

# SPUDNUT



#2, the special Whither Fandom? issue, from Gary Deindorfer, .447 Bellevue Ave., #9-B, Trenton, NJ 08618. Available for DRUG "the Usual." Art credits: Steve Stiles, logo & p. 7. GD: LOGO

THIS IS THE DEAL THIS DARN TIME I received a brilliant, long letter from Don Fitch on things fannish some time ago. It was too long to be included in SPUDNUT #1, the letters supplement to the by now probably only dimly remembered SPUD #1, the eight pages of my own words, and some of Joseph Nicholas's. I also received a brilliant, shorter loc from Steve Jeffery which cries out to be printed in its entirety. Thus, I have decided to publish this special "Whither Fandom" SPUDNUT, with Don and Steve's letters, and a few other people's letters and postcards to fill up the eight pages. Now then, if any of you by this time remember SPUD #1, I figure that about two months after you receive this issue of SPUDNUT, I shall publish my SPUD #2, eight pages all of my own writing. See you then. For now, enjoy the mind tripping by Don Fitch and Steve Jeffery on whither goes fandom....

Sometimes you've got to stop and swallow the roses

DON FITCH As usual, Joseph Nicholas' arguments have some merit//~~but~~ ~~not/valch~~. It does, indeed, seem that "renaissance" is overstating the matter a bit, and yet... even though most current fanzines are published by fans who have been around for over ten (or maybe over twenty) years and -- even if not Old Fans, & Tired -- aren't publishing frequently enough, it's possible that we're approaching a sort of Critical Mass which might result in a sort of Sustained Fusion Reaction, even though a Renaissance in the sense of a Fission Explosion like ~~The~~ Good Old Days is unlikely.

I wax nostalgic for those Good Old Days -- The Golden (or maybe Silver) Age of Fanzine Fandom -- as strongly and frequently as anyone else who was there ("there" is the 1960s & early '70s, of course), and am delighted by the resurgent fanzine activity of late (even though there's so much of it as to be overwhelming), but I do think that the **real** renaissance, if there is to be one, is yet to come -- and that it will differ from "fandom's Golden Age" (as I know it) at least as much as the one at the end of the Middle Ages differed from The Golden Age of ancient Greece and Rome -- equal or similar levels of Activity & Creativity, perhaps, but developing in very different ways.

Here's how I figure it (as of 11 Feb '93): Back in Those Days (say, more than 20 years ago, though the situation was changing even then) people who read science-fiction were overwhelmingly young, male, considered weird by their mundane age-peers, highly-imaginative, intellectually precocious

but emotionally and socially retarded, and misfits in their repressive mundane environment. (Don't quibble while I'm Generalizing.) Those who Discovered Fandom (fortuna-<sup>te</sup>ly for them, mostly, I guess) found in it a home, a haven where they could feel comfortable and accepted, and they poured into it their enormous enthusiasm & energy (characteristic of adolescence) and whatever talents & creativity they possessed or could develop. This intensity of input, the narrow focus of the micro-cosm, and the number of people involved, resulting in achieving Critical Mass and the explosion of "Fandom's Golden Age" -- in some ways/<sup>like</sup> albeit at a much more modest level) those cultural explosions in London c. 1600 & during the 1920s in Left-Bank Paris.

That whole **world** is now in the past. It's no longer possible to say "fans are 20 years ahead of the rest of our society" with any semblance of credibility -- at best, we're now neck-and-neck. The young proto-neofan with the stereotypical talents still exists, of course, but today it's not only possible but **easy** for such a person to find adequate outlets in the immediate/mundane environment. Those who chance to connect with fandom find it ... not a whole new universe, a brave new world uniquely suited to their talents & interests, but merely another social & intellectual outlet, one of many available to them (and perhaps the others are more easily and inexpensively available than such fanac as publishing & attending conventions). They will feel no pressing Need to put a lot of their Time, Energy, & Heart into fandom -- and, consequently, won't get much out of it, or cause it to flourish.

Or look at it from a more sercon view: A large majority of potential Fans -- people who consider themselves "fans of science-fiction" -- have come into the genre by way of non-print media, rather than written s-f. From what I've seen of it, movie and TV s-f is almost entirely personality-cult/soap-opera not at all conducive to the development of the sort of questing imagination (I think of as) characteristic of a Fan. For those who read ... the prozines (not always excepting ANALOG) are packed with well-written little non-stories with a touch of the supernatural, and polished but insipid re-workings of old themes, with little ideational content... so little Imagination that the young proto-truefan of today isn't likely to get hooked on s-f, but will go off in some other direction. Covina's only new-book store has a whole (& large) wall devoted to "science fiction"(at least half of which is clearly fantasy), -- twice as large an area than any other category -- so it's obvious that many people actually do read s-f (including a fair amount of reprints of good, old material and things by the few good newer writers, so not all is lost), and a modest sampling has led me to the opinion that most of these new writers are considerably better at **writing** than all but a few practitioners in the genre were in the past. The current S-F&F is better-written, but on the whole it's deficient in the imaginative qualities which used to make the reading/appreciation of the genre a **cachet** indicating that a reader of it was (very probably) the sort of person who would be "Fannish" (despite disagreements on the definition of that word).

I suppose, though, that a hundred or more of these new professional S-F&F writers might be a whole generation of proto-neofans who moved in the direction of selling their words rather than giving them away in fanzines. (I'd guess that about ten neos entering fanzine fandom each year was nearly the average, though it may have seemed like more because we met all of them, and many were obnoxious) so this (if it really is appropriate) could account for the absence of a decade's worth of new blood, or/<sup>at</sup> least a major gap.) It's difficult to envision the current

(or near-past) Science-Fiction Field generating enough people to effect a renaissance of fanzines.

What the return to active fanac by long-established, but fafia or gafia, fans produces seems more aptly-called a resurgence -- though perhaps (one can always hope) that it'll be a ground-swell which will result in a major flowering of fanzines in the next decade or so. I discovered fandom later than most neos, closer to being 30 than 16, and was then (& still am) several years older than all but a few dozen active fans. Within a few years the bulk of the (mostly now-fafia) fans from that era will be reaching retirement age, realizing that their kids are finally and permanently out of the house, and deciding that they have money and time to spend on a Hobby. Few, however, are likely to assume fanzine activity as a Way of Life, and (as Joseph says) an issue or two per year really isn't enough, and the egoboo-factor may be too low. (Many will probably go into APAs, which won't be of much benefit to the whole.) And, though I hate to say this, Gary, fans are **almost** as prone as mundanes to get dull and stodgy with age; we (\*sigh\*) started off higher and thus don't sink quite so low, but The Flame doesn't burn quite as high or as bright as it used to (and certainly not at both ends of the candle), and the Sparks are conspicuously sparse.

So far, I can see no soil rich enough to nourish the burgeoning & flourishing of a general Fanzine Renaissance. Mind you, I'm not entirely unhappy about this -- already I devote more time to fanzine activity than is prudent if I'm to lead a desirably-balanced life, and I'm not keeping up with all the fanzines I receive, which are probably less than half of those being published. Admittedly, some of this is due to my inherent Disorganization and tendency to act on whim, and perhaps to excessive **pro bono** work (hey, neofans both need and deserve longer and more carefully thought-out LOCs (even though they don't necessarily get them from me) than old-timers who have a WAHF which would make an outstanding fanzine in itself), but mostly... I think there's plenty of fanwriting being done now, much of it by people who are at their peak (which may not be very high), so any increase would force me to pick & choose, to Accept or Reject people entirely, which goes against my grain.

Modern Technology enables the veriest neofan to publish a fanzine greatly superior in construction values -- typography, format, and duplication -- to any published more than ten years ago, and (though less often) superior in artistic values to most of them, as well. The written contents, however, are frequently only mildly interesting; Our real shortage appears to be not of fanzines, but of well-written fannish material. One may hope that the advancement of more people into or towards retirement will remedy this. The few neos who have come into fanzine fandom during The Dry Decades, when most went into Convention Fandom, include some impressively talented writers, and more who are at least more competent than neos used to be, on the whole, but sometimes it seems as though most of them are more interested in computers and desk-top publishing -- which would be great ... if they could get better material.

Ideally, perhaps, the old-time fan writers should connect with the new DTP-type fans, but that doesn't seem to be the way it works -- probably because fanpublishing is too individualistic to encourage such co-operation.

There seems to be an aspect here which I haven't quite been able to solidify into words -- it has something to do with the concept that, in the earlier days, neos could feel that they were entering into a

Group Activity which was growing and developing; they could, after a very brief apprenticeship, plunge in, take an active part, achieve Status on their own, and help control and shape the course of it. The talented & creative neos who come in today, with the same Need for achievement & making their mark, can't look at a lot of fanzines or fanwritings and say, "Gee, I could do better than this"; everything is so Established, including the Status hierarchy, that a lot of people come in, look around, and leave in search of something more accessible.

One crucial aspect of A Social Group (looking at fanzine fandom in that light) is that the members speak the same language (in a figurative sense)... not just something like "fanspeak," but shared basic ideals, traditions, interests, goals, and, ideally, at least an acquaintanceship with almost everyone else in the Group. This sense of community/family Belonging certainly is not characteristic of any large modern convention (& hasn't been since ... ummm ... sometime in the '70's, I'd guess); Corflu, ditto, and apparently a few other small conventions have it, but Fanzine Fandom seems too large & diffuse to have maintained it. \*sigh\* I guess it'll be limited to sub-fandoms -- CONFERENCE 4 had it in spades; with 400+ attending, the Atmosphere was almost precisely like that of my earliest WesterCons & WorldCons, differing mostly in that people did more sitting-around drawing humanized animals in each-other's sketchbooks than lively talking, there was rather more overt sensuality/sexuality (mostly in the artwork), and a tendency to justify their absorption in a sneered-at field by citing economic/professional potentials, rather than the Wave of The Future justification used by early s-f fans.

Probably a careful analysis of FACTSHEET FIVE -- either the old Gunderloy ones or the just-out issue (from Seth Friedman, P.O. Box 170099, San Francisco, CA 94117; \$4, no trades) -- would be interesting & helpful, especially if one knew what one was looking for. Each of the categories "science fiction" and "personalzines" contains about 50 reviews (maybe 30% of the 1st and 10% of the 2nd are familiar &/or indubitable "fanzines") -- and there are a couple of hundred under "music", and "sports", but **many** hundred under "punk" -- maybe **that's** where all the fanzine fans have gone. (And, considering Jim Munroe's former-PunkZine, that might be a major loss to us.) At the very least it's a salutary lesson that s-f fanzine fans not only aren't unique in pubbing our ish, we're a very small part of a Mass Movement. (Though there isn't such a category included, one reviewer describes something as an "a bunch of smart highschool kids sitting around being bored so they decided to put out a 'zine' zine." A group of teen-aged Japanimation fans south of here began PARACHUTE LIMIT just that way (or said they did... one doesn't like to appear **too** Serious, you know), and it's turning out quite well, though irregular, with a fine piece in the current issue by one of the group who's teaching English in Japan for a year... some highly perceptive comments, & he's handling Culture Shock about 10 times as fast as Lafcadio Hearn did. A major difference between these two subgroups of "Amateur Publishing Fandom" seems to be that the F5-types (as I lump them) tend more often to want money for their zines (usually, I calculate, just about enough to cover costs), though this is increasing in fandom as well -- presumably because photocopy is more expensive than mimeo (much less hekto), and postal rates are high.

The mundane/Amateur Journalism/letterpress (now also DTP) publishing fans tend mostly to APAs for distribution, but are fannishly generous in trading or giving their Papers and Journals, and think of asking for ~~d~~ash only in connection with major items which involved hundreds of hours of work. They also do much more fannish communicating than I'd thought -- it's amazing how much precise ideation one can put in six paragraphs

if one is going to have to set the type by hand, and many of them write a lot of postcards & letters, although the usual APA arrangement -- open membership, no activity requirement -- permits, in effect, totally passive subscriptions. Some have even been in fandom -- Joe Goudonis, who's been publishing since 1926, was invited by Don Wollheim to join the early FAPA, and Al Fick dropped out of that group just before I hove on the scene. This is another group facing The Graying Syndrome -- printing was pushed as a boy's hobby until ...maybe the early '40s; only two of the people attending the Tucson Convention were under 30, and probably 3/4 of them were over 65 (there's a possible skewing due to retired people being more free to take a week off/travel.)

Your comment re. Maureen & Alan: This echoes one I made at the first Corflu I attended -- "Gee, if all of us who are sitting around complaining about how Fanzines Are Dying would just go home and publish one or two during the next year, we'll be complaining, next time, about being Inundated." Don Fitch, 3908 Frijo, Covina, CA 91722

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 There go the hebephrenics, acting silly again  
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**STEVE JEFFERY      Poor Otis, dead and gone, left me here to sing this song...**

The death and/or renaissence of fanzines rears its battered head again in Joseph Nicholas' letter to Ken Cheslin's THE OLAF ALTERNATIVE, reprinted in SPUD. To be honest I'm in no position to tell whether 'fings ain't what they used to be' in fannish Days of Yore; I wasn't there. I've been paddling in this pool for a couple of years only and I seem to be getting more zines through the mailbox over the last six months or so. Because of a peculiar span of interests (though this touches on another point in Joseph's argument), the fanzines I get tend to fall into several camps: 'traditional' fannish zines, like OLAF, TAND, STET, FOLLY and MIMOSA, interested in anecdotal fan history and reminiscence, often nostalgic in a degree that reflects their general readership, but wondering where all the 'new blood' has gone to; new fanzines that have started since my own involvement, like Ben Girard's THE FROZEN FROG and Tommy Ferguson's TASH and GOTTERDAMERUNG (and already clocking 6-9 issues), and, more recently, a number of one-shots, apazines and perzines. Then there are a whole crop of non-SF (despite STET's tongue in cheek rider that it is "a SF fanzine, which means we rarely, if ever, mention the stuff at all"), non-fannish fanzines that are firmly geared to the gothic/alternative scene. And a lot of these are new, in their first or second issues. I don't know if I'm seeing a renaissance, or a new birth, but there's lots of activity and crossover going on, and Joseph probably isn't looking where I am.

**"Reports of my death have been exaggerated"**

I don't get a fraction of the zines that are published (and there are thousands listed in Mike Gunderloy's Factsheet Five) and I don't actively solicit too many, because I don't think I could maintain the same level of active contact with them all.

Joseph seems to be bringing a numerical argument, a sort of train spotters approach, to his definition of a revival. More to the point (and the real meaning behind a renaissance) is what is being discussed in these fanzines, and are they arguing and promoting any new ideas and views, or are they content to exist in a cosy enclave that believes 'true' fandom stopped somewhere in the fifties and sixties, and that nothing much has happened since?

I mention this from the reply to a letter by Matthias Hofmann in MIMOSA 13 asking about fandom for the 90's. Dick and Nicki's reply is that, as a fan-historical zine "we welcome well written first person articles from fans of all eras, but there are only two years of the 1990s (so far), in comparison with a combined 30 years for the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s." Why, I wonder, have the 70s and 80s been quietly swept under the carpet? Is the era of RatFandom, KTF reviewing, fandom red in tooth and claw, seen as an embarrassing interlude, a loss of faith in fannish ideals, not to be discussed in polite and genteel company? And fanzines like MIMOSA, STET and, to an extent, OLAF are, by and large, fairly genteel ("pipe and slippers fandom" as someone, Maureen Speller?, put it), which is actually part of their charm.

Is there anything new to say about fandom, and is there anyone outside fandom who is going to take any notice of it? Should they? Or have fanzines marginalised themselves by recursive arguments about the form and frequency of response, whether a LoC or trade is best, one-on-one or all-for-all, when and why to drop people from their mailing lists, whether twilltone is more fannish than photocopy or laser printing?

Well, maybe not all. Here is ERG 120 (120! - Quarterly? Good grief) from Terry Jeeves, who writes about a holiday in the US, WW2 fighter planes and even lists and reviews fantasy novels (hurrah, someone else likes the stuff), and today's postperson brings Mark Manning's JUPITER JUMP apazine, in which he discusses anything and everything, from Sartre and Berg to neutering the cat. I might join this if there wasn't a two year waitlist...

#### The circulation of the blood

"if the hardcore of a hundred or so fanzine fans each published his or her own ish a few times a year, then we would really have a jumping deal." (Gary Deindorfer, SPUD #1).

Well, we'd have a lot of fanzines trading with each other, but maybe far fewer people writing LOCs. And since few zines seem to comment on or list fanzines received in trade, we may not get a lot of involved discussion, just a lot of isolated views and no way for anyone new outside the circle to break in and find out what's going on. I can see both sides of this argument, but again it's down to numbers, rather than active discussion of what fandom ought to be looking to. It's noticeable that the start up fanzines tend to be those that actually mention and review SF (which was my first notion as a neo, before finding it was a rare and fabulous beast indeed -- an impressive exception being John Owen's SHIPYARD BLUES). I rather welcome this neophyte misconception, because (a) I wonder if a fandom that is only about itself can become hypochondriac and (b) I still like to read and discuss the stuff. In fact, with Maureen Speller's recent launch of Acnestis, I'm pleased to find there's an enthusiastic support for in-depth discussion of SF as a literature in an APA, so my own enthusiasms may gravitate more to this than my own long-planned and long-delayed sercon zine on sexuality in science fiction. Or I may (looking at the Acnestis membership list) confuse the issue further and solicit support for such a skiffy project.

Remember: the heat death of increasing entropy only applies to closed systems. /Steve Jeffery, 44 White Way, Kidlington Oxon, OX5 2XA, UK/

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 "Sit on my face and I'll stay with you forever." -- Sid O. N. Miface,  
 "Sit On My Face," FOREVER. Sid Records  
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~ JOSEPH NICHOLAS I see that Joseph Major refers to an "English Socialist," which I assume from its context must be a reference to

me; but he's wrong on both counts. Calling me English perpetuates the usual ignorant American (I use the term deliberately) conflation of England with Britain (I am in fact Scots-Cornish); and calling me socialist shows that he just hasn't been paying attention to what I've said (even in FOSFAX). But then that's consistent with his tedious right-wing theology, which assumes that everyone on the left thinks, says and does exactly the same. It's rather surprising -- and rather amusing -- to note that while right-wingers such as Major have no trouble accepting and vituperatively disputing the existence of divisions of political opinion on the right, they have such terrible trouble accepting that there can be, and are, similar divisions on the left. But then coming to terms with that would mean abandoning their theology altogether, and of course that would never do.

I don't understand David Palter's letter at all. I am "the most consistently insulting writer" in fandom? Wow. You must obviously have sent him a different issue of SPUD #1 to that everyone else received! /Joseph Nicholas, 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill Hill, London N15 6NH, UK/

GREG BENFORD SPUDNUTs probably will not arrest the entropic doom of Earth, but it can perhaps link the starbegotten few who might, say, stir the sun's core to prolong its life to about 200 billion years. That'll get the ash of nuclear fusion out and flush the center with nice hydrogen protons, which can merrily burn into helium (through the carbon cycle). In 200 billion I'll bet we can find other solutions, other starry dwellings, maybe a way to produce a frequent focal point fmz, even. We've got to Think Big, Meyer. Enough of J. Nicholas' gloomy socialist doubt, begone with Dengrove's rewriting of history when he wasn't really there: there was a Golden Age of Fmz, about 1950-65, and I saw it. I don't even argue that You Had To Be There. Hell, you can still read QUANDRY or OOPSLA! or GRUE or...but of course, conversations overheard, not participated in, always sound less interesting... /Greg Benford, 1105 Skyline Dr., Long Beach, CA 92651-1936/

JEAN YOUNG Joseph Nicholas may have a sharp tongue, but he writes well and straightforwardly and in a well-organized manner. I gather he's known for tromping over people in hob-nailed boots, but the few locs I've seen from him, while hardly "mellow", are interesting and not, to me, offensive. Perhaps if or when I become the object of his scorn, I'll sing



a different song. /Jean Young, Animal Fair Productions, RR 4 Box 47, Decorah, IA 52101/

NIGEL E. RICHARDSON Funny how the mention of Joseph Nicholas is still enough to get some people gibbering like chimps, regardless of what he says. I mean, that bit of his you quoted in SPUD was reasonable enough, meaning it more or less matches my thoughts on the subject. I was getting pretty fed up, last year, with ninnies saying a fanzine renaissance was about to burst upon us in this country, and that the nay-sayers should hush their mouths. Maybe they genuinely believed 2 fanzines a month was some kind of renaissance. None of the people who used the R-word actually got around to producing a fanzine -- except Steve Green. IN the last 4 months I've received more fanzines from Dale Speirs than I have from British fandom -- if you don't count ANSIBLE. If this is a renaissance I've got a 97 foot long penis.

Joseph Nicholas gets it right again in SPUDNUT about the massive gap between wishful thinking and brute reality when it comes to fanzines. Somehow it's become part of fannish thinking -- if that combination of words isn't too oxymoronic -- that good intentions are enough. All you need do is say how you're going to get around to doing a fanzine some day soon: to actually get around to doing something about it is considered bad form, tainting the sacred idea with the profane reality.

So what does sf fanzine fandom need to get itself off its arse? Dunno. Don't care, really. There's no way that fine talk can bring about any sort of fanzine revival. People are either going to produce them or they're not. If they've got nothing to say, haven't got the finances or just can't be bothered, that's the way it goes. If our version of the fanzine dies it'll be no big deal. Check the reborn FACTSHEET FIVE. There are reviews of 48 'Personal Zines,' of which only 3 come from "our" fandom. So I'm trading with people who use colour xerox rather than twilltone and mimeo, and are more interested in what Kurt said to Courtney last Thursday than what Walt said to Chuck in '58. Boo frigging hoo. /Nigel E. Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG/

JOSEPH T MAJOR Very apropos comment from Ted White on the problem of regular production. Everybody agrees that there needs to be a focal ppint fanzine but no one wants to actually do the work laid down in the specifications. Whcih, in any case, seems more like a program for burnout. Not to mention that the most important reward would be egoboo, and given the spiteful tendencies of a select few, who seem to have learned their social interaction on BBS, that reward is likely to be badly tainted. /Joseph T Major, 4701 Taylor Boulevard #8, Louisville, KY 40215-2343/

WAHF: Buck Coulson, Gloria McMillan, Carolyn Doyle, Chester Cuthbert, Ned Brooks, Jeanne Mealy (who sent an "Idaho Spud" candy potato), Sue Thomason, SHeryl Birkhead, Lloyd Penney, Curt Phillips, Berni Phillip, Rick Dengrove, Paul Williams (the Legend Himself!), Shelby Vick, Steve Stiles, Rhodri James, Michael W. Waite, Dick Lupoff, and Alexis Gilliland. & DAVE LANGFORD, DAVID THAYER, JENNY FLOWER, & GARY HUBBARD.



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