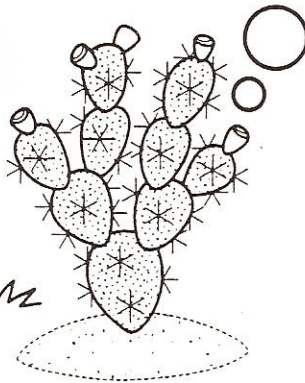


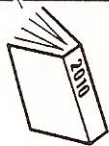
Great science fiction novels come in sudden, brief outbursts, followed by long, dry spells.



Long, dry spells? I can live with that.



OPUNTIA
24.1



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ART CREDIT: From deep in the heart of Texas wends this cover northward via Teddy Harvia, 701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054-2307.

EDITORIAL: Calgary's annual con went July 21 to 23 at the Glenmore Inn, a new location. Overall, not bad, and I'll have a fuller report in issue #25 on ConVersion 12. Coming up October 6 to 8 is BanffCon 95, with GoH Terry Pratchett of Discworld fame. Details from Box 20001, Calgary, Alberta T2P 4H3. Banff is basically a suburb of Calgary (but don't say that to a Banff resident) and is only a 1½ hour drive from Cowtown. Trilingual: English, French, and Japanese. In early October the tourist season is over but the ski season not yet started, so things should be relatively uncrowded.

A bit of surprise when I got the June 1995 issue of AMERICAN PHILATELIST and read an article in it about August Derleth. It gives a biography of him that would be unrecognizable to SF fans who know him for his Lovecraft connections. Only a passing mention of SF; mostly about him as a Wisconsin regional author and some labels he had printed up like postage stamps with his picture on them.

[The phrase "The Usual" means a zine is available for \$3 cash, trade for your zine, or contribution such as art, letter of comment, or article.]

ANGRY THOREAUAN #13 (US\$2 from Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) One of the best reviewzines around. The live band reviews are those around Los Angeles, but zines and music albums are certainly accessible to the rest of us by mail. Rants, letters, detournement cartoons such as the Dysfunctional Family Circle that is as hilarious as it is sick, sick, sick. One rant about how journalists get it all wrong was of particular interest to me, as I have become so fed up with mass-media reportage that I have stopped taking the daily newspaper. Monique continues her series on what it is like to work in the phone sex industry, this time on foot fetishes. An essay on why toilet seats are so uncomfortable. Story and interview about the Imperial Butt Wizards, who "have become notorious for displaying complete disregard for safety, personal or otherwise, ...". Comic strips and lots of reviews.

BUSSWARBLE #23 (The Usual from Michael Hailstone, 14 Bolden Street, Heidelberg, Victoria 3084, Australia) Comet crash into Jupiter, a trip to South America to observe an eclipse, and letters. A lot more science than most SF zines.

ARROWS OF DESIRE #6 (The Usual from S.V. O'Jay, Box 178, Saint Leonard, Maryland 20685) A themed genzine, the ish at hand being on the topic of Religion. A bit of everything on the topic from essays and statistics to Jesus jokes and locs. Next ish will be about Bloody Foreigners.

OBSCURER #30 (US\$6 for 3 issues from Jim Romanesco, Box 1334, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201) A reviewzine that uses a few detailed reviews to take a global look at a topic. This ish has a look at the problems of ANSWER ME! zine in Washington state with a District Attorney on a porno rap, and with a subpoena in the case of a gunman who fired shots at the White House. Maybe it would be safer to put out a Trekzine? Also a psycho zine publisher named Frank and some other stuff about the Excited States of Hysteria.

REDISCOVERIES NEWSLETTER #15 (The Usual from Mark Harris, 3712 North Broadway #190, Chicago, Illinois 60613) This is a participatory reviewzine where readers send in their recommendations for books they like. Not bestseller-type reviews, but books you'll only find in secondhand stores or by mail order. Some interesting stuff, such as THE THREE CHRISTS OF YPSILANTI, an account of how a psychiatrist played God and put three patients together, each of whom thought he was Jesus. I must look out for that one.

GALACTO-CELTIC NEWSLETTER #12 (The Usual from Franz Miklis, A-5151 Nussdorf 64, Austria) In English from a very enthusiastic SF fan. It is difficult to summarize the contents in a brief capsule review. Basically a free-flowing stream of articles, fiction, art, locs, reviews, and a bit of silliness. Not for those suffering from terminal dignity.

ANSIBLE #93 (SASEs from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU, England) A microprint newszine of what goes on in British SFdom. Very humorous.

VISIONS OF PARADISE #60 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-0733) A diaryzine in the life of a math teacher, also reviews of SF books.

I SHOT KURT #4 (\$1 from Bobbie Pinn, #7-6912-101 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T6A 0H7) Handwritten punkzine, also includes peel-off stickers.

SLUR April 1995 (Free at selected music stores, probably \$3 for a copy by mail from Room 362-21, 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3S2) A musiczine of western Canada, with reports of local bands, record reviews, the usual stuff one finds in such zines. Mostly Edmonton but also coverage of elsewhere.

SEARCHING FOR DELICIOUS #1 (\$1 from Homehome!! Publishing, 1413 Centre Street South, Calgary, Alberta, T2G 2E5) A punkzine with mostly experimental art, literary stuff and poems, a few rants. Average.

PUBLIC #11 (\$15 in Canada, \$17 elsewhere, payable to Public Access, Suite 307, 192 Spadina Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2C2) A glossy artzine from the usual suspects living on Canada Council grants, with academic articles on cyberspace. Actually there were some thought provoking pieces in here asking the next question about computers as ordinary tools (like a paintbrush or pencil). The opposite of WIRED; no giddy concentration on computers as ends in themselves. In the foreword: "As we struggle with the recognition that the speed of analysis and comprehension can never hope to compete with the speed of change, we find an increasing need to substitute the speculative for the analytic." Those who babble about how cyberspace is liberated should remember, as one PUBLIC writer points out, that 'cyber' comes from a Greek word meaning to steer or control. "Cyberspace is not a hermetic space that exists separately from existing social spaces; it links local spaces together into a globalized space of informational control." Policing cyberspace is easy if it is to be done; the idea brought in here is Bentham's Panopticon. Bentham invented the Panopticon as a central tower with a ring of dormitory cells around it. The tower is mirrored so that the guards can see into the cells but the cell occupants cannot see the guards. The Panopticon is commonly thought of as a prison, but Bentham suggested it could be used as a school or factory as well. Because the cell occupants never know if they are being watched or not, they have to be on their best behaviour at all times.

Cyberspace can be used as a polyanopticon, monitoring computer users from many places, not just a central tower. How many computer nerds know who Benthams was? Those who suppose the Internet will remain freewheeling should look to the history of radio and television.

GLOBAL MAIL #11 (US\$3 from Box 597996, Chicago, Illinois 60659) A requestzine, listing not reviews but people who want participants in mail art, zines, or projects. This zine is rapidly expanding; I'm a bit worried that it could end up like the Gunderloy FACTSHEET FIVE and collapse. To pick a few items at random, there is a request for the 1997 Cabot Decelebration, on the occasion of John Cabot stumbling over Newfoundland in 1497. He was the Canadian version of Columbus. The Decelebration wants to blame everything gone wrong in the last 500 years on Cabot, in much the same way that Columbus was made to carry political baggage during his commemoration. In the "Actions" column is the Pig Sanctuary, for unwanted Vietnamese pigs. Somewhat oxymoronic is the listing under "Anarchist" for an anarchist cookbook, soliciting recipes. What! Follow rules for mixing flour and butter? Anyone who can be in Nevada in August might like to write for details of the Burning Man Festival, in which participants will build a 40-foot-high wooden man, stuff him full of fireworks, and run like hell when the match is applied. The "Places" is a column listing such must-see sights as the Museum Of Menstruation in New Carrollton, Maryland. The "Rants and Manifestoes" section has such titles as "Capitalism Is A Satanist Whore Religion". For those who complain of inability to get work published, check the two pages of "Zines Requesting Contributions".

OBSSESSIONS #4 (The Usual from Bridget Hardcastle, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX, England) This time around the subject is Rocky Horror fandom. I always wondered why they never showed the movie in Calgary at any other time than midnight; now I know. Unfortunately I'm on an early morning shift, so I can never stay awake to see the movie.

EMPTIES #15 (The Usual from Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG, England) Financial report about the semiprozine CRITICAL WAVE, which is forever on the edge of bankruptcy. Anecdotes and rants on a variety of matters. A rooster that outsmarted a German at a game of Xs and Os. (Reminds me of one German at work who tends to live up to the stereotyping about his volk. Whenever he gets too rowdy, someone calms him down by pointing out who won the last war.)

FROZEN FROG #11 (The Usual from Benoit Girard, 1016 Guil-laume-Boisset, Cap-Rouge, Québec, G1Y 1Y9) Benoit has bowed to the inevitable, and his zine is now a loczine. A brief account of his new job, then over to the loccers. By the time this review appears, the Worldwide Party #2 will have come and gone, but we look forward to seeing in the next ish how it was celebrated.

PHASSIONATE FULCRUM #3 (The Usual from Mike Whalen, Box 55422, Metairie, Louisiana 70055-5422) Perzine, starting off with Whalen's divorce. A column on old periodicals, circa 1800s, he picked up for his collection. Zine reviews and locs.

FOSFAX #175 (The Usual from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) 68 pages of microprint, including the neverending Heinlein commentary, the neverending debates in the locs, miscellaneous reviews, conreports, and much else. A must-have for political junkies.

PHOSGENE #1 (same as FOSFAX) This is a self-parody of FOSFAX, albeit only 20 pages of microprint. My reaction was to convert a fakezine review into reality, so I must have liked it.

FANTHOLOGY '91 (US\$10 from Arnie Katz, 330 South Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107) Anthology of fannish articles from 1991, with a wide variety of topics, as one might expect.

ZERO-G LAVATORY #4 (The Usual from Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, British Columbia V0R 1S0) A flamezine where there is never a dull moment; makes the FOSFAX loccol seem the very model of polite conversation. Trekkie bashing galore, they being a threat to the very foundations, etc. Also a continuing piece of faanfiction, quite good, and I'm not just saying that because I showed up in it this ish (mainly because he mis-spelt my name). I must remember to forward a copy to CSIS.

ZUGZWANG #2 (The Usual from Kim Huett, Box 679, Woden, ACT 2606, Australia) Reduced literally to a minimag size on a folded single sheet, but the microprint allows a fair amount of commentary about fanzine revivals and GUFF results.

FTT #17 (The Usual from Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England) The initials of this zine are always the same but title varies, this issue being FLAMING TANTRIC TOASTERS. Judith reminisces about Australia fandom and how she first met a GUFFman. The locs are placed in the middle of the zine, then Joseph writing about the hidden revolution and the crisis of agenda SF.

TRAP DOOR #15 (The Usual from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Genzine, starting with some interesting statistics about the number of zines got by Robert, indicating that we are hardly in a death of zines phase. Various articles on discovering SF, how to get a deli special named after you, baby modelling, ATom sketches, and fanhistory. Locs, of course.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #39 (The Usual from Thomas Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Starting off as usual with the ongoing if somewhat disjointed saga of a troika of mad scientists, then on to reviews, con reports, fan memories (How I Won The War, etc.), and a large loccol. A nice detourned Victorian engraving.

WILD HEIRS #6 (The Usual from Arnie Katz, 330 South Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107) An extended Corflu con report by a variety of authors; there have been WorldCons that didn't get this much ink. Of course, they who complain about the size of WorldCons then turn around and moan over the small size of specialty litcons. Corflu is for fanzine fans who don't have to be told what corflu is, and for fans who would like to be part of a fannish group not obsessed by buying up all the spinoffs of some media SF world. Sounds like an interesting group.

PROBE #96 (The Usual from SFSA, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine, with lots of fiction and reviews of books and videos. Excellent artwork by Roberto Schima. A well-made digest zine with good production values that more people should be seeing. Send them a few banknotes and have a look.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #60 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) They've been varking too 'ard in putting out this clubzine. I and my trusty typewriter (on which OPUNTIA is entirely produced) were both amused to read the editorial lament that " ... produced on Pagemaker 5.0a on my nice new PowerMac, then ported across to Pagemaker 5.0 for Windows at work so I could print it. Windows then stuffed up all the fonts and the shading and refused to print vertically oriented characters." And so the carnage continues on the Information Superhighway. Meanwhile and elsewhere, Ian Gunn discusses the wonders of a 500-channel television, of which 450 are showing reruns. Forget the specialty channels aimed at cat fanciers or stamp collectors; it costs too much to run a channel for narrow interests.

GRADIENT #12 (same as VISIONS OF PARADISE) Genzine with articles on the nature of God, reviews, locs, and a cumulative index to GRADIENT. The latter is a good thing; it would be nice if more zines had indexes to their articles. All Knowledge Is Found In Zines, but just try to find it.

ROGUE RAVEN #7 (The Usual from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Avenue SW, Seattle, Washington 98166) Perzine, covering his extended travels into the American Southwest, with much about the aboriginal tribes. After a brief digression to rant about politics, an account of attending powwows, the Good Old Days as represented by brickmush, and old radio shows.

REASONABLE FREETHINKER #4 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236) Tom has carved out a niche doing detailed reviews of movies. These are not the usual capsule reviews one sees in other zines. They are in-depth studies that use other sources as well. The review of "Interview With A Vampire" takes into account such things as the death of the author's daughter and its consequent influence on Rice's work. A number of con reports and locs.

LIMBO #3 (\$2 from Peter Stinson, 209 - 17 Avenue NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 1L9) Genzine from the art underground of Canada. Starts with an account of the business meeting of the national association of artist-run galleries, with an interesting 'viruscon' type of sabotage. Must have been a barnburner; the writer says " ... I missed all the great photo opportunities of different representatives from ARCs in tears." Also comix, a cab driver's diary of his customers, and variations of Alfred Jarry's play called "Tuba Rex" and "Ubu Wrecks". In the former variant, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein shows up.

ON SPEC #21 (C\$6 in Canada/US\$6 elsewhere from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) Canada's SF prozine with excellent artwork, colour cover, perfectbound. The two stories I enjoyed in this ish were "The Burden Of Proof" in which God is successfully reduced to mathematical equations, and "Cereal Prizes I Have Known And Enjoyed", in which not-of-our-time prizes lead to obsession and divorce.

BROKEN PENCIL #1 (\$4.95 at newsagents or from Box 203, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7) A newsagents slick periodical that proposes to bring zines to the attention of the general public in the same manner as the Seth version of FACTSHEET FIVE. Starting off as a twice annual, with the zine reviews sorted by province or city. I get the distinct impression that these folk are new to zines, as the listings rigidly list title, definition, publisher, main creator(s), price, and address, instead of simply stating "Available for whatever from so-and-so". This results in the ridiculous repetition of the phrase "No known publisher", followed immediately by the name of the creator. One might expect this rigid format for library buyers, but it seems rather obvious that if no publisher is listed then it is automatically credited to the editor. Nitpicking aside, this magazine lists a fair number of Canuck zines. The geographical sorting is meaningless really, but there is a title index for cross-reference. If they can keep publishing and build up a circulation, then this should be a boost for Canzinedom, bringing in people who had no idea zines existed and who would not have been exposed to them except via a newsagents. Also a few interviews with zine pubbers and out-takes from zines, such as the Lucien Bouchard Flesh-Eating Zombie Doll With Removeable Leg.

DEROGATORY REFERENCE #80 (The Usual from Arthur Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, New York 10704-1814) Perzine, with life on the 'alt.polyamory' section of Internet, the Church of the SuperGenius, and miscellany.

THINGUMYBOB #14 (The Usual from Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England) Stream-of-consciousness flow of articles integrated with locs. Sexual goings-on, a tour of Belize, a fan who lives in Argentina, and disgusting gerbil activities.

DRIFT #71 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) Locs, miscellany, and a fair bit of détournement, but what caught my eye was an account of the Toronto Small Press Fair. It seems a gent from the Legal Deposit Office, National Library of Canada, toured the Fair and was hitting up publishers for the two copies of each issue that by law must be sent to the NLC. This struck me as unusual because while I've heard of them sending out dunning letters for back issues, this is the first I've heard of an actual inspector going about looking for offenders. The National Library of Canada Act specifies that two copies of each issue of a periodical are to be sent to the NLC on publication. I do this with OPUNTIA. Now some pubbers go into a rant about greedy government bureaucrats wanting something for free, but I view it as an opportunity to increase the chances of preserving OPUNTIA for posterity. All zine pubbers presumably think their material worthwhile, otherwise why publish it, so here is a chance to increase one's audience.

MARKTIME #38 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 59851, Schaumburg, Illinois 60159) Perzine about Mark's hobbies of baseball, taping radio stations, mass-transit and ongoing travels to visit every county in the USA.

QUIPU #5 (The Usual from Vicki Rosenzweig, 33 Indian Road, 6-R, New York, New York 10034) Perzine, starting off with the decline of liberalism as evidenced by the recent American elections. Then a trip to Las Vegas to attend the Conflu convention, another trip on an antique New York City subway train, and a review of a book about living as a homeless person.

IT GOES ON THE SHELF #14 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605) Reviewzine of older books, stuff you won't find on the shelves of Coles. Lots of strange and interesting items, demonstrating once again the wondrous stuff that humans can get up to.

FILE 770 #109 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, Box 1056, Sierra Madre, California 91025-4056) Newszine of SF fandom. In this issue, obits, controversy over the 1995 Aurora Awards, Hugos, TAFF results, and con reports.

BARDIC RUNES #11 (\$4 from Michael McKenny, 424 Cambridge Street South, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5) Fictionzine specializing in sword-and-sorcery stories. Mostly Canadian authors but also some from USA, Netherlands, and Russia.

ERG #130 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) A tour of a radar installation, Noah's Ark, Doc Savage, an investigation as to why gyroscopes will not take us to the stars, a brief history of SPACE SF MAGAZINE, and a story about hunting the wild haggis in Glen Milla. Lots of variety in this issue.

ADVENTURES OF AN UNEMPLOYED ENTOMOLOGIST #3 (US\$2 or trade from Box 3026, Worcester, Massachusetts 01613-3026) A perzine, exactly what the title says, being the job-hunting adventures of the publisher. She will stop publication of this zine once she finds a good job; the final issue is thus indeterminate, so hustle if you want a copy.

KNARLY KNEWS #52 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Almost entirely locs, but a couple of pages of zine and book reviews. An interesting "Exhibit A" of a Citibank letter informing the Welch household that their 2½-year-old son has been pre-approved for a credit card with a \$5000 limit.

WHITE TRASH V2#1&2 (The Usual from Thomas and Denise Longo, Box 8890, New Orleans, Louisiana 70122-3037) The only zine I know of that makes Tim Lane of FOSFAX look like a wimpy pinko. Starts off with an article on trying to track down the truth about legislation affecting

school lunches; not surprisingly, what the news media report is nowhere near the actual facts. Various reviews, not only of the traditional sort, but also of a computer virus and a cigar. Mafia fiction and locs. Very strong right-wing slant.

CHIMNEYVILLE ALMANAC #4 (The Usual from Johnny Lowe, 1152 West 24th Street, #1, San Pedro, California 90731) Sort of a continuation of the clubzine SMART ASH. Personal accounts, zine reviews (with illustrations of the covers) and the comics artist Robert Crumb.

LIME GREEN NEWS #12 (US\$2 or trade for mail-art zine from Carolyn Substitute, 125 Brower Drive, Florissant, Missouri 63031) Mail-art zine, although this issue is used to catch up on a backlog of locs.

SPACE CADET GAZETTE #3 (The Usual from R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, #110, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6J 1J1) Childhood writings, film reviews of B-movies, the WW1 memoirs of Cameron's grandfather (easily the most thought-provoking part of this issue), a trip to Mayan territory, and locs.

ZINA #1 (The Usual from Barnaby Rapoport, Box 565, Storrs, Connecticut 06268) A stream-of-consciousness flow about CDs, why you got this zine, APPARATCHIK, and various movie reviews.

ATTITUDE #5 (Three trade copies to the editorial collective c/o Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF, England) Sixty pages, about half of them locs. Overall, in generalities, it emphasizes fanzine fandom and cons, mostly on the running thereof and what is to become of them. Pam Wells starts off with how she became a Interneter; her e-mail address is Vacuous_Tart@btch.demon.co.uk, certainly one of the more unusual addresses. Her conclusion is that newsgrouping is closer to cons than fanzines. One can control who gets your zine, but anyone

can barge into a newsgroup and divert conversation off track. Writes she: "Fanzines are like a luxury cruise ship, as opposed to a long-haul tourist-class flight. A greater number of people will use the net, but there will still be enough of us who enjoy the more rarified community of fanzines."

Attitude is also the name of a convention the editorial collective intend to do. In keeping with this are two con reports, on smaller events similar to what is apparently intended for Attitude the Convention.

Some zine and book reviews, and praise for the game of cricket. A bit strange how cricket never caught on here in North America while rounders baseball did.

BCSFAZINE #266 (\$2 from West Coast SF Association, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Apt. 110, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) Clubzine with local news, how to get on the Internet, Zelazny obituary, WW2 stories about alternative WW2s, and locs.

APAPLEXY #13 (Details from Grant Duff, 456 Gladstone Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5N8) An apa whose members are mostly in the Ottawa area, but they do have contributors from places like Edmonton and Colorado Springs. I picked up some copies on the freebie table at ConVersion 12 in Calgary and started to read them in numerical order. I first read #13, then #14, and was baffled by the mailing comments before realizing that APAPLEXY is counting down, not up. I should therefore have read #14 first. A good thick apa, with lots of reading, mostly perzine stuff. If you want to become involved in apa publishing, this would be a place to enquire within.

Trying to establish the origin of zines is much like the futile attempts to define SF (or worse yet, Canadian SF). Most of today's zine publishers operate without any knowledge of the history of their hobby. Many think zinedom only dates to the 1970s or 1980s when punk was young. SF fans know that zines date to at least the 1930s, and many of them are aware that there were predecessors in the 19th century. It all depends on your definition of what a zine is.

What brought this on was the receipt of a press release from Moshassuck Press about their latest book GOING HOME AND OTHER AMATEUR WRITINGS, by Edith Minitier. Hardcover, with a staggering 950+ pages, which explains the price of US\$65 in USA, US\$75 elsewhere. To be had from Kenneth W. Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741.

Edith Minitier (1869-1934) became involved in amateur journalism at age 14, when she attended a convention of the New England Amateur Press Association. Her first zine was published the following year, and she went on to a long involvement in the hobby. GOING HOME collects her writings for posterity. The press release about the book has an extensive biography about the many apas to which she belonged. SF fans may like to know she was the first woman to be elected President of the National Amateur Press Association, in 1909.

Taking a broad view of zines, and using the Minitier book as an excuse, I'd like to take a brief look at early Canadian zines. The earliest of which I have a copy (not an original, just a photocopy) is BRIC-A-BRAC #2, published February 1885 in Montréal. It would only need a few changes to be re-issued today and successfully pass as a 1995 zine. Bad poetry and Part 2 of a bad romance lead off the issue. Politics of the day (Gen. Gordon had just

got himself into a mess at Khartoum). Apologies for the issue being late: " ... the reason being the Carnival, which was held during the last week of January; while it lasted, there was no possibility of getting any time to work on a paper or anything else."

BRIC-A-BRAC was published by Harry W. Robinson. It was in English and subtitled "Devoted to Amateur Journalism, And More Especially, Its Extension in Canada". There are reviews of trade zines but maddeningly Robinson does not list addresses or even place of publication. He mentions THE NUGGET of New Glasgow; I assume this is the Nova Scotia town. BRIC-A-BRAC was normally available only for trade, although one could get a sample copy for 1¢ to pay the postage.

An editorial discusses the meaning of amateur journalism and how it is a training ground for those who want to become professional writers. Sound familiar? Robinson writes as follows.

"In the past, Canada has been a considerable factor in the strength of the 'dom, but one by one, the Canadian Amateurs have fossilized, until at the present day, THE NUGGET, THISTLE, BOYS FOLIO, and BRIC-A-BRAC are all that are left to represent the 'dom in Canada. ... It is our ambition to do something towards making Canada again to take a prominent place in amateurdom ..."

" ... we have not received thirty exchanges in return for two hundred and fifty sent out. Where! Oh, where are the papers of those enthusiastic youths who talk so much about the encouragement of recruits?"

"Every coarse word, and every bit of slang appearing in an amateur paper, does something to retard the progress of the 'dom."

VISIONS D'AUTRES MONDES

From May 1995 to January 1996, the National Library of Canada is staging a major exhibit on Canadian speculative literature. Accompanying the exhibition is an anthology of essays about the state of the genre in Canada, written by the usual suspects such as Runté, Vonarburg, Colombo, Clute, and many others. The anglophone version is titled OUT OF THIS WORLD, the francophone version VISIONS D'AUTRES MONDES. Trade paperback, 264 pages, both available at \$19.95 per copy from the National Library of Canada, Marketing & Publishing, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N4. Edited by Andrea Paradis.

Even in a country like Canada, to try and cover every aspect of a literary genre in one exhibition would be foolish. The subject is simply too large and complex to get into one neatly-wrapped package. The exhibition, and the anthology, therefore concentrate on certain areas. General themes in the book are on the nature of Canadian speculative fiction, Québec, women's writing, and the dark side of Canuck fantasy.

I'll skip over the essays discussing the history of Canadian speculative fiction and the vexed question of trying to define it. This is old hat for those in fandom for a while, although neos will find it interesting. I enjoyed John Robert Colombo's musing on what Star Trek would have been like if it had been produced in Canada. Enterprise would probably have an Inuit name, Kirk would be a Lieutenant-Governor, interventions by the starship would be delayed by wrangles over whether they would be a federal or provincial responsibility, and the Québécois crew would be constantly threatening mutiny.

There are quite a few essays about Québec fiction (SFQ). Francophone fiction elsewhere in Canada undoubtedly is there but so low-profile as to be invisible. SFQ has gone off on a different course than Canuck or American SF because of the limited market, relations with France, the

lingering effects of ultramontanist and the Quiet Revolution, the youth market, and the disproportionate influence of SFQ zines.

Perhaps the strangest and most convincing essay is by Ven Begamudré, who starts off with magic realism and ends by predicting a good future for Canuck SF because of the rise of the Reform Party. It does seem to almost make sense.

Lesley Choyce, a writer and publisher in the Maritimes, is not as well known as he should be. His essay is about the very well hidden SF history in that area. This is no surprise, as anyone knows who has ever tried to establish and maintain communications with Maritimes fandom. (Myself included; I have yet to ever get a reply from any Haligonian I've written.) His book THE REPUBLIC OF NOTHING, is still to be had at chain bookstores; you might like to obtain a copy.

I won't summarize every essay in OUT OF THIS WORLD. There are many on women in SF and on the various shades of fantasy. Brief mention is made of television and music but only brief. Nothing is said of the history of fandom. The emphasis is on book-length fiction and anthologies. Short fiction was not covered. I have no problem with these omissions. It was certainly enough hard work just to cover the areas they did. Trying to squeeze in every aspect of speculative fiction in Canada would have meant an assembly line approach of one short essay per subject that would have missed much. Better to discuss some topics in greater detail.

Alas, the exhibition will not tour the country due to budget restraints, so it will not be seen by many westerners or Maritimers. The anthology will be as close as we can get to it. One nice thing about it is that it is written in an understandable style; no turgid academic psychobabble as is common with much analytical work. If you know little of Canuck SF, this is an excellent reference work for your library.

On November 16, 1885, the hangman pulled a lever, and Louis Riel fell through the trapdoor into martyrdom. More than a century later his death still has a subtle influence on Canadian politics. Even his statues cause controversy; just before ConAdian, one of them was removed from the Winnipeg legislative grounds for reasons I won't go into here. Riel has also created a subgenre of Canadian publishing, with a major book on him published about once a decade. Some condemn him, others praise him. The most recent came out in 1994, and presents a more sympathetic picture of him than most. RIEL: A LIFE OF REVOLUTION, written by Maggie Siggins (HarperCollins, available at Smithbooks and other chain bookstores) uses not only written records but also oral tradition of the Métis.

Louis Riel was born in Winnipeg, son of two distinguished families, with not a few revolutionaries in them. As the outside world intruded on Métis and aboriginal lands, he grew up in a ferment of political struggle. He was sent to Québec for education, and became the cultured representative of the mostly illiterate Métis. He was fluent in both English and French, and almost naturally gravitated to their leader. A poet and writer, he was an orator much feared by his enemies.

The first rebellion he led began in 1869, when the Hudson Bay Company sold western and Arctic Canada to the newly formed confederation of Canada. There was a gap with no government in the Red River district, made worse by the intent of government surveyors to redraw land lots without regard for the Métis who were already there. A provisional government was formed to keep out the Lieutenant Governor sent by Ottawa, William McDougall. Riel did not start the rebellion but was asked to be the leader because of his education and ability. He preferred instead that another be appointed as a figurehead President of the provisional government, while Riel was Secretary, and acted as the power behind the throne. The rebellion

began October 11, 1869, when surveyors intruding on a Métis farm were stopped by a group of horsemen led by Riel. He told the surveyors in English "You go no further.", someone else stepped on the survey chain, and a rebellion was underway.

Both sides had all they could do to keep their own side together, nevermind fight the enemy. There was no railroad for Ottawa to rush troops to the Red River, and McDougall was kept fuming impotently on the American side unable to enforce his law. The Red River settlers were much divided between themselves, and Riel had difficulty keeping them united. He was constantly beset by traitors and infiltrators. One such, Thomas Scott, a bigoted Orangeman detested even by the anglos, had to be executed. There were forts taken and retaken, barricades and roving bands of horsemen. In the end, Ottawa had to acknowledge the provisional government and make Manitoba a province. But Riel was ordered into exile for five years and the Métis were swamped by eastern militia and settlers, their land claims swindled out of them, and their culture destroyed.

Riel spent much of the next fifteen years in the United States, although he frequently violated the terms of his exile by living in the Red River area. He was constantly hunted by his opponents and eventually moved to Montana. It was there in 1885 that the Métis of northern Saskatchewan asked him to lead a second rebellion. This one was doomed to failure because a railroad had been built to rush militia to the scene, and because Riel was never able to unify the settlers a second time long enough to form a government. He ignored the suggestions of his military lieutenant Gabriel Dumont to fight a guerrilla war. The militia was led by General Middleton who was detested by his own troops and known as "Old Fred". A set piece action took place at Batouche where the Métis lost trying to fight a conventional battle and the Canadians won because their troops mutinied against Middleton and attacked without orders.

Riel was captured and tried that summer for treason. It was a kangaroo court held in Regina and made worse by the incompetence of Riel's lawyers. They could have fought it and won on constitutional grounds, but instead chose to plead Riel innocent by reason of insanity. In her book, Siggins goes through the evidence and shows that Riel was in fact sane. At the trial, the Crown Prosecutor wanted to prove Riel sane and hangable, the defense lawyers tried to prove him insane, and Riel made it clear that he was sane and would not allow his life's work to go down in history as the work of a madman. This resulted in the unusual circumstance of prosecution and defendant working together to prove Riel was sane, while the defense found itself at odds with the man they were to have helped. Riel was found guilty. The jury did not want a death sentence, but the judge was an Orangeman supporter who, as legend has it, found Riel "guilty of treason and sentenced to death for the execution of Scott".

Siggins writes from a sympathetic point of view for the Métis. Most Riel books have relied on the printed record which is almost entirely written by Riel's enemies, and thus come a cropper. Siggins looks at the matter using Métis oral tradition as well, and provides a more balanced look at the two Riel Rebellions. One thing that surprised me, that I never noticed before even though I have read a fair bit about Riel, was how young he was. In his first rebellion he was only 25, and was executed at age 40.

FAREWELL TO NOVA SCOTIA

Another genre of Canadian literature is the separatist novel. These books generally concentrate on Québec and Alberta, the two noisiest provinces in Canadian politics. (Oddly enough, all the third parties originate from these two provinces.) There is one peculiar subgenre of separatist fiction, that of Nova Scotian offshore islands declaring independence from the provincial government.

The latest in that category is THE REPUBLIC OF NOTHING, by Leslie Choyce. I walked past this book at Smithbooks and ordinarily would not have stopped to look at it, as it was in the general fiction section. But the author's name in huge print (twice the size of the title) seemed familiar. After a moment's thought I realized where I had seen the name before; he edited the 1992 SF anthology ARK OF ICE. (Trade paperback \$14.95 from Pottersfield Press, Lawrencetown Beach, R.R. #2, Porters Lake, Nova Scotia BOJ 2S0, or at chain bookstores.) So I had a quick skim through REPUBLIC and bought it.

THE REPUBLIC OF NOTHING is Whalebone Island, declared independent by the narrator's father Everett McQuade. In the aftermath, there is no aftermath, the Nova Scotian government not knowing or caring about the declaration. McQuade is an anarchist, hence the name for the new nation, The Republic of Nothing. The other inhabitants of the island humour him, being rugged individualists all. Strangely enough, McQuade is elected to the Nova Scotia legislature as a Tory, although perhaps not so strange in view of the Tories' favourite pasttime of knifing each other in the back and ignoring party solidarity. I see I forgot to mention in my review of the Riel book that after his first rebellion Louis Riel was elected several times to the House of Commons as the member for the Red River riding. Riel was elected as a Tory, which takes on overtones of the bizarre, considering that the federal government of the day was Tory and they were sworn enemies. As the REPUBLIC book progresses, McQuade works his way up, is elected as party leader, but shot by the second-place finisher at the convention. The book begins in the 1950s, progressing to the 1970s somewhat altering history, there being no Premier McQuade in our timeline.

The book is very episodic, each short chapter bringing a new character in or out, or delineating some event in a cut-and-dried fashion. It reads well, however, with the black comedy mixed evenly with a romance.

[continued next page]

The Republic of Nothing is sheltered from the turmoil of the Sixties, but the outside world eventually intrudes as a multinational tries to mine it for uranium. The narrator's mother is psychic, but eventually loses her powers. Half the population of the island has some sort of guilty secret, some of which are resolved as the book goes along, most of which only in the rush to the last few chapters. There is the son of a Newfoundlander who never accepted joining the Canadian confederation, and who fled to The Republic of Nothing, thinking it was an island off Greenland and thus part of Denmark. There is a dead Viking, buried in a bog in the centre of the island and who later plays a part in stopping the uranium miners.

A good read, which manages to tie all the loose ends of plot together at the end and prunes out many of the characters as it goes along, so the reader isn't lost trying to keep track.

THE REPUBLIC OF NOTHING is a trade paperback available in chain bookstores or from Goose Lane Editions, 469 King Street, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 1E5. Price is C\$16.95 or US\$14.95.

FROM AIRSHIPS TO ON THE BEACH

I was checking the Co-op Book Exchange and noticed a game called SLIDE RULE, which caught my eye because I collect slide rules and how-to manuals. This turned out to be by Nevil Shute, best known to SFers for his novel ON THE BEACH. I thought momentarily that this was another novel, but it was instead his 1954 autobiography. A very interesting book indeed, for I was not aware that he was a pioneer aviation engineer, involved with the R.100 airship and later owned an early airplane company. He does have brief mentions of his literary work, but it is on aviation that he concentrates almost all of the book.

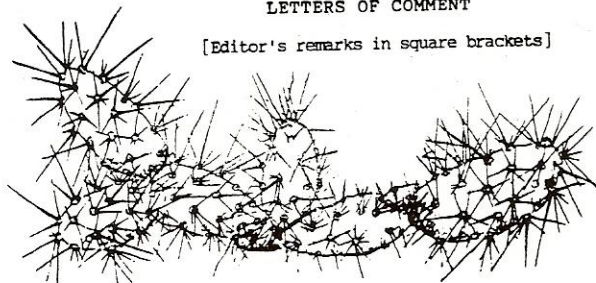
He certainly led an exciting life. His childhood was that of a typical English schoolboy. His father was in the Post Office, and was in charge of the Dublin P.O. at the time of the Easter uprising of 1916. When the rebel forces took over the Post Office building, Shute was a young lad roaming up and down the streets watching the fighting and helping out as a first-aid volunteer.

As a young man freshly trained as an engineer, Shute's first job was designing and building the R.100 airship. This was part of a rather remarkable test of the debate about government versus private enterprise. The Labour government ordered two airships. R.100 was built by Vickers, R.101 by a government agency, both to the same general specifications but designed separately. Shute had to work on a fixed-price basis bid by Vickers, while the government crew had unlimited funds. R.100 was completed first and made a successful round-trip between England and Canada, albeit with some problems along the way. (One advantage of airships is that they can be repaired in midflight.) The R.101 was late and unsafe but flown anyway due to political pressures. It was sent to India but crashed with great loss of life in France. In his account, Shute is quite sympathetic to the R.101 designers, who were hampered by a publicity department run amok. Vickers worked quietly and could alter plans with no difficulty, such as changing engines three times on R.100. The government publicity trumpeted every design of the R.101 as the best in the world, which prevented a change if necessary, and forced the engineers to stick to unsafe designs because the politicians did not want to lose face. The R.101 left port in a storm, rushed since the Minister wanted to beat a political deadline. The outside skin of the airship was so rotten it fragmented, and the gas bags rubbed on the support girders. It was a miracle that it made it as far as France.

Shute finishes up with his days at Airspeed, later owned by de Havilland. Not as interesting, mostly concerned with minutia about running a business.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Chester Cuthbert
Winnipeg, Manitoba

1995-5-10

Garth Spencer's "The Semipros in Canada" conveys information which I and probably most other Canadian fans did not have. Few of the publications mentioned have even been seen in Winnipeg to the best of my knowledge.

One famous fan used Alastair Cameron's FANTASY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM for every book he reviewed in his fanzine. Andre Norton was enthusiastic about it, and may have used it as a source of plot ideas. Reviews in the professional SF magazines were commendatory, and I am in agreement that it should have been reprinted after the original edition of 500 copies was exhausted. Likely your saying that it was difficult to apply the system to the speculative fiction published in the ConAdian issue of PRAIRIE FIRE would apply also to the "New Wave" fiction of earlier years. I never made much use of the system myself, although it is almost an encyclopedia of ideas.

FROM: Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

1995-5-14

PRAIRIE FIRE is probably quite logical in lumping together SF and fantasy. While the outer fringes of each category lean respectively towards spaceships and robots, and wizards and elves, there have always been a fair number of stories which are argued over as to which category they are in. As for 'near future', Heinlein's "Year of the Jackpot", in the march 1952 GALAXY, predicted (actually it was satire) that the world would end that year, and you can't hardly get a nearer future than that.

I never believed that After-the Bomb stories dominated the 1950s and 1960s (not nearly as much as future war stories dominated the 1940s) but they were new in the 1950s. There were a few stories about nuclear weapons in the 1940s, one of them providing a lot of publicity for Campbell's AS-FOUNDING when government agents descended on his office to investigate the 'leak', but in general, SF authors are better at extrapolating the known than they are in predicting the future. Fear of the Bomb was part of US culture in the 1950s as well as part of SF, so the Bomb stories were talked about more. Disaster stories in general were more popular; Heinlein's "Jackpot" arrived when the sun blew up.

FROM: John Thiel
30 North 19th Street
Lafayette, Indiana 47904

1995-5-31

Garth Spencer's article is a real service to SF fandom. You're getting a lot of good sercon into your zine. I'm glad to see the Wuzis on the cover progressing.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1995-5-17

I can't remember having ever seen the Alastair Cameron classification system. But I might point out that another one exists, worked out by Jack Speer and originally circulated through FAPA. It had a logical progression from one general theme to another, and it broke down general themes into quite detailed differences of subdivisions. It had provision for giving a story more than one set of numerals, a main one to correspond with its main theme and one or more others to take care of themes that appeared as subplots or subsidiary elements in the story.

Garth's survey of Canadian semi-pros should be useful to collectors, although I imagine it would be quite difficult to find today copies of many of the items listed. I keep wondering how much first-rate fiction circulates only in the pages of such publications and is never considered for anthologizing or fully professional periodicals because the right people didn't see it on its original appearance in print.

FROM: Terry Jeeves
56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England

1995-5-12

Many thanks for OPUNTIA #23.1A and B. Why not combine both into one mag, and why the strange, sideways format? Presumably you have a valid reason. I'd love to hear it.

[It's been a while since I explained the philosophy behind OPUNTIA, and as there are a number of new readers, I will use Terry's letter as an excuse to repeat myself. In deciding to publish a zine, I first established that it would officially be an irregular, so that if I couldn't meet a schedule then I would not feel any guilt nor would I have to apologize to readers for lateness. I have been

keeping OPUNTIA on a fairly monthly schedule, but do not consider myself obligated to do so. OPUNTIA at the start was to be small but frequent. My prior observation of many zines was that they start off this way, grow like Topsy (mainly because of locs), slow in frequency, and finally die because they become a chore. OPUNTIA therefore will always be restricted to 16 pages, reduced on the photocopier to fit four sheets of paper. This size puts OPUNTIA just under 30 grams, which is the increment for domestic and American postage. The increment for international postage is 20 grams; above that the postage is the same for two issues of OPUNTIA as it is for one. This is why my overseas readers get this zine in pairs.

When I started my zine, I resolved that it would not be yet another 8½ x 11 general zine with a bit of everything and no purpose beyond publishing for the sake of publishing. I set up a compartmentalization system whereby the whole-numbered issues are sercon, .1 issues are review-zines, .2 issues are indexes, and .5 issues are perzines. If I have too much material accumulating for one type, I use lettered subdivisions such as A and B. To take 23.1 as an example, I had 1½ issues worth of copy at the time that 23.1A was made up. I knew that within the month I would have enough copy to fill in 23.1B, so I sent out the A issue, then the B, to ensure that the copy wouldn't be stale-dated. As for purpose in publishing, I felt there was no other zine covering Canadian fanhistory, and that OPUNTIA could fill that need. (Yes, there were Canfanhistory zines in the past, but they are dead and gone.) The other Canadian zines seldom or never discuss Canadian politics; I, on the other hand, grew up in a very political family (my father ran for office many times), and so I have been writing about that in the perzine issues. The book reviews concentrate mainly on older books, much like Ned Brook's IT GOES ON THE SHELF or Mark Harris' REDISCOVERIES. The bestseller SF will be reviewed in plenty of other zines, so anything I might write is superfluous. I also mention recent Canadian books which I don't see reviewed anywhere else.]

[OPUNTIA is a text-based zine; other than the cover art, and very rare interior illos, words will prevail. The sideways format is a matter of trying out other possibilities besides the normal vertical format, and was inspired by the now defunct Edmonton zine NEOLOGY, which used to change format almost every issue.

Locs are printed or wahfed not in the next issue but in the next issue of that fractional number. If you send a loc on a .5 issue, for example, it will not appear until the next .5 issue. In order to keep OPUNTIA within its 16-page limit, I must regretfully cut letters hard. I still want to get long locs, as this gives me a selection of topics to choose from in editing. Don't, however, be surprised or angry that I chopped up your loc and only printed a few paragraphs from it. I try not to alter the sense of your letters, but probably will cut off many arguments before they get going. If several loccers write about the same thing, I pick one essentially at random so as to avoid wasting space by repeating the same thought. I appreciate your locs, really I do.

The title OPUNTIA was chosen for a number of reasons. I am a professional horticulturist and have published numerous articles thereon, including some original research on the two species of Opuntia native to Alberta. In fact, the licence plate on my car is 'OPUNTIA'. I also wanted a general term so that if my interests change and I drift out of the SF hobby, I can keep publishing the zine but on other topics.

OPUNTIA is deposited in the National Library of Canada in order to increase the chances of it surviving in posterity, notwithstanding Johnson's remark about libraries demonstrating the vanity of human hopes. Years from now, after the mortgage is paid off, I hope to publish a Can-fanthology on an annual basis to preserve material out of other Canzines, but that is merely a hope. (How do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans.)]

FROM: Jenny Glover
24 Laverockbank Road
Edinburgh EH5 3DE, Scotland

1995-5-22

I don't know what's happened to the covers of OPUNTIA, but can you do more of it please!

[Actually, I don't do it; the artists do it. I'm always looking for line drawings for the cover, so artists take note. Must have an opuntia-related theme (no barrel or organ-pipe cacti), on 11 x 8½ page (leave room for me to insert title). I prefer to run series of related art but will take singletons. Payment is C\$10 for one-time use.)

I'm inclined to prefer the alien [Wuzi] perched on the cactus while sketching (#23.1B) to the unhappy alien trapped in a spider web (#23.1A), but they both have a vitality which attracted me to read the fanzine avidly.

One thing I always do when looking at a fanzine listing is look for new faneditors, because everyone builds up their own mailing lists. You, for example, are conjecturing on the renaissance in Irish fandom, comparing it to Seattle. I didn't know about it; it always fascinates me that I can find out about a new home fanzine from this side of the Atlantic by reading about it in a fanzine from North America.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Harry Andruschak, Randall Tin-ear, Joseph Nicholas, Bobbie Pinn, Carolyn Substitute, Joseph Major, Henry Welch, Sheryl Birkhead, David Thayer, R. Graeme Cameron