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I've said this before, but children are terrible artists. And artists are crooks.

A Present From the Past: Looking at 2014 with Dr. Isaac Asimov

Just slightly less than 22 years after his death, it is still Very Good to be Isaac Asimov. The indefatigable Doctor still outsells the great majority of living science fiction writers, and he has enjoyed a sort of renaissance over the first two months of 2014. This has been inspired by the re-examination of a piece that he wrote for the *New York Times* in 1964, speculating on the nature of the World's Fair – and the world that would create it -- in 2014.

Some columnists have used the relative “accuracy” of those predictions as a springboard to dive into classic works from Asimov’s canon. Konstantin Kakaes wrote a piece for *Slate* last November that considered *The Caves of Steel*, *The Naked Sun* and *The Robots of Dawn*, finding contemporary echoes in each.

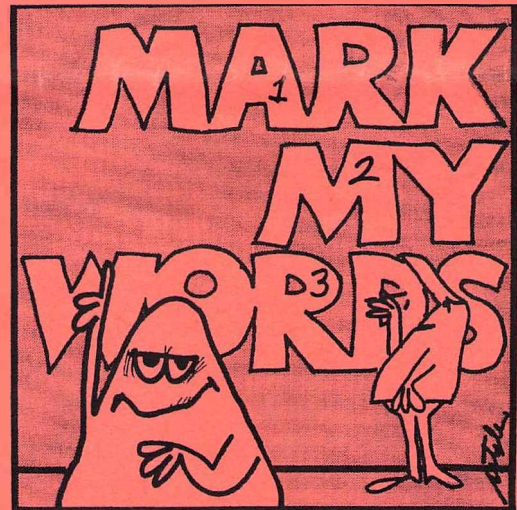
Rebecca Rosen’s appreciation of Asimov’s predictions, datelined December 31st in *The Atlantic*, is largely reflected through the lens of her own concern with climate change, a perfectly rational priority for a contemporary writer. In a January 16th article, *Crave* columnist Eric Mack emphasizes the “failures” in Asimov’s predictions, and seeks to excuse them by citing the perspective of the mid-1960s, feeling the effects of the post-war population boom and technical advances which Mack calls “game-changing.” He feels that the innovations seen between 1964 and 1989 were not as important as those that occurred from 1939 to 1964, and that Asimov’s expectations had been raised by the successful exploitation of the atom and the Pax Americana it bequeathed us.

Everyone, however, agrees that it is very quaint that Dr. Asimov thought that the World’s Fair would still be an important institution in 2014. 20th Century fandom had a particular identification with the New York World’s Fair of 1939, and the 1964 edition felt like a comfortable chapter in a long-running franchise. It also reflected one of the 20th Century’s common social principles, that of innovation for its own sake, of progress as a desirable goal independent of any of the ills that it was expected to cure. This is an assumption which has lost its currency over the 50 years between 1964 and today. People now see innovation as a process largely driven by marketing, and are suspicious of science in a way that would seem quite backward to the confident denizens of 1964.

I don’t think it would come as much of a surprise to Asimov, however. Imagining a highly automated world of 2014, he speculated that boredom would become one of humanity’s most pervasive concerns, and that as more

[Continued on Page 2]

Everybody knows there’s something wrong with them. They just don’t know what it is.



A Key to the lines published in FLAG #12

Page 1: “Do you think that I creep in the night and sleep in a phone booth?”

Lyric from “The Other People,” Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, 1966.

Page 1: “Quackers, Uppers, Downers, All-Arounders – you name it, we want it.”

Sergeant Stedanko (Stacy Keach) expresses the narco-enforcement zeitgeist in *Cheech and Chong’s Up in Smoke*.

Page 4: “A novel is a prose work of a certain length that has something wrong with it.”

Aphorism frequently attributed to Randall Jarrell by Samuel R Delany.

Page 6: “Ah figs, Mother Nature’s brown diamonds. In the fall the rotting leaves smell like an Olympian’s ejaculate!” Myrtle Snow (Frances Conroy) waxes poetic on the FX Network’s *American Horror Story: Coven*.

Page 7: “Beautiful things don’t seek attention.”

Rebel photographer Sean O’Connell (Sean Penn), in Ben Stiller’s film of *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

Page 8: “But not a word I heard could I relate, the story was quite clear.”

Lyric from Led Zeppelin’s “Kashmir,” 1975.

Page 9: “Like the untamed wilditude of nature, exploding in the space where your brain used to live.”

Early Cuyler (Unknown Hinson) extolls his home-made arboreal refreshment “Glug,” from Williams Street’s

Squidbillies. (“An insult to animation” -- Carrie Root, 2014.)

Page 10: “Fandom then was an island of conflicts in a sea of conflicts.”

Oh frag...I really need to write these things down. From a letter written to a recent fanzine – is it one of yours?

A Present From the Past:

Looking at 2014 with Dr, Isaac Asimov

[Continued from Page 1]

and more people support themselves essentially by tending to a machine, genuine “work” will become one of the most prized commodities in the developed world. Many of his predictions were the kind of things that John W. Campbell and Hugo Gernsback had envisioned decades before, a super-streamlined world transformed by abundant energy, and which would evolve politically at a similar pace, enabling the construction of underwater cities and roadways which propel cars with compressed jets of air like a nationwide air hockey table. But there are sobering observations among his projections that impress me much more: “Not all the world’s population will enjoy the gadgety world of the future to the full. A larger portion than today will be deprived and although they may be better off, materially, than today, they will be further behind when compared with the advanced portions of the world. They will have moved backward, relatively.” To me, that is that scariest passage in the entire piece, but it seems to have inspired relatively little comment, in 1964 or 2014.

Pride and Prediction

As usual, FLAG’s most persistent benefactor and correspondent Paul Di Filippo has stepped up to provide me with additional insights into the issues of the hour. His latest decorated package

contained the 25th Anniversary issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, published in October of 1974. Nestled among the issue’s ample fictional attractions, Asimov’s regular “Science” column considers the art of predicting the future through science fiction, and outlines the principles that he felt separated it from mere “fortune-telling.” Observing that there are three laws of everything – motion, robotics, thermodynamics– he proposes “Three Laws of Futurics” to guide the rational extrapolator.

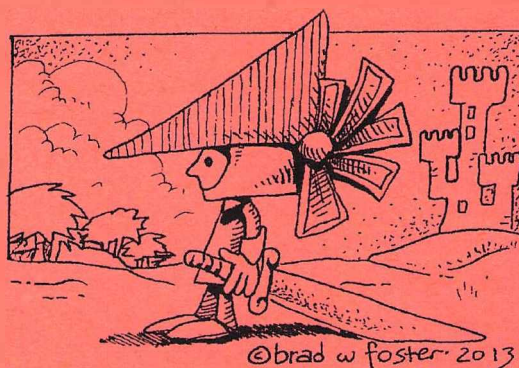
First, “That which is happening now will continue to happen,” also paraphrased as “What has happened in the past will happen in the future.” Asimov observes that this principle is the central theme of his *Foundation* trilogy, and it is a well-established way of looking at history. He observes that the process is frequently “bumpy” and altogether more interesting than we might prefer, but globally, the trend is always toward familiar patterns of event and response.

The second principle is “Consider the obvious first; most won’t.” By 1974, science fiction had been warning of the consequences of unchecked population growth and unregulated industry for nearly 50 years, but when these long-predicted events began to have consequences, we termed

each issue a "Crisis," as if they were sudden and random events of which we had no foreknowledge. Asimov gives perhaps the best explanation for his highly-advanced world of 2014 when he observes that even the most dedicated futurist has to write material appropriate for their market, or in other words, if you want to be published, you are always best advised to tell people what they want to hear. But no matter what we hope or wish the future will be, any credible extrapolation must address the obstacles which confront us in the present, however summarily, if we are to feel some personal investment in the future proposed.

The third Law of Futurics might be seen as an overriding dictum for science fiction in general: "Consider the consequences." In his 1965 essay "Future? Tense!" Asimov wrote "...the important prediction is not the automobile, but the parking problem; not radio, but the soap opera; not the income tax, but the expense account; not the bomb, but the nuclear stalemate." We often characterize good science fiction as asking one more question than most readers would have thought of ourselves. In my own workshop days of 20 years past, this was expressed as the drive to create the "third order story," symbolized by such shorthand as imagining the drive-in movie theater as a distant consequence of the invention of the internal combustion engine. There is a sweet spot where such speculation reaches a new territory of its own while the steps leading back to its point of origin can still be observed and appreciated. To Asimov, if one kept the first two Laws of Futurics in mind while engaging in the third, there was little luck or guesswork required to make a reasonably accurate series of predictions.

I should point out that Asimov was far from being naïve enough to assume that scientific progress would provide an unbroken arc of advances in the human condition. As an undergraduate assistant, he had worked for a researcher investigating "Social Resistance to Technological Change," and the project led him to conclude that there had been a significant backlash against every technical innovation in human history, going back to the invention of the written word. He suggested we would have robots exploring



Mars, but a manned mission would still be in the planning stages. Robots would exist, but they would not be very common or capable. Television would provide a 3-D image on a screen large enough to watch a ballet in "life size," but people's desire for an idealized or hermetic life would also leave them even more disconnected from the natural world. Matt Novak, writing for the "Paleofuture" page at Gizmodo.com characterizes Asimov's 1964 predictions as "shockingly conservative," and *New Republic's* Jerry Coyne sees his failure to anticipate the Internet as a fatal flaw. I see most of Asimov's conclusions as plausibly, reassuringly obvious; far from an insult, by his own criteria.

The Slow Explosion

Some of Asimov's more florid conclusions are related to the general phenomenon of population growth, which he was convinced would render our world a less livable version of Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* or Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* unless we took action to halt it. In fact, the world's population has outstripped his prediction of 6.5 billion by a healthy 600 million, but we have done a better job of generating food, water and shelter for all those people than Dr. Asimov anticipated.

Rather than enduring truly massive death tolls from famine, the planet's systems are slowly shivering to pieces under the combined weight of 7.1 billion people. The oceans that will inundate much of the world's low-lying coastlines by the middle of the century are apparently on the verge of

This does lead me to wonder, however, what kind of Corflu Guest of Honor Jane Austen would have made.

I know it's your bedroom – it smells like clown makeup and spaghetti!

biological collapse. There is a widespread belief that the Earth is about to undergo another mass extinction event, which will also eliminate most of humanity. But the possibility that no such catastrophe will actually occur, and the world's population will expand past 12 billion, most living in conditions comparable to Beijing or Mexico City, is probably both more disturbing and more likely. We are profoundly inventive creatures, and we might be just competent enough to survive under conditions far worse than anything we've imagined so far.

Even Asimov, who wrote a story at age 19 ("Trends," published in *ASF*, July, 1939) in which social resistance to space flight is so great that the first flight around the moon is mounted in secret by a cabal of underground eccentrics, showed more faith in global government and its capacity for useful action than warranted by subsequent events. His heart-warming assumption was: "...the earth's population is now about 3,000,000,000 and is doubling every 40 years. If this rate of doubling goes unchecked, then a World-Manhattan is coming in just 500 years. All earth will be a single choked Manhattan by A.D. 2450 and society will collapse *long before that!*

"There are only two general ways of preventing this: (1) raise the death rate; (2) lower the birth rate. Undoubtedly, the world of A.D. 2014 will have agreed on the latter method. Indeed, the increasing use of mechanical devices to replace failing hearts and kidneys, and repair stiffening arteries and breaking nerves will have cut the death rate still further and have lifted the life expectancy in some parts of the world to age 85.

"There will, therefore, be a worldwide propaganda drive in favor of birth control by rational and humane methods and, by 2014, it will undoubtedly have taken serious effect. The rate of increase of population will have slackened but, I suspect, not sufficiently.

"One of the more serious exhibits at the 2014 World's Fair, accordingly, will be a series of lectures, movies and documentary material at the World Population Control Center (adults only; special showings for teen-agers)."

Asimov had ample opportunity to see just how resistant people could be to a "rational and humane" idea like this; "right to life" activism and the effort to deny women reproductive freedom were well under way before he died

in 1992. The world's two most populous nations, India and China, have established serious policies designed to limit population growth, but these policies do not enjoy a good reputation worldwide, and are seen by many as a draconian intrusion into some of the most basic human rights. Like many of the world's worst problems, population pressure is highly regionalized. In the West, birth rates have dropped spontaneously, for a variety of social and biochemical reasons, and therefore its citizens tend to focus their anxieties on collateral effects of population pressure, including environmental toxins and climate change. The World Health Organization has consistently promoted contraception for 60 years, but even the AIDS epidemic produced something less than a "worldwide propaganda drive." One might also have expected that either of these issues would have inspired the development of technology to make sexual contact universally free of the risk of pregnancy or disease, if the world at large shared Dr. Asimov's priorities.

Prediction and Purpose

It's worth noting that Asimov's decision to couch his article's predictions in the context of a future World's Fair was suggested by the editor at the *Times* who bought it from him, and this premise must have altered his perspective on the shape of things to come. The boredom that he assumed would soon overtake a perpetually underemployed future population seems incompatible with the very concept of an event so dedicated to achievement and ambition in all fields. He thought – or certainly hoped – that we would still be interested in the future by the year 2014, an assumption that may have been irrationally optimistic.

In the 1974 *F & SF* column, Asimov spends considerable effort making the case that prediction is a secondary object at best for the science fiction writer, who, he asserts, "...is a *writer*, first and foremost, and his chief and overriding concern, if he is an honest practitioner of his craft, is to turn out a good story, and bend everything else to that end." But having attended to the aesthetic and financial imperatives of the field, sf writers might well be encouraged to predict the future, since they had done such a good job of it in the past. He recalls the visits paid to Campbell by Intelligence officers after *ASF* published *Deadline* by Cleve Cartmill in March of 1944. Cartmill's story basically described the device still under development by the Manhattan Project; but being based

on publically-available scientific findings, *not* publishing such a story would have been more suspicious than exploring the possibility.

Asimov gives more kudos to “Anson MacDonald” (Robert A. Heinlein), who predicted the invention of a radioisotope weapon, and its use to end World War II, but also its universal supremacy as a strategic deterrent to total war, in his story “Solution Unsatisfactory,” written very late in 1940. A more rigorous reader might point out that Heinlein’s version of the Manhattan Project makes no use of thermonuclear reaction, and is developed by a United States which remained outside the Second World War, as do Japan and the Soviet Union. America gives the radioactive weapon to Britain in exchange for accepting our hegemony over the post-war world. Heinlein predicts the effects of the weapon’s development with depressing accuracy, although his device seems more chemical than nuclear in nature.

I find Asimov’s selection of these two examples interesting, because he seems to be dancing around the questions of not only what science fiction *can* predict, but also what it *should* predict. He makes the point that the development of atomic weapons would have occurred either with or without their parallel invention in fiction, implying that predicting them was not such a noteworthy achievement. But I think he also intends to make it clear that neither Heinlein, nor Cartmill, nor Campbell, nor H.G. Wells, should be *blamed* for the invention of the bomb or its use on Japan. That one might blame them is ludicrous, but if we acknowledge that some predictions are self-fulfilling, the real power of science fiction emerges. The field is quick to accept credit for projecting “benign” advances like satellites and nuclear medicine, but less enthusiastic taking credit for cybernetic spying and ceramic firearms. Prediction and speculation are meant to have both inspirational and cautionary aspects; thus, Asimov held the carrot of flying cars and electrographic wall art, while also wielding the stick of unchecked population growth.

I think the missing element in those predictions from 1964 is any acknowledgment of the human desire for continuity and the familiar. We could indeed be living in windowless, climate-controlled house-bunkers; the technology to create “semi-permeable”

environments screened from most of the world’s microscopic hazards certainly exists. But very few people *want* to live that way; even in the face of speculative works about environmental hazards ranging from *Safe* to *The Toxic Avenger*. We know that the world might poison us, but most of us still want to live here anyway.

In Asimov’s era, the loss of industrial jobs was a major social issue, and he might be excused for expecting that process to continue. But in reality, for many purposes humans are simply far cheaper than machines, even if the machine can do a job more efficiently. And the long-term capital investment needed to build and maintain the machinery has become very difficult to secure; few of Asimov’s predictions anticipate a global economic recession in the years leading up to his 2014 Fair. China is the only nation that currently seems to have the interest and the money to mount International Expositions.

For all these shortcomings, there are still more points where his aim is as uncanny as a blind Zen archer. “Synchronous satellites, hovering in space will make it possible for you to direct-dial any spot on earth, including the weather stations in Antarctica. Communications will become sight-sound and you will see as well as hear the person you telephone. The screen can be used not only to see the people you call but also for studying documents and photographs and reading passages from books.” This written at a time when a useful computer still required its own room. It invites us to marvel at the trip we’ve taken over those fifty years; from carbon paper to the digital cloud. If he doesn’t explicitly predict the Internet, his connected world seems to imply it at several points. Nothing about *Angry Birds*, however.

Asimov and the Web shared the planet for a bit less than a year, so he saw the door to the world we live in creaking open. Wonderful as it all is, one expects that the learned Dr. (who had, come to think of it, certain similarities with The Doctor) would have observed that the Net had much in common with dialog-loving subcultures going back to the invention of telegraphy, and that the evolution of the modern wired world was unavoidably, blindingly obvious. Other consequences – the collapse of print newspapers and the rise of the Twitterverse – are entirely our responsibility.

We live in an ugly city of monsters.

Allow me to explain. You were born with your aggressive tendencies unsuppressed.

COLOR PARTY:

Readers' Letters to FLAG

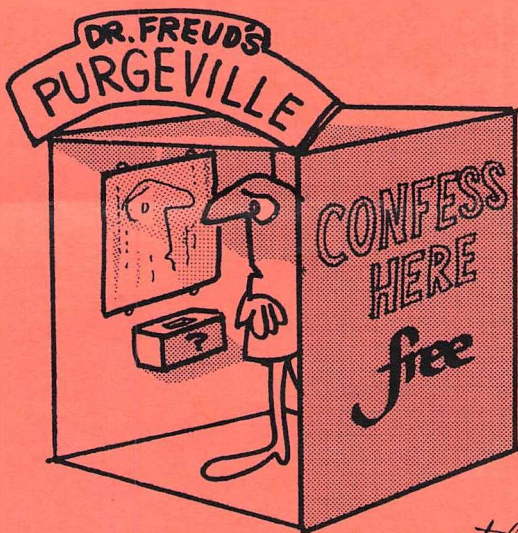
[Response to FLAG continues to exceed my ability to publish it all, so I try to keep my replies brief; as ever, your letters are presented in Georgia, like this, while my comments are explicated in Estrangelo Edessa, like this.]

William Breiding

P.O. Bod 961 Dellslow, WV 26531
wmbreiding@yahoo.com

I thought FLAG #12 was going to be a RAEBNC kind of thing, but then I got to the lettercol. I could blather on about music, but I won't. It was good that Rob Imes edited *Outrageous Cherry* for you. Matt Smith is productive. I have 110 or more of their songs. It does get repetitious! If John Purcell enjoyed print and graphic versions of Lansdale's *Bubba Ho-Tep*, he should by all means track down the film version starring Bruce Campbell. Can't agree with Marilyn Holt that most pop is drivel. Them's is fightin' words! And YES, like the '80s, the '70s produced a whole bunch of great music – and not just starting with the Sex Pistols! I had an immediate urge to make a mix tape for Marlin Frenzel. I made it to a Giants game at Candlestick. It was windy but sublime. Go, McInerny! Too many goddamned fanzines! I want them all!

[Wow, Bill, you're bouncing off the metaphorical clubhouse walls. Glad to inspire such enthusiasm!]



Jerry Kaufman

P.O. Box 25075 Seattle, WA 98165
JAKaufman@aol.com

When I first read *Triton* I completely identified with Bron for about the first two-thirds of the book. It took me that long to realize just how unreliable a narrator he was, and just how troubled. I don't think I had read many, or any, books with a narrator that flawed. So I felt rather unhappy with the way the book went. I decided that the end of the book, in which Bron waits for a dawn that never comes, hinted that he would start to get better. After all, "it's always darkest before the dawn." When I told Chip this, he said, "That's an interesting reading."

Steve Bieler gave me some very nice, and welcome, egoboo in his letter. Too bad that I don't feel like I deserved it. If I were so plugged in, I would have discovered *Mojo* years earlier. If it weren't for my brother-in-law Bob, I probably wouldn't have tried it. He had an issue featuring Leonard Cohen when I last visited him and sister Debby in Denver (perhaps three years ago - way too long between visits, I know). He let me take the issue home, although he kept the CD of different people covering Cohen's music.

Fred Lerner

91 Worcester Ave. White River Junction, VT 05001
Fred.Lerner@dartmouth.edu

Now I know how I'll be spending my retirement. An article about Pat Murphy in a recent SF COMMENTARY sent me to my bookshelves to pick up the copy of *The Falling Woman* that I never got around to reading; and I expect that your remarks on *The Dispossessed* and *Triton* will set me to rereading those novels. (Who knows – I may even decide to reread *Among Others*, a novel to which I took a mild dislike when I read it the first time. If I do return to it, I'll want to do so in print rather than on my Kindle, as I suspect that reading it electronically might have prejudiced my response to the book.)

You say that "the lives of Bron's neighbors Freddie and Flossie were inspired by the treatment of 'Leslie' in Russ's dystopian short story 'Nobody's Home'". I wonder if their names were inspired by the younger of the two sets of twins in Grosset & Dunlap's *Bobsey Twins* books. In the earlier books of that interminable series, Freddie and Flossie were four years old, and their siblings Bert and Nan were eight. In later books they were six and twelve respectively. I can't help thinking that Delany thought this early exercise in

literary time dilation worth alluding to in an outright science fiction novel.

[I'm sure that both you and Delany are "right" – the names of the two characters are surely no coincidence, and I take him at his word regarding the inspiration of their specific nature.]

Marlin Frenzel

P.O. Box 1522886 San Diego, CA 92112

Ho Andy! Thanks for FLAG #12.

I finally got Ouspensky's 2nd book *New Model of the Universe* from the library...information told me it had been withdrawn from general circulation and kept aside from his other books (probably because of the last section dealing with sex and evolution). Anyway, I just finished and am almost through (his) third book *In Search of the Miraculous*. Gonna take a break and read a good long bio of Johannes Brahm!

Also just finished *The Darkness That Comes Before*, Volume 1 of R. Scott Bakker's epic fantasy novel *The Prince of Nothing...* and Volume 2 of Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* comic.

Joseph Nicholas

15 Jansons Rd. Tottenham N15 4JU United Kingdom
josephn@globalnet.co.uk

There was something about the tone of the second paragraph of your opening remarks which sparked in me a belief that you were about to cease publication -- a reflection on how you had felt when setting out, on the plans you had made, on the things you had actually done....followed by the words "Things are a little different now". I fully expected you to say, following the news that Carrie had recently had a pacemaker fitted, that you felt now was the time to "put away childish things" and concentrate on the cares and concerns of adulthood. But instead you promised the next ish in a month's time.

I can't say much in response to your essay on *The Dispossessed* and *Triton* -- I have read the former, once, and struggled through the latter (such a struggle that I can't remember whether I ever finished it); I have never felt any inclination to re-read them, and indeed have never read any fiction by Samuel Delany since then. (I have read *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, but that was a few years later, when I was in my nascent-critic phase.) I do recall that one of the points made about *Triton* at the time, on this side of the Atlantic, was that it was a typical 1970s American SF novel, full of blah about personal growth and getting in touch with one's feelings and all the rest of that "caring California crap". And that Delany was taking a risk with his audience by knowingly providing his novels with titles which could be misread as *Dull-gren*, *Trite One* and *Never Yawn*.

Nothing else to say at this point. So are you still aiming to attend the Worldcon in London later this year, or is that one of the "childish things" you have now put aside?

[I think the most admirable aspect of *Triton* is its resolute focus on the protagonist's inner issues, even though the reader and most of the powers in the universe are shouting at the narrator to discourse further on politics, the war, or the technical underpinnings of the Outer Worlds. I'm sorry for giving such an elegiac impression in #12 – we certainly do still intend to be at LonCon 3 this summer, although I am beginning to ask what I'm actually going to do there.]

Steve Jeffery

44 White Way, Kidlington OX5 2XA United Kingdom
srjeffery@aol.com

Andy, you swine...I now have a really strong desire to dig out and re-read *The Dispossessed*, *Triton*, *Past Master* and Delany's essay "To Read the Dispossessed" and his Appendices to the *Neveryon* books as well as Jo's article on Tor.com (which I was unaware of - thanks for the pointer to that). Do you know how much time it will take?

Silly question. Course you do; you've just done it yourself.

I really don't have the time. Waaah. Excellent ish. Thank you very much.

Bob Jennings

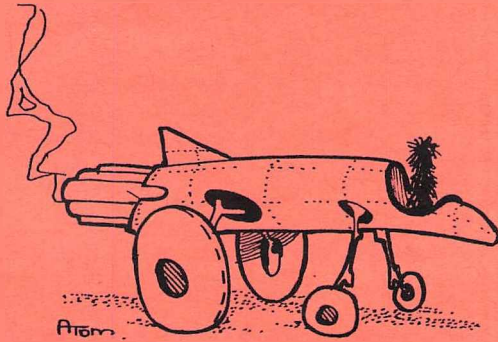
29 Whiting Road, Oxford, MA 01549
fabfcbks@aol.com

I thot you did an excellent job analyzing and comparing *The Dispossessed* with *Triton*. I believe you hit most of the comparison points right on the head, however I must confess that I am also one of those people who was never able to make it all the way to the end of *Triton*. I tried, a couple or three times, but I got bogged down in the long dissertations about Things, stuff that obscured the story line and kept me from concentrating on the plot. Sometimes I couldn't even keep my mind on the pages I was reading. This was before I initiated my 100 page rule. (I give any novel or non-fiction book a hundred pages to grab my interest. If it doesn't grab my interest after a hundred pages, I close the book and move on to something else. Life is too short and there are too many other books out there waiting to be sampled to waste my time on something that clearly does not interest me.) Books like *Triton* were part of the reason I adopted the rule a few years later. Delaney has written some interesting stories with interesting set-ups, but I didn't find *Triton* to be one of them. Clearly your opinion was different.

[I thought my reaction to *Triton* was rather diffident, and I'm still not certain that I understand it. I'd stop short of saying it was a "waste of time," but I'm also through taking tips from Jo Walton for now.]

"We always have been, we are, and I hope that we always shall be, detested in France."

No, don't protect him...he'll work off that cake in the acid mines....



Randy Byers

1013 N. 36th St., Seattle. WA 98103
fringefaan@yahoo.com

First of all, I recognize the lino on page 4 as belonging to Randall Jarrell because Delany once quoted it in a reply to a letter I wrote him. Small world, eh?

I really enjoyed your revisionist take on the relationship between *The Dispossessed* and *The Trouble on Triton*, even if I'm skeptical. I've always read Delany's novel as a direct response to *The Dispossessed*, and I'm almost certain that Delany used to claim it was as well. However, this is from my notoriously unreliable memory. On the other hand, I also remember "To Read *The Dispossessed*" as much more of a demolition job than you portray it, so what do I know? During my freshman year at the University of Oregon (circa 1978-1979), Le Guin did a reading before a large crowd, and in the Q&A afterward someone asked her what she thought about Delany's essay and about *Triton*. My memory is that she brushed off the question, saying she thought his novel was in some way a response to hers, but she wasn't sure what Delany was trying to say.

In any event, your essay did what all such essays should do: it made me want to reread the books, particularly *The Trouble on Triton*, which after the last time I read it (well over a decade ago now) I decided was my favorite of Delany's novels. (For Le Guin I'd probably go with *The Left Hand of Darkness*.) The first time I read *Triton* (as it was called then), I was one of those who didn't understand that Bron was an unreliable narrator and basically a jerk. I hated the book, because I hated Bron. Well, you know, I was still coming off an adolescence spent reading mostly heroic fantasy, so anti-heros were a new thing to me. Later I came to understand that Bron was meant to represent, well, me: the 20th Century heterosexual white middle class male

in all his appalling lack of self-awareness, stuck in a utopia that made him feel like a useless outsider. Sort of like the Tea Party today.

Also, that Bieler fellow is fucking funny. He should write more. He should write more for CHUNGA, in fact.

[Delany largely acknowledges the relationship between the books, but I think his point is that he composed the basic narrative of *Triton* before reading *The Dispossessed*, then tweaked it in certain ways that suggested further comparisons. Admittedly, it's a subtle difference.]

Murray Moore

1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, ON L4Y 1C8 Canada
murrayamoore@gmail.com

Late come I to my reading of FLAG 12 and my learning therein that Carrie is the host of a pacemaker. Better her than me: I am unsure of the position of my arm at 90 degrees, higher than which for Carrie is dangerous: in her situation I would therefore make like a penguin, keeping my arms always at my side.

Your erudition in the matter of discussion of Le Guin and Delany is formidable. I expect that Bruce Gillespie would be thrilled to publish a long article by you, an article too long for FLAG. What next? Will you start illustrating FLAG, too?

R. Laurraine Tutihasi

P.O. Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323

On FLAG #5: I read with interest Howard Waldrop's LoC in which he recounts removing chopsticks from Paul Williams's hands after he fell asleep. It was good of him to do so. My sister had a fairly gruesome accident with chopsticks when we were both very young. I was chasing my sister around the house. We were both barefoot. Somehow chopsticks ended up on the floor and my sister stepped on one. It pierced her foot--not the sort of thing one wants to think about very long. I think we both developed a healthy respect for chopsticks as potential weapons.

On Flag #9: I have to agree with Andy Porter about the Trekfen not being hippies. Although I was a latecomer to Trekdom, I did finally arrive in the mid-70s at the same time I found sf fandom. It wasn't until I had finished my formal education and started working the I got involved in both. I don't really recall any of my Trek friends being even remotely hippie-like. Many were housewives. Some had been part of fandom before Trek. A couple of my sf fan friends might be described as hippie, but they were somewhat connected with NYC. Those of us in upstate were pretty straight, even the one or two who had the surface appearance of

not being so. The first fans I met were mostly from my local area or the Midwest. A lot may have depended on geography.

[This is just one of a series of great notes Laurraine has sent in response to a catch-up package of FLAGS. And okay, I surrender: Trekkies are not Hippies.]

Mark Plummer

39 Shirley Road, Croydon, CRO 7ES UK
mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

I got to read Flag #12 on the train home from the London First Thursday pub meeting. Arguably I should have read it earlier, before generating the print run specifically, as I found some peculiar formatting in Fred Lerner's letter. Nothing fatal, just an odd line break or two and an unnecessary indent, but it bugs me -- and I need to tender apologies to you (and Fred) now before you are deluged by emails from your British correspondents. Not that I'm passing blame here but it's product, I think, of your approach to creating a document, where you do things manually that I'd let the document do for me.

And of course it is your fanzine to do with as you will, and I resist the temptation to meddle with your text beyond the needs of converting the document to A4. True, I have from time to time considered replacing all the interlineations in John Nielsen Hall's copy with quotes from the last issue of Motorway Dreamer, but so far I've held out on that one.

But now's the time to admit to one small textual interference in Flag #12's BRE. I decided to take a chance that it wasn't some carefully crafted joke or allusion when in the fanzine countdown you omitted the first letter of the second word of a particular fanzine title in two separate places. I should stress that this wasn't a rash decision; I even went to the lengths of googling the resulting word you'd used but I really couldn't think of any reason why you'd be invoking the Lanet commune in the Aude department in south-west France. And so I changed your text, adding the omitted letter, ultimately unable to resist the opportunity to, for once, put the P into one of Chris and James's fanzines.

[FLAG #12 was assembled with increasing desperation as I approached the Fanzine Countdown. Anything you do to save me from myself is profoundly appreciated.]

Jason Burnett

P.O. Box18496
Minneapolis, MN 55418

I was thinking the other day about your email

address. I can remember (and I'm sure you can too) when there was online snobbery against @aol.com email addresses, but now it seems that they've acquired a sort of retro-cool panache.

I just finished reading Flag #7. I think that "lettercol as a room party" was an interesting literary conceit. While I shudder to think of the amount of work that would be involved, I think it would be interesting to see a fanzine organized continuously along those lines - people coming and going, conversational groups breaking up and re-forming in different configurations.

Wargaming seems to be a perpetually greying fandom - I remember when I was at my heaviest into wargames (almost 20 years ago - doesn't seem like such a thing should be possible) reading in MWAN about how much greyer the hobby was than back in the days of *Wargamers Digest* and Donald Featherstone's *Wargamer's Newsletter* - not realizing, of course, that Featherstone was in his mid-40s when he started the *Newsletter* and in his 50s when he published his best-known books.

For a lot of people, wargaming is like fandom - a 2-stage process. They're first bitten by the bug in their teens and early 20s, then gafiate after leaving college when their time is swallowed up by starting a career, getting married, starting a family, etc. Then at some point in their 40s or 50s, the kids are growing up, the career is running along nicely, etc., and they start looking for something to fill the spare time that they now have for the first time in 20 years or so. Some of them find their way back to their youthful hobbies, finding that things have kept chugging along - with many changes but also many similarities - in the intervening years and they dive back in. Model trains seem to follow the same pattern.

Other Correspondence Received From:

Paul Di Filippo (Beautiful Sercon writing in #12.); **Brad Foster**: (A new small piece attached for your consideration, to help break up all that boring writing in a future issue.); **John Hertz** [John points out that Milt Stevens was *fictionally* killed at LA Con II, rather than *functionally* killed. An intersection of the auto-correct function and a short deadline. If such errors are vexatious, they affect people who submit via email less frequently.]; **Arthur Hlavaty** (I thoroughly enjoyed the book discussion. "Unreliable reader" is a useful new concept; I fear I may be one.); **Lloyd Penney** (It's been quite some time since I've read the LeGuin and Delany books you quote, and I have read Jo Walton's *Among Others*, but found myself not nearly as connected to it as you have.); and **John Purcell** (Your article is the kind of comparative literary study that I enjoy reading.)

And that is the terrible and secret fate of all life.

1.) BROKEN TOYS #25, Taral Wayne, 243 Dunn Ave. Apt. 211, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6 CANADA, email to Taral@bell.net. (Note change of email address!) Taral has a number of projects he wants to pursue in 2014, and thus threatens to do fewer issues of BROKEN TOYS. But the prospect of new art from his hand is also pretty exciting, so I'll willingly sacrifice a *few* issues of this consistently diverting fanzine. I've read a lot of accounts of fans saying goodbye to beloved pets in the past several months, but none of them compared the experience of outliving several house cats to that of an immortal being like a god or a vampire. His "A Fly on the Wall" is fan fiction because it uses a fan gathering as a framing device, but it's more than funny enough to survive translation to a mundane context. The letter column is now almost always lively, and frequently features a few names I don't see anywhere else. One of the best personal fanzines currently being published.

2.) FADEAWAY #39, Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd. Oxford, MA 01540-2035 Email to fabficbks@aol.com. I'm cheating just slightly to reach back to January 29th for this issue, but Bob has sent several good numbers in a row and I want to recognize at least one of them. FADEAWAY has become a slightly less arcane edition of FANTASY COMMENTATOR; this issue has Dwight Decker engaging in literary archeology to unearth stories about exploring space by balloon. And Bob takes a lengthy excursion into the curious Fawcett Comics universe to consider the arc of Captain Marvel Junior, a character he has been devoted to for most of his life. I admit that I don't think I had ever read a single panel of this book, so Bob's analysis was completely new to me, something which I can generally count on in each issue of this zine.

3.) THE BANKSONIAIN #20, David Haddock, 84 Foxhollow, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB23 8ES United Kingdom, c/o eFanzines.com, email to banksoniain@gmail.com. Obviously quite a melancholy issue, as it deals with the aftermath of Iain Banks' death and public reaction to it. But #20 also contains several antidotes to my general dismay at Iain's demise, mentioning as it does projects to publish a collection of his poetry, an Austrian opera based on *The Wasp Factory*, and a general wave of appreciation and analysis from Barnstaple to Brunei. I also have to get a copy of Iain's last novel, *The Quarry*; not too surprisingly the reviews that David quotes make it sound like one angry book. Haddock's account of his correspondence with Iain, conducted on pieces of paper delivered by the Royal Mail, makes it clear what a remarkable friend Banks was. A year later, I'm just beginning to miss him.

4.) THE DRINK TANK #365, Chris Garcia, c/o

efanzines.com, email to Garcia@computerhistory.org. The 9th Anniversary issue of TDT has a bombshell – this will be the last year for the fanzine, which will cease publication on the occasion of its tenth anniversary issue. Chris commands all his many silent readers to write some kind of reply in the next year; I'll be interested to see who complies. This issue is a 41-page retrospective of David Lynch's TV and film franchise *Twin Peaks*, which briefly bestowed a quizzical glamour on North Bend, Washington 20 years ago. The most successful item is Chris' summary of each episode in the form of a haiku. I also enjoyed Jon Klima's comparison of *TP* and the Korean feature film *Memories of Murder*. I'm afraid it has been too long for me to invest in any of the story's unanswered questions, but it's still fun to remember the dumbfoundedness. Makes me want a piece of pie.

5.) THE ZINE EXPLORER'S NOTEBOOK #3 & #4, Doug Harrison. P.O. Box 5291, Richmond, VA 23220. A broad collection of reviews in the tradition of FACTSHEET FIVE and other gazetteers of the fanzine world. The most recent issue was out in Spring of 2013, which means that stuff sent to Doug now might arrive in time to be listed in a 2014 edition. I'm certainly sending him this issue of FLAG.

Also Received or Released:

ANSIBLE #319, Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU United Kingdom, ansible.co.uk

bunyip & ayotochtli #3 - 5, edited by Bob Hole, c/o efanazines.com, email to rhole2001@yahoo.com

COUNTER-CLOCK #17, Wolf von Wittig, Via Dei Banduzzi 6/4, 33050 Bagnaria Arsi (Ud), Italy, email to wolfram1764@yahoo.se:

THE DRINK TANK #364 - 366, Chris Garcia, c/o efanazines.com, email to Garcia@computerhistory.org

ECDYSIS #2, Jonathan Crowe, online c/o eFanzines.com, email to ecdysis@mcwetboy.net

FFANZ ACROSS THE WATER: Alan Stewart's 1991 FFANZ Trip Report, posted at efanazines.com

OPUNTIA #271 & #272, Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7

THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS #97, Tom Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359, email to tomfamulus@hughes.net

SCIENCE FICTION SAN FRANCISCO #149, Jean Martin, et al, c/o efanazines.com, email to SFinSF@gmail.com

SPORADIC #23, also **LETTERS FROM LLOYD BIGGLE JR. 1959-1982**, Bill Plott, 190 Crestview Circle, Montevallo, AL 35115, online c/o efanazines.com

TETRAGRAMMATON FRAGMENTS #232, Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge #307, Southgate, MI 48195, email to robimes@yahoo.com

TRIP REPORT FOUND IN A PLAIN MANILA ENVELOPE, Murray Moore's 2001 GUFF Trip Report, posted at eFanzines.com