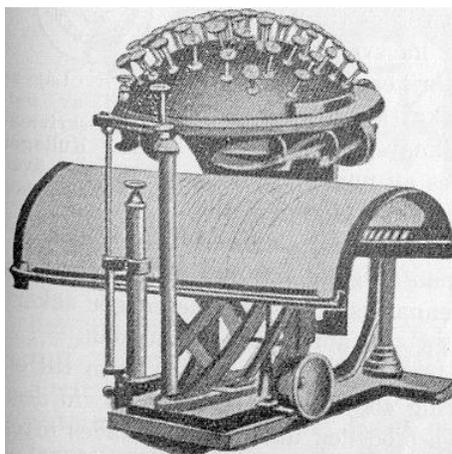


PHYSICALITY OF WORDS ON PAPER



A science fiction/personal fanzine by Åka
October 2007

This is a fanzine. That is here taken to mean that it's a low budget publication edited by a fan. A fan in this context means a person in some way associated with the science fiction movement known as plain *fandom* (it was the first of all the fandoms now existing, and thus didn't get a qualifier in front of the name). The fan editing this particular fanzine is Anna Davour, also known as Åka. She likes feedback, and receives e-mail sent to the address adavour@owl.phy.queensu.ca. The physical address is subject to change, but until December 31 it will be 17 Van Order Drive 7-204, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7M 1B5. Copyright belongs to the individual contributors, but you are encouraged to download, print and distribute the entire fanzine freely.

See also <http://physicalityofwords.blogspot.com>.

What is this?

This is a fanzine aimed primarily at a readership by sf fans but also other people generally interested in fantastic literature – or perhaps in getting to know me, the editor. It is intended for print, but will also be distributed online as a pdf file. It will contain thoughts and musings about genre literature (mostly sf, which includes some fantasy), zine reviews (web zines, traditional fanzines, other small press magazines), and some notes on the world as it looks from my perspective.

I hope to have readers with varying background, so I will not assume any knowledge of fandom or fanzine culture. I might occasionally use

some fan slang anyway. If you encounter words you don't recognize, just think of them as you would think of a new thing in a science fiction story: it will become clear what it means if you just get to know this universe some more.

Everything in this issue is written by me, except the letters (and that will be obvious).

Why am I doing this, putting together a document to distribute to people?

It's as simple as this: I'm addicted to the mind-expanding tool of text — of reading and writing. A steady supply of books and regular opportunities to sit down and order my thoughts in sentences

and paragraphs, that is as important for me as oxygen, tea and chocolate. And here I am, in a new country full of people who might be interested in discussing books and perhaps reading my fanzine! It should be possible to find at least one or two, if I really look for them.

Everything springs from my love science fiction and fandom. Science fiction is a playground for the mind, fandom is common ground for the playful minds. In a perfect world, in the Utopia where people can spend their time working together or alone finding things out and making things up (that's science and art, in a broad sense), there would be all the good things I find in fandom.

I was originally drawn into fanzine fandom as a result of a mild attack of home sickness the last time I spent a few months abroad. I was in Germany to practice my language skills, and missed my friends in Uppsala. I wrote some things as a greeting to the local circle of sf fans, stapled the pages together and sent them in time for the monthly pub meeting. The response didn't come until I was back home, but then I found out that there were people who actually cared about what I was writing (and about the fact that I was writing in this form at all).

Fearless Fantasy

How I found some readers of the fantastic.

Before moving to Kingston I tried to find out if there were any local science fiction fans here. I found indications that a former fanzine fan might live in Kingston, but that was all. Well, if I don't find any organised fans I'll just have to try to gather some readers of fantastic literature and start something on my own, I figured. How hard can it be?

As it turned out, I didn't have to.

When I stepped through the door at Book Market the first thing I noticed was a sign on the front of the counter: "Fantasy book club meeting at the library". Yes! It could be worth checking out. I hesitated only for a few seconds, and then I asked about it. A small group, not yet with established routines, open for suggestions about how to meet and what to read.

The second tuesday of September. Five people

Fanzines turned out to be something I had always missed: an outlet for the thoughts in my head. Fanzines are a means of communication with people who might be interested in what I have to say, but communication slow enough that I have time to formulate myself properly. (I used to have a problem with all of these interesting things accumulating in my mind until I could not decide where to start, and therefore I would wave my hands a lot and start talking about ten things simultaneously. I still have that problem, but to a much milder degree and not too trying for the patience of the people around me.)

Just a few years later weblogs entered the scene, and after a while I could not resist. I've been blogging since the beginning of 2005 (and I've had several different blogs). Somehow it cannot completely replace fanzines for me, there is some special feeling in compiling and formatting a new issue. *Physicality of Words* was the name I made up for my new blog in English, and this fanzine is therefore the *Physicality of Words on Paper* – although you might have downloaded a pdf from the web it is intended to be printed for (by) anyone who prefers a hard copy.

gathered around a much too large table. A novel by Tanya Huff was the reading assignment, and someone had actually printed out a list of questions in case the discussion would stall.

Who are they? Different ages. Seem to know about fantasy, two of them have read very much. The question is: do we include science fiction? Probably, although M was somewhat reluctant. She likes the fantasy aspect of sf, not the actual hard sf parts. P loves Asimov and Bradbury and is happy with anything. The other M looked seriously at me: "as long as you're not a trekkie, or a Star Wars fanatic". No problem.

I slowly relaxed. I know this type of person. Book readers, book lovers, seekers of the fantastic. I think I will feel at home.

They know nothing about fandom though. I told them about the Judith Merrill collection, and

about the Worldcon in Montreal 2009. Will they want to read my fanzines? Let's find out! Next

meeting is October 16, and we will discuss *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle.

Little everyday differences

About my impressions of Canada

Sweden is a small country in the upper corner of Europe. It is mostly empty, and compared to other European countries the distances between the small cities are vast. Tell someone from central Europe about people who drive for over an hour to have a pizza and go home again – they will almost not believe you. Tell an American and they will not understand what would be strange about that. Everything has another scale on this continent. Canada is much like Sweden, only so much larger that it makes me dizzy. (In case you want to know, only Ontario is twice as large as Sweden. The population is not so much larger, Ontario has about 14 persons per km² while Sweden has 22 per km². Canada in total has a population density of 3.2 per km². Sweden is a long country from south to north, but just the border between Canada and USA is more than five times longer – 5.66 to be accurate.) And I don't even have a driver's license.

From Uppsala, a city dominated by the university, we moved to the even smaller Kingston with just as many students. The similarities are many, making it a relatively smooth transition. Still, it's always a challenge to move abroad. And there is always the human tendency to like what we recognize and to be surprised and perhaps annoyed by things that are different. What do we find, what do we think, what are the little things that make it obvious to us that we are not in Uppsala anymore? (In the following, please remember that we have not explored very much of Canada yet, and some of our observations may be specific for Kingston.)

Andreas – my husband – commented that he thinks that Sweden is more science fiction than Canada. By this he meant that things seem slightly more streamlined at home, slightly more modern and high tech.

One thing that seems strange to us is to have to learn to use checks. You cannot avoid it. Actually, the alternative to checks often seems to be cash rather than some other kind of transfer. I payed our first rent in cash, which felt very odd. At home we would have got a bill in the mail with an account number on it, and in case we could not use

online banking we would have gone to a bank and transferred the money to the landlord's account. Checks are something that people used 20 years ago, and carrying large amounts of cash is just strange.

But generally I cannot say that things here seem old-fashioned, they are just different.

Beverages are definitely different. I'm very fond of carbonated water, and there is not one single vending machine on campus that has sparkling water in it. I don't want to pay for still water (it may taste better than tap water, but it still feels ridiculous) and I don't want a sweet drink. Where I find carbonated water it is often some fancy brand (expensive) and very small bottles.

And then there is the coffee. I'm not much of a coffee drinker, I prefer tea. One guy told me that he had heard that tea contains twice as much caffeine as coffee. I told him that I was sure it was the other way around. Then I went to a department colloquium where they served cookies, and together with something sweet I usually like the contrast of the bitter coffee – but when I poured the coffee in my cup I had to ask if there was something wrong with it. I had a full cup, and I could see the bottom of it through the light brown liquid. It did not even taste much like coffee. Apparently it was meant to be that way, and noone else complained. My tea is blacker! I can believe that it contains more caffeine than this lame excuse for coffee.

Since then I have tasted much stronger coffee here, but on average I'm sure it's much more diluted than people usually make it at home.

Cheese is different too. It has the same names as some cheeses I know, but they are clearly not the same. This yellow cheddar is funny. But the mozzarella is hard and has a strong taste, nothing like the soft and mild Italian version. Not bad at all, but different. The havarti is not like the Danish thing that we once bought and that you could smell all the way down on the street outside the building where we lived on the fourth floor. The feta on the other hand actually tastes as I would expect – but I'm surprised that it's called feta al-

though it's made outside of Greece. It must be some EU regulation which is not applicable here.

A very pleasant discovery is how nice and helpful people are. Really. And friendly. People actually talk to each other, even people who just happen to sit close to each other on the bus. It makes me feel welcome. I guess Swedes at home really are as closed as people say. I wonder what impression I make, with my Swedish sense of personal space. I'll adapt.

Something I'm not used to is the abundance of science fiction everywhere. It is not that it's really difficult to find sf at home, but you need to go to the right places and know what to look for. Here I can go to the library and actually find lots of new titles among the old classics. At home the sf

Zine reviews

This is the section where I write about small press and amateur magazines. Kind of like this one, only mostly fancier. I intend to review one traditional sf fanzine, one webzine and one "other" in each issue (so let's hope that there will be more issues in the future)

Steam Engine Time #7

This is a publication by the experienced fanzine editors Bruce Gillespie and Janine Stinson (Australia and USA). It's available from <http://eFanzines.com>.

This issue is nice looking with 44 pages and a colour picture on the front cover. It contains a thematic section with three articles about short stories, two articles about the fiction of Alan Garner and ten pages with letters of comment. There are also two editorials, and an "article of comment" about Harry Potter, some lists of recommended reading, and a few other things.

Reading this reminds me of the fun in discussing what I read. This is a fanzine for those seriously interested in fantastic literature.

The letter section is very interesting, about ten pages of various comments and discussion of the previous issues. If I could ever have such a letter column in my fanzines! This is the ultimate measure of success for a fanzine, in case you don't know. Reader interaction.

Here we find for example a debate between Bruce Gillespie and Darrell Schweitzer about the true significance and legacy of New Wave. I had no

shelves at the library contain a sad collection of books translated 20 years ago or more, since not much sf is published in Swedish any more.

There are also many stores that sell used books, *everyone of them* with a large section of science fiction.

I get these impulses to buy a lot of sf books just because they are available, but mostly I'm able to resist. But not always. We didn't bring many books with us when we moved here (we had only four suitcases in total, with mostly clothes). After a month we had almost one meter of books, and we have to think about getting ourselves a bookcase. I wonder what we will do with the things when we have to go back to Sweden. . .

idea that this was still a hot topic, but apparently even some younger readers have strong (negative) feelings about this movement. People I know tend to be very positive to the whole thing, I know some who would say that the most important contribution by Michael Moorcock to the genre was to edit *New Worlds* and introduce the new stuff. My parents were still in school when all of this happened, but I'm collecting the *Orbit* anthologies together with my husband.

There are also a couple of different comments on things related to politics in science fiction and in the future. It makes me think that I should take the time to read the earlier issues, if I remember to squeeze it in between all other things on my reading list. I wish I had time to think about everything I find interesting and write well formulated responses and well researched fanzine articles about everything. (That's what I'm working on in what remains of my spare time after family and friends get their share.)

You might now think that the most interesting was the letter column, since that is what I focus on here, but the part about short stories probably is of more general interest. The guest editorial about book awards and what they are good for (or not) one of those pieces that make me think and want to formulate my own opinion.

If you never read fanzines you might want to start with something like *Steam Engine Time*. It has a personal tone, but it's not difficult to understand if you're new to fandom. (If you're not

interested in serious discussions about literature parts of this fanzine might just be boring anyway, and you should look for something else.)

Flurb webzine #4

<http://www.flurb.net/>

In my browser I have a collection of bookmarks for various webzines (most of them found via Locus online blinks, a news service covering much of new sf related things online). Somehow I seldom visit these sites to actually read the zines, and when I do it's because something in it catches my interest and makes it stand out among the many (and perhaps because I decided to write a review...).

It was not that Flurb is edited by Rudy Rucker, although I keep promising myself to read something by him. It was not even the introduction by Rucker himself, even though it's very nice:

So here's Flurb #4, kicking off a second year of Flurb's world dominance of literary and unclassifiable SF-related webzines that are illustrated with paintings and photos by me.

What made me select Flurb #4 was that it contains a story by Kim Stanley Robinson. I read everything by Stan Robinson. It's not that I always love it while I'm reading, but his stories always remain with me after putting it down. Often I feel sort of energized, inspired to be present and active and participate in things going on in the world. At least this is the best explanation I can think of now to why I always seek out things written by KSR.

His story in Flurb is called "Kistenpass", and it's about some experiences hiking in the Swiss Alps. It's about mountains, but also very much about culture shock, about living in a foreign country where you do not master the language, and about dealing with unexpected obstacles. No science fiction this time (except for one of the photos perhaps), but nevertheless a good story. And I think everything really happened.

Of the other contributions I think "The Vicar of R'Lyeh" by Marc Laidlaw is the one I'm going to remember. It's fun (and it has a good horror element), and I have played enough of the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game to make up for my lack of interest in the works of H P Lovecraft. The story is illustrated with photos of seaweed and other sea things, very appropriate.

There is an essay by Kathleen Ann Goonan, "What Science Fiction is All About, or, The Amazing Dancing Chairs". About growing corn and about neighbours with guns and about life and science fiction. And dancing chairs. Excellent fanzine material.

I'm not sure what to say about the rest. I have not read all of the stories yet, but since I gave myself a deadline I had to write some kind of review anyway. I have seen enough to say that I can recommend it. The layout makes it possible to actually read on the screen (if you have discipline and are not distracted by other things like Cory Doctorow predicts you will be). Go check it out! If nothing else, just the pictures.

Steampunk Magazine #2



This is a beautiful magazine published by a group called Strangers In A Tangled Wilderness, and available for download at www.steampunkmagazine.com.

Being very fond of creativity, of people doing things just because they like it, and of general do it yourself-attitude, I can't help loving Steampunk Magazine. This is a nice mix of articles, interviews, short stories and illustrations, together inspiring steampunk as an attitude or even a subculture.

The first issue had some theoretical texts about the deeper meaning of steampunk, but you get a good general impression of what the people behind the zine mean by it without reading those. It's about the aesthetics of visible and workable technology, it's about doing things in the physical world, and it's about non-conformity – among other things. Of course there is also the polished

brass, the dirigibles and the usual steam age inspired props.

In this issue there is for example an article about the “pennyfakething”, which is an instruction on how to rebuild a bicycle to something with the same feeling as a pennyfarthing (you know, those 19 century bikes with a huge front wheel). There is also a beautifully illustrated inspirational article of how to dress in steampunk fashion and how to make your own steam gear. We also get an interview with “hacker/contraptor” I-Wei Huang, who build steam powered gadgets which give him fame and glory.

I also highly recommend the long article about

Some letters

LoCs to an earlier fanzine.

In 2005 I attended the Worldcon in Glasgow. I wanted to take the opportunity to establish contacts with other fanzine editors and actually managed to prepare a fanzine to trade with: *Of Physicists and Fen*. This is the first fanzine I have produced in English since then (I became a mother shortly after the convention, and then I had to finish a thesis, so I've been busy) and there are letters of comment which were never printed anywhere. Here they come, two years later.

I'm very happy for every sign that anyone is reading my fanzines!

Jerry Kaufman

Thank you for giving Suzle and me a copy of your fanzine, which I enjoyed a good deal. I thought your writing was quite warm and personal, easy but not glib. I liked very much the comparison you make between the two worlds you inhabit, and would welcome more from you.

I would ask that, in future, you make your margins a little smaller and your type size a little larger. That way you could have the same number of words per page. The size of type you used rather strained my eyes!

I read Jukka Halme's fanzine just before yours, so I got some added pleasure from comparing your ConCeive experience with his. (It's been over a week, so I've already forgotten the particulars in which you differ.)

I think someone gave you copies of our fanzine, Littlebrook, in Glasgow, but if you didn't get all

the history of steampunk in various forms of cultural expression, like literature, film, games, and comic books. It doesn't mention all my favourites (I miss *Iron Dragon's Daughter* by Michael Swanwick and *The Light Ages* by Ian R MacLeod), but there are plenty of other titles. I like this kind of well researched overviews.

The stories work less well for me than the articles. Not that they are bad, they just don't catch my interest the way the other things do. I think they are a necessary ingredient anyway, to illustrate some different takes on what steampunk is or could be.

of them, you can find all the current issues at <http://www.efanzines.com/>.

Yours,

Jerry Kaufman
3522 NE 123rd Street
Seattle, WA 98125,US

Hmm, yes, the printed version had really small type size. It was really supposed to be A4 (12 pt size!), but when I copied it I suddenly realized how much money I had spent on photocopies this year and decided to shrink it to half size. Not a really good decision, I agree. The layout was otherwise standard L^AT_EX article.

Bill Burns is a hero. Without eFanzines.com it would be much more difficult and much more work to find fanzines and faneds, and much more difficult to reach others with my own fanzines.

◇ *Áka*

Peter Sullivan

Hi Anna. Thank you for making “Of Physicists and Fen” available on the efanazines.com website.

I especially liked the way that you formatted it to look just like an academic paper - very appropriate! Of course, if you were trying to look the same as most academic papers on the web, you would have to persuade Bill Burns to set up the website so that all we can see is the abstract, and when we click on the main part we just get a message saying "Your

university needs to pay a 5000 kroner annual subscription for this journal." I guess that the economics of peer-reviewed academic journals are a bit different to the egoboo of fandom.

How is the PhD going? When it is finished, will we be able to call you "Doktor Åka"?

I think you are wise to try to balance work with everything else, and Olga is right to tell you so. Up until May, I had a well-paid job, which I enjoyed most of the time, but it was eating up 65 hours a week with all the travelling. I now have a new job that is only 37 hours a week, which lets me spend more time with the people who are special to me, and also some free time to do "fanac." It's less money, but I feel much happier.

I hope you had a good time at Worldcon. I only found out about it just a few weeks ago. I did wonder about going as a day trip, as it is only 3 hours drive from me here in England, but in the end I did not go. If there is not another European Worldcon until 2015, I may regret this decision! Will you be writing up your Worldcon trip in the same style?

Peter Sullivan peter@burdonvale.co.uk Sunderland, England.

Yes, now I'm a doctor of philosophy! (Well... in reality I still need to hand in some things and fill out some forms before I'm allowed to use the title, but I have cheated a couple of times.)

I think a good job is not defined by the money but by how well it allows you to live. You should earn enough, but then the important thing is to feel reasonably happy with what you are doing and to have enough time for friends, family and everything else.

I will probably not write anything much about the Worldcon trip. It was a long time ago, and I have other things to write about.

Chris Garcia

Wonderful title and I was so glad to see this type of work out there. There's far too little of this sort of thing out there running around.

The Free Thinking is Great, Correct Thinking is Better is actually nearly exactly the opposite of the various college mottos I've been at. 'Free Thought is greater than Right Thought' is one that a libertarian group I was once a member of used.

I did an issue of The Drink Tank where I talked about the ways in which a film festival and a con are very nearly the same thing. There seem to be even fewer differences between SF cons and PhysCons (did I just coin a new term?) than I would have thought. Computer conferences are quite different, The Guests of Honour at Comp Cons tend to be there for an hour or two, make their speeches and head for the door. The prices for conferences also tend to be multiple-times larger.

The desire to write popular science is a good one. I try to write popular Computer History, and there is a small, niche market for it. I've sold an article or two in the field, but mostly, I just write for the museum's in-house pub and leave it at that.

Sounds like our theory of what we put in fanzines seem to mesh very nicely. The Drink Tank proves that I am constantly writing and believe that far too many things are interesting.

If you'd ever like to drop an article my way about Swedish fandom or physicists or anything else, I'd love to run them!

Chris garcia@computerhistory.org

I will not promise to write any articles for other fanzines. I would like to, but I struggle to make time to get my own zines out. Maybe I'll feel inspired some day and do it anyway, you never know! Constantly writing...

But I will take a look at your fanzines online.

◇ Åka

◇ Åka

◇ Expect the next issue in January. Or so. ◇