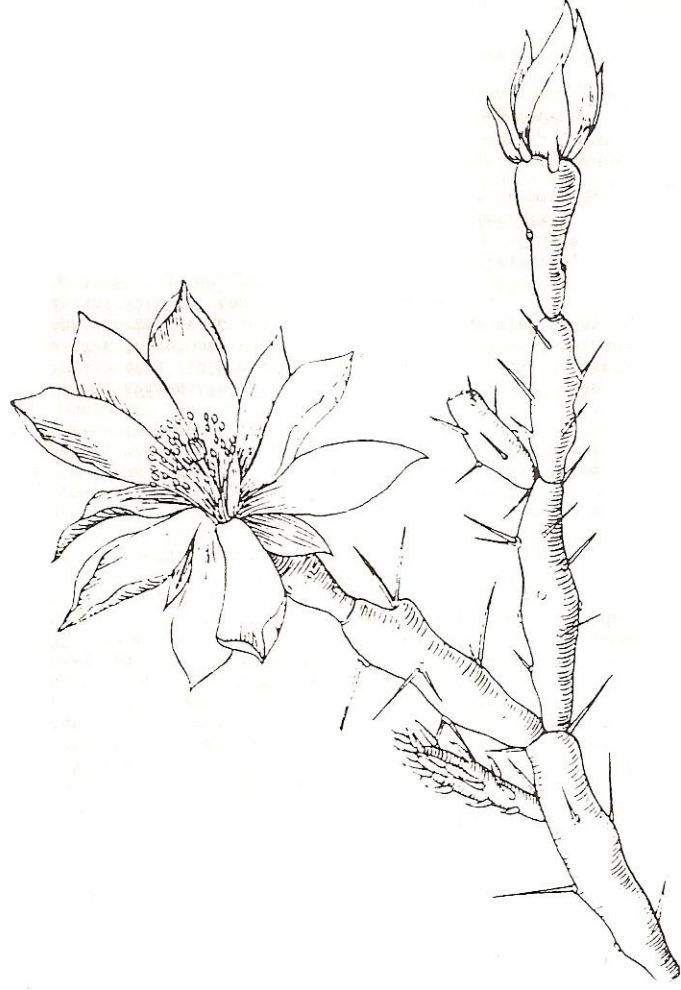


OPUNTIA

31.1



OPUNTIA #31.1

Ides of March 1997

ISSN 1183-2703

OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. A one-time sample copy is \$3 cash, otherwise only to be had as a zine trade or for a letter of comment on a previous issue.

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia pusilla, by an unknown artist from the 1937 book by N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose titled THE CACTACEAE.

E-MAIL STUFF: The Toronto in '03 bid for the WorldCon is now at: <http://worldhouse.com/worldcon-2003/>

ZINE FAIR: As we go to press, George Sweetman advises that Cowton's first zine fair will be held April 12 at the Calgary Multi-Cultural Centre, 712 - 5 Street SE. No other details at the moment but I hope to drop by. Book your flight early, and remember: there is no sales tax in Alberta.

WORLD WIDE PARTY #4: At 21h00 your time on June 21st, raise a glass to your fellow fans around the world. Get a wave of good cheer circling the planet. Be sure to write OPUNTIA or some other zine and tell how you celebrated. Let the Papernet know what went on at your node.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

FAPA #237 (Details from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) The Fantasy Amateur Press Association, published quarterly, is now up to Volume 60 and is one of the older apas, though not the oldest, as some stretch back into the 1800s. In an apa, each member publishes his/her own zine in x number of copies (68 in FAPA) and then sends them to a Central Mailer or Official Editor. The OE sorts out the zines into bundles, each bundle containing one copy of each zine. The OE then mails one bundle to each member, a convenient method of zine trading. I have recently joined FAPA; they have a maximum of 65 members, but there is no waiting list as I type this. Annual dues are US\$15 to cover mailing costs, and the minimum activity is 8 pages per year. For FAPA, you must have fanfannish credentials such as publishing an SF fanzine or letters in two or more fanzines not both produced in the same municipality. In FAPA, one gets to hobnob with some of the great names in SFdom. Although nominally about SF, FAPazines range from personal zines to review zines to fanhistory.

CAPERS AWEIGH #7 (\$5 from John MacNeil, Box 96, Sydney, Nova Scotia, B1P 6G9) This chapbook is mostly poetry, with a few prose pieces on Cape Breton life. Some news and a writer's market guide as well. A look at a way of island life not too familiar to outlanders.

KNOW NEWS V4#4 (US\$3 or zine trade from Scott Crow, Box 1948, Fair Oaks, California 95628-1948) Fictionzine with some good pieces ranging from going berserk about cellphones to vicious gossip. More hits than misses.

FOR THE CLERISY #18 (Zine trade from Brant Kresovich, Riga Business School, Skolas 11, Riga, LV-1010, Latvia) An expat's life in Latvia with little details about the local culture. Also musings on languages and economics.

MAXIMUMROCKNROLL #163 (US\$3 from Box 460760, San Francisco, California 94146-0760) Small-press punkzine, saddle-stitched, hundreds of pages with indie record ads, music and print reviews, band interviews, scene reports, and letters. The columnists, however, are my favourite. Starting off is a diatribe against body piercing which says out loud what many punks are too ashamed to admit publicly, that piercing nipples, eye lids, or lips is only pseudo-cool and certainly unsanitary. Elsewhere, weird stuff in the news, a history of Michael Bakunin (who was displaced by Karl Marx and is largely forgotten today), the inevitable Web site review column, the even more and most regrettably inevitable O.J. Simpson bone-picking, and much else in the urban counterculture life.

SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY #10 (The Usual from Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408-4315) Published once every fifth year, so if you've been feeling guilty about how late you are with your zine, then relax. A look at the impact of modern technology on zine publishing, such as the IBM Selectric typewriter. Various personal stories such as being a fashion model for S&M leather, a New York City apartment with no floorboards, roughing it in the Seattle bush, photos of fandom old and new, and a bad piece of faanfction by Harlan Ellison that most probably would not have been published if it had been submitted by Joe Blow.

NEVER QUITE ARRIVING #5 (The Usual from Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, England) Actually she'll be in Australia by the time you read this, but will be back in England by June. Having thrown up her job for a Grand Tour, this issue covers the North American segment, staying with friends in Boston, touring about USA, attending SF conventions, down to sunny Mexico, and life on the road.

FHAPA #2 (Details from Nigel Rowe, 5224 North Glenwood, 3rd Floor, Chicago, Illinois 60640) Not to be confused with FAPA, this is the Fan History APA. FHAPA #1 got a poor critical reception, to put it mildly, but this new issue is nothing to be ashamed of. Besides the usual business news and notes of The Timebinders group which sponsors FHAPA, there is solid content such as a list of libraries and other repositories for SF collections. In other zines of this apa bundle are an installment of B.C. fanhistory, British fanzines in 1980, the history of the first British fanzine, prewar fanzines of Australia, indexes, and a general look at Canfandom.

PROPER BOSKONIAN #38 (The Usual from New England SF Association, Box 809, Framingham, Massachusetts 01701-0203) One of the better clubzines, with detailed zine reviews, fanzine history, an installment of Ian Gunn's wonderful "Space-Time Buccaneers" comix, con reports by people who actually go to panels, film and television reviews, and locs. I enjoyed the fanzine review of my own zine, issue #28. Inbetween slagging about the tiny type size of OPUNTIA is a truth spoken in jest: "Coulson, Warner, Major, Penney et al are obviously not real people at all, but each a rival worldwide omnipresent letterbombing army."

ANGRY THOREAUAN #18 (US\$5 from Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) Musiczine with the usual music and zine reviews and band interviews, but there is much more than that. This is the Christianity issue, with a colour wraparound cover of what crucifixion is really like. I wouldn't show this issue to your local pastor. Lots of rants, starting off with Christian rock groups that desperately chase the latest trends and often deny their religious leanings in an effort to appear mainstream. Also The House of a Thousand Crosses, similar to Watson Lake, British Columbia, except that instead of leaving street signs, visitors put up crosses.

THE FOSSIL (US\$10 from The Fossils, Inc., c/o Joseph Diachenko, 9217 Mimosa Drive, La Plata, Maryland 20646) Newsletter of a club devoted to the history of amateur journalism, although mostly taken up by internal club business. The group began in 1904 as an alumni association of apahackers, and evolved over time to record the history of apas and encourage people to join the parent groups such as the National APA and others. The issue at hand contains a brief article about researching the life of a Lovecraft-associated apahacker, some brief essays on Ben Franklin and Robert Frost, and the club happenings. The Fossils run various awards, one of which is the Gold Composing Stick Award, and keep a library of old zines which might be of interest to serious researchers.

ERG #136 (Zine trade or loc from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) This issue starts off with a review of a set of circa 1936 cigarette cards depicting the world of the future. Some of the Things To Come did so, while Just Imagine a terraformed North Sea drained so that one could drive on dry land from London direct to the north tip of Denmark. Elsewhere, obscure SF prozines, graveyard humour, and the economics of booksellers in Britain.

ICHTHYOELECTROANALGESIA #3 (US\$2 or zine trade from Sean McLachlan, Box 1933, Columbia, Missouri 65205-1933) Published by an archaeologist, and starting off with a question-and-answer session on topics such as Vikings in America (the runestones found are fakes but there was a genuine settlement in L'anse aux Meadows), when did agriculture begin, and Egyptians did so build the pyramids (and not aliens). Most of the issue is a trip report to Turkey.

GALACTO-CELTIC NEWSFLASH #1-97 (The Usual from Franz Milakis, A-5151, Nussdorf 64, Austria) In English by an artist. This issue is about his artwork at Stuttgart Planetarium, and thoughts on the love life of monsters.

FANFARE (IN F) #1 (The Usual from Dave Wittmann, 2675 South Nellis Blvd, Apt. 1055, Las Vegas, Nevada 89121) Most of this zine is taken up by an extended essay on terraforming Mars. An afterword by Wittmann explains that he was prompted to do so because he had attended a club meeting that was supposed to deal with it, but instead veered off into Amazon forest clearing. This puts me in mind of convention panels which often do the same thing, disappointing audience members who had hoped to learn something on the subject.

LAST RESORT January 1997 (The Usual from Steve George, 642 Ingersoll Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 2J4) Brief perzine of a freelance writer. You may have seen some of his horror novels on the store shelves. In this ish he announces that he is moving into copywriting jobs with ad agencies; the money is better than novel writing. Elsewhere, an account of car troubles and finally buying a new one, not entirely unrelated to the previous subject.

GEEKCORE #2 (US\$2 from Jesse Fuchs, Box 9146, Denver, Colorado 80209) A bit of everything, from Hungarians who still commemorate lost battles to life as a person named Jim Jones (he's heard all the Kool-Aid jokes, so don't bother). A vignette about comics/Star Trek geeks that will please Sharyn McCrumb and Scott Patri, and various reviews of music and zines.

CRAZY RHYTHMS #2 (Jesse Fuchs, as above) A musiczine subtitled "Throw Down Your Gun And Tiara And Come Out Of The Float". Mostly record reviews, a retrospective of a songwriter/singer, and an interview with a music critic.

GOTTERDAMMERUNG #8 (The Usual from Mark McCann, 40 Derramore Avenue, Belfast BT7 3ER, Northern Ireland) With the subtitle "My Patio's on Fire", but no stories about house fires. Rather, drunken moments in a pub to honour a friend emigrating to the frozen wastelands of Toronto and an account of backwoods Turkey. Also, Scouting in the hunger strike period of the Troubles.

BANANA WINGS #4 (The Usual from Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CRO 6JE, England) Subtitled "An Obvious Resentment of Tradition", the theme is taken up in the leader editorial. The discussion centres on why neos should be expected to pay homage to tradition. It is daringly suggested that the classic of SFdom "The Enchanted Duplicator" has passed its sell-by date, reasonable sentiments indeed, given that we are quickly approaching a time when mimeographs will have passed from living memory. The editorial sums up a reasonable attitude, that tradition is fascinating but we are not obligated to be bound by it. In other writings, this zine covers conreports, the idea of perzines as confessionals, extended fanzine reviewing, and ~~confessionals~~ trip reports.

FTT #21 (The Usual from Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England) Subtitled "Incorporating INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GARDENER", the theme is not taken up in the leader, which is instead an account of Judith's childhood on an Australian farm. I found it interesting how much in common it had with my rural childhood in Canada. The details are different but the general gist is the same. Elsewhere, accounts of Fort McHenry of "Star Spangled Banner" fame (or infamy, given its ridiculous vocal range), confessionals of Tunisia and Zambesi hippos, locs, and plagues as labour economics.

BIBLIOZINE #54 (The Usual from John Held Jr, Box 410837 San Francisco, California 94141-0837) Mail art zine specializing in the bibliography of the field, usually devoting each issue to a particular theme. This issue covers the rubber stamp art of Corice Arman. He was active in the 1950s; there is a passing mention about another rubber stamper circa 1918, which gets me wondering just how old rubber stamping as an art is. The citations in this zine are annotated, which makes them more useful to the reader who is unlikely to see the actual publications, most being obscure or rare.

PHILOSFY #4 (The Usual from Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge, San Antonio, Texas 78239-4022) As San Antonio is hosting the WorldCon this year, it is not too surprising to see a list in this issue of things to see and do when in town. This zine specializes in discussions about morality and ethics, the topics in this issue being on death and war. Locs and reviews, as well.

TO GO FORTH IN LIFE (The Usual from Paul Olson, Box 3472, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403-0472) This chapbook is a self-contained Christmas novella about what happens when two Army buddies meet up after many years. A Scrooge analogy set in northeastern United States.

CHALLENGER #5 (The Usual from Guy Lillian, Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153-3092) a 106-page zine to make FOSFAX look like a double-sided flyer. Excellent cover art, illustrated throughout with B&W photos which are properly scanned and screened, not the usual blobby raven-in-a-cave-at-midnight photos one sees in other zines. Speaking of caves, there is an account of what dumb clucks get up into when they go into caves with no training and less equipment. Reports on the WorldCon in Los Angeles, with a side trip to interview one of the Manson women (Lillian is a lawyer). Lots of locs.

CHIMNEYVILLE ALMANAC #6 (The Usual from Johnny Lowe, 1152 West 24 Street, #1, San Pedro, California 90731) Media and comics zine but not so much as to annoy Trekkie haters. An interview with a screenplay writer and the Los Angeles WorldCon in pictures. Zine listings are the unusual feature; instead of capsule reviews, Lowe shows the actual cover art, reproduced at smaller size.

CONTRACT V9#1 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B9) Newszine of Canadian con-goers, with listings and advice (such as a sample job description sheet) about SF conventions.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #46 (The Usual from Tom Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Con-going, asking questions of psychics they'd rather you didn't, getting Buddy Holly's autograph, military memories, UFOs, various reviews and locs.

WARP #40 (The Usual from Montréal SF&F Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec, H2W 2P4) A clubzine of mediafans, with news and notes of eastern fandom, con reviews, philosophy about the written word and why it will stay with us, and media reviews.

MARKTIME #41 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 59851, Schaumburg, Illinois 60159) Diaryzine of a travelling man whose aim is to visit every county in the USA. En route, he also tapes radio stations and visits baseball parks. This is the fellow to ask if you need any advice on discount flights and car rentals.

8-TRACK MIND #90 (US\$2 from Russ Forster, Box 90, East Detroit, Michigan 48021-0090) Subtitled "8-track's Comeback: Curse or Blessing?" this issue deals with a disturbing new trend, as 8-track cartridges have now become hot collectibles, and speculators are moving in for a quick buck. The letter column is mostly of the "How much is my 8-track worth?" but the articles are good. The DIY article on converting a television set into an aquarium and adding an 8-track player which used the TV controls. The history article this time around is about portable 2-track cartridge players. It is a surprising analogy to Apple computers, as 2-track players became extinct because the manufacturer targeted the wrong market and rested on its laurels.

PLOKTA #5 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4RH, England) Genzine with various mild parodies, an account of the editor's pregnancy, leading into a rather alarming account of a proposal to save the placenta post-partum and either auction it off at an SF convention or have it as a meal. No wonder British food is so bad.

THINGUMYBOB #15 (The Usual from Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England) Rather incompressible this time to be honest. Bits of conspiracy ranting, building a physically-impossible thingy, and a list of telephone codes which I'm sure are quite useful over there but I haven't the slightest what they're for.

FILE 770 #115 (US\$8 for 5 issues from Mike Glycer, Box 1056, Sierra Madre, California 91025) Newszine of fandom with strong emphasis on WorldCons, in this issue the Los Angeles event. Some reports on other SF cons, and discussion of the 1999 Australian WorldCon.

FOSFAX #184 (The Usual from Falls of the Ohio SF and F Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) 72 microprinted pages of American politics, with a bit of SF book reviews and con reports. Lots of reading, and if you don't happen to like it, you can always use it as a doorstop or put it in the car trunk for traction.

DEROGATORY REFERENCE #84 (The Usual from Arthur Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, New York 10704) Perzine with Philcon report, life with word processors, banking as gambling or vice versa, and reviews.

KNARLEY KNEWS #61 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525-16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Perzine which is mostly locs. Baby #3 is en route in the Welch home, fanac of a different sort.

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION BULLETIN V6#7 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236) Clubzine with news and notes about fandom in southern USA. Con reports, lists of clubs and upcoming events.

BUSSWARBLE #31 (The Usual from Michael Hailstone, 14 Cecil Road, Blackheath, New South Wales 2785, Australia) A literal mix of fiction and trip reports, alternating from page to page in sequence. Locs and musings.

GOTH, SHMOTH #3 (The Usual from Paul Olson, Box 3472, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403) Fictionzine with two stories and a few zine capsule reviews. The second story "Doomsday Casual" was pretty good, an after-the-Bomb story in which a surviving couple find out that nuclear warfare isn't what it was made out to be. All those ICBMs, after all, were built by the lowest bidder under rush-job deadlines, back when 'quality' was just a slogan. The husband in particular is angry to have to report back to his job as usual, writing publicity for an investment financial corporation.

DRIFT #85 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) Collagezine with a bit of everything. Fiction, poetry, reviews, letters, and news about town.

SQUID MAIL #7 (\$2 from Eric Skilling, 23 Bernard Way, Calgary, Alberta T3K 2E7) A newstand down on Kensington, in the heart of what City workers refer to as Yuppieville, has started carrying local zines. The zines are, like SQUID MAIL, photocopied with aimless editing and worse layout. This one is done by an art school student who should know better. But there is one redeeming article about being called up for jury duty and, as much as he wanted to serve, was dismissed without even being questioned.

TONGUE TIED #2 (no address listed) I bought this on the same newstand as the above zine. Alberta College of Art must be teaching a zine course or something. I only mention this zine because it is published by Lazy Girls Unlimited, who live up to their name by reviewing a book they haven't finished reading yet. Lots of angry authors have claimed over the years that a critic didn't read through the book they reviewed, but this is the first review I've read that concludes "I'm curious about how it all turns out for K. and plan to finish it soon."

ON SPEC #27 (\$6 from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) Canada's prozine of speculative fiction, with excellent colour cover.

RE:ACTION #5 (US\$1 cash from Neoist Alliance, BM Senior, London WC1 3XX? England) A well-organized anarchist zine; is this an oxymoron? The main article "Demolish Theme Park Britain" discusses tartan tamfoolery and the pseudo-Celtic nonsense that neo-pagans and tourists are so fond of. Much like rodeos out here on the Prairies. The other major piece is on the First Congress of the New Lettrist International, held in St. Andrews, Scotland. As it was an anarchist convention, it basically went off like a typical English SF con, although perhaps I shouldn't be that insulting to the NLI.

APPARATCHIK #74 (The Usual from Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Avenue North, #103, Seattle, Washington 98103) A triweekly SF fanzine. This issue starts off with some discussion about Corflu, a small fanzine publisher convention, becoming what the WorldCon used to be back in the early days of SF fandom, a central gathering point for trufans. WorldCons today run in the kilofans of attendance, most of whom are media fans. The reason in discussing Corflu is that there recently was a fuss about Britfans unknowingly violating unwritten rules on bidding for this con; the article at hand sets out what those hidden assumptions were. Elsewhere, thoughts on Socrates and whether or not he was rude at parties. It seems to me that the obvious answer can be deduced by the fact that he was made to drink hemlock, conclusively demonstrating that it's sometimes better **not** to "ask the next question".

LIME GREEN NEWS #16 (US\$2 or mail art contribution from Carolyn Substitute, Box 771, Florissant, MO 63032-0771) Mail art zine, this issue starting off with a trip report, some letters, a reader participation story in four versions, and zine reviews.

ANSIBLE #115 (The Usual from Janice Murray, Box 75684, Seattle, Washington 98125-0684) Dave Langford's droll and very funny newszine of what's happening in British SFdom. You don't have to be an SF fan to appreciate the wit in this double-sided sheet of microprint. As an example, the conventions listing reports on Corflu in Leeds: "So far we've had a long period of apathetic silence, a formal announcement of cancellation in the face of alleged US hostility to a UK venue, and then tearful scenes of forgiveness and re-instatement: God knows what hidden agenda lurked behind all this."

PINKETTE #15F (The Usual from Karen Pender-Gunn, Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia) Only twenty letters left in the alphabet before we may expect the main zine PINK. In the meantime, this is mostly clip-pings, personal news, and locs.

THYME #113/AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS #73 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Two zines printed as one. The latter is book reviews; the actual SF news is in the former. A good overview of fandom Down Under.

LONDON PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER #16 (US\$5 cash for four issues from the LPA, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS) A weird mix of Irish religious politics, leylines, conspiracy theory, and Celtic culture. This issue discusses the Bonfire societies, a British version of KKKism from the looks of them. Tends to have a bit too much academic Marxist psychobabble but not as bad as some I've read.

PROBE #101 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Nice clubzine in digest size with card covers. News, reviews, locs, and fiction and excellent artwork. An extended look at the better SF films of the 1950s. Now that South Africa is no longer an outcast, they are thinking of bidding for a WorldCon circa 2005.

DESIGN FOR LIFE #1 (The Usual from Tommy Ferguson, 768 Manning Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6G 2W6) Perzine, with accounts on women, favourite music, fandom, gossip and the effects of changing one's name.

YEAR OF THE COW (The Usual from Judith Hanna, 15 Jansons Road, Tottenham, London N15 4JU? England) A one-shot zine produced for Attitude: The Convention (not to be confused with Attitude: The Fanzine), but which is zine reviews where fanzines are considered as light snacks.

MOSHASSUCK REVIEW, February 1997 (Zine trade from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025) Apazine about H.P. Lovecraft and his circle, starting off with a news clipping about a company seeking investors to produce Lovecraft Draft Cider, made from New England apples. Inside, a history of the United Amateur Press Association, an oxymoronic name if there ever was one, as since its founding in 1895 it has been split in two or more factions, each one claiming to be the real UAPA. A bibliographer's nightmare, as each faction had the same title and volume numbering for its newsletter. Elsewhere, a report of the 1996 World Fantasy Convention, a professional con, not a fandom con.

TABLOID TRASH #6 (The Usual from Rusty Clark, 24 Glenview Drive, West Springfield, Massachusetts 01089) This 8½ x 14 zine specializes in hand-carved rubber stamps. Almost entirely a portfolio of stamp images sent in by readers. A lot of the stamps look like lino cuts (not an insult; lino cuts are an art form in their own right) but some are quite detailed.

IT GOES ON THE SHELF #17 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605) Review-zine specializing on obscure or out-of-print books. It is amazing what odd topics have been published in the past.

HISSY FIT #2 (The Usual from Margot Dame, Box 113, 4250 Fraser Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, V5V 4G1) Nicely produced saddle-stitch zine with glossy cover. A feminist SF zine. Usually I cringe when I see a zine describe itself as feminist, as the odds on it are that it will be filled with academic jargon and the gibberish that seems to go with most political and ethical causes. Not so here, pleasingly, but rather a good use of common sense and clear writing. This ish considers virtual reality (VR) and how it may affect women in the future. Full-blown VR, where you can't tell it from reality, is a loong way off, and always will be until the timelag problem is solved. Computers cannot generate a VR fast enough to avoid a lag between what our eyes tell us in the VR field and what our senses tell us in the real world: "The smell of vomit may be an unfortunate addition to our paradise.". In a look at using VR to help disabled people overcome their handicaps, it is noted that if our current society does not have the will to help them with problems of the real world, we're certainly not likely to be spending money to give them VR. A look at the pros and cons of the virtual office, working at home and telecommuting via computer, had my particular attention, as that is what my sister-in-law does while still being able to raise two small children at home. This zine tends to be a touch pessimistic in some places though.

VISIONS OF PARADISE #71 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828) A diaryzine of the life of a maths teacher.

IDEA #10 (The Usual from Geri Sullivan, 3444 Blaisdell Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408-4315) The last of the zines still using twiltone paper. Starts off with an account of an unsuccessful attempt to revive Lil Abner, and reprints the strips of the revived series. This should make it a collector's item for the comics fanatic. Elsewhere, musing about the old days in a band, Ukrainian fandom, collecting Pez dispensers, mental illness, and lots of locs.

SNUFKIN'S BUM #1.5 (The Usual from Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ, England) Produced for Attitude: The Convention. You don't really want to know how the zine title was chosen. Trust me on this one. Much of this perzine given over to an account of buying furniture at IKEA; the British sales staff seem not as polite as the Calgary IKEA folk from whom I buy most of my furniture.

THE FREETHINKER #6 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236) Book and media reviews, locs, etcetera. One review covers pirate life and all that dead man's chest stuff.

GRADIENT #15 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-1023) Reviews, locs, the multiple lives of Superman, and an obsession with China.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #71 (The Usual from Melbourne Science Fiction Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine with reviews on all kinds of SF, locs, and news about SFdom Down Under.

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE #15 (The Usual from Karl Johanson, 4129 Carey Road, Victoria, British Columbia V8Z 4G5) SF genzine with reports on fans who stood as candidates in the provincial election, news and notes on Canfandom and locs.

INDY #3 (The Usual from George Sweetman, Box 523, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2J2) Skateboard/punkzine with band and music notes, and the ongoing war to make Cowtown safe for skateboarding, a.k.a. skateo-masochism. Also an account of a car accident and post-accident photos.

UKULELE #4 (The Usual from Daniel Farr, #106, 77 Maitland Place, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2V6) The first ish in a decade of this zine. A bit startling to turn to the locs and see a letter from Robert Bloch, Prof. Runté still a student in Edmonton, and Joseph Nicholas advising that FTT #2 would be out soon. Timebinder indeed.

ZINE WORLD #1 (US\$3 from Doug Holland, 924 Valencia Street, #203, San Francisco, California 94110) is a well-produced reviewzine with colour cover and 50 pages of zine capsule reviews. As FACTSHEET FIVE dies the lingering death of a thousand delays, many zinesters have been looking for a successor; will this one be it? One unfortunate failing of F.F. was that it came to be looked upon as a focal-point zine, the centre of zinedom. This is not correct, as zines must necessarily form a network, a Papernet, where each zine is at the centre of its own network and simultaneously on the periphery of other zines' networks. The Papernet has no central focal point. Each node on the Papernet is a centre and a peripheral point. Neozinesters do not appreciate this, and have no awareness of zinedom's history since the middle 1800s. Doug Holland, editor of ZINE WORLD, makes it clear that he does not expect his zine to be a focal point. He actively encourages others to do their own reviews. This is not just a matter of philosophy for any reviewzine, but a practical matter, for what brought FACTHEET FIVE to its knees was the overwhelming number of zines out there. Printing and postage costs aside, simply assembling thousands of reviews is a Sisyphean task and a Herculean labour combined. The Papernet is unmappable and unknowable in its entirety, an illustration of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Web pages are not the answer either; someone still has to sit down and read all those zines, then write capsule reviews.

ZINE WORLD is not a place for delicate egos. There are lots of KTF reviews that viciously and often gleefully rend their victims. Having read my share of bad zines, I well understand the reviewers' irritations in reading yet another zine with 'dude' in every other sentence or bad poetry. Some of this may be a problem in the selection of reviewers. Poetry chapbooks should not be reviewed by people such as myself who detest free verse with a passion; better to give them to someone who will give them a fair chance.

Doug Holland also has a holier-than-thou attitude on what constitutes a true zine. He condemns anything that has an ISSN as not being a real zine, as if it were a sellout. Speaking of which, ZINE WORLD takes paid ads and is not available for The Usual, only for cash.

Actually I can understand that last point. Once a reviewzine gets past a few dozen reviews, the publisher cannot afford to trade copies. That is what killed the original incarnation of FACTSHEET FIVE. But Holland should realize that he should not be throwing stones if he is with sin himself.

SUBWAY POSTERS #1 (The Usual from George Sweetman, Box 523, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2J2) is a reviewzine that has a lot of Canadian zines not likely to be seen mentioned elsewhere. Skateboard, snowboard, girlie, anarchist, and punk. I found several Calgary zines listed that I didn't know about.

TAIL SPINS #28 (US\$4 from Brent Ritzel, Box 1860, Evanston, Illinois 60204) Musiczine, saddle-stitched with nice wraparound colour cover. Lots of music and zine reviews. Articles on the sinking of the Titanic, protestors at a political convention, lobotomies and such.



Being a fanhistorical person, I keep my SF convention material in organized binders. While looking for an unrelated item, I decided to document newspaper reports of the cons in one convenient list, as shown below.

<u>Convention</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Headline</u>
ConVersion 3	CALGARY HERALD	86-07-27	Aliens gravitate to science fiction fair.
ConVersion 5	" "	88-07-24	Meeting is out of this world.
ConVersion 6	" "	89-07-21	Beam on down for sci-fi party.
ConVersion 6	" "	89-07-23	Convention's out of this world.
ConVersion 7	" "	90-07-22	Trekkies beam in for show.
ConVersion 10	" "	93-07-18	Alien life forms get kick out of the universe.
ConVersion 11	" "	94-07-25	Starships and lizards blast into sci-fi event.
ConText 91	EDMONTON JOURNAL	91-06-09	Local sci-fi writers win awards.
ConAdian	WINNIPEG FREE PRESS	94-09-01	Space travellers.
		94-09-03	Sci-fi folk sway to filking beat.
		94-09-06	Sci-fi writers, fans, party-goers beam back home.
ConAdian	WINNIPEG SUN	94-09-04	Space dogs! (photo of Klingon eating hot dog)
	" "	94-09-04	Con games: Sci-fi buffs have a fantastic party.
TorCon 1	GLOBE AND MAIL	48-07-05	Zap! Zap! Atomic ray is passe with fiends.
TorCon 2	" "	73-09-01	Sci-fi no longer pie in the sky

This list is by no means comprehensive: I do not always get the daily paper while attending a con. The above list did get me thinking of a possible programme item for SF cons. Set up a betting pool on how the con will be reported in the local newspapers. The photo category could run odds on a Klingon using a phone booth, a knight eating a hot dog, etcetera. Headline betting would go by keywords such as "beam in", "sci-fi", and "out of this world". One could extend this contest to local television news shows, although it might be more trouble to judge, as someone would have to get a videotape session arranged. It would be easier just to wait for the daily paper and clip the story the next morning. The phrase "sci-fi" probably wouldn't pay very good odds, as it is such a common item. For extra fun and greater pay-offs, one could take bets on combinations of phrases in a story headline. One hazard might be someone working in collusion with the re-write desk to fix the payout.

The study and analysis of zinedom is rapidly becoming a thriving cottage industry, much as science fiction became respectable as a course subject in universities during the 1980s. Of course, as SFers found out, the academics viewed SF with their own jargonistic slant, and published works on them that had more to do with getting tenure and promotion than speaking clearly to the reader. In the same manner that an arbourist like myself cannot glance at a tree without automatically thinking about which branches to prune off, even if on vacation in Banff National Park, so it is that academics view any branch of literature in the context of their favourite philosopher.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL SELF-DESTRUCT IN 30 SECONDS is the thesis of Fred Wright, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his M.A. at Kent State University, Ohio. (Available for US\$2 from Wright at 1675 Franklin Avenue, #244, Kent, Ohio 44240) The formal title of the thesis is *Personality On Parade: A Psychoanalytic Analysis Of The Zine Revolution*. I had approached it with my usual prejudice against humanities doublespeak, but was pleasantly surprised to find it quite readable and enjoyable. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is dragged in to provide the framework for this thesis, but one can ignore talk of the Symbolic, the Object *a*, or the Imaginary Order. It was not too intrusive anyway, and although I have not read Lacan and have no desire to do so, I get the impression from Wright's interpretation of him that the theories of Lacan are as reasonable as any other and probably easier to understand.

Wright starts off with an overview of zinedom. Unlike many capsule histories of zinedom, which believe that it all began in the 1970s, this thesis is aware of most of the ancestors. SF fanzines of the 1930s, the Dada-zines circa WWI, the Beat chapbooks, and broadsides of the American Revolution all get a look in. The only major group I noticed missing were the apazines and fadazines of the middle and late 1800s.

Wright goes on to look at the motivations for publishing zines. Independence and autonomy, avoiding commodification (ie, The Usual gets a zine, not subscription, and to hell with advertisers), networking, expression of one's personality, and a method to establish a new identity are some of those motivations. Money is not a motivator, something that economists often don't admit in their analyses of the world.

Prof. Robert Runté (University of Lethbridge) has mentioned that people in the zine and fannish worlds often view themselves primarily from the point of view of their hobby, and do not define themselves by their job, as do most mundanes. FIAWOL. Wright considers zine publishers in a similar light, where they assume a new and better identity through their zines: "Beth no longer remains just "Beth", but "Beth from YEESH!", and Aaron, by virtue of publishing COMETBUS, has had Cometbus attached as his new surname."

That is not to say everyone is looking for such a change; it may be therapy, a desire to find others who think as they do, or simply pleasure. Those on margins of life look to zines as a community, or as a safehouse where unpopular topics can be discussed without being shouted down by non-believers. Many zines are started as propaganda for a cause; LITTLE FREE PRESS immediately comes to my mind.

The most interesting section of Wright's thesis is the final part "The effects of zines on readers and society". This is seldom considered in most studies of zinedom, which tend to look at zines only from the publisher point of view. Readers are often zine pubbers themselves, but many are simply looking for something different. Wright mentions honesty and authenticity. Unlike mass media, zines do not worry about offending advertisers or upsetting a local school board, so they can print things that would never appear in a newspaper or television show. Surprisingly, Wright suggests that zines are more of a threat to mass media than thought: "One person publishing a zine of 50 copies represents no

[continued next page]

competition to a large media corporation, but 10,000 to 20,00 people producing zines of 50 copies competes with the products of large media corporations. First of all, the publishers and readers of those zines, e-zines, and Internet postings are spending time and money not engaged in purchasing or interacting with the products of those corporations."

STEWART HOME CONSIDERED AS A TREKKIE

Samuel Johnson is remembered today not because of his writings, which are mostly obsolete or unreadable, but because James Boswell made him the subject of one of the best biographies yet written. Johnson preferred to write long, rolling sentences with heavily Latinized words. By the time one gets to the end of the sentence, one has forgotten what the first part was about. In conversation though, Johnson spoke in the simple clear English that made him famous in literary salons throughout London. Occasionally he would suddenly remember that he should be using big Latin words and recast his sentences to match, but mostly he put aside or forgot his pretensions and spoke English.

I got to thinking about Johnson as I read through Stewart Home's book ANALECTA (£3 from Sabotage Editions, BM Senior, London WC1N 3XX, England) and some other books of his of similar nature. Much of Home's writing alternates between clear English that led this reviewer to think he might learn something and turgid psychobabble that one expects from a Professor of Comparative Literature. On the whole, Home stays with a fairly understandable text. This anthology comprises various articles, unpublished essays, and interviews. Home is to avant-garde art what Ted White is to SF fandom; never far from any major feud, and always ready to give as good as he gets. Some of this writing is in response to critics, some is feuding with anarchist groups, and much of it is about life in an obscure microcosm that is no more important to the real world than SF fandom.

Class war and Hegel seem to obsess some of these people and far too many statements are made on the basis of unproven assumptions. If you've always suspected that modern art is a fraud, Home will confirm this for you in his hilarious essay "Faking It". Being short money, Home nipped down to his printer, got some waste paper used as test sheets during press setup and consequently covered in multiple images, and bound them up as books. Next, he "... signed and numbered the edition, then sold the fruits of my 'labour' to the Tate Gallery ...". Actually I don't condemn artists who do this sort of thing. It's nice work if you can get it, and it is the gullible and/or pretentious collector who deserves all the scorn.

There are interviews with the kind of people who invent concept art, a criticism of a porno novelist, and some short pieces on miscellaneous topics. One interview with Ralph Rumney discusses a museum exhibit on the art group known as the Situationist International. Says Rumney, "I read the visitors book ... Almost everyone who'd written in it said this is disgraceful, ... what a load of rubbish.". It does point out one failure of every art movement that starts out as a reaction against the gallery system; those movements will in time end up themselves in the galleries. Mail art, for example, is now collected by philatelists, and learned catalogues are published about installation art. Doc to all, as the mail art saying goes.

The groups, art or anarchist, that Home writes on, are all part of their own obsessed world. They talk about the Workers, the word 'fascist' is a popular insult and philosophers are taken a bit too seriously. I got the distinct impression that most of these people have no conception of what a real Worker is. Yes, they may have day jobs as waiters or copy editors, but none have any idea what life is like spending thirty years as a line worker. I work in a highly unionized environment and in 17 years have never heard workers talking about praxis or bourgeois consciousness. They talk about how much of a wage hike they can get, or the pension plan.

I read many of the current SF bestseller novels, but you will seldom find them mentioned in OPUNTIA. This is because I only have limited space and would rather use it for older books that deserve renewed attention and new books not as likely to attract as much notice as the latest Discworld novel. Bestsellers will get numerous reviews in fanzines, so I don't care to waste much space here on needless duplication.

Because 75% of my readership is outside Canada, I want to draw to their attention the Tesseracts series of Canadian SF anthologies. These books are sold here in the usual chain stores such as Smithbooks and Coles, but I suspect are rare elsewhere. Canadian SF has been quietly making large gains over the past several years, led by ON SPEC (prozine) and TESSERACTS. In the winter of 1996 were released the latest volumes of the latter, TESSERACTS Q and TESSERACTS 5.

TESSERACTS Q is a collection of short stories edited by Elisabeth Vonarburg and Jane Brierley. It comprises stories originally published in Québec and now translated into English. TESSERACTS 5 is edited by Robert Runté and Yves Meynard and has a wider selection both old and new. All of the TESSERACTS anthologies are still in print; details from Tesseract Books, 214-21 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S2.

TESSERACTS Q carries stories from what to most anglophone Canadians is an alien society. Translations are always iffy to review as one does not know whether to blame the author or the translator. I try to give the benefit of a doubt to the author, and in any event did not need to invoke this policy very often. Jean Pierre April's story "Rêve canadien" is an hilarious alternative history where a Canadian ethnographer is told by an African griot/witch doctor that Jacques Cartier had discovered Cameroon, not Canada. Cartier was after diamonds in Cameroon, and in order to throw enemies off the track, made up a wild story about a new land

behind Newfoundland (whose existence was known for many years previous to Basque fisherman). Cartier was as surprised as anyone else to learn that there was really such a place. All very plausible, right down to how Canada got its name. In our universe, it comes from an aboriginal word 'kanata' (the village) but this alternative universe uses the old joke as truth that the name is derived from the Spanish 'aca nada' (there's nothing there). The ending dips into fantasy, but altogether a quite enjoyable story.

"1534" by Denis Côté is an account of an Orwellian independent Québec. Not in the figurative sense, but the actual 1984 lifestyle, with posters blaring "Emmanuel de Shamplain is watching you", a narrator named Winston who revises history, an endless war with the English, and life in Nu-Franz in general. Winston seems to be tolerating his life in the perpetual year 1534 until he finds a battered and torn book in a trash can, titled "1984".

Many of the stories in this anthology are variants of Alternative Québec, such as the Rome-never-fell scenario where Mount Boreal (Montréal) is on the fringes of the empire, and monks settle theological disputes with computers. But there are some genuinely alien worlds such as the planet whose sentient inhabitants are born from the soil, cannot eat anything from outside the small territorial patch they were born on, and perforce never develop nations but do have advanced communications technology. My Soil Science professors back at the University of Alberta would have been delighted by this well-thought-out bit of ecology. Another story is the journey of a manned ship into the Earth's core to locate a black hole that fell in a few years prior. It would be quite at home in ANALOG, with plausible suspension-of-disbelief technology and even a religious fanatic to sabotage the mission.

[continued next page]

TESSERACTS 5 is overbalanced in the gloom and doom, so much so that co-editor Robert Runté had to apologize for this in his afterword. Some stories are routine or uninspired, an example being Sally McBride's "There Is A Violence" in which aliens result to violence to get back sacred artifacts hoisted for an art gallery. One can easily see the analogy with aboriginal tribes in Canada seeking return of medicine bundles and the like taken by archaeologists. "Poetic Licence" by Sansoucy Katheron is about an Ottawa M.P. hosting a visiting alien as a houseguest. Said alien gets caught in the toilet, shorts out the electrical wiring, and other escapades that are mildly amusing. I'm sure this was done better in some 1950s SF prozine.

Lest Prof. Runté think I'm out to get him for some imagined slight at the last ConVersion, I hasten to add there were many stories I liked. The better stories are those that challenge accepted dogma by exploring the ultimate consequences and asking the next question. In "The Paradigm Machine", Jean-Louis Trudel takes a look at WIRED's vision of the future and goes to the logical conclusion that most netizens of today will not like to hear. The sysops and cyberpunks of the future will be an underclass living in slums. Living in virtual reality is no substitute for successfully dealing with the real world. "Tortoise On A Sidewalk" by Michel Martin deals with something I've always wondered about people who want to be frozen for later revivification; who wants them? In this story, a time traveller learns that the future does not want him and will not share its bounty with him. As a denizen says to him: "What would the men of your time do if hordes from the sixteenth century suddenly invaded your streets? ... Would you show them how to vanquish illness, master nuclear power, build an airplane, go to the moon? Of course not."

Elisabeth Vonarburg has a good story marred by a title with a pun that is meaningless in the context of the story and distracts from it. "Readers Of The Lost Art" manages to overcome this bad start, fortunately,

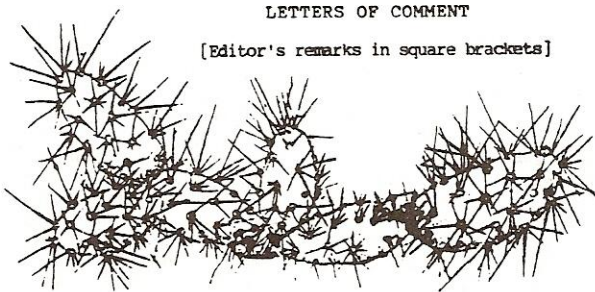
and compell the reader to stay with the story. The plot is about the ultimate in performance art, where two actors skin each other alive then trade skins as if they were changing clothes. Normally I don't read horror but this story starts off mildly enough as if it were from ENGLAND SWINGS SF or one of the other New Wave anthologies. Thinking it was one of those arty pieces, I kept turning the pages, then suddenly found myself reading horror but too curious to quit. As it turns out, there is an ending that redeems the horror, and left me wondering if there was any horror in the first place.

Runté's afterword "Trouble Down The Mine" is a good-humoured defense against the gloomy tone of this edition of TESSERACTS: " ... it's not as if Yves and I deliberately set out to choose the most bleak, depressing, downbeat stories we could find. ... Canadian writers ... have seen the future, and it is run by Westray."

[Westray is a Canadian corporation that was responsible for one of Canada's worst coal mine disasters several years ago.]

In that time-honoured debate "What is Canadian SF", the question is answered by Runté as: "In Canadian SF, whether our heroes ultimately succeed is less important than that they undertake the struggle, that they find life and dignity if facing whatever confronts them." As I type this, my hometown is enduring its umpteenth record snowfall and endless -25°C temperatures, so Runté's remark is of more than just rhetorical quality. We are not going to abandon our homeland, just as so many citizens of war-torn countries stand and endure. Walt Willis remains in Ulster, elderly Ukrainians refuse to move out of Chornobyl, and we stand and endure the depressing winter days. I don't know that enduring is a distinctly Canadian characteristic and therefore also the method by which Canuck SF can be separated out from all other SF, but it is one of the visible characteristics of our literature, even if not unique.

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



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

1996-12-20

It would undoubtedly take something approaching the OED in wordage to cover the history of amateur publishing thoroughly. It would be possible to trace the history of zines even further back than Gutenberg's invention, since monks produced without pay many copies of manuscripts that had been written without thought of compensation back in the Dark and Middle Ages.

[One can trace SF back to the ancient Greeks but realistically SF began in 1926. So it is with zines; one can trace antecedents back to the dawn of writing, but zines as a self-aware field began in the middle 1800s.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: John MacNeil, Chester Cuthbert, Eric Lindsay, Harry Andruschak, Scott Patri, Teddy Harvia, Henry Welch, Buck Coulson, Murray Moore, Lloyd Penney, Ned Brooks, Joseph Major, Sheryl Birkhead, Luther Blissett, Tommy Ferguson, Scott Crow, Judith Hanna, Fred Wright

DIE FAHRRADEER DES ANTONI MIRO, edited by Peter Kustermann (Kulturzentrum Buz, 1996) is a postcard-size paperback, beautifully printed in colour on glossy paper. Antoni Miro is a mail art creator who does postcards and other types of pieces; this book is a collection of a series he did of surreal bicycles. The bicycles appear against backgrounds of treescapes, ocean waves, or clouds floating in a blue sky. Sometimes the backgrounds are surrealistic or collage but usually it is the bicycles that are surreal. They are painted as Leonardo da Vinci-type flying machines, as towtrucks or backhoes, or with Picasso extracts for handlebars. A second look reveals details missed on the first quick glance, such as bizarre levers and cogs to propel the bicycle instead of a chain, or a blurred pedal in motion that is a Cubist horse. Only a few of the bicycles have riders; mostly they travel along tightwires or beaches without a human figure to distract the viewer from the form and function of the bicycles. I don't imagine this book will be at your local Smithbooks, but Antoni may trade for zines or mail art. Try him at Apartat 148, 03800 Alcoi PV, Spain.

From the Associazione Psicogeografica di Bologna, I get regular news about the multiple name Luther Blissett. Numerous people using Blissett's name have pulled off pranks and hoaxes, some so successful that Italian journalists are actually asking themselves if a story is true or made up by urban legend Blissett. At hand is a broadside reporting on the history of Luther Blissett, as reported by Luther Blissett. Also received was a reprint of the London Psychogeographical Association about their favourite pasttime, three sided football. Played on hexagonal pitches. Mucho hilarious in the finest anarchist tradition. The APB is at Box 744, 40122 Bologna Centrale, Italy. Details on three-side football from the LPA, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS, England. Both would probably appreciate a dollar bill or two for postage.