago, asked me why I did conrunning when it's so bloody stressful. I didn't really have an answer for her at the time. But having given it some thought I think that I do it because whilst it is stressful, it's also really enjoyable in the main. And also, on a darker note, to feed my inner megalomaniac because it's a bit of a power trip. Most people wouldn't admit to that, I don't think. But I like being in charge and will quite happily abuse my position of power when it suits me. It's probably why I like being Hotel Liaison, because you get to be "in" with the hotel as well as "in" with the conrunning crowd. I like being "in". You get to know things that everyone else doesn't and since I'm a naturally very curious person, this suits me well. I do think I have a tendency to take on too much though. So for Odyssey I plan to have a deputy, some minions, and possibly even a toady. Applications for these positions should be sent to BeMyBitch@scarlett.co.uk



Elayne Pelz

What SF Books did I start with?
Ray Bradbury.

First convention?
Westercon 1969.

Favorite fan moment?
Sitting around chatting with friends.

Forgettable experience?
Chicon 3 masquerade.

What lit am I currently reading?
Historical mysteries.

What con am I looking forward to?
Anticipation – Montreal Worldcon 2009.



The site for Odyssey 2010 is also the site of the 2008 Eastercon which is where Journey Planet originally happened.



Anticipation will be the first WorldCon in the Francophone world. How do you say "Look, a Klingon!" in French?

The Gender Issue

by James Bacon

Maura McHugh is one of those friends that are few and far between. I feel lucky that I have this type of friends – true friends: she'd tell me when I was being an ejit and give me a real-life hug if I felt down and one day, when I go mad of urban life, I know a place I can escape to for a couple of days.

I met Maura in 1990, if I remember correctly. She was at an Irish Science Fiction Association coffee morning with Clive Barker, and I think it was then since he mentioned *Nightbreed*. I got to know her properly when I joined her and many others on the Octocon '93 con committee. Maura was a real presence in Irish fandom: a clear communicator, knowledgeable, incisively intelligent and, of course (but dare I say?) a beautiful tall blonde. We were on committees together for four years; I co-chaired with her for one year. They were good years: I was eighteen, Maura a little older and in college in Trinity doing a masters. We would meet often: Octocon had weekly meetings anyhow since it was pre-internet, and we would also chat and talk about stuff over very cheap dinners in the most wonderfully frugal of places. So, friendship through con running. Now, eighteen years later, she is a budding writer and I am a train driver. Who would have reckoned?

I got chatting to her about an upset I caused in regard to The Clarke Award. My feeling is that it's an award about professionals and the like, and not really for or involving fans in general; in fairness, as I admitted, many fans are involved but many of them have alter egos. It sparked a great conversation that got into gender, and I have written this piece with that chat in mind.

Maura went off and kindly wrote something for us following our discussions. I found some solace in hard factual statistics – something I really like in fandom, where so many people make assertions that sound like fact but are based on opinion. But feel free to challenge these findings; they are just statistics.

Awards are for the best book. Well, that's how I feel about it, but at Eastercon discussion was heated about the lack of Ian McDonald and his book *Brasyl* on the Clarke shortlist. It was put forward that, well, *Brasyl* would win a number of fan-voted awards anyhow, and maybe this had an impact on the jury. An eminent

person who is involved with the judge selection process did also suggest that this was perhaps a consideration of the judges; personally I reckoned that it should be the best book that wins.

The relative absence of women from the list was not a focus for me personally; I was more interested in good books being nominated. It's probably that I somehow think that fantasy is girls' fiction and SF is boys' fiction. I do think a lot like that, and I am sorry to be horrific; that's my boy brain working. Don't get me wrong; some fantasy does appeal to me. Robin Hobb for instance – and sure I know, it's not cool that Megan Lindholm has to use a gender-obscure name to keep marketing happy, but I do like her work regardless and she is a super con participant (one day I will run Hobb Con). Tanith Lee also nicely crosses the genres at times. And there is no shortage of fantasy in one form or another that I enjoy, but somehow I am base and do see there being more female fans of fantasy than of SF. This is, of course, narrow-minded and marginalises female fans; although then I also wonder at whom some fantasy books are being actively targeted.

I don't know for certain, but I think Karen Traviss wasn't even read for the Clarke award. I asked a few people and they initially presumed she hadn't been published in the UK; but she was published by Arrow and Orbit, and she is really popular. She had an incredible year in 2007; she had two books published, stateside and in the UK: *Legacy of the Force* (book 5), *Sacrifice*, and *Republic Commando* (book 3), *True Colours*. *Sacrifice* got to eighth place on the *NY Times* best selling hardback list; *True Colours* got to fifteenth place in the mass market paperback best sellers. Her 2006 novel, *Bloodlines*, went back into print with the release of *Sacrifice* and that also went onto the best seller list for mass market paperback, in at twelfth place – obviously on a bounce from *Sacrifice*, released the same month.

Of course, Traviss is brilliant. Her writing is very good; she is a woman who seems to have a real understanding of military matters and also is different in certain ways. Now, since *Revelation* (another *Legacy of the Force* book) jumped into first place on the *New York Times* best seller list, people are taking

notice – but still not a mention of her for any award that I can see. I wonder is SF just not science fiction, and also if people understand that with *Republic*



Commando, at least, is a book that stands alone well. Maybe it's all just not worthy enough in the eyes of fans and judges; a real shame, if so.

Race occasionally seems to come up in regard to representation in SF; I know very few Black fans and even fewer Black authors, but then does it matter when I am reading a good book? Well, I have felt there is a different quality to SF written by Black authors. There was a Black author on the BSFA long list, ignored by the Clarkes – or should I say the novel was not eligible since it wasn't submitted or sought out by the jury. Also the Nebulas had a Black lady on their shortlist. But as it happens I don't usually know if a person is Black.

The Hugos were a bit of a shame this year: not a woman in the Best Novel nominees and although two out of the five shortlisted for Best Novella were women there were also no women up for Best Novelette. Yet both editing Hugos had two out of five nominees who are women. Out of nine professional categories there were 11 women and 35 men nominated; I am also including the women involved with *NYRSF* and *Locus*, although I can name David Hartwell and Charles Brown and cannot yet name the women involved off the top of my head. Can you, dear reader? The fan sections were not any better: 12 men to 3 women and again one of those is part of a team.

The Nebulas seem a little better; there were five women and eight men on the short list. For me that seems about right, although 50/50 is what one would really like. Interesting that the Nebula, much put down, seems to get it better. (No *Brasyl*, but the winner was a good choice.) Of course I noted that out of the seven scripts nominated, there was not a woman there.

The BSFA – which had no women shortlisted out of a total of 15 on the (modern day) shortlists – was not so good, but the split on the long lists was 34 men to 10 women for novel and 55 men to 17 women for the short fiction. Not sure about the artwork part since I see 30 works on the long list and I don't think any are by women.

But surely there are fewer women readers, fewer women fans, and fewer women writers in SF? Am I wrong in that blunt assumption, taken from years of attending conventions? Women are always in short supply at conventions and I am pretty sure that if I go into Waterstone's and physically check the books on the shelves there will be fewer titles by

women than men. Who is to blame for this? Of course, that's a whole different argument, as I have an opinion about the industry.

I looked at the fantastic Broad Universe site that attempts to provide statistics regarding gender: <http://www.broaduniverse.org> It's a great website, but the one figure I failed to find was the breakdown of base readership. I have lifted some figures from there.

From *Locus* (December 2007), US publishers for October 2007 through September 2008: Approximately 1/3 are reprint or reissue editions

- 695 female authors/editors (39.7%)
- 1,019 male authors/editors (58.3%)
- 35 unknown (anonymous, gender concealed by author) (2%)

Total: 1,749

From *Locus* (September – December 2007), Books received from US Publishers in July – October 2007:

- 407.16 female authors/editors (41.7%)
- 560.83 male authors/editors (57.5%)
- 8 anonymous or undetermined (0.8%)

Total: 975.99

Broad Universe also had an interesting statistic about the SF magazine *Strange Horizons* (www.strangehorizons.com); fiction edited by Jed Hartman, Susan Marie Groppi, and Chris Heinemann (2000–2003) or by Susan Marie Groppi, Jed Hartman, and Karen Meisner (2003 onwards).

Original stories published (not counting reprints):

- 2000 [partial year]: 5 by women (29%), 12 by men (71%)
- 2001: 22 by women (46%), 26 by men (54%)
- 2002: 19 by women (42%), 26 by men (58%)
- 2003: 25 by women (52%), 23 by men (48%)
- 2004: 23 by women (52%), 21 by men (48%)
- 2005: 26 by women (59%), 18 by men (41%)
- 2006: 30 by women (67%), 15 by men (33%)

All original stories published (September 2000 – December 2006):

- 147 by women (52%)
- 138 by men (48%)



According to a 1996 survey, less than 30 percent of all text books were written by women.

Breakdown by genre for 2001:

- Fantasy: 16 by women (53%), 14 by men (47%)
- Science fiction: 7 by women (33%), 14 by men (67%)

If the readership of an author by gender is 50/50 but more men turn up at a convention, is that an indicator that conventions and therefore quite a large chunk of fandom is just not interesting to women? Robert Rankin has 50,000 readers a year; we have about 350 members in the fan club and 150 people will turn up at events (the law of diminishing returns, I suppose). Usually we do have about 50% women in attendance at signings etc. I wonder if collectively fandom goes wrong somewhere, if we shun women. I would love to know what the demographics are of purchasers. I see women, like my wife, who generally do not go to conventions; but by golly she buys the stuff.

I have some hard SF evidence that I only now thought of checking: the James White Award. Now in its eighth year, I have administered an award nearly every year. The award is judged by a panel. No judges knew the sex of the entrants. The final judges would know the names of the finalists, but not who wrote which story. Of the judges that we could choose (we had no option on two each year) that leaves 18 judging positions. We selected four female judges over the six awards: 22%. Let's look at four awards in detail at random (I picked the years from a hat).

Award A:

- 27% of entries were by women. 9% are indeterminate (initials etc.), leaving 64% being men for sure.
- Shortlisted women made up 40% (i.e. two of five).
- A man won.

Award B:

- 24% of entries were by women. Less than 1% was indeterminate (I was getting better), leaving 75% of entries by men for sure.
- No women were shortlisted.
- So a man won.

Award C:

- 23% of entries were by women; 2% indeterminate; 75% of entries definitely by men.
- Shortlisted women made up 40% (two of five again) .
- A man won.

Award D:

- 12% entries by women; 1% indeterminate; 87% entries by men.
- Shortlisted women made up 20% (one of five)
- A woman won.

So the figures continue. It breaks down as follows over six awards:

- 17% of entries were by women.
- 3% of entries were unknown by author gender.
- 80% of entries were by men.
- 23% of shortlisted stories were by women
- 77% of those shortlisted stories were by men.
- 50% of winners were women.
- 50% of winners were men.

But that's a science fiction short story comp, so maybe it should be looked at with other things in mind. I wonder how a fantasy one would be, or crime.

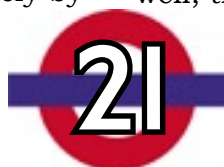
I have run three fun conventions so far in the British Isles:

- Aliens Stole My Handbag (2000) had 34% women in attendance.
- For Damn Fine Con (2002) I don't have the final figure, but towards the end membership was 40% women.
- They Came and Shaved Us (2003), which had 171 members, had 41% female attendance.

So average female attendance was 38% which is a bit disappointing really, as I always thought we were running much closer to 50% at our conventions and made much of this. As I said, Rankin events *do* get about 50/50, at least based on some dodgy head counts. Last year's Novacon was 80 women out of 227 members, up to doors opening, so that's about 35%. This is around the figure that seems to continually pop up.

This all compares to the two most recent Jasper Fforde talks I was at. At Waterstone's in Piccadilly there were about five men out of the full room of about 80 people. Similar at Foyles, there were about ten men out of the 100 filled seats or thereabouts. Now, there's something different going on there. But these are all interesting figures, that I can point to and say, well, there they are for you to think about.

I think change can occur, but for someone like me it requires focus; one needs to be aware, and because I am not someone who has a perception



of having to fight for my identity within SF, I somehow forget that maybe others do. I may be able to address it gently in the participation end of programming at LX, although I need to expand my knowledge of who is good at doing what. I think Liz Batty is strong on this though, as are other members of the programme team.

In the SF world I am a white man; I am on the majority side really, so I hardly notice. But at work I am Irish; this is very important to me, and I get quite annoyed when someone in work refers to me as white, as that has a connotation here that I am not happy with. I am Irish.

After writing the first draft of this article a number of things came to light. First, Mike 'Big Tent' Glyer, editor of *File 770* – and who would have expected a newszine to last so long – has a blog which I didn't then know about; Mark Plummer pointed out that he was discussing the lack of furor about there being only four females on the fiction Hugo shortlists, while last year there was an issue when there was only one. It makes interesting reading. I am interested that across the world, a pair of Irish persons are actually discussing this and, worse, publishing it in fanzines. There you go Mike – synchronicity or what?

From that I found a blog item by Nancy Kress, who kindly gave us permission to reprint her item, which has some very interesting stats.

Nancy Kress Blog (nancykress.blogspot.com)
– Sunday, April 13, 2008 – Gender and Awards

I understand (second-hand, since I don't surf much) that there is some concern out there in InterNet Land that the Hugo ballot features only four women nominees this year (last year there was only one). As it happens, gender distribution of SF writers is something I keep track of. Here are the figures from the 2007 SFWA Directory:

Male names: 58%

Female Names: 35%

Other: 7% (These people are unknown to me personally and are using initials, have unisex names like "Pat" or "Terry," or have non-English names which I don't know the usual gender for).

The Ambiguous, a band from Northern California, are Pat on Drums, Chris on Bass, Terry on Guitar and Jan on Vox.

Now, the awards record. From 1977-2007, there were:

Female Hugo winners: 35

Male Hugo winners: 93

Female Nebula winners: 57

Male Nebula winners: 70

So women are under-represented for Hugos and over-represented for Nebulas. Why? I have absolutely no idea. Do any of you?

An excellent question. Will I get slammed if I say that the SFWA members, who are pros, may also be a better judge of good work? Well, this year's winner was a good choice...

And finally, Mark also pointed out David Cook on LiveJournal, who did a poll asking people what they thought the gender breakdown was for attendees at Orbital, the 2008 Eastercon. 55% of those polled got the right answer.

David Cook LiveJournal (http://davidcook.livejournal.com/) – Friday, 28 March, 2008 – Poll Follow-up

From the list of 1186 members I looked at, I identified 691 as male, 406 as female, and had 89 unknowns (badge names, you know), which makes the ratio 63% male / 37% female. So it looks like among fans, most people's perceptions are pretty close to reality, in this highly unscientific survey :-)

And that is a fine point to end on. It's not highly scientific, it's just stats and thoughts and general observations.



Gender and SF

by Maura McHugh

I have more faith in awards that are selected by juries than ones that are selected by popular vote alone. Normally, juries are sent all the work published in a particular field for the year, and make the effort to read everything. At least there is a sense that the jury has sampled a wide selection of work.

The Hugos provide a good example of how popular awards usually play out: few people nominate or vote, and the awards tend to skew towards authors who are popular, recognisable, and/or have an active fanbase. This is not to say that those nominated for the Hugos are not worthy; but the shortlists are not always representative of the entire field. At least the John W Campbell Award attempts to highlight and promote new talent.

I think the BSFA awards suffer from this also: a small pool of people vote, and therefore the established/well-marketed authors tend to proliferate.

An award is an indicator of taste in some fashion, so it's not always going to reflect everyone's tastes. I agree that Ian McDonald's absence from the 2008 Arthur C Clarke Award shortlist was mysterious; yet these omissions happen, and Ian has been nominated for so many other awards already it's unlikely he's going to be upset by not getting a nod for the Clarke.

But let's examine the absence of women or people of colour in these awards. At least in jury awards you tend to get a better representation on the shortlist, but in the popular votes women and minorities are almost invisible. People have been tracking this for some time and I find it personally very frustrating.

I wish I could say that this is a simple issue, and easy to solve, but it's not. A lot of it comes from deeply encultured notions about gender and race. These are issues that prompt knee-jerk reactions, because no one wants to admit to being biased. It would be easier if people examined their prejudices and questioned them, rather than refusing to enter a dialogue about them or pretending they don't exist.

If you examine how often women are being published across the various speculative fiction magazines, you'll probably arrive at an average figure around 30-35%. It varies from publication to publication, but it's rare these days that you'll spot an all-male issue of a magazine



(although it happens). Based on numbers from editors who track their submissions, that figure correlates with the percentage of submissions from women writers. In general the percentage of women published matches the rate at which they submit. I can't offer the figures for writers of different ethnicities because this is not easy to monitor.

In a fair world we should see a matching 30-35% representation of women on the shortlists for awards, but this doesn't happen, especially in the popular awards. Once again, the juried awards usually offer up a better representation of the field.

For instance, in this year's Hugo shortlist there were five men listed in the Best Novel category, and no women. Out of fifteen places across the three short fiction categories there were four women shortlisted. This is not representation. No one ever points out that women are almost never on the shortlist for Best Professional Artist. Are there women working in that field? I know there are.

And check out the 2008 Locus Awards shortlist. This is the shortlist voted upon by the public after Locus offers an extensive longlist of suggested candidates.

There were no women in the Best SF Novel category, but there was a single female candidate in the Best Fantasy Novel category. In the short fiction lists there were two stories by women, out of a field of 15. The only two categories that approach being representative is Best First Novel and Best Young Adult Novel,

where there are two women nominated out of a shortlist of five. Again, there are no women on the Best Artist shortlist.

Let's see some proper representation of women and minorities

in these awards and then we can talk about the fairness of who is being nominated and who is being left out. At the moment the awards tend to reflect only one band in the spectrum of our field, and that's a downright shame.

This is all the more baffling, in relation to the representation of women in awards, when you consider that most research points to the fact that women read more than men. A 2007 AP-Ipsos poll in the USA found that: "More women than men read every major category of books except for history and biography."

And: "Among those who said they had read books, the median figure – with half reading more, half fewer – was nine books for women and five for men."

So in general terms women read more often, and read more books than men, and yet they submit written work for publication far less than men. On top of this, when women's writings are published they are less likely to be nominated for an award than a work of similar quality written by a man.

It seems we are encountering an issue first with confidence – women do not submit as much work as men – and then with visibility. Even when women publish, their work doesn't attract the same level of attention as writings by their male counterparts.

The Feminist SF wiki (<http://wiki.feministsf.net>) is trying to raise the profile of women authors. After the debacle with the Hugos in 2007 (only one woman was nominated out of a shortlist of twenty across four fiction categories) they encouraged women to list any work that was eligible for an award. The subsequent list was an astonishing array of talent, and would immediately silence any negative suggestions about the range of women's fiction available for nomination. The list for next year is already under way.

Most of us live in a diverse multicultural world. It's time for women and people from a variety of



ethnic backgrounds to step forward and write stories that reflect this diversity. Then they must submit their work to publications, and be prepared for the long grind that occurs during that particular process. In my experience there are editors who are eager and receptive for good quality original work. It's about time women and people of colour depicted their worlds – and I believe the speculative fiction market is the perfect home for those worlds.

There have already been great strides forward made in this regard, but we need more new voices

and different perspective in the field; we will all benefit from it. Plus, excellent writing by women and people of colour deserves recognition. It's something to consider during nomination season.

For anyone who wants to read about these issues in more depth, check out these online articles/blog pieces:

Analysis of Women's Publication Rates in Asimov's, Analog, and F&SF for the Years 1987 to 2001

http://brassman.xtra-rant.com/women_write/index.htm

Are we talking about gender and magazines AGAIN?

<http://blogs.feministsf.net/?p=332>

Broad Universe Statistics

<http://www.broaduniverse.org/stats.html#mags>

SF and Fantasy in the New Millennium: Women Publishing Short Fiction

<http://www.strangehorizons.com/2007/20070820/0women-publish-a.shtml>

There is lots of information on this generally at the Feminist SF wiki

<http://wiki.feministsf.net>

There's never been a solo Female Best Professional Artist Hugo winner. Diane Dillon shared the award in 1971.

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Prior to Elizabeth Bear's win in 2008, no woman had won the Best Short Story Hugo since Connie Willis in 1997.

Kari

What books did you start with?

My mother read me *Alice in Wonderland* when I was 3, I found Narnia at 5 and *The Hobbit/LoTR* at 8 – by then I was also reading lots of myths and legends at her encouragement. I had a copy of *Susie Saucer and Ronnie Rocket* in early childhood, too. My first “real” SF novel was Heinlein’s *Starman Jones*, which I loved then and still love now. Heinlein led me on to Norton, Asimov, Clarke, Delany, McCaffrey... So fantasy has always been part of my reading landscape.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

Star Trek, believe it or not. Through Trek fandom, I met Andromeda Bookshop, its wonderful catalogue and con-listing. Again via Trek I hung out a little with the Leicester SF group in my later teens, then joined CUSFS (Cambridge University SF Society) on my third day at university.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

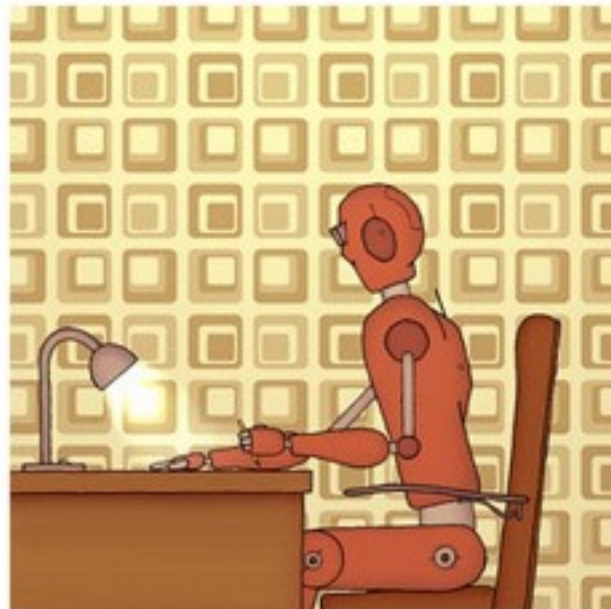
I went to my first con at 13 (it was a one-day Trek event in Slough), and my first non-media con at 17 (FantasyCon 5, in Coventry). I missed Seacon 79 due to parental reluctance to allow their barely 17-year-old daughter to spend five days in Brighton with a lot of strange men. I don’t remember a lot about the Trek con, other than it had lots of books and fanzines, and I was looked out for by a much older fan who I knew through the fan clubs. I went to FantasyCon with my boyfriend, and we met no one but enjoyed the programme. The next one was Fencon in 83 (one day con in Cambridge) at which I suspect I worked most of the time. Then Mexicon 2 – expensive food, strange men hitting on me, Keith Roberts!

What’s your favourite fan moment?

I’m not sure I have one, although I have fond generic memories of the wonderful central lounge in the Adepti, and, going back to Trek days, the weird lifts in the Dragonara hotel in Leeds.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Yes. Details would be inappropriate.



What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Kate Elliott’s new *Crossroads* sequence. Other than that, I’m reading a magic-tinged thriller by Phil Rickman, which highly creepy. There’s nothing in particular that I’m waiting for, apart from the usual set – new books by Steven Brust, Tanith Lee, Delany, Liz Williams and Justina Robson.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Montreal in 2009.

A question of your own?

Antiquarianism and history are siblings but not twins: discuss.

James’s answer: History is reading the books written by the winners; antiquarianism is looking at the broken swords of the losers. The past in different ways, but each their own.

Chris’s Answer- Antiquarianism is what us Curator types, along with Antiquarians and the lowest rung, Antique dealers, deal with while History is left to Professors and Historians, which therefor means it’s boring! There also is no real money in History, aside from about five books a decade which cross-over, while Antiquities are always going up in value!



“History is written by winners, and largely ignored. Historical fiction is written by losers and makes bank!” Chris Garcia

Persis L Thorndike

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

My fourth grade teacher read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to us during class; she didn't read it fast enough, so I went to the library and took it out. Then I was given *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* for my birthday when I was 10. I read a lot of Asimov, Bradbury and some Silverberg slightly later, as well as the C S Lewis Space Trilogy. I just loved the Bradbury stories and would read them over and over, and read as much Asimov as I could get my hands on. When I was 11 or 12, I started reading voraciously on a daily basis, and devoured everything my public library had to offer, fiction, biographies, SF. *The Hobbit* I think I read when I was about 10 or 11, and *Lord of the Rings* I read for the first time for an English project in eighth grade, and proceeded to read them annually till after college. But it wasn't until I was out of college that I discovered that people were still writing science fiction! I eventually discovered Anne McCaffery, and read as many of her stories as I could find. Now, of course, my To-Be-Read list is never-ending, and my pile of books has expanded to several shelves, double-rowed, of the bookcase next to my bed. I can always be found with at least one book going at a time.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

My now husband, Spencer Love, dragged me into fandom in 1994. My first ever convention was Westercon in 1994, and my second was WorldCon in Winnipeg; ConAdian, where Anne McCaffrey was the GoH. I was in heaven. Although with no con experience, and only knowing the musicians, I spent most of my time in the filk room, listening to wonderful music and getting to know some of the people I had met in June/ July better. I do remember wandering into a room where some group was collating some zine or other, but since I had had a pretty mundane life up till then, it took me some time to figure out that this community was where I belonged. Now I am well-ensconced in and very much dedicated to my extended family.

I didn't figure out that there was so

The 1994 Westercon was held in Los Angeles and the Guests of Honor included Mr. William Rotsler as the Fan GoH.

much going on at cons until much later, when I got to know some of the Boston area locals, and started working on Arisia for the January 1995 con. Once they figured out that I had marketing skills, I was tapped for program book ad sales. I haven't missed an Arisia since, although some of the early years are a blur as my daughter was born 20 days before Arisia 1996, and had her name in the program book as my assistant.

However, coming from a mundane background, I was pretty appalled at the level, or lack thereof, of communication skills among the con comm members, and swore up and down that I would never ever ever work on a con again. This lasted until 2001, when I agreed to write some letters, to Hugo presenters for MilPhil, the Millennium Philcon in Philadelphia. I ended up working events the entire weekend, and lost ten pounds (from all the running around from the fifth floor of the Marriott to the deepest depths of the bowels of the convention center where Camp Franklin was held).

But it wasn't until I was out of college that I discovered that people were still writing science fiction!

So I was caught again. I was cornered at a party in early summer 2003 by some friends who wanted me to take over Fast Track (aka Kids' Programming) at Arisia, and it's been all downhill from there. Thanks to James, I am known for running a kick-ass kids' program on the worldcon level, and have been asked to run or contribute to cons outside the local Boson area. Shortly after Noreascon 4, I started running the Boskone kids track, known as Dragon's Lair. I've branched out, too; there's a G&T conference in the Boston area, Beyond IQ, that I've designed and run kid programming for for the past 4 years.

On the communications front, I realize now that the Arisia con comm has pretty good communication skills, all things considered.

Now I run children's programming for my local Boston cons and a G&T conference, and offer help and mentoring for other smaller cons. I'm about to time out of the younger programming, as my daughter is now 12.

Eventually I will probably have a hand in running the Arisia Teen Track, but I'd like to take a year or two off and be Tech Mom and play (but I'm not sure about that yet).

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

My first convention was Westercon 47, Conozoic, over the first weekend of July in 1994. My not-yet-husband, Spencer Love, and I were driving cross-country and back, recording 21 songs in 18 days for the Pegasus Winners Collection 1 album (to celebrate 10 years of OVFF, Ohio Valley Filk Festival). Such filk notables as Kathy Mar, Leslie Fish, John & Mary Creasey, Steve & Coleen Savitsky, Lynn Gold, were all at Westercon, and it was an opportunity to record several of the songs planned for the album. Never having been exposed to SF conventions, and not being widely read in the newer writers, I was a bit clueless, and since Spencer was far more interested in the filking than anything else, I had a slightly skewed view of cons for several years. In fact, at this particular one, I left for Saturday night to go to a contra dance in Pasadena. I think I saw a small bit of the art show, did go to the dealers' room, but panels were something of an enigma at that point. I'm not even sure I knew they existed. But I had a great time hanging out listening to music and talking to people, and staying up way too late.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Only one? Realizing that people do remember who I am. For me, not because I am married to my husband who is a BNF (Big Name Filker).

Spending time with the Hugo nominees at MilPhil and talking to the administrator of the Seiun Award (Takeo Yonazaki?) and his daughter. Being told I should sing more by people I respect in the filk/folk world who think my voice should be heard.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

An unfortunately-timed masquerade costume that my 10-year-old daughter made that, since I was over-committed to running two areas of Arisia in 2006, I was not able to pay enough attention to her ideas and help her make better decisions. One good thing to come of this was the start of my friendship with Marty Gear.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Let's see: More of Eric Flint's 1632 series, *Howl's Moving Castle*, re-reading Margot Benary-Isbert YA

stories, listening to *Melting Stones* by Tamora Pierce on Full Cast Audio books. Some books on slip-covering and re-upholstering. [Aha, I see a another new SF movement to bicker with mundanism: slip covering - I like it. JB]

What convention are you looking forward to?

Balticon is my next con this year. Urban Tapestry is the music guest, Connie Willis is the GoH. I get to go play with tech and be Tech Mom, making sure we all remember to eat and drink enough water. I'll be doing Kamikaze Costuming there on Friday night, but they don't run it the same way I do at Arisia.

A question of your own?

Where's my time turner? (smiles)



Tove Jansson by Ylva Spangberg

Tove Jansson was born in Helsinki in 1914, the daughter of sculptor Viktor Jansson and illustrator Signe Hammarsten, and as a part of Finland's Swedish-speaking minority. When she died in 2001 she had become a national icon in Finland, in spite of the fact that all of her work was written in Swedish; in Sweden, she was second in popularity as a writer for children only to Astrid Lindgren. She was loved by countless readers all over the world, and the origin of a great commercial industry based on the Moomin books: there's a Moomin theme park in Finland; Moomin has appeared as a play, as an opera and on TV; Moomin merchandise has become big business.

But Tove Jansson was much more than the creator of Moomin. She was a painter, illustrator (among many other things, she illustrated Swedish editions of both Lewis Carroll and *The Hobbit*), satirist, writer, and dramatist.

Tove Jansson began publishing her drawings as a young teenager, went on to study in Stockholm and Helsinki, and continued to publish illustrations. Her first picture-book was published in 1933, and from then on she also began writing short stories. Beginning in 1935 and to the end of the Forties she drew an enormous amount of covers and cartoons for *Garm*, a humorous-satirical journal. On these covers, a little critter with a big nose, a tail and small black eyes made his first appearance. From the beginning he was meant to look mean; strangely enough, he started out as Tove's retort to her brother Per-Erik when she had lost an argument about the philosopher Kant with him, and drew this thing on the toilet wall and wrote "Kant" underneath...

The little creature, called a Snork, became Tove's signature animal. In the winter of 1939, just after the outbreak of the second world war, she began writing a book about him and his mother to cheer herself up. She forgot about the manuscript until 1945, when a friend told her to finish it and try to get it published. The creature's name was changed to Moomin, the book was published with Tove's own illustrations, and here the Moomin saga

Moomin World is considered to be one of the best amusement parks in the world for young children.

begins.

The nine Moomin novels (if you can call the very first one a novel) were written and published from 1945 until 1970. *The Moomins and the Great Flood* is a rather conventional, uncomplicated and cute book for smaller children, about how Moomin and his mother flee from a flood to find a place to sleep during winter (when Moomintrolls hibernate) and perhaps find Moominpappa who has gone off with the hattifatteners, the mute, electrical beings who are forever trying to reach the horizon. At the end of the book, they find both Moominpappa and the house he has built for them, and they settle down in the most beautiful valley they've ever seen.

In the first two full-sized books, *Comet in Moominland* and *Finn Family Moomintroll*, the family is very settled in their valley, and here some other notable Moomin characters are introduced. We had met Sniff already in the first book, but now we meet the lonely wanderer and musician Snufkin, the Snork and his sister, the Snorkmaiden (who is Moomin's special friend), a few hemuls, the fearsome Groke, the snooty Gaffsie and a few more. These two books are unmistakably written for children: charming and whimsical, funny and sometimes scary, but without the depth of the later books.

The Exploits of Moominpappa (later revised as *The Memoirs of Moominpappa*; it's the latter version I refer to here) is a different matter. One summer, Moominpappa has a bad cold, and to cheer him up Moominmamma suggests he write his memoirs. He does, and reads every chapter aloud to his family. This book is not just funny, it's wonderful comedy. On the one hand, it's a great book for children, full of exciting adventures, strange and comical characters, surprises, poetry and comforts. On the other hand, it's a parody of the whole autobiographical genre, written in an inimitably pompous and self-important style. It also introduces one of my favourite characters in all of world literature: little My, the most matter-of-fact, curious and self-contained kid one can imagine.

Moominsummer Madness comes next and, again, it's a more structured and mature comedy than *Comet in Moominland* and *Finn Family Moomintroll*. Here another flood causes the adventures; the Moomin family, together with little My and a few others, take refuge from the water in a house conveniently floating by, only to discover it's a very strange house indeed. It is, in fact, not a house but a theatre. During the

voyage Moomin, Snorkmaiden and little My are separated from the family, and the family decide to put on a play in the hope their lost ones will find them again. Moominpappa writes it – in hexameter. They perform the play in front of a puzzled but enthusiastic audience in boats, the lost family members find their way home again and all ends well.

After these two books, Tove Jansson went in a new direction with the following, *Moominland Midwinter*. While the rest of the family is hibernating, Moomin wakes up on his own in the middle of winter and has to face a totally new situation without them. He makes new friends and new discoveries, and after a while is joined by little My, who has also woken up. Unlike Moomin, she's not the least bit afraid of winter; she immediately sets out to joyfully conquer it. Winter passes, the sun begins to return and the rest of the family wakes up.

Moominland Midwinter is the first book where Tove Jansson uses the Moomin setting for more serious purposes, and this is, of course, a rite of passage. In the earlier books, the Moomin family and their friends have adventures, but they are just that: adventures. They are not the kind of events that change people. But when Moomin meets winter – dark, scary, beautiful and cruel – it changes him.

Tales from Moomin Valley is a collection of short stories: about the hemul who wanted to be alone; how Snufkin tried to write a melody but was distracted by a small admirer; how Moomin found the last dragon in the world... Again, these stories are more serious than the early books, touching upon themes of identity, trust, loss, possessiveness. (Classic and many times republished in anthologies is "The Fillyjonk who believed in catastrophes", the story of an anxious Fillyjonk desperately trying to live a well-ordered life in spite of an overwhelming fear.) In this collection Tove Jansson shows herself to be a master also of the short story: in spite of the serious issues the stories are delightful reading.

With the next Moomin book, *Moominpappa and the Sea*, Tove Jansson definitely leaves the world of children and goes on to writing for adults in the Moomin setting. Here Moominpappa feels superfluous in the well-ordered family life in Moomin Valley and takes

his family to a small, remote island, where they take up residence in the deserted lighthouse. This book is centred around Moominpappa's mid-life crisis and the way it affects his family, most of all Moominmamma, but also around Moomin's fight to come to terms with his own adolescent feelings. This is a terse, beautiful book, with a kind of bleak and frightening poetry to it.

The last book, *Moominvalley in November*, is a goodbye to the Moomin books. A number of familiar Moomin characters – Snufkin, the Fillyjonk, Hemulen and a few more – come to the Moomin valley, each for their own reasons, only to find the house empty and the family gone. If *Moominpappa and the Sea* was a book about how the Moomin family restructures itself, this is a book about how all the people around them come to terms with themselves without the structure of the Moomin family to lean upon. Like *Moominpappa* this is basically a book for adults, written in a quiet and melancholy tone. When it ends, all the protagonists but one have left Moomin Valley.

And so did their creator, who now went on to write realistic novels, short stories and drama for an adult audience. She returned to Moomin now and again with both texts and illustrations, but the emphasis lay elsewhere. Some of the later works are as enchanting as the Moomin books; others are mercilessly precise and perceptive. Tove Jansson became a consummate artist with perfect control of her work, whatever she undertook to do. In my opinion she was a truly great writer, always having her own light touch, superior power of dramatisation and unsentimental compassion.

So now I can only recommend that you give yourselves a real treat and get acquainted with Tove Jansson's work, whether in Moomin Valley or out of it. Chances are you'll find a body of writing and illustrations you'll want to return to again and again. Which is what I'm going to do now: immerse myself in Tove Jansson's exquisite, unsurpassable prose. For the thousandth, but certainly not the last time.



Hayley Niuserre

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

I'd done the rounds on children's SF long before, but the first SF book I remember reading whilst actually knowing it was a "genre" book is *Hogfather* by Terry Pratchett. My step-dad bought me the paperback for Christmas in 1997 (I was 11). We were visiting family in Eire and I didn't leave the bedroom till I'd finished it. This took longer than usual as I had to look up some of the words in a dictionary. One of them was "crowbar"; clearly I had a rather sheltered upbringing.

After that I read the entire Discworld series (twenty-one books at the time) over about three months and developed a habit of staying up all night with a torch under the bed covers. At some point I got into the *X-Men* comics and devoured them in a similar manner. It was Philip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, given to me as a reward by my Classics teacher (of all people), that made me realise there were science fiction books rather than just comics and moving pictures.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

I arrived in different bits of fandom in different ways but for all of them, the internet was the contributing factor. It was *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that first made me discover online fandom - I wrote (awful) fanfiction, made (frightful) websites and even wrote a few (dreadful) essays for fanzines. Then after discovering Discworld, I jumped into the online community as well as joining the offline fanclub: The Guild of Fans and Disciples. Some people have fanzine collections; I have issues of their newsletter, *Ramtop to Rimfall*.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

I was in Liverpool for the '97 Eastercon with my Dad but since I didn't really know what science fiction was, I don't count it. In 2004, I went to the Discworld Convention (at Hinckley Island) and, after volunteering all weekend, was promptly hooked on conrunning. I couldn't afford Eastercon 2005 (Paragon 2) but I drove to Glasgow for the 2005 WorldCon... and drove home four hours later: a death in the family. I planned to go to the 2006 Eastercon, but it

clashed with Paddy's Day and I had a pub to run. Somewhere in my crazy mind, I decided the only way to get to an Eastercon would be to run one, so I went to Novacon and announced a bid.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Not so much a moment, as a string of moments at the above mentioned Novacon. I was mostly greeted at Novacon with the phrase, "Oh, *you're* Hayley." These were people who, to me, were the famous names of fandom - to be admired, respected and possibly hidden from. It felt very cool that they knew who I was and I didn't even mind the unaired (and, by one person, aired) ending of: "The crazy girl who thinks she can run an Eastercon."

I arrived in different bits of fandom in different ways but for all of them, the internet was a contributing factor.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

I've had some awkward moments but I mostly *have* forgotten them. I don't dwell on what I can't change and fandom has been too awesome an experience to let the odd downer colour my memories.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

I'm reading Jon Courtenay Grimwood's *Arabesk* trilogy at the moment and loving it. Sometimes I struggle with plots like his that have so many different points of focus but his voice is so absorbing that I can enjoy the story without getting hung up on trying to remember every single road name (and I'm sure there's enough detail in there for someone to draw a map).

What convention are you looking forward to?

Eastercon LX! Good job really, as I'm on the committee. I'm working my way through the stuff that our Guests of Honour have published (well, not all of it, I'd need another year to get through all Tim Powers's stuff) and the more I read or listen too, the more that feeling of keen builds up. After that? Another one I'm on the committee for: Aetherica. Bunch of very cool people running a fantasy convention at a



proven hotel (Crowne Plaza Chester), I can't wait.

A question of your own?

What part of fandom do you wish you knew more about?

Fanzines. Definitely. I'm reading more and more of them on eFanzines.com but I still feel like it's this whole other world that I'm just dipping a toe into when I really want to dive on in. I find myself writing LoCs and deciding they're too lame to send, or scribbling ideas for articles but not knowing how to structure them or if anyone will care. I think the ticket's to read more ('LURK MOAR' as they say on lolcats) so I'm working on that and oh look, I just wrote something for a fanzine...



Deb Geisler

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

Like many children, I started with fairy tales and mythology. The first book I bought with my own money was from a book club for grammar school kids: Robert Goddard, the father of modern rocketry. (smiles) But the SF books I first remember reading were by Andre Norton and Robert Heinlein.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

The beginning of my active role in fandom was Noreascon Three – when I wrote the convention's committee and asked if they would be interested in having one of my students do an interenship working on publicity for the convention. They were happy to take her, but then

said, “What do we need to do to get *you*?” That was very hard (okay, impossible) to ignore, and very flattering.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

My husband, then boyfriend, took me to a Darkover convention in Delaware in 1984. I had a marvelous time, met lots of neat people, and got to chat with several authors. I was hooked.

What's your favourite fan moment?

The time that it all crystalized for me – all of that con-running stuff, and how joyous it could be – was at Noreascon Four. I realized that nowhere else could you say, “Chip, I need you to move a dragon,” and hear the reply, “Which dragon?” (The dragon in question was ~60 feet long.)

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Of course – there are always those kinds of things, in any endeavor about which we care, or in which we have invested deeply. But the good definitely outweighs the bad. No contest.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Some fantasies, some mysteries. Waiting for the next cycle of really good SF from people whose work I enjoy reading. The latest new book (not a re-read) that I enjoyed was from Jim Butcher's “Harry Dresden” books (*Small Favor*).

What convention are you looking forward to?

This year? Balticon. I've never been to one, and it will be a chance to see friends I haven't seen in quite a while.

A question of your own?

Why on earth didn't the two of you collaborate with people closer than 8 time zones away? (smiles)

James's answer: It makes no difference. We are in the science fiction age; we have the internet.

Chris's answer: Well, it was either Claire and James or find two Australian fans who'd be willing to add to my Zine-Count!



Alice Lawson

What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

I have always been interested in fairy tales and myths including magic and vampires. First SF was the Elric books.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

I was running a *Rocky Horror* review and Mark Meenan (who worked with me at the time) asked us to appear at an Albacon (I think) and I really enjoyed it.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

First con just to be at the con was Conspiracy, the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton. It was very busy. I remember meeting a lot of very nice people. Some of whom I am close friends with to this day and one whom I married.

What's your favourite fan moment?

Seeing James Bacon and Stef Lancaster running YAFA so well, although there were times when I closed my eyes as I passed. [Somewhere James and Stef blush.] Fandom has given me lots of good moments. Seeing Alison Scott speechless will always be a good memory.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

You need to remember things to learn from them. Wish I could remember that when I am reaching for another drink.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

I have just finished Mike Carey's latest Felix Castor book

What convention are you looking forward to?

LX 2009. Definitely.

A question of your own?

When are you getting the time to do this my dear? You must run on Duracell.

James's answer: Not sure, I just really like the idea of working with Claire

and Chris. We are all very different, but very passionate and serious about our SF and the hobbies of social interaction that revolve around the subject. I also think I needed to start doing a fanzine; well actually I do, and have edited 48 issues of the Brentford Mercury, but a proper fanzine.

LX 2009. Definitely.

Theresa Renner

What science fiction books did you start with?

Heinlein's *Red Planet*, followed by his other juveniles, which our military base library in Panama happened to have

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

The 1974 Worldcon was here in DC and my mother heard an ad on the radio for it.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

1974 Worldcon, Discon, in Washington, DC – but we never got out of the dealers' room for the two days we were there! Program? Art Show? Masquerade? Parties? What were those??

What's your favourite fan moment?

For one of the Worldcons in Chicago, the Operations staff was in collusion before the convention. At the appointed hour during the convention, we all showed up at the Ops office dressed in white shirts with bow ties. The look on Ben Yalow's face was priceless.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Committee members screaming at other people in public places (and I won't name a convention, as there's more than one).

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Ian Douglas's *Star Marines* (book three of the Legacy Trilogy) – military SF.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Denvention 3, since it will get me away from Washington DC for a couple of weeks!



Writing the Future Red by Farah Mendlesohn

It is a truism that the default position of UK SF is leftist, but this did not use to be the case with SF written for the teen market.¹ In the 1970s, although the counter-culture influenced the genre greatly (most of John Christopher's work operates on the assumption that anything parents/elders say about the world is wrong), most authors continued to generate tales of individual exceptionalism, hierarchical governments and hereditary leadership.²

At the end of the 1990s, however, a number of new SF writers began writing for children and teens. Some, such as Stephen Baxter and Ken MacLeod, came into the field from the adult genre – as had been typical before the 1970s. Others, such as Philip Reeve, Conor Kostick and Rhiannon Lassiter, write only for children. One of the new elements many of these writers brought into the field

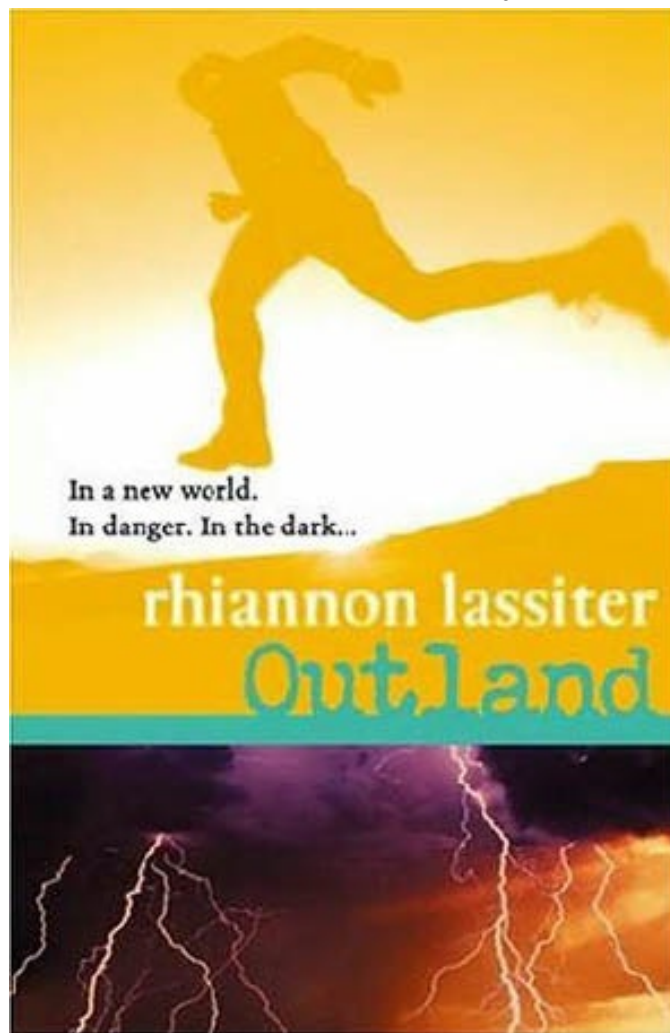
was a distinctively leftist stance, a willingness not simply to challenge the opinions of authority but to challenge the construction of that authority and the ideologies which supported it.

At the liberal/anarchist end are writers like Philip Reeve, whose *Mortal Engines* sequence has sought to challenge unthinking martialism, ecological devastation and entrenched hierarchies. Tom Naisworthy, the lowly apprentice to the historians, breaks from his destiny, helps to destroy his world and, by the third book (*Infernal Devices*), has settled for the life of a pastoralist. The post-city future which

Reeve depicts at the end of the sequence is high-tech pastoralism, but with little sense of the “getting from here to there” which I think it fair to say is one of

the distinctive elements of Marxist literature. Where the books do reflect a Marxist sense of history, however, is in their grand canvasses; although Tom and Hester – the principal protagonists in the first two books – are important, always there is a sense that they, and later their daughter Wren and her friend Theo, are swept up in a movement in history in which it is the mass of people, their choices *as a group*, that will unseat the entrenched interests of all sides.

Writing for an older audience (perhaps mid-teens and older), the late Jan Mark's *Useful Idiots* comments on the nature of imperialism and takes a dig at the well-meaning liberal. When a skeleton is found on the beach, Merrick Korda's attempts to help the minority indigenous population (the English) inadvertently support a *kulturkampf*, undermine his own assimilation (he is third generation assimilated), and are repudiated and exploited by the people he set out to “help” without ever actually discussing with them what they wanted.



For younger readers Rhiannon Lassiter offers a masterly critique of imperialism in her *Borderlands* portal fantasy/science fiction sequence. Across three books – *Borderland*, *Outland* and *Shadowland* – Lassiter discusses the true likely impact of four westerners arriving in a foreign land with all the assumptions of (even liberal) western imperialism.

In *Borderland* Laura and Alex go through into another world and, in their attempts to take it over (Alex thinks of himself as another Alexander the Great; Laura is more subtle), manage to bring the entire political edifice down around their ears, killing several thousand people. Jzhera, desert warrior woman

in love with Alex, comes to realise that he has feet of clay, and that she can't remember what her tribe were going to do with the wealth of the desert

city had they won it anyway. In *Outland* and *Shadowland* the protagonists meet the Library between worlds, with its factions, and plots and lessons on imperialist interference, and economic imperialism. The doctrine of non-interference comes under some severe scrutiny but without offering any easy answers, and the protagonists discover that they can be manipulated as well as manipulator. All the destinarian, imperialist assumptions of portal fantasies are overturned as they come to realise that the worlds they enter are not customised playgrounds.

Surprisingly, economics has become the science most of interest to the new generation of SF writers in this market. Although K. A. Applegate's *Remnants* sequence is mostly concerned with the dynamics of survival in a hostile universe, it begins with a spaceship setting out from a ruined earth, full of people who have fought or bought their way on. Much of the first three books focuses on the "false consciousness" endemic in capitalist societies where status is presumed to relate to worth. Similarly, Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* destroys any sense of superiority on the world stage with a consideration of British refugees in a flooded world. In *Exodus* values that made sense in the old world are undermined by new economic imperatives, and readers get to see how much of our sense of commodity capitalism is a construct. Oisín McGann's *Small Minded Giants*, set in the middle of an ice age, offers a rare example of a working class protagonist and manual labourers as role models: a race against time thriller, the pleasures in this book are in the growing awareness of the economic and physical complexity of any large city. Exploitation of labour is here presented not as an inevitable consequence of natural hierarchies or the necessities of survival, but as a calculated element in the political and physical construction of the domed-in world.

For Marxists, perhaps the most interesting of the new writers is Conor Kostick. In his first novel, *Epic*, a group of colonisers on an unnamed planet play at the interface game of Epic. Once a mere pastime for bored star-travellers, over the centuries Epic has come to be the arena of the economy and of law. Prizes and monies won, given or traded transfer as points accumulated in the real world. Victory in the graduation tournaments can bring a university place; armour bought with the pennies stolen from kobolds become tractor allocations or books for a school. Presiding as a referee over the system is Central Allocations. Made up

of the most prestigious and victorious players, this committee ensures fairness in everything from hip replacement operations to luxury goods.

The difficulty is that over the years the colony seems to be doing worse, although CA are forever talking about improvements in the future. Equipment is degrading, people's lives are getting harder, and the gap between the rich and poor in the game seems to be growing. However, CA decisions may be challenged in the arena, and when Erik's parents feel their village has been treated unjustly in the allocation of solar panels they decide to give it a go. Unusually, they succeed in reducing the CA team to a draw. This one act sets off a chain of political events, as the CA become increasingly repressive in order to hold in place the economic system they think preserves society.

All the destinarian, imperialist assumptions of portal fantasies are overturned as they come to realise that the worlds they enter are not customised playgrounds.

But there is also another chain of events. Dead once again in the game, Erik creates in a flash of bravado a new character very different from the norm. The emphasis in the political system on accumulation of prizes and powers as the route to economic success has led to a game world in which avatars are attribute-loaded grey pixels, and almost all action takes place in the arena. Eric flippantly assigns almost all his start-up points to beauty and wit. In response, the game offers him more opportunities to interact. Kostick begins to argue that the game itself has been subverted. The more it is tied to a crude capitalism, the less interactive, rich and joyous it becomes. By part-way through, we learn that the game itself (an Artificial Intelligence) is pretty unhappy. As we get further into the game, the political complexity of the novel extends: one of the things Kostick uses it for is to present a critique of meritocracy. The graduation games, for example, which are supposed to test the mettle of the young, are lies. Not because anyone cheats, but because it is well within the rules of Epic to gift powers and spells, weapons and potions, so that some young people enter the arena with a rich inheritance of armour while others enter with the small pieces of plate that their folks grubbed together penny by penny. In the game of Epic, accumulation is compound

not hierarchical, so that the richest have the opportunity to get richer. Not unreasonably, one character advocates violent surgery.

Social and political speculation in children's science fiction is clearly getting richer. The assumption that social norms will persist appears to be dying away; the sense is becoming clearer that the economic superstructure and its accompanying ideology is fragile. The empires of commodity capitalism no longer extend unthinkingly into the future.

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(Endnotes)

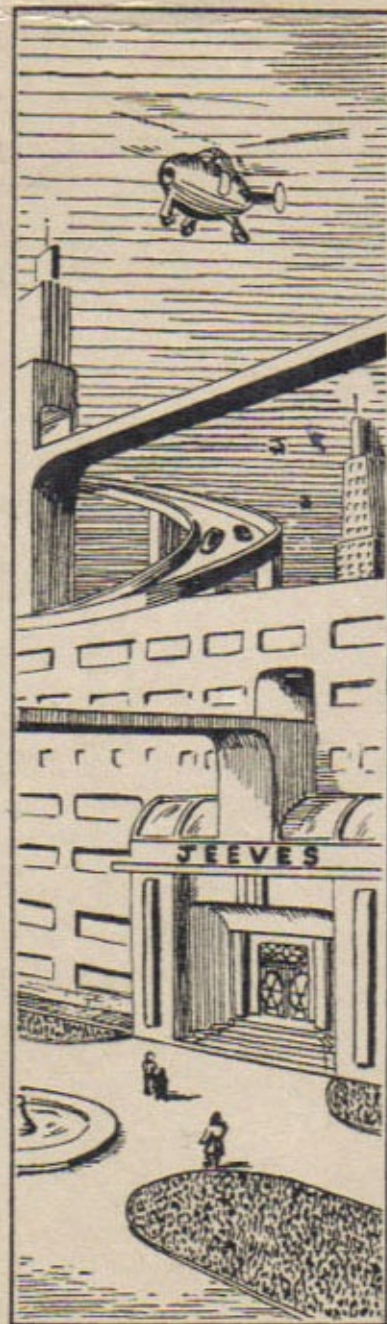
¹ I am uncomfortable with the term YA, because the social values of YA SF of the 1980s are so very different from the social values of Juvenile SF of the 1950s. "Teen" seems a more generic descriptor.

² For a recent example see Neil Arkasy's *Playing on the Edge*, where the government turns out to have been in ignorance of corruption and the denouement involves their promise to clean things up. There is no sense at all of the connection between government and capital. Or William Nicholson's *The Windsinger*, where those treated unjustly turn out (inevitably) to be suitable for higher positions in the new meritocracy.

Julie Bertagna was also the name of an 8th Grade History Teacher at Buchser Jr. High School. They're not related.



The default political position for American SF is obviously "Look at me! I've got the right idea and nobody listens!"



Judith Proctor

What science fiction books did you start with?

I remember a Dutch friend of my father leaving a copy of the first Lensman novel behind after a visit. I ended up reading the entire series and loved them. The irony is that now, I consider them to be very badly written. [The opinions expressed here are not shared by the art editor. JB]

I adored Heinlein (still do) and was eternally grateful to Gollancz for putting easy-to-spot yellow jackets on their SF books so that I could spot them easily on the library shelves. I discovered many new writers that way. I used to cycle to Wythenshawe library after I'd exhausted the smaller one in Heald Green where I grew up.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

Blake's 7. The fan club address was on the back of the videos. I joined that and gradually became aware of the wider world of fandom through people that I met. I'd say the Redemption committee were the people who got me into lit fandom, as many of them were Eastercon regulars.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

Who's 7 – it was an excellent introduction to conventions as it was programme-heavy. In fact, it set the general tone for Redemption which was its successor. Who's 7 had an Eastercon style to it, though I didn't know that at the time. I went to other media cons, but never thought them as good.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Only one that is too bad to talk about.

The second worse one was the post Contemplation bug – I don't remember ever being so ill in my life. My son, Henry, had it at the same time and we were both continually vomiting. I'm very glad that we were travelling with friends who took care of us.

I've had my fair share of embarrassing moments, and the ongoing voice trouble. I've pretty much gotten used to that. I carry a notebook with me at all times and hope that I won't need it. I've done panels while lying on the floor

(which isn't as bad as it sounds, as people are very nice about it) when my back/shoulder were too painful).

Mind you, if I had a pound for every fan who has said, "Why don't you learn sign language?" and has then been unable to read the phrase that I finger-spelled back to them, I'd be pretty rich by now.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Imperial Earth by Arthur C Clarke. I was surprised by how many scenes I remembered in this book, but had not remembered which book they were in. I think it probably sums the book up well to say that it's thin on plot, but great on atmospheric detail.

Next in the queue is a Robert Sheckley anthology, and if my husband gets a new job (and thus reduces my stress levels to where I can concentrate on something chewy) then I've a couple of Iain Banks novels waiting for me.

I've just finished *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* by Francis Hodgson Burnett. They're both better than I remembered them. She had the knack of writing stories that would have been soppy and sentimental in anyone else's hands and making them work.

What convention are you looking forward to?

I always look forward to Redemption, of course. I think I'm currently signed up for Conrunner, LX, Discworld (where I'm going to be helping organise one of the guilds). Further in the future is Odyssey, and I'm seriously considering Satellite 2.

A question of your own?

Why is your allotment so important to you?

It's incredibly relaxing. The physical work of weeding and digging is physical and removes the need to visit the gym. The robin follows us around the plot, the birds sing in the hedge, the other allotment holders are always friendly and being outdoors is good in its own right. When tying up raspberries, or hoeing around onions, the problems that have been choking your life fade into the background.

Where else can you get mental therapy, healthy exercise and organic veg (and a reduced carbon footprint) into the bargain?



The layout guy for Journey Planet really doesn't like Heinlein. I mean really doesn't like him. Grrrr...

Marcia Illingworth

What science fiction books did you start with?

I started reading *Analog* and *Argosy* as a child. My dad used to have subscriptions, and we used to argue over who got the magazine first. *Brave New World* and *1984* were required reading where I went to school. This isn't terribly surprising when you consider that I was raised in a town that was built for the purpose of building a nuclear bomb. They continued to do nuclear projects for the government for, well, I guess there is still research going on there. There used to be a lot of weapons research, but I'm not sure what's up with that now.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

While my father was an avid reader of science fiction, he was never involved in fandom. I guess I came into the general world of fandom through friends and my children. One of my sons remains a fan, and the other one regularly apologises to me for growing up to be a mundane. When I first started going to conventions the second time around, I started volunteering right away. I'm a bit of a workaholic. I don't think I could even tell you how many conventions I've been to, or how many jobs I've done at them. I've done everything from Co-Chair to gopher.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

My first convention was the first World Fantasy Convention in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1975. My then new husband and I planned our wedding so that we could go to Providence on our honeymoon, because my then husband's best friend was up for an award of some sort. I don't even remember what the award was. In retrospect, I don't know if we ever officially joined the convention. Richard just wanted to be there in case Karl (Edward Wagner) received an award. I then had a long gap before attending another convention because, in spite of Karl and Barbara calling us every time they were at a con anywhere near us, my late ex-husband never wanted to go to another one. He said that "those people aren't our kind of people". There are so many reasons that the operative word became *ex-husband*.

What's your favourite fan moment?

That's hard to say. There are a few that vie for position as absolute favourite. One was getting to introduce two of my favourite writers (Charlie Grant and Harry Turtledove), who had never met each other before, at a Chattacon many moons ago. And you can't beat the feeling that you get when you are asked to be a Fan Guest of Honour.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

I think everyone has those. I find the best way to forget them is to just not talk about them.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Mostly what I'm reading now are accounting textbooks. When I'm not buried in those, I have to confess to enjoying Georgette Heyer for a little light read. I got a late start on Terry Pratchett, so I'm trying to read more of his stuff. It's perfect when your head is so full of numbers that you think it's going to explode.

What convention are you looking forward to?

I always look forward to Eastercons. However, I have to say that the con I'm most looking forward to at the moment is ConCave, in Horse Cave, Kentucky, in February of next year. Tim and I have been invited to be Guests of Honour. It's a con we've always wanted to get to, but never had enough money and leave time to manage.

A question of your own?

Why is there air? ;~)



What science fiction books did you start with? (If not SF - fantasy or horror?)

The first genre books I remember reading were a series of short story collections edited by Isaac Asimov, *Asimov's Aliens*, *Asimov's Ghosts*, *Asimov's Monsters* and *Asimov's Mutants*. Fantastic stories for younger readers where the protagonists were all children/ young people who also happened to be aliens/ghosts/monsters/mutants. Unfortunately, while I remember some of the stories, I haven't a clue who any of the contributing authors were. I stuck with the short story collections for quite a while, reading all the horror and SF anthologies I could get my hands on, with the outcome that I enjoyed the work of many great writers, but completely out of any context; I loved the "Light of Other Days" by Bob Shaw, but I only realised who the author was 15 years later during one of those wonderful late night convention chats.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

My best friend from school, Rob, was and is devoted to story-telling in all its forms and from the age of 12 or so, pressed comics, videos, computer games and all things science-fictional on me. Following several years of comic-fair attendance, he introduced me to James Brophy, and the old story unfolded: Girl meets boy, girl falls for boy, girl gets sucked into boy's hobbies, to the extent of con-committee membership! Thanks, Rob. Thanks, James!



What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

From '97 or so, I went to several comic fairs around Dublin, but my first full blown convention was Octocon 2001, in the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoighre. It was a good Con to start with; I was recruited as a gopher and so saw lots of what was going on – though, after a while, con memories blur into one another, so I'm hard pressed to remember specifics.

What's your favourite fan moment?

In general, I'm a fan of anything involving silly costumes, so Damn Fine Con had many memorable moments. The night of the Cross-Dressing Law Enforcement Disco, I was descending the stairs from my room, with two friends. The gentleman was attired as J Edgar Hoover, in sports jacket and tie, gold lamé skirt and fishnet tights; the ladies, one on either of J Edgar's arms, were resplendent in slinky 1960s numbers, complete with chest hair and moustaches. We passed two boys of about 10 years old, who stared until we were out of sight and raced up the stairs, yelling "Brian! Brian! We just saw hookers!" It was indicative of the debauched evening to follow.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

If there are, I've forgotten them.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

As co-chair of Octocon 2008 (plug), I'm trying to read as much of our guest authors' work as possible before the con. I've just read Peadar O Guilin's novel *The Inferior*, which takes many fantasy tropes and subverts them with SF as the story progresses. Excellent stuff, I'll be passing it on to as many people as I can.

What convention are you looking forward to?

Octocon 2008, of course! It's my chance to finally run the convention I want to attend. We're coming back to Dublin City Centre; we're involved with the Children's Book Festival, which gives us the opportunity to recruit a whole new generation of fans – though with our

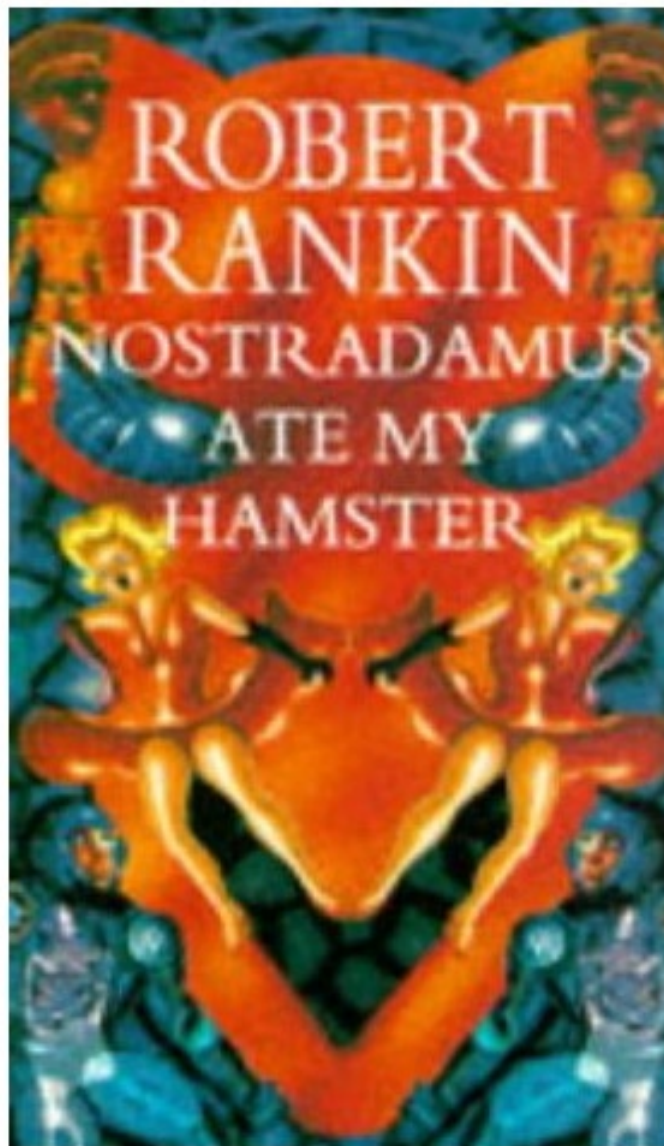
GoH, Ken MacLeod, we'll have plenty of hard SF and hopefully some political discussion for our not-quite-so-young adult members.

Robert Rankin, Sproutlore and Me
by Stacey Whittle

If someone had told me that I should read a Rankin book before I actually read one I probably never would have picked one up, because I am a contrary bastard. However, I'm thankful that I am since, wandering around the library one day looking for something new to read, I noticed a stand labelled "It's a man thing" with *The Fandom of the Operator* stood proudly on the top shelf. So I thought to myself, "Bugger that for a lark," and checked it out immediately. I was back two days later checking out every Rankin book they have and found that I was in love: that Rebus and the scrapes he gets into! So then a trip to a book shop where they actually had some of Robert Rankin's books – and how could I not want to read a book called *Nostradamus Ate My Hamster*? And the covers: I hadn't seen anything like them, each and every one a work of art. Of course, I found out later that that was because each and every one of them was in fact a work of art!

If you ask people what it is that they love about Robert Rankin's work one of the first words you'll get is "funny"; and his work is funny, but is funny enough to keep me coming back for more and more? I don't think it is; if it were just funny it wouldn't work. I think it's the warmth: the warmth of the humour and the warmth towards the reader, with knowing winks – the fact that you as a reader are allowed in on the gag. For me, when I read a Rankin book it's almost as if I'm reading it with him; he even talks to me (with the use of footnotes). The more that you read, the more in on the joke you are – yet without ever having felt left out in the first place, which is a hell of a talent. So his books have humour and warmth; but they are also clever and pacy and effervescent, brimming with pop culture references and icons, not to mention the running gags which are a tradition or an old charter or something.

Mind you, he's rubbish at writing women! Where the men of the Rankin world are whole and alive and could very well be sitting next to you in the pub, the women are somehow less; they are more caricatures than real. For example, of course, take *The Lady in the Straw Hat*; this is true of all the ladies, with the possible exception of Kelly in *Web Site Story*. Yet this lack of reality to the woman of the Rankinverse doesn't impair my own enjoyment or provoke any anti-woman response,



since there's no malice to it and women are not maligned – more often the opposite is true.

I first met Rankin at a signing in Newcastle for *The Witches of Chiswick*; my sister and I tagged along to the pub after the signing and we were regaled with story after story about this wondrous fan club, Sproutlore. Mr Rankin described it to me as "less of a fan club and more of a bunch of people to go to the pub with". He handed us a load of forms to join; though I had never been part of a fan club before, and was indeed just dipping my toe into fandom itself at the time, I thought "What the hell?" and just did it.

The first event I attended was Large in Derby – cowboy night at the Flying Swan (really The Alex pub). I had a great time and looked forward to the next one: Brentcon, which I think cemented my marriage to Sproutlore (The Now Official Robert Rankin Fan Club).

Four days in Brentford, including a pub crawl of all the Brentford pubs – where I bonded with one of my now best mates in the world, Lee Justice – a night of music with Robert Rankin and

the Rock Gods (his band), a day of panels and fancy dress (Sproutlore *loves* fancy dress), a rock disco and a lovely relaxing Sunday in the Bricklayers Arms – the pub on which Rankin based his fictitious Flying Swan – in the beer garden with a raffle and auction. Two of my favourite memories are the unveiling of Pooley's bench, and a treasure hunt around Brentford (which included a pirate in a wheelchair at all times, for reasons that have become lost in the mists of time) that led to buying lots of Calippos in Sainsbury's while dressed as a pirate! That was all enough to have me hooked.

I remain hooked; and thanks to the positive and wonderful experiences I have had with this particular fan club, I have opened up to lots more areas of fandom. I have been to quite a few conventions now, I have written some things for the *Brentford Mercury*, and a couple of years ago I helped organise The Lazlo Awards which was great fun. I am part of several online science fiction and fantasy communities, where we meet up every few months for lightsabre fights and light-hearted arguing (where there are geeks there are arguments!) and lots and lots of beer (where there are geeks there is beer).

I think, after quite a few years of being part of Rankin fandom, that what it means to me now more than anything else is family and community. This last year I have been to three weddings connected to Sproutlore (including the Victorian extravaganza that was Mr and Mrs Rankin's wedding), with at least one other on the horizon. My sister, who is also part of this community, has moved to Essex from Newcastle to be with her boyfriend, who she met through the fan network. I can't remember the last day that went by when I wasn't in touch with another Sproutlore member in some medium or other, and for that I am extremely thankful.

I thank Sproutlore for my friends, and for my little baby – another wonderful and amazing consequence of my involvement. "It's a man thing"; indeed it isn't.

Margeret Austin

What science fiction books did you start with?

John Wyndham. I forget which was the first but it was probably *Day of the Triffids* after seeing the 1962 film. I remember I was in the second form at the time so that would have been 1964 or thereabouts. I can picture the very classroom I was in when we all had to tell the class about the books we were currently reading. Of course, the teacher (whose name escapes me) trivialised my contribution in favour of my classmates who were reading James Joyce, Dickens and the like. It didn't deter me though. I decided I liked this "science fiction" stuff of which I'd been previously unaware – apart from *Dr Who*, of course, but no one had actually told me that was SF.

I went on to read as many of John Wyndham's books as I could lay my hands on, although I recall never been wholly satisfied by his endings. The stories just seemed to stop rather than reaching a conclusion. I forget which SF writers I tried next but soon found I liked Larry Niven and Harry Harrison.

What brought you into the general world of fandom?

A combination of the *Radio Times*, Rog Peyton and Gerry Webb.

In the early 70s I discovered *Star Trek* although knew nothing about fandom until the *Radio Times* published the address of the Star Trek Action Group run by Janet Quarton. I immediately joined the club and was put in touch with a couple of *Star Trek* fans who wanted pen pals. One of these, Margaret Draper, lived not too far away so we used to get together at weekends and listen to audio tapes of *Star Trek* episodes – this was before video recorders were readily available to the masses.

Being an avid film fan I used to subscribe to a couple of magazines. One of these was *Films Illustrated*. One Friday morning sometime in, I think, 1975 an issue dropped through the letterbox – this issue was ultimately to change my life completely for in the small ads on the inside back cover I happened to notice an ad for Andromeda in Birmingham which listed among the shop's recent acquisitions *The Making of Star Trek* and *The Trouble With Tribbles* by David Gerrold.

To digress for a moment, I had actually attended the University of Birmingham from 1970 to 1972 and

The origin of (Blank) Ate My Hamster is the 1986 headline from 'The Sun' "Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster".



must have regularly walked along Summer Row on my shopping trips into town. The bus from Edgbaston, where the halls of residence were, stopped just across the road. And yet I had never noticed the shop. Not only that, I was completely unaware of the Birmingham SF Group – did they even have a stand during Freshers Week?

To return to the plot, I rang Margaret that evening and told her of my discovery. Being desperate to read anything and everything we could find about or relating to *Star Trek* we agreed to drive up to Birmingham the following morning to visit the shop. And there we met Rog who started to tell us about SF conventions. We'd just missed that year's Novacon so the next con in the calendar was Mancon in Manchester in 1976.

So, where does Gerry Webb fit into this, I hear you thinking? In 1975 I had started work at the Appleton Laboratory, formerly known as the Radio and Space Research Station – as a child I imagined they launched rockets out the back – and part of the (then) Science Research Council, in Slough. Unbeknown to me at the time I wasn't the only SF fan employed there.

Of course, the teacher trivialised my contribution in favour of my classmates who were reading James Joyce, Dickens and the like.

I'm a bit fuzzy on the dates but I believe it was at the *Star Trek* mini con in 1975 where the other Margaret (we were known by our friends as Margaret and the other Margaret respectively) acquired a copy of "Empath", one of the *Star Trek* episodes banned by the BBC because they, and I quote, "contain scenes of insanity and violence considered unsuitable for the major part of the audience". There was an American guy at the con who'd brought a 16 mm print of the episode with him hoping to raise enough money selling it in the auction to pay for his trip. I didn't have enough money in my bank account to buy it. Margaret did. Of course, we didn't have a 16 mm projector but why let a little thing like that stop us?

My office at the Appleton Lab happened to be located next door to the photographic lab and one day not long after this convention I was chatting to Phil, the Chief Photographer, who'd come into my office with a requisition for a new freezer to store his film stock and learned that not only was there a 16 mm projector in his lab but he'd be happy to run the episode

for me one lunchtime. On his way out of my office he glanced back and asked, "By the way, does Gerry Webb know about this?" I hadn't met Gerry at that point – he worked in one of the huts behind the main building (if you've read Dave Langford's *Leaky Establishment* you'll have a good idea of what the Appleton Lab was like). I rang him and told him about the episode and that Phil thought he might be interested in seeing it. Gerry was quick to explain that he wasn't actually a *Star Trek* fan but he'd come along, without prejudice to his credibility as an SF fan, and take a look. Gerry became a regular visitor to my office, telling me all about fandom and encouraging me to attend both Eastercon and Novacon.

What was your first convention like, and where and when was it?

This was the first *Star Trek* convention held in Leicester in, I believe, September 1974. The guests of honour were George Takei and James Doohan. I'd joined quite late in the day and the hotel was full for regular members so I volunteered to be a steward as there were a few rooms set aside for stewards – mine was a couple of doors along from George Takei's. My memory is a bit fuzzy but I think there must have been over 200 attendees altogether. The convention was great fun although I remember we upset James by seeming to ignore him at breakfast – we were just being polite, going to sit at another table, letting him eat his breakfast in peace and quiet. He wasn't used to this at US cons so he thought it meant we didn't like him. George got lost in Leicester – he'd gone for a ride on a bus – and was late for his GOH speech.

The funniest incident I recall was nothing to do with the con. I was walking through the city centre with a couple of friends in search of something to eat on the Saturday lunchtime. We were following a woman with a small boy in tow. Suddenly the child pulled on his mother's hand yelling excitedly, "Look! Look, Mummy! It's Mr Sulu!" as he pointed to the other side of the street where George was making his way back to the hotel. The boy's mother gave him a swift clip round the ear and said, "Don't be so stupid," marching him off in the opposite direction. I've often wondered if the boy ever learned he really had just seen Mr Sulu, in Leicester of all places.

My first SF con was Mancon.

I remember buying Harry Harrison a pint and I also recall seeing reels of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* shown in random order. Can't remember much



else. I stayed at my friend Anne's flat – she was a student at the university at the time – so I missed the horrors of the student accommodation.

What's your favourite fan moment?

This is more of a favourite fan story than a fan moment so I hope it will suffice. At the 1974 *Star Trek* convention, the organiser, Jenny Elson, was very concerned we might have trouble from hordes of fans trying to gatecrash the con in order to meet the stars of the show. So door security was tight. Even so, we learned at the Sunday morning stewards' briefing that two gatecrashers had been found during the night and had been evicted from the con. We were instructed to keep an eye out in case they returned.

Some 15 years later my partner, Martin Easterbrook, and I were at a dinner party when he started telling a story about his early days in fandom and how as an impoverished PhD student he'd once gone to a *Star Trek* convention with his friend smaller Malcolm (named thus to distinguish him from Malcolm Davies). They'd been intending to stay up all night at room parties because hotel rooms were beyond their means. This plan immediately ran into difficulty when they arrived at the con to discover *Star Trek* fans didn't know about room parties – we'd all gone to bed at 10.30. So they'd sneaked into the art show when no one was looking and slept on the floor! I didn't actually get to meet Martin until Skycon at the Heathrow Hotel over Easter 1978 when he dropped his wallet and I picked it up and gave it back to him.

Any bad experiences which you wish you could forget?

Well, having a critically-acclaimed and popular author pass away during our Worldcon in 1995 has to rank at or near the top.

What science fiction or literature are you reading and enjoying at the moment?

Lois McMaster-Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan series.

What convention are you looking forward to?

James Bacon's next one, whatever that might be! Lately I find I prefer smaller cons. Damn Fine Con was one of the most enjoyable in recent years. [That would be Zombiecon

– www.zombiecon.co.uk JB]

A question of your own?

What do your friends say about you?

Julian Headlong once wrote about me: "Well, Margaret is careful. That's like saying that *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* is quite good, really – something of an understatement. Margaret is meticulous. That's a good word. And it even means what I think it means. Margaret is thorough. She will make sure it all gets done. And done properly. This is a good thing. Honest. We all think so, and none of us would dare argue with Margaret. She might be forced to put us right. And none of us want that to happen. She also likes Spike. A lot."



Did you hear that TAFF nominations are open? Surely you must have! bugshaw@gmail.com to nom!

Sue Edwards

I guess I started more with fantasy, as lots of children's books involve some of that, and a friend of the family gave me *The Hobbit* followed by *LOTR* when I was about 10. I started reading SF a bit later; the first books I can remember were some John Christopher initially at school, and then some of the John Wyndham books which were available in the smallish SF section in the local WH Smith – this was very much the days before a Waterstone's in every town.

Fandom came later for me. I joined CUSFS and Jomsborg (Cambridge Uni Fantasy Soc) at university, and got to be friends with lots of fannish people, although at that stage I hadn't much clue about conventions etc. I think it must have been 1984 when several friends were talking about the Eastercon they'd recently gone to, which sounded quite fun. My first convention was (conveniently local) Camcon, the 1985 Unicon in Cambridge, which I enjoyed a lot, and then my next one was on a rather different scale, the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton. After that ordinary life got in the way a bit, plus the detail that unless I happened to know people involved in organising them the best way to find out about future cons seemed to be at a con, although I did get to the 1988 and 1990 Eastercons.

Then I went to ConFiction, the 1990 Worldcon in Den Haag, which was the beginning of several things... I was sitting chatting with Phil Allcock when he said he had to go and be the Gopher Hole manager, but why didn't I come along too as there'd probably be quieter bits in between times to carry on chatting. I'd heard a bit about gophering before but avoided it as my perhaps over-literal idea was that I'd be sent to find people and I didn't know many people and was (still am) shy of approaching people I don't know well, so I resisted Phil's initial recruitment attempts. Although it was quite early in the con several people had already worked enough hours to claim a gopher T-shirt, which involved fishing through large boxes trying to find the right size. Sorting the T-shirts into boxes for each size seemed an



obviously useful but also safe thing that I could do, although Phil made me sign up as a gopher before starting on it. After a while he decided I could do with some help and asked the waiting gophers if anyone was bored, and Lissa said yes. So we sorted the rest of the T-shirts and then all spent much of the rest of the con together, which worked out rather well for all of us – even if some of the later bits of gophering were more scary as I was very unsure about what I should be doing.

After that I started going to more Eastercons, and discovered that I quite enjoyed helping in the green room if the shift manager was somebody I knew who wouldn't make me do anything too scary, like Kari, so around the early 1990s Kari, Phil, Lissa, Phil and me became the Lean Mean Green Room Machine team, and then Teddy and Lissa made us all

T-shirts for that. I carried on helping in most of the Eastercon green rooms and seeing more of how they worked, and then one year came back from a skiing

holiday about a month before Easter and found messages saying that the person who'd been going to organise that year's green room had to drop out and I seemed the most likely (mug) to pick it up of the three people who'd ticked that box on the volunteer form. So I frantically emailed everyone I could think of and fortunately it seemed to work well enough. Something similar happened a few years later, and that one was followed by what's definitely still my scariest experience in fandom, getting an email asking if I'd organise the green room for Interaction. Thanks to much appreciated support from lots of people we got through that one more or less OK too.

I don't really think that much of what I do at cons; it's just helping out because I mostly enjoy it and lots of people doing that is how conventions (and fandom in general) work, so I was both stunned and honoured by last year's Doc Weir award. It took quite a while to sink in (and to realise that I'd have to present it the next year, aarrgh! that one counts as second scariest fannish moment, see above ;-)). James asked if it made any difference being a woman, but while it's good to have more women's contributions recognised I don't really see it that way, possibly since much of my adult life has been spent in environments with more men than women (first at college, then working in computer software), so fandom doesn't stand out as odd – or not for that reason anyway!

I'm still reading quite a lot of SF and fantasy, often for some upcoming Jomsborg in Exile Ping, some of which



have been responsible for adding significant bookshelf space requirements to my life as they join the list of authors I look out for and I catch up on what's already available. It's a bit disappointing that I seem to have slowed down or find less time to read than I (think I remember I) used to have, but I seem to be addicted to buying books anyway and so far we just about manage to find room for ever more precarious stacks waiting to be read.

How to Write American: Zed's Dead, Baby by Ulrika O'Brien

Every now and then a British writer attempts to write in an American voice, and, well, ow. Dearies, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but some of you need a little teensy bit of help. Mostly you need to take all the unintentional British usage out, by noticing it in the first place. I can't claim to solve all your Americanization (note the zee-not-zed) woes, but I think I can help a bit. The following rules are mostly rough guidelines, and can in some circumstances be ignored. Don't. Yes, there are exceptions, and yes, you can make your little red-shirts-versus-storm-trooper arguments for individual ones, but why bother? If you let the debatably British usages slip by, sooner or later they add up and your writing still sounds Pommy. Or at least Canadian. So just listen to Auntie Ulrika and all will be well, right? Great. Let's get on with it then.

Stop sorting quite so much. Americans fix things, they figure things out, they make arrangements, they set stuff up, they certainly get things squared away, and occasionally they might even *sort* things *out* in their own minds, but they only sort *things* when they're dividing groups of objects into smaller subgroups by what kind of thing they are, like sorting laundry into whites and colors. If you don't mean acts of separating the sheep from the goats, don't sort. And on the subject of things strewn about, Americans *clear up* only that which was previously unclear. For after supper, or general acts of extracting order from chaos, try "cleaning up" or "tidying up" instead. If you must, you may clear *away* the dishes.

Ditch most *haves* and *have not*s. Well, the *haven*'ts, anyway. Americans are active. So replace *haves* in virtually all cases with forms of doing. The answer in American to the question "Have you let the rhinoceros out?" is "No, I *didn't*." Only the question would most likely be "*Did* you let the rhinoceros out?" anyway. Likewise the answer to "Have you got my thermonuclear device?" would be "No, I *don't*." Be especially wary of colloquial British phrases that actively depend on *have*. Those need to be strangled outright: Americans don't *have a lie in*, we sleep late. We don't *have a moan* on someone's shoulder or anywhere else. We may cry on someone's shoulder but we

simply never *have a cry*. We do occasionally have fits, and if it gets bad enough, in some regions we have conniptions. The basic rule for American is that in compound verbs with "have," if something gets elided, it's the "have". Occasionally, it's okay to use "have not" for vehement denials. As in: "You've ruined my story!" "I have not!"

Americans are active. So replace *haves* in virtually all cases with forms of doing.

Don't treat collective nouns as plural. In the US, the committee *is* unanimous, the rock band *was* a success, and the government *has* made an announcement.

Beware of everyday household chores and objects; they are rife with usage variation. Fairy Liquid does not exist in the US, and we do the dishes, not the washing up. Grills are mostly for outdoor cooking – in which case they're synonymous with barbecues – or they are great flat expanses in greasy spoons for frying eggs and bacon on, but whatever they are, American grills are always, always, always something you cook food on top of, not under. The heating source at the top of your oven is the broiler, and not something one cooks toast under. That's what toasters or toaster ovens are for. (And while we're at it, toast should be buttered while it's still hot. Cretins.) Americans have no cookers at all, poor little lambs, we only have stoves or ranges. Nor do we have cookery books; they're cookbooks. And no matter whether there is a bathtub in the same room as the toilet, or not, that room is still the bathroom, or in public places, restroom. The room is never the toilet; that's reserved for the porcelain font itself. When nature calls, we do not "want the toilet", we "need to go". Also, we simply do not *bathe*; we *take* baths, or we shower, but we never, ever, in a million, trillion years 'have a bath'. (Ye gods and little fishes, you might as well drag out the crumpets and tea towels with images of the Queen Mum.) When we put on our swimsuits and get in water at the beach or in a pool, we are going swimming, or taking a swim. And, in fact, in general Americans are more grabby than Britons. Whereas you seem to passively *have* things, we forthrightly *take* them.

Editor's Note: as a part of the peace accord signed following the War of 1812, The English Language is a wholly owned subsidiary of the USA.



The American form of English is somewhat closer in construction and vocabulary to Italian than it is to German, which is closer to the British form of English.

We do not bespeak things; we order them custom. Ready-made clothes are off the *rack*, not the *peg*. We hardly have any trolleys at all, and all of those are street cars. Anything else you might suppose to be a trolley is really a cart. Steel-basketed thing at the grocery store? Cart. Wheeled object for moving medical equipment around? Cart. Rolling equipment for emergency room use – including defibrillator and selection of IV drips? Crash cart. Tea trolleys of course just plain don't exist (nor, alas, decent tea), but if they did, they would be tea carts, just as restaurants

sometimes have dessert carts. And in America, virtually nothing comes in tins. Soup comes in cans. Sardines come in cans. Conserved foods that are not either frozen or put up in jars, all come in cans. Paint comes in cans. About the only things that you find in tins are Danish cookies and fancy teas, and those are fancy, embossed tins, with pry-off lids. Which is why there's no such thing as an American tin opener. And while we're still in the kitchen, consider coffee. In America, "coffee" is a mass noun, like butter or sugar, not a count noun, like cup. Therefore Americans will have "coffee", "some coffee", or "another cup of coffee", but under no circumstances would we have "a coffee".

America has no posh frocks. Nothing posh. No frocks. And ABSOLUTELY no posh frocks. Dear God. If you say "posh frock" you're not just British, you're English, and you're hopelessly plummy and twee on top of it. Except that Americans don't say "twee".

Watch your prepositions and articles. Americans worry *about* people not *over* them. We fool *around* rather than messing *about*. While we're matriculated university students we're *in* college, not *at* it. And no American university, no matter how good, do we *go up to* or *get sent down from*. Addresses and people may be on particular streets, but not in them, unless they are standing or lying right in the middle of the thoroughfare. (Pavement, by the bye, is whatever we pave our streets or sidewalks with. The paved pedestrian pathways alongside



the roads are sidewalks.) Conversely, when we're in the hospital (note the non-optional definite article) we may be *in* a ward, but not *on* it. We fill forms *out*, even though, I agree, filling them *in* would make more sense. We're perverse that way. And one of the many ways we are different *from* the Brits is we never say "different *to*". The growing hordes of the ill-educated have been known to say "different *than*", but this is a regrettable abomination and should also be avoided.

"That's too bad" is a mild expression of genuine sympathy. Period. When we mean "tough shit", we

say, "Tough shit."

"Californian" is a person from California, and nothing else. Americans do not speak of Californian orange juice, the Californian sunshine, or a Californian accent, any more than Britons speak of the Londonian police or the Surreyish countryside. It's California sunshine, Florida orange juice, and Minnesota Nice. Do not be tempted to add an "n" to make an adjective. It's just wrong.

A junket is never a banquet. A junket is a subsidized trip wherein vendors attempt to get political favors, good will, positive press, or future business by providing free goods or services, especially luxurious ones. The places where you park your car are not car parks. They may be parking lots, parking garages, or parking structures, but we reserve our parks for industry. Which is to say that we don't have industrial estates; they're industrial parks, whereas housing estates are developments. Council housing estates are low income housing. The only things that are estates are what dead people leave behind in their wills, or a large piece of property surrounding a stately home. By the bye, that large piece of property around a stately home is not itself a park, since parks, unmodified, are public spaces, not private ones. And while we're on the subject of buildings, neither offices nor apartments (never flats) come in units called blocks. A block is the distance from one city or suburban street to the next. You may have an apartment building or an office tower, however.

Don't *mind* us: Americans have no minders. We don't mind ourselves or one another, though we might watch ourselves, look out for each other, or look after one another, depending on whether you mean manners, caution, or health-related caretaking. Usually we only mind each other when the other is being rude, and even rudeness does not make me my brother's minder, though if I am of a biblical bent I might claim to be his keeper. Our children have baby sitters or nannies. Spies have handlers. We don't mind the gap, unless we have an anti-corporate bent, but we do like the cute little T-shirts from your adorably functional subway. Also, switching minds for a moment, we don't normally substitute "I don't mind" for "Yes, please."

Sports. Note the plural. Remember it and use it. ("Sport" is someone who is good-natured and game.) Many headaches may be had relating to the transatlantic understanding of sports. Presumably you already know about the difference between what we call football and what you call football. That's just the beginning. The group of players who share a locker room is called a team. Just that. Never a club, and totally, absolutely never a side. Delete from your vocabulary all colloquial phrases that depend on the equation side = team. We have somehow retained the phrase "choosing sides", but it's strictly an oppositional term, not about picking teams. For that reason, it's impossible for an American to let *the* side down, though certainly he might let the team down, and possibly he might let *our* side down, as opposed to those evil them. But really, American usage of "side" in a sports context is tricky for Britons, and is best simply avoided. And trainers. Trainers are people, not shoes. Athletic shoes might be tennies, tennis shoes, running shoes, high tops, Nikes (or whatever brand), but never plimsolls, which are in fact British for sneakers. Also, punters. No punts, ergo no punters. The only punters we have are the ones who punt the ball in football, if the quarterback decides not to try another running play on the final down.

Things vehicular: what the hell is a saloon car? It had better serve whiskey and have swinging doors and a piano player named Lefty if an American drives it. Otherwise it's a sedan. Not "sedan *car*": just sedan. Estate cars are likewise banned in favor of station wagons. A coach, like a trainer, is a person. Or possibly it's a species of horse-drawn carriage. What it isn't is any kind of motorized vehicle. Whether

a cross-country Greyhound or the cross-town local transit, the object you're thinking of is a bus. Which, unless it's a horribly pretentious tourist-conveyance, does not have an internal spiral stair or a second storey. Also, a van is only a van if the driver's seat and the cargo area have no intervening walls dividing them. If a vehicle has a discrete cab for the driver, it's a truck, irrespective of size or number of axles. The one exception would be moving vans – trucks that movers use can still be called moving vans, despite really being trucks, as in United Van Lines. Don't ask me why. Obviously, America has neither lorries nor lifts, at least not in the vehicular sense. Lifts may still be the little man's helper.

What all those vehicles drive on, in the city, is streets. Roads are strictly rural things. Whether there are circular intersections at all varies by region, but if they exist, they are traffic circles or rotaries, rather than roundabouts. (And that thing with carousel horses is a carousel, you see, hence the name.) And while all cities have streets, no American city has a high street, though a small and old-fashioned enough town may well have a main street instead. Americans might, on occasion, refer to the commercial establishments lining that main street as shops; but we do not "go out to the shops", we go shopping. (Generally speaking, be very circumspect when using the noun "shop" at all – we don't use it the same way you do, and far less frequently anyway.) When we shop for food, that's grocery shopping, not food shopping, and if we have something wrapped, it's a package, not a parcel. If we pick up prepared food and take it home, that's "take out", or "to go", but never "take away."

And so it goes, on and on. Perhaps you think I'm taking the piss, winding you up. Truly, I'm not. We really do talk like this. We say "around" for "about", most of the time, too. The old saw about being divided by a common language is remarkably apt. It's not like Americans aren't equally bad at speaking British. To be avenged on me, you've only to point at any of the ghastly hordes still doing bad Monty Python English accents, and Bob's your uncle.



The funniest cultural misunderstanding from Christopher J. Garcia's TAFF Trip: "Time, Gentlemen!" calls the barkeep. "Almost Midnight," answers Chris.

Acton by 'Tubewhore'

This last issue of this esteemed fanzine introduced readers to my vanity project to visit every one of the stations listed on the London Underground map, and to write about it via my blog, tubewhore, on the Livejournal site. Since I began the journey in August 2006 I have found myself sucked into a strange world of nerdiness and geekery regarding the Tube network, and if there is a Mecca for the legions of transport spotters and train spods, it must be the London Transport Museum's Acton Depot.

In March it held one of its infrequent Open Days where for a small fee you can wander round a vast warehouse of assorted strange machinery, petting the huge bearings and playing on defunct rolling stock, and naturally I absolutely couldn't miss the annual opportunity to see inside the hanger for myself. I'd been waiting for this weekend with mounting anticipation since I first heard about it back in July '07. Only once a year, the Acton Depot opens its door to all and sundry. The imagination runs wild; somewhere in deepest Acton there's a warehouse stuffed with all manner of transport-related heavy machinery, equipment, street furniture, signage, posters, and any other unknown bits and bobs, scale models and sundry peculiarities that have a home nowhere else.

People who wear their authority like a mantle provoke in me a desire to blow raspberries or flash my bra at them.

Walking into the depot itself is walking into a wall of smell and memory. Immediately I'm back in my grandfather's workshop as a very small child; it's the scent of old machines, dust and time. The smell of heavy cast metal, gearings and axle grease. Inside the warehouse, every square inch of space is crammed with machinery in various states of completion: there are bits of trains, buses, Tube carriages and trams, plus bearings, gears, switching equipment, switchboards or signage, all of it piled up in what seems almost random order, plonked down wherever

there was floor space when the delivery guy turned up. There is a small stand of street lights huddling together like grazing giraffes, a wall filled with time-card machines, clocks all now

stopped; the stairway to the mezzanine floor is covered in a variety of signage directing you to a variety of nowheres, a marvellous nonsense of defunct instructions. The inherent steampunker in me is gibbering in delight at the embarrassment of riches on offer, of the clocks and dials and Bakelite, of switches and valves and important-looking levers; this is heavy engineering, of things built to last from a time before miniaturisation. The air is delicious with the scent of hard-working things, now idle but utterly fascinating in their scale and dislocation from purpose.

Filling up the pathways there's stall upon stall selling transport ephemera interspersed with model railways. People selling timetables and maps jostle up against dioramas of tiny little tramways pootling up and down tiny high streets, overseen by the proud men that have spent hours hiding in the garden shed reproducing Weston-Super-Mare in 1952 in 7MM scale. It's all rather mad and wonderful. I buy lots of posters, baggage forwarding labels and old tram tickets.

The atmosphere in the building is one of gentle decay, a shoring up of the discarded and dusty, of technology that's been superseded and abandoned as flotsam on the tide of progress.

There are handwritten signs in faded ink on some of the exhibits saying that no one knows what such a thing might be, so if you might, please inform a member of staff. This kind of preservation of the puzzling fragment stands in stark contrast to the Museum proper in Covent Garden which exudes a far more official, educational air, and as such is a damn sight less fun.

Now I'm all for education, but I'm also very keen on exploration and exchange of ideas, and museums are often much more interested in promoting an official story and a sense of authority. People who wear their authority like a mantle provoke in me a desire to blow raspberries or flash my bra at them. They don't like admitting they don't have all the answers. In museums, the weight of this authority is palpable, leading to people feeling they should speak in hushed tones when in the presence of the precious objects that have been carefully displayed with notes and labels, enshrined in glass cases on plinths for your reverent worship and edification. Things are

carefully arranged to tell an official history, and everything is terribly important and meaningful. You are far less important than the wonders you have come to view. As much as they



to promote accessibility, you can't engage with museum things when they are divided from you by plexiglass and a sense of importance, and it's just this sense of engagement that makes Acton so delightful. It's all just a big pile of stuff, like a full-size toy box spread across the floor in a joyous jumble. You can poke things and press buttons, take pictures and sniff things, and a century of dust is coughed from the seat springs when you pat the upholstery in a friendly gesture to a friend to sit down beside you in a train carriage from the '30s.

It's staffed by a legion of enthusiasts, many of whom were puzzled by a number of oddly dressed gothy types turning up and cackling madly over the assorted wonders on display. Myself and friends were asked 'Who do you represent?', as though we ourselves were freewheeling exhibits for a different venue. This is a treasure trove of delights to make you clap your hands with glee, made all the better for it being filled with others who would see your

delight and say, 'Yes, isn't it brilliant!' and be happy for your excitement. People – both staff and fellow nerds – were on hand to tell you interesting snippets and were often delighted to be able to geek out about Tubes to a pair of excitable girls who were clearly loving playing on the trains. We were still talking to staff well after the day had officially ended and we were supposed to go home.

And, of course, there's so much to see that I could only have covered about a third of it and never found the small pile of bits that are the surviving remains of a circular escalator that never saw working service being, it was decided, A Bad Idea and possibly even Bloody Dangerous; so I can't wait for next year and the chance to go again. Next time I bring sandwiches.



Though Tubewhore does take a strong shot at us museum types, I can't say that she's wrong about us.



For the best example of curatorial arrogance, watch "Who the !@&\$& is Jackson Pollack?" a fine documentary.

The LoC Box

Dear James, Chris and Claire:

Greetings, you Journeyplanetees. As if you haven't got enough to do, and don't have enough fanzines to work on, you go and produce this new one, and make the rest of us look bad. And, just to spite you, I'm going to write this loc, and serve you all right. So there!

James, I wield the Power of Two, too. And I've been doing so for 25 years. (I won't do the wind chill joke.) You'd think that ring would tarnish with age, but nope, it just gets shinier all the time. Max, hard to believe you're still in touch with some of the YAFA kids, but it's an indication that you've made an impact, and shown them something engaging, and not dumb because adults are involved in it. Your friend Mick sounds like a couple of fans locally, and I won't identify them for fear of getting rapped for it.

Greetings, John, you shit-hot writer you. I think the last time I got drunk at a con, I was the chairman, so I had the perfect excuse. I also had good camouflage...a one-litre jug of orange juice, spiked with peach schnapps. Fuzzy navels...they're not just for breakfast any more. Yvonne and I are hoping to get to London sometime in the next few years, so your fan's guide to London would be very handy indeed, especially information about Forbidden Planet. We might take in a con, as well as a tour of the city, so we need to save substantial bucks to do it. (And, you're right about Chris.)

Yvonne, I wouldn't try to edit James. That's Simoné's job now.

I've never taken part in a fanzine in an hour, although I'd like to give it a shot, especially with Chris running around like a very hairy werewolf. Tobes should know that with the term "content provider", the accent on content is on the first syllable. When it's on the second, it's a very different meaning indeed. I have some hopes there will be some different names on the Hugo ballot next year. Chris, is that your pocket watch? Beautiful.

Traveling to conventions is one thing, but one method we like to use when we can is the train. Next month, we will be taking the train from Toronto to Montréal for Con*cept, Montréal's annual convention. Should it be a pleasant trip, we will probably do the same thing for Anticipation. VIA Rail is quite roomy and comfortable, and we are hoping to enjoy the train before people tired of spending too much on gasoline decide to take the train instead, and crowd it

the way Ang describes.

Hi, Dave, I can't believe I've run conventions, either. Given the new legalities involved in doing so, I think I'd slink off when no one's looking, or dump it on the first person to miss a committee meeting. To me, those crazy days are in the past, I've run my few, and I don't get to run then any more, nyeahh, nyeahh...

I would ask Peter Sullivan if he had done that fanzine he wanted to do, a one-shot at a convention, maybe this one, and if he was able to use that old article of mine about holographic cats. If you did, could I get a copy or e-copy?

If we had laptops in 1980, would any of us have wanted to meet anyone else except in chat rooms on the Internet? We'd all have tremendous conversations and feuds, and probably wouldn't have met anyone. And, if we were going to have sex with our computers, they'd have a very special port. Too hot to type? Is that how they say it now? Save the apostrophe! Buy a copy of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves!* Lilian, if you're going to describe the undergarments you're wearing, we're going to need more description, or at least a photo.

Chris, you said in *The Drink Tank* 181 that *Journey Planet* 1 was worth taking the time to respond to fairly. Exactly right, took me two days to actually write this loc, and I still only get a page and bit's worth out of it. Shoot me now! (Do not think of a Warner Brothers cartoon. I said, don't think of it!) I presume there will be an issue 2? I will do a better job of it, I promise. See you bunch then.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Chris says...

We can always depend on a LoC from Lloyd, which is a good thing, indeed.

Max's piece was my favourite in the first issue because, reading it at the exact moment I was meeting several of the main players at Eastercon, I could totally envision it all happening. It's one of those stories that's not only fannish, but really, if you've got fun friends this is the type of story you have to tell!

I'm firmly of the belief that a Fanzine in an Hour is impossible, but saying that you're doing a fanzine in an hour is a good way to get yourself a fanzine in a day.

Linda and I are doing Toronto first and then heading to Montreal by train, so maybe we can carpool!

I'm quite proud of JP1 and now 2. I think we done good!



