

You should have seen Hitchcock take down an interlineation in Arabic.

CALLING ALL FANNISH PSYCHOHISTORIANS! I would be interested to hear if any survivors of great and horrible fannish conflicts like the Breendoggle or Topic A have any recollection of having noted warnings or portents of doom which preceded those cataclysms. Some have offered the opinion that deep social divisions had been present in fandom for some time before the eventual outbreak of hostilities, and the feuds themselves merely provided a convenient field on which to "resolve" those ancient injuries. Others contend that feud is an inevitable and cyclical event in fandom which requires no more casus belli than the lemming-like proliferation of fans which periods of relative congeniality tend to produce. Whatever model we endorse, is there any way to anticipate the approach of such violent spasms? If we could predict when and how feuds commonly occur we might be able to minimize their effects, on ourselves and on fandom as a whole.

I ask these questions as I have an uneasy feeling that we in fandom may be standing again on the brink of war. Am I the only one who has noticed a shortening of tempers in fandom over the past year or so? Does anyone else notice an increasing number of snarling, hateful letters and commentary in forums like SFC (I have in mind the brutal indictments of the ConFrancisco committee made there by such luminaries as Darrel Schweitzer)? Can anyone else think of recent incidents when gentle, even humorously chiding commentary has been met with threats of total gafiation or feud?

Of course, part of this impression is due to my own ham-handed methods and the consequences which follow. I've been having a share of bitter disputes of late, which is always true, but people suddenly seem prepared to regard any criticism as an attack on their very existence as fans. I find the disease has infected me as well: Recently, Karen Babich raised the old "Trufen as elitist snobs" argument in an apa we both belong to, only she phrased it in such a way that characterized them as bigots. I found this offensive, and responded, at least partially, with an ad hominem argument which could even have been true, but which was inappropriate and rude, and I'm sorry for having used it. I feel stupid for making her so mad.

The thing is, having to hear about the elitist abuses of fanzine fandom over and over again has begun to grate on me. Increasingly, the perception of that abuse is tied up in the expression of any critical thought, no matter how mild or reasoned. I can't (well, I can't) tell you how many DNQ letters I have received in the past year, detailing all the ways my opinions or those of our columnists in SB, have wounded and scourged the writer. But, look, people, I've read real KTF criticism; there isn't anyone working in fandom today who approaches that level of vitriol, not even Peter Larsen. Even Greg Pickersgill, who recently found my work wanting in a review of BLAT! failed to bring me to tears. I think there is little to moan about.

Some fen have referred to this phenomenon as an inroad of "Political Correctness" into fandom. I beg to differ. The national trend of calling anything we find inconvenient "P.C." is a backlash against criticism, against all efforts to alter society into a form which doesn't favor the person doing the name-calling. It ultimately means only that someone is getting preferential treatment, and that someone isn't you. It is this rigidity, the reactionary resistance to all criticism and impetus for

change that is mirrored in current fandom.

Perhaps the secret to modern fanac is this: When in doubt, attack Ted White. In regard to his articles in SB, I have received some real gems. From Kathleen Gallagher, a letter of 2/26/94: "I have to take exception to Ted's offense that Harry Warren (sic) 'should have known' it was only a critique and not a personal attack. I read much of Ted's opinions and I certainly would have been personally offended...I've read other criticisms and heard them at fanzine gatherings and at the Cincinnati Ditto saying the same thing...I never heard one I considered as vicious as Ted's. ...All I can say is Ted, quit living in the 50's and get a life. Fandom has moved on. Some of us enjoy fan history and are glad there are folks out there taking to time to document and preserve it. The stories you choose to tell aren't mine. ...I don't intend to wallow in a past that isn't mine to share. If you had your way, I don't think I'd even be allowed into the present."

Somehow, in the midst of this rant, she transforms Ted's criticism of "Harry Warren" into an indictment of her basic right to be a fan. It's a breathtaking example of illogic, certainly, but it also bears a troubling tone of being a party line, perhaps something roiling around in casual conversation at that Cincy Ditto. One can easily hear this coming from the mouth of Brian Earl Brown. Or perhaps she was once married to Eric Mayer? Another example, from Henry Welch: "I find it ironic that Ted White writes 'One has to wonder if Harlan has any comprehension of how these actions of his are viewed by the rest of us' when he, himself, is guilty of exactly the same sort of actions." Hmmm, Ted, next time you go on TV and call Andy Porter a turd, let me know so I can set my VCR.

It may be that I am reading too much into a few letters, but I can't shake the feeling ugly things are ahead. Does anyone else out there have these paranoid vibrations of dread? Or do you, too, think Ted White is living in the 50s?

I HAVE RECEIVED a handful of letters on the TAFF issue (Thanks!) but more may be coming; I'll get back to that next week. Also: If, as Dan Steffan reports, Corflu NoVa isn't going to sponsor a return of the FAAN awards, might an independent committee do so? Does Corflu have enough to do already anyway? What do you think? -- aph 3/24/94

If the SAN PABLO dies now, she dies clean.

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Address Correction Requested