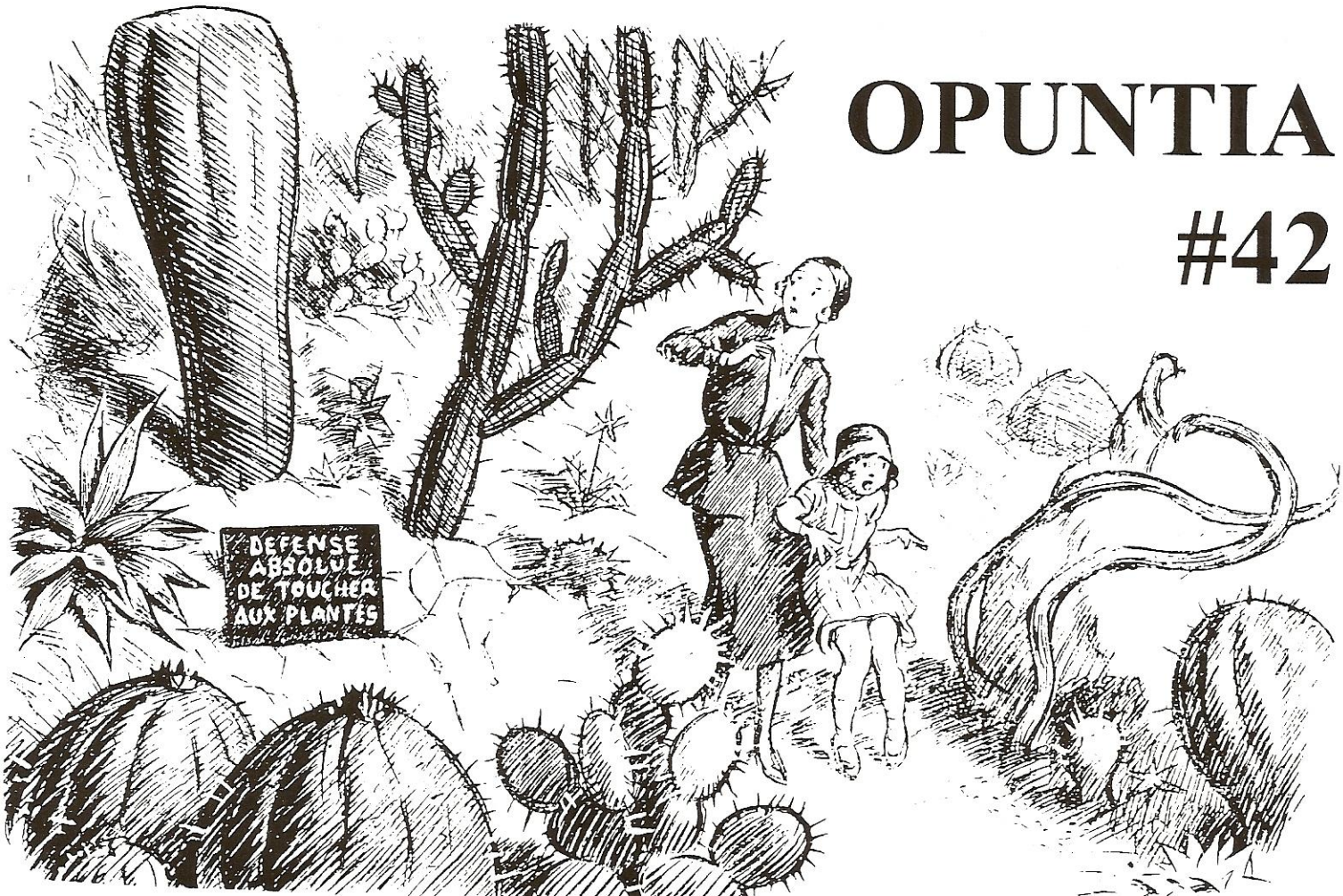


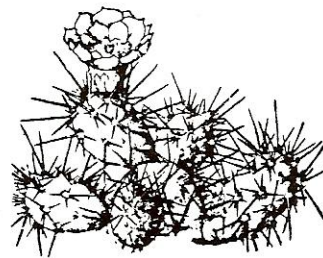
OPUNTIA

#42



TO THE
EDITOR

[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



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OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment.

ART CREDIT: The cover art is from the 1931-05-20 issue of PUNCH, page 546. Entitled "A Superfluous Veto: Les Jardins Exotiques at Monaco", it is by an artist whose signature was so artistic as to be illegible.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Scott Crow, Chester Cuthbert, John Held Jr, Bruce Pelz, Henry Welch, Sheryl Birkhead, Buck Coulson (letter dated 1998-12-30 prior to his decease 1999-02-19), Rodney Leighton, Eric Lindsay

FROM: Lloyd Penney
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

1998-12-27

I've explored the Web lately. More and more, I learn about Usenet and other newsgroup services. Dejanews gave me a look at rec.arts.sf.fandom. I found it an expensive, time-consuming way to have the same conversation you might have in a con suite. I have slightly more confidence in the future of paper zines now.

[The University of Calgary Library has free Web and Usenet browsing on its terminals. I spend about two minutes a week zipping through the rasf newsgroup to see if anybody died or got arrested, but the content is seldom worthwhile. I would say rasf chat is far more trivial than con suite chat, and as mundane as anything you would hear in a sports bar. It confirms my belief

that it is only good for breaking news and that if paper zines emphasize quality of content, they will survive.]

I plan to start working on our CUFF trip report in the new year, and sell it as a stand-alone fanzine with proceeds to CUFF.

FROM: Robert Lichtman 1999-02-05
Box 30
Glen Ellen, California 95442

In your "Fragments for a History of Apas", you state that "apas also have a tradition of mailing comments". This tradition doesn't predate the founding of Fantasy A.P.A. so far as I know. According to my information, mailing comments originated in the second FAPA mailing and were co-invented by Jack Speer and the late Dan McPhail. I know that in the printers and poets apa (as I think of groups like the National APA) there's something of a tradition of commenting on others' productions in a more general way, but mostly not of getting down to the specifics of what is being said by others.

[Robert is Secretary to FAPA, which has a few openings available. For information on what the qualifications and requirements are, and how to join, send a letter to him. If you're thinking of starting a zine, this is a good place to begin.]

FROM: Harry Warner Jr 1999-01-08
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Apa mailing comments in the sense that they exist today did not exist for apa members until the coming of FAPA. Previously, the mundane apas had provided an occasional brief note from this or that publisher on his reaction to the quality of the printing or the writing in this or that journal, and sometimes a big fuss began from a statement in the previous mailing. But the mailing comment activity that often consumed half or more of all the pages in an apa mailing was unknown until it developed early in FAPA's existence. For the first two or three years, FAPA imitated the mundane apas by having the offices of two 'official critics' who would write a sentence or two about each publication in a mailing. They were terminated when individual members began doing it more comprehensively. I have always thought those offices belonged in Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Mikado".

Once I did some translating for a prozine whose title was, I think, INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION. I survived my work on German fiction without getting any threats from the authors, so I suppose I did a fair job. The biggest problem for me was trying to figure out if an unfamiliar word in the German story was a real one I should look up, or an imaginary word made up by the author for device or slang.

Translation involves so many special problems when the texts are meant for operas, oratorios, or lieder. The composer may have set a reference to joy to a bright major chord and in the same line a mention of pain to a dissonant minor chord. The translator must be sure he gets the corresponding words in the right place so they match the chords. If the composer has set to music a poem about a nice old grandmother sewing long hours every night for her family, the translator can't use 'stitched' on a long-sustained high note where the original used a word easy to sing. Then there are the foreign words with no real English equivalents. In both "The Merry Widow" and "Die Fledermaus", a famous number puts 'duzen' in a prominent place. It means to converse with the intimate, familiar 'du', while in English we have only 'you' for all second person pronouns.

Maybe there's no single reason why humans collect. It must have a source for some persons showing off. It may have originated for utilitarian purposes, like much of my book-buying began largely for lack of a first-rate public library. For still others, I imagine that there was a problem with too much spare time; solving crosswords or learning new forms of solitaire light have been the method to pass the hours. Avarice could come into play for some people, who decide to collect inexpensive things with the thought that they'll increase mightily in value. Once a collecting hobby gets started, it takes on a life of its own and often continues even though the original impulse is no longer important.

FROM: Carolyn Clowes
5911 West Pay Drive NW
Depauw, Indiana 47115

1999-02-03

Collecting: I can think of reasons not to collect, other than being unbalanced or a true perfectionist. I just don't like a lot of stuff I have no use for. It sits there taking up space, gathering dust, needing to be packed up every time I move. For me the appeal of ownership is overrated. When I see otherwise sensible folk spending vast sums to cover every working surface of their homes with Trek dreck or those hideous gnomes squatting on mushrooms, I hardly feel unbalanced at all.

1999-03-01

In my family, collecting was a function of entropy, and things collected to the point of chaos. So I tend to equate collection with clutter, and the Law of Unintended Consequences turned me against that pursuit. I'm delighted that collections of wonderful things exist in hands that will preserve and care for them. And I'm relieved that those hands are not mine.

FROM: Scott Garinger

1999-01-27

Box 321

El Segundo, California 90245-0321

I get chain mail/e-mail from friends and co-workers almost every day. Some of it is humourous, some of it informative, but most of it is garbage that goes straight to the recycle bin. I wonder what percentage of e-mail sent is jokes/images/lists that are passed from person to person. Do you think this percentage is higher than chain mail circulated via snail mail? I tend to believe this is true. There are no stamps to lick, just the push of a button and an e-mail can be sent to hundreds or thousands of recipients.

[History clearly demonstrates that the easier and cheaper it is to send communications, then the more trivial the bulk of them will be. Before Sir Rowland Hill's postal reforms of 1840, postage was so expensive that the only mail was vital business correspondence and important family news such as deaths or address changes. Telegrams were faster but still expensive; if you got one at home it was something important. Memos were important back when a secretary had to cut a stencil for the mimeograph. Today everybody buries everybody else under photocopies, faxes, and e-mails, most of which could have been handled with a phone call or face-to-face mention at the next staff meeting. Chain letters accelerated into warp drive with the advent of e-mail, and now merge into computer viruses.]

How do you think the electronic network will ultimately affect the postal/zine network? I suppose only time will tell, but my suspicion is that hand-carried information will attain a more favourable place in people's minds and hearts.

[Radio killed vaudeville but left Shakespeare alive. Television killed black-and-white movies but the big-screen SFX movies are alive and doing big box office. Print will not be killed by the Internet but will certainly be altered. If newspapers, magazines, and zinesters can resist the temptation to go trendy in an effort to keep readers, but instead go for quality of contents, then they will survive. The Papernet cannot compete with the Internet for immediacy or news, but it can easily outdistance it for sober second thought, historical background pieces, and detailed articles of record that are not archiveable on the Internet.]

FROM: Randall Tin-ear

1999-02-07

Box 3478

Hollywood, California 90078

As if the postcard chain mail crap was not enough, here is more. James MacLaren occasionally writes for my zine ANGRY THOREAUAN. [He sent an account of a chain letter on dollar bills: "*St. Elizabeth. Anyone receiving this bill will be blessed with a lot of money if*

he writes this Saying on 10 other bills".] Enclosed is a photocopy of a chain mail postcard apparently never posted. The printed image side is: "*DON'T BREAK THE CHAIN. Dear Friend, This chain was started in the hope of bringing happiness to all men. Unlike most chains, this one does not require any money. Just send a copy of this card to 5 male friends, then pack up your wife and send her to the man who heads the list. When your name reaches the head of the list you will receive 5,814 women. Some of them are bound to be dandies. Have faith, don't break the chain. One fellow broke the chain and got his wife back.*". The address side is undated, but has a publisher credit line "*Saxtone, Box 175, Amarillo, Texas, Made in U.S.A.*".

FROM: Terry Hornsby 1999-03-25
66 Johns Avenue
Lofthouse, Wakefield WF3 3LU, England

I always wondered why SF fans were so concerned about recruiting new members, but I guessed that it was like some kind of self-replicating virus, for its own sake, the perpetuation of a species without any objective reason. I can see how these issues would concern club memberships, too. What I can't see is how clubs can expect to harness such a chaotic, anarchic, and amorphous idea as fandom. It can't be done, and making the attempt is to forget the partly subversive nature of fandom, that it

cannot be so easily contained.

Fandom is where fans go to rebel with the rest of the black sheep. Make it socially acceptable with a club, organize it, and you take away many fans *raison d'être*.

AN EGOCENTRIC AND CONVOLUTED HISTORY OF EARLY FILK AND FILKING

by Lee Gold

[Reprinted with permission of the author from CONCHORD 12 SONGBOOK. She can be reached at 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, California 90066.]

I found organized SF fandom in 1967 at Westercon XX. Filksinging was a two-hour afternoon programme item, with Bruce Pelz and Ted Johnstone singing out of Pelz's FILKSONG MANUALs. (Recently republished in a one-volume version, US\$13 including shipping and handling. Contact Bruce Pelz, 15931 Kalisher Street, Granada Hills, California 91344-3951). Bruce and Ted sat at a table in the front of the room, with Ted playing guitar. They chose what songs to sing, and audience members sang along if they felt like it. There were songs from John Myer's Silverlock set to music, and "The Orcs Marching Song" to the tune of "The Ballad Of Jesse James", and Tom Digby's "Little Teeny Eyes" about a very strange computer, and many, many others.

A month later I attended my first Los Angeles SF Society (LASFS) meeting with copies for sale of THE THIRD FOUNDATION #76 (the fanzine's first issue), containing my first filksong "Oh, What A Beautiful Martian". One of the LASFSians who sang it that night was a fellow named Barry Gold, whom I married two years later.

In turn, I bought Pelz's first three FILKSONG MANUALS (published for the 1965, 1966, and 1967 Westercons). A couple of years later, I bought his fourth FILKSONG MANUAL, and also an old fanzine, THE STF & FSY SONGBOOK, edited by Hal Shapiro, dated 2060 (which Pelz had informed me had been brought out for the 1960 WorldCon).

A few years after that, Ted Johnstone sold me a copy of WEST BY ONE AND BY ONE, an anthology of Baker Street Irregular pieces published by Poul Anderson in 1961. The last piece was "An Introduction to Filk Singing", by Karen Anderson. It begins:

"In the first place, 'filk song' was a typographical error. That was obvious to everybody who read the essay in whose title it appeared. Besides it had no meaning. Who ever heard of a filk?"

"Since the essay appeared in an amateur publication circulated among SF fans, though, there was only one thing to do. Rather than waste a phrase like 'filk song', something must be created

to which the name could be applied. Now, some eight years later, it means "a topical song borrowing the melody and structure of a well-known folk or popular song". And there are hundreds of them."

Despite Karen Anderson's definition, there were already filksongs with original tunes. Of course, back then the only ways to learn a new tune was reading sheet music (Pelz's FILKSONG MANUALS had sheet music for many songs) or picking it up from a recording (phonograph record, wire recorder, or reel-to-reel tape recorder).

Eventually I got around to asking older fans about just what fan had originally typoed "folk song" into "filk song" in just what amateur publication. The culprit turned out to be Lee Jacobs, an L.A. area fan who died shortly before I entered fandom. Back in the 1950s, he'd submitted an essay to SAPS (Spectator Amateur Press Society) entitled "The Influence of Science Fiction on Modern American Filk Music" about supposed SF incidents in folk song, which was a straight-faced analysis of a number of thoroughly filthy "dirty songs", taking various metaphors in them as if they were meant literally. Wrai Ballard, the Official Editor of SAPS, rejected the essay on the grounds that the songs would get the apa in trouble with the Post Office, by violating the laws against mailing pornography.

But he did notice that LeeJ's title had an interesting typo: "filk song". He told his friends about it. And he had a lot of friends.

Lee Jacobs eventually published his essay elsewhere (this time getting the title spelled accurately), but by then most of the people in organized SF fandom had heard about "filk songs". They decided, as Karen Anderson wrote, to apply the term filk to the already long-standing tradition of SF/fannish songs and music.

Most pre-cassette recorder filk falls into two basic categories:

- 1) Melodies written for poems from professional fantasy and SF (with lyrics by such authors as Myers, Tolkien, and Heinlein), and
- 2) Lyrics written to well-known melodies (folk songs, show tunes, Gilbert & Sullivan, popular songs). A number of such lyrics appeared in professionally published F&SF, including Tolkien's "Troll Song" (to the tune of "The Fox Is On The Town-O") and Heinlein's song in "The Roads Must Roll" (to the tune of "The Caissons Go Rolling Along").

Other lyrics were published in fanzines, both by pros and fans; the distinction wasn't as great in those days. Shapiro's 1960 filkbook included "Pore Stf Is Dead" by Damon Knight and "The Author's Ordeal" by Isaac Asimov, as well as a number of pieces by Charles Tanner and Randall Garrett summarizing various F&SF books' plots, inspired by Newman Levy's poems devoted to plays and operas. Levy wrote the lyrics of "Thais"; I have no idea who

wrote the tune. I reprinted

one of Tanner's filksongs

in XENOFILKIA #1. Garrett's filksongs appear in THE BEST OF RANDALL GARRETT and the trade paperback anthologies TAKEOFF! and TAKEOFF TOO!.

Early incidents of what we'd now call filk are chronicled in Harry Warner Jr's excellent histories of fandom ALL OUR YESTERDAYS and A WEALTH OF FABLE. Warner notes that "filksong" was a term that had not yet been invented, but songs were sung (at the 1940 WorldCon) that consisted of new lyrics with a science fiction theme set to familiar tunes. Filthy Pierre, aka Erwin Strauss, gave me photocopies of two sheets of these songs that he'd picked up, and I reprinted them in XENOFILKIA #18 and #19. They were by John Bristol, a pseudonym of Jack Speer. The one that puzzles me is a short piece which is said to be to "the obvious tune". I'll print it here just in case someone can recognize it.

*"We'll build a tempo-ship
And we'll take a little trip,
And watch a million years go by."*

At the third Michicon on Halloween weekend of 1943, to celebrate the opening of Battle Creek's Slan Shack: *"Some 22 persons drifted in and out over the weekend ... A SCIENCE*

FICTION SONG SHEET was published, containing fan parodies suitable for group singing". Warner notes that Jack Speer was there (blowing up black balloons), so perhaps some or all of the songs were his.

"The first respectable publication of music in fandom was Jim Blish's setting of Kornbluth's poem "Cry In The Night", distributed in the May 1945 VAPA [Vanguard Amateur Press Association] mailing ... "

"Just after World War II, Blish and Robert W. Lowndes got outside funds for their attempt to found a firm producing 78-rpm discs. One fan composition, Chandler Davis' "Song Of Worlds Unseen", performed by pianist Bertha Melnik, was among the works on Vanguard discs that actually got distributed. ... The company collapsed after it lost an angel [backer]."

The 1947 WorldCon had what Warner says was *"Perhaps the first of the big drunken WorldCon parties ... in the Hadley [Publishing Co.] suite ... Fans gaped in disbelief at [John] Campbell sitting on the floor, helping Hubert Rogers and Benson Dooling to sing a variety of bawdy ditties."* The next night saw Mary Mair singing *"a vocal setting of Sturgeon's "Thunder And Roses" [and] Chandler Davis playing his own compositions on the piano; [Joe] Kennedy, Fred Burgess, George Fox, and Algis Budrys singing as a quartet a ditty about AMAZING ("We shout*

to the skies the praises of Shaver/ We wish that he were a moldy cadaver"); and Milton Rothman playing the piano."

At the 1952 WorldCon, *"everyone joined in "Glory, How We Hate Ray Bradbury" to the tune of "John Brown's Body" during the ball."* Also known as *"The Bradbury Hate Song"*, this was written by Ray Beam, Jack Natkin, Lewis Forbes, Jerry Hunter, and probably others. It appeared in Shapiro's STF & FSY SONGBOOK and was later reprinted in a Pelz FILKSONG MANUAL.

A year later in 1953, the WorldCon's last event was *"Gordy Dickson ... with his guitar and science fiction ballads."* In 1954, the WorldCon programme included an operetta adapted from Ray Bradbury's *"A Scent Of Sarsaparilla"*, narrated by Anthony Boucher. At the 1955 WorldCon, a fan choir sang a number of Damon Knight's songs written to Richard Rodgers' tunes.

Meanwhile, the Liverpool SF Society of England acquired a used recorder in 1953. It did a number of taped productions which, says Warner, *"were done with professional éclat, were hilarious to anyone who knew the peculiarities of both fandom and the BBC, and achieved such miracles as a full symphony orchestra accompanying what sounded like a choir of hundreds of voices singing fannish words."*

The 1959 WorldCon saw everyone present who had ever sold anything to John Campbell gather together to sing "Oh, No, John", written by Randall Garrett to the tune of the folksong of the same name. Randall later wrote: *"We sang the song to him, and he just stood there, looking superior, which he had every right to do, and when it was over, he looked around at all of us, and said, 'Thank you for your stories'."* This filksong appeared in the 1960 SAPS mailing and was reprinted in a Pelz FILKSONG MANUAL with the note that *"A fifth verse, added by Karen Anderson, is apparently lost."* This verse finally appeared in FILKER UP #1.

In addition to writing filksongs sung at the 1940 WorldCon, Jack Speer was also responsible for FANCYCLOPEDIA I in 1944. In 1959, Richard H. Enay enlarged this into FANCYCLOPEDIA II, which included the following definition of filk song credited to Nancy Share: *"A type of music which, if it weren't fannish, would be called a folk song; fan parodies or pastiches of this or other types of mundane chansons."* FANCYCLOPEDIA II's definition of Poetry also bears on Filk:

"Fantasy poetry, of course, dates from earliest times. Science-fiction has not seemed such a good subject for poetic flights, but efforts have been made by fans (some worthy), and among famous poets scientific pieces are found, notable in Tennyson and

Kipling, tho some with sfnal themes are actually anti-science."

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"In fandom and the pros we have: ballads, usually of rather simple appeal; a couple of epics; such as semi-narrative and descriptive pieces as 'Passing Of The Planets'; store of poetry expressing personal feeling with no connection with fans save that fantasy fans have written it, or Red Moon, Martian Lover, first space flight, ktp [Esperanto for 'etc.' – LG], are substituted for mundane themes; dadaistic and metaphysical jingles like daffy poetics; and a great many parodies of various types of poems and songs."

A year later, in 1962, the National Fantasy Fan Federation published Donald Franson's "A Key To The Terminology Of Science-Fiction Fandom". Its definition of filk song was: *"Fannish folk song, often a parody of a mundane folk song."* It's a bit frightening to realize that THE HACKER'S DICTIONARY's definition of filk isn't as up to date as Franson's. It defines filk as: *"[from SF fandom, where a typo for 'folk' was adopted as a new word] n.,v. A 'filk' is a popular or folk song with lyrics revised or completely new lyrics, intended for humourous effect when read aloud and/or to be sung late at night at SF conventions."* I'd suggest that filkers send the person(s) responsible for this dictionary a better definition if I hadn't recently seen weeks of enjoyable but futile controversy on how to define filk during the

creation of the rec.music.filk newsgroup, all of it ending in resigned agreement on the minimal statement that filk was a genre of music that had originated in SF fandom.

I entered SF fandom in 1967, about the time that filking, on the West Coast at least, began to wither away. Some of us connected this to the growing popularity of artistic rock, played to sophisticated tunes that required more than just one singer with the ability to strum half a dozen guitar chords. Whatever the cause, Pelz published one more FILKSONG MANUAL in 1969, but that was the last of them. Ted Johnstone and I wrote a few more songs together, such as "Eating Crottled Greeps", but essentially new filk in the Los Angeles area came to a halt with the end of the 1960s.

In 1973, I came across what was then the NESFA (New England SF Association) filksong collection; 15 pages of songs, some of them college dirty songs like "Seven Old Ladies". There were also "The Ballad Of Gordy Dickson" by Ben Bova ("FIRST PUBLICATION ANYWHERE" trumpets the claim at the bottom of the page) and "The Ballad Of John W. Campbell" by Joe Ross (to an original tune but without sheet music).

In February 1976, in time for Boskone XIII, the first edition of the NESFA HYMNAL came out, edited by Craig R. McDonough. It had a pink cover and 61 pages of songs. The editor's introduction

noted that: "*Part of the activities at past BOSKONES have included the singing (and otherwise bandying about) of a most peculiar type of composition known as the Fannish Folk-Song or "Filksong". As there is always a shortage of readable copy of some of these songs (to ensure, amongst other considerations, that everyone is at least trying to sing the same song), it was deemed by NESFA that There Would be A NESFA Songbook For Use At The BOSKONE.*"

The book was called a hymnal as a reference to the style of filking then popular in the Boston area, in which all audience members expected to have access to the words of the song that the song leaders were singing, just as church-goers expect to be able to turn to the correct page in their hymnal and sing along with the choir.

Later Boskones held Filksong Contests, whose entries were photocopied at the convention into FILKSONG BOOKs distributed in the filking room. The Boskone 14 FILKSONG BOOK was edited by Joe Ross with the assistance of Lisa Raskind, and so probably were the uncredited filksong books at the next two Boskones. Boskone 14's FILKSONG BOOK had 27 pages; 15's had 57 pages, 16's had 32 pages and an announcement of "*the forthcoming NESFA HYMNAL*". I don't know how long this tradition of instant Boskone filkbooks continued, but it eventually died out. I have not heard of its rebirth.

In 1976, Ruth Berman and Ken Nahigian edited THE MIDDLE-EARTH SONGBOOK, over a hundred pages of songs set in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien, including (with her permission) Marian Zimmer Bradley's melodies for Tolkien's own songs (recently recorded by Annwn, at long last).

THE HOPSFA HYMNAL came out about the same time. Its editors printed all the F&SF songs they could find, often neglecting such minor issues as proofreading, copyright, and obtaining authors' permission. THE NEW YORK CONSPIRACY SONG BOOK used similar tactics. Both eventually encountered legal difficulties.

It was a longstanding fanzine tradition to feel free to reprint short pieces of copyrighted material without consulting the authors, as long as the editor made sure to credit them and to send them a copy. Hal Shapiro's 1960 collection included pieces from many copyrighted F&SF works, but it appeared at a time when a WorldCon had less than a thousand members. As fandom grew, its publications took on more commercial and legal significance.

The second edition of the NESFA HYMNAL was over 200 pages, edited by Joe Ross with the assistance of Lisa Raskind, in 1979. It's still in print, thanks to NESFA. The editors' introduction notes: *"It was at the NESFA meeting of 10 December 1972 that*

Richard Harter first proposed that NESFA produce the 'ultimate' filksong book. According to the minutes, Jim Saklad suggested the title THE NESFA HYMNAL ... From that brief exchange, the word 'hymnal' has entered the fannish vocabulary."

"While many mourn the passing of much of the old informality of fandom, we feel that the custom of copying filksongs without consulting their originators is no longer a viable practice, if it ever was. We have sought permission to use all songs of known authorship whose authors are still living, regardless of whether the songs were legally covered by copyright ... Many writers have had the opportunity to correct errors that have crept into their songs over the years."

In 1978, Filthy Pierre, aka Erwin Strauss, printed FILTHY PIERRE'S MICRO FILK, over 400 filksongs. Most of them were fairly old, and in print so tiny that the only way to sing from it was to re-type the songs.

In 1980, just in time for sale at Westercon XXXIII, the first WESTERFILK came out; 88 pages of new songs, many with original tunes, soon accompanied by a commercial cassette of the songs. Only afterwards did I begin to hear references to "bardic circle", let alone to "chaos circle". Modern filk had begun. I'd welcome any further information on pre-modern filk.

USENET COMMENTARY ON FILK HISTORY

compiled by Dale Speirs

Filk Preferences.

One type of filking that deserves passing mention was popular in Britain: “ ... *drunken chorus singing, which was much of what filk was when I first became a fan. The odd ‘performance’ was a counterpoint to that. When it all became much more focussed on performance, and particularly on a few key performers, I completely lost interest and went back to partying at night.*” [3].

Context Of Songs.

Topical humour and parody is funniest when freshest, and fades faster than any other form of writing. This creates a problem if fannish filk songs are preserved, since the next generation will miss the point of such songs. “You had to be there at the time” is the operative rule for understanding such songs. Historians and literary critics have long been used to the problem, which is solved by liberal application of footnotes and parenthetical remarks explaining the background. For filk song fanhistory, it has been noted that: “ ... *each song should have, if needed, some sort of author’s notes explaining what led to the song ...* ” [4]. This is particularly true for filk songs about SF conventions and fannish personalities.

Reprinting.

When OPUNTIA reprints items, written permission is obtained where the copyright still exists, but many fanzines never bother about this. The first news that many authors get of their articles being reprinted is if they get a complimentary copy, and many never even get that copy. The Internet is far worse yet, as many reprints soon have the author’s name stripped off and are circulated as being by an unknown author or credited to someone else who posted it in a newsgroup or listserver. In filking, song copyrights are more sensitive, since it is easier to make money selling tapes of songs than reprinting an essay or short story in a zine. It has been commented that: “ ... *things are not done this way, i.e. payment, in the rest of fannish publishing, but it’s how things are done in filk. You need either to tell them how much you’re willing to pay in royalties if you’re planning on making a profit, or ask them to forego royalties if you are planning to price it only to recover costs.*” [2].

A Verbal Contract Isn’t Worth The Paper It’s Written On.

Mark Mandel has mentioned [1] the importance of written documentation when reprinting filk songs: “*In writing. ALWAYS in writing. You want to make it entirely and durably clear to the rights owner just exactly what you want to do with the material.*”

and you want a clear and permanent record of what they are permitting you to do with it."

"For the Arisia '99 Oldies session lyric sheet I got some permissions by email, from filkers, and printed out their replies. But for the lyrics to "Mary O'Meara", which are by Poul Anderson, I sent hardmail and kept his signed reply. It was just my letter, returned, with "Okay, if that's all you want to do with it. Have fun!" plus his signature. I've seen this before from professionals; I think they do it when they don't feel a need to keep track of what's being done, so they don't need to have a contract or to keep the request. And on the other side, it makes the limitations perfectly clear. ... No way do you want, ten years down the line, somebody or somebody's "heirs and assigns" to come after you for royalties or damages that the rights holder waived over the phone or by email."

There have already been court cases, in Canada at least, where it has been established that e-mail messages can be used as legally binding contracts. This is a simple extrapolation of precedents involving fax messages and telegrams. E-mail messages should therefore be preserved as printouts complete with Internet routing and time stamps. Archiving e-mail in a secured backup with read-only access may not be as wise. Ten years from now that file may not be readable, either because the media (floppy or CD) has decayed, or because there is no equipment that can read it

(remember what happened with 5" floppies and tape reels).

You will probably have discarded your current machine, and while there are companies that can retrieve data from obsolete media, they are very expensive.

The earliest written records from thousands of years ago are always business records about who sold who how many sheep for x number of talents. Those distant peoples very early learned the adage "Get it in writing!", and the subsequent millennia have not lessened the importance of paper. Filkers take note!

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THE YEAR 1900 PROBLEM

by Dale Speirs

There is never any new thing. The religious fanatics who thought they would have a clear field for year 2000 doomsaying have found themselves shouldered to one side by computer nerds. The consequences of a two-digit year in computer databases have been so widely publicized that it hardly seems necessary to repeat why there is such a fuss. The failure of computers to determine whether 00 is year 2000 or year 1900 was foreshadowed by a fuss in the 1800s about the use of two-digit years in documents.

The year was 1871: *"I cannot but feel surprise at the silence of the public on the serious inconvenience which may, and indeed surely will, early or late, be the consequence of the practice now so very common of omitting the century in the dating of letters and other writings. How frequently is a letter thus headed: "17 May '71". That mode of dating is, it seems to me, of quite recent introduction. Certainly I do not recollect having noticed any instances of it till within a few years past. Taking our date "17 May '71" as an example, and supposing that a letter should be met with so dated, and which treats of some highly important matter of history, what, I would ask, is conclusively to determine the century in which it was written? Of course the contents of the letter, or the watermark of the paper on which it is written, may decide the question, but most certainly evidence from either of*

those sources may fail, and in that case how greatly should we regret that, for the saving of the trouble of forming a couple of figures, perplexity had been occasioned." [1].

In agreement, another author wrote [2]: *" ... people adopt a slovenly, commercial way of dating the year, and put '71 instead of 1871. ... I was old enough to remember how it used to puzzle me to meet with names written in books with such dates as '78, '91, '85, and so on. I thought the books might have been, where I found them, of more than a century, whereas those dates were all of the last century, and should have been written 1778, 1791, and 1785."*

A calmer voice provided a reason why there never was a Y1900 crash: *"It was common in the seventeenth century, and, judging from the experience of the present time, there will be no difficulty found in the twentieth century in determining whether the handwriting of any particular letter (apart from the question of its contents or the watermark of its paper) belongs to the nineteenth century or to the one that preceded."* [3].

References.

- 1] Polydore, H.F. (1871) Letter-dating. *NOTES AND QUERIES*, 4th Series, 8:370

2] Anonymous (as F.C.H.) (1871) Letter-dating. *NOTES AND
QUERIES*, 4th Series, 8:463

3] Anonymous (as W.D.M.) (1871) Letter-dating. *NOTES AND
QUERIES*, 4th Series, 8:463

World Wide Party #6

On June 21st, at 21h00 your time, raise a glass to friends in the Papernet. The idea is to get a wave circling the planet. A simple toast will suffice (alcohol not required), but you could host a party, publish a one-shot zine, or do anything else creative in expressing friendship in the Papernet. Write and tell me how you celebrated, but also publish an account in other zines to spread the gospel.



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