OPUNTIA 334


Cupid tried to shoot me with one of his arrows to make me fall in love, but I was too fast for him.
I'm not so fast and I fell in love.
TEDDY HARVIA

National Flag Day (Canada) 2016

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

CHINESE NEW YEAR 2016: PART 2 2016-02-07

photos by Dale Speirs

The second weekend of the New Year celebrations in Calgary Chinatown. The day before the actual date of the Lunar New Year, a Sunday, I joined the crowd at Da Qing Square on the west side of the Chinese Cultural Centre to enjoy the dragon and lion dancers.

The parade marshal wore traditional costume. This was not a sinecure; he was very busy directing the dancers to keep them from colliding with each other during tight maneuvers.


Eau Claire MARKET
1097

The dragon was this close to me!

After the show was over, the dancers met the audience up close on the street.

A brother and sister pair of dancers, posing with their lion.

The weather held above freezing. This is the first winter that Calgary has never had a -20ºC day (as of February 15). The temperatures have been very mild, in the +5ºC to -15ºC range. I wish we had winters like this when I was a child.


福


CALGARY
CHINATOWN

A mural in a Chinatown parking lot. It signifies something or other.

LIT CRIT CRIT
by Dale Speirs

As you will have noticed from reading previous issues of this zine, I write a lot of reviews. I read other reviewers' work, and I hope people read mine. We are not arbiters of public taste but we are bringing to the reader's attention books or videos that we feel deserve notice. Whether or not you agree is unimportant. If you find that your tastes are the exact opposite of mine, then you can read the books I pan and ignore the ones I praise. If you read a reviewer's work over a period of time, you can discern his tastes and decide accordingly.

I regularly read reviews in other zines and often try out books or movies that I would not have known about otherwise, and I hope my readers have the same experience with me. I ignore the bestsellers and box office hits on the grounds that one more review by me of them doesn't add to anything, although I may review them years after they first came out. I review new small-press books that are easily overlooked in the flood of material and older items that deserve renewed attention.

There are two main types of literary reviews. The book report format, which I use, summarizes the story and supplies reasons why it was good or bad. This is the most helpful for readers. The literary essay, much favoured by academics or small-press magazine writers, takes a book or two as a pretext and then soars off into realms of pretentiousness, academic jargon, polemics supporting the critic's ideology, and usually all three. The book under discussion might be lucky to get a couple of paragraphs in a four-page essay, and is only an excuse for the reviewer to show off his literary pretensions.

When I was a young man and still somewhat indiscriminate about what I read, I bought some books of literary criticism, but soon learned their minimal value. It was obvious that many critics did not let facts get in the way of their ideological bents. They cut the reviewed books to fit their Procrustean beds, regardless of what the author really intended. Now that I'm thinning out my library, I'm going through them one last time before putting them out in a Little Free Library box.

Just The Facts, Ma'am.

The first one is actually quite a good one because it discusses factors about published works that most English literature students are completely ignorant about. In the 1980s, a book dealer named Chris Drumm, of Polk City, Iowa, published a series of inexpensive pocket-sized booklets. They were mostly author checklists, but some were small collections of short stories by better-quality authors that had gone out of print. DRUMM BOOKLET #9 was "Non-Literary Influences On Science Fiction" (1983) by Algis Budrys, a professionally-published SF author and regular book reviewer. He wrote this 24-page essay in reaction to litcrit reviewers who blithely reviewed books while unaware that many textual problems blamed on the author were actually the responsibility of the publisher or the typesetter.

Many SF novels began as serials or collections of short stories first published in pulp or digest magazines. They were then re-sold as novels. In those pre-computer days, authors did not like to re-type all that work, so the standard procedure was to use tearsheets from the magazines, with fresh typescript interpolated here and there to fill in gaps. Possibly the author also proofread the tearsheets for typos or unwanted copy changes, but for novel-length works, most of them didn't bother because the work wouldn't pay for itself. In the time it took to do a proper proofread, for which he was not paid, the author could have churned out another story that would sell.

Budrys points out that stories first published in pulps underwent copy editing for mechanical purposes and to fit the house style. The publishers were interested in money, first and always. They economized as much as possible in order to maximize profits, and were restricted by what the magazine distributors demanded. In those days, distribution was almost entirely controlled by organized crime because newsstands were a cash business and allowed the Mafia to launder their money. The end result was that the author was the least important part of the process and was considered to be a sub-contractor working for the publisher. There have always been more people wanting to be published than space for them to appear in, so this gave (and still does) the publishers the advantage of being a buyer's market. An author who got too huffy about how his works were treated could just go whistle for work someplace else. There were always hack writers who were willing to write entire issues of SF magazines under multiple names and do it for starvation wages.

Magazine publishers had distinctive house styles. A manuscript might not be rejected if it didn't conform to the style but it would certainly be copy-edited. Long words were discouraged, short words were preferred. A character didn't receive something; she got something. Villains had to have Slavic or oriental names; no one named Bob Jones could threaten to destroy Earth unless his

demands were met. There had to be physical fights or war scenes in the first couple of pages. Proofreading was done only to avoid serious typos; one can imagine the result if the typesetter dropped one letter from the word "shift".

Budrys wrote this essay in the era of linotype, but his remarks are still valid because books reprinted from that era were set from tearsheets of the original publication, not the author's original manuscript. During the layout of the set type, paragraphs could be accidently transposed. No one would ever notice, including the author.

The most common reason for altering an author's text was the widow, which is a single line at the bottom of the page that was the first line of a paragraph continued on the next page. A paragraph at the bottom of the page either had to end on that page exactly at the bottom, or extend over the next page for two or more lines to make it visually better. The copy editor, without consulting the author, would therefore chop lines out of the text or else add a few lines. The latter was the easier thing to do, as the copy editor could add a few lines that restated the previous paragraph without disrupting the flow of the story.

Budrys cites a classic example where the copy editor need four more lines at the bottom of a page and wrote:
He began to cut.
Snip.
Snip.
Snip.

I see various zines today whose editors often leave widows at the bottom of a page, such as a title for an article which begins on the next page or column, or the name of a loccer isolated from his letter on the next page. In OPUNTIA, I have always tried to avoid widows.

Budrys notes that writers, or else the editors, had to fit stories to a predetermined word count or number of pages. Writers were paid by the word, so lengthening a story by padding was and still is the standard tactic for them. If a story had to be shortened, this was always done by the editor, who knew what space it had to fit. The paragraphs he chopped out may or may not have altered or confused the story, but the publisher didn't care and the author's opinion didn't matter. Serial stories had to end each chapter on a climactic note with an unresolved ending so that the reader would buy next month's issue.

Budrys's essay should be required reading for literary critics who analyze SF stories or novels without taking into account that the author's version of a story was often not the one that reached print.

Scripta Floreat.

THE ISSUE AT HAND (1973) by William Atheling Jr is a trade paperback collecting critical reviews of SF works. This was the pseudonym of James Blish, an accomplished SF writer himself. He published these reviews in various zines under a pseudonym, it being safer. It also allowed him to review his own works, a practice that goes back centuries among critics. His style is midway between book reports and the academic essay.

The reviews were originally written between 1952 and 1964, and a couple of convention keynote speeches are included as well. Most of them are about individual issues of SF magazines, which were the dominant form of published SF until the late 1950s, when novels gradually took over.

Blish makes the point that good writing is not entirely a subjective opinion. There are some objective rules, although once beyond the basics (spelling and grammar) there is some disagreement as to what is an objective rule and what is the critic's opinion. Errors in known facts are to be avoided. Blish gives the example of an author who thought cyanogen and cyanide were the same thing. The deus ex machina plot hasn't been acceptable since the ancient Greeks but is still used all too often.

Excessive description of irrelevant items does not add realism to a story. Blish cites the example of an author going into excruciating detail about a character smoking a cigarette. Instead of writing "He lit a cigarette", the author describes how the character pulled a pack out of his pocket, tapped a cigarette into his hand, put the pack back, looked around for a booklet of matches, picked up a match, struck the match against a table, applied the match to the cigarette, sucked to get it lit, shook the match to put it out, threw it in an ashtray, and began puffing on the cigarette.

Some of this stuff was undoubtedly padding to get the word count up, but many authors used it because they thought it added to the realism. It didn't. Decades later, the cyberpunks made this mistake when they wrote cutting-edge stories with descriptions of world-dominating computers running on several megabytes of memory, or punks interfacing with computers via telephone jacks.

Blish mentions what he calls the one-punch story and which I have referred to as the twist ending. The one-punch story, which depends entirely on a surprise ending, can only be read once: "*But it was only a dream ...* ", "*But it was only a video game ...* ", "*And their names were Adam and Eve*". This can be overcome somewhat if the rest of the story is done well, with good characterization and an interesting plot. For most SF short stories though, that didn't happen. The story had only the tomato surprise and the rest was wilted iceberg lettuce.

Blish twice goes after the said-ism problem, where writers are reluctant to use the word "said", and substitute any number of alternatives, such as moaned, shouted, shrieked, gasped, demanded, grunted, repeated, agreed, objected, and so forth. Those are emotional states for the most part, and no person goes through that many states in normal conversation. He quotes the infamous line: "*Good morning, he pole-vaulted.*".

Blish's book is an historical document about an era that vanished decades ago, but is still a useful read for all that. Like Budrys's book, he mentions the realities of publishing and how they influenced what a story or novel would look like by the time the printer pushed the start button on the press.

The Inside View.

Damon Knight was one of the better SF writers in his time. He also did quite a bit of editing, and for many years published ORBIT, an anthology series. Between 1990 and 1993, he edited three issues of MONAD, a literary essay magazine written by SF authors. Knight was able to get the big names in SF to write for him. He specifically stated that he wanted only SF authors writing essays for him, to provide a view of the genre from those who had the inside view. Fans and critics were not wanted; the former had their zines and the latter had their small-press university magazines that no one read twice.

I only have the first two issues, produced by Pulphouse Publishing of Oregon, Knight's home state. The printing quality of MONAD was good but the square-backed format glue has failed to hold the pages together after 25 years. My copies fell apart on re-reading.

MONAD #1 (1990) starts off with an essay by Ursula Le Guin, a feminist, on the tradition of male authority figures in SF. Since the genre grew up with a target audience of adolescent boys and comic book store clerks who lived in basement suites, SF was worse than most types of literature when it came to male chauvinism. As late as the 1970s there were many stories published in SF digests whose authors couldn't understand why people got huffy because they referred to "girl lieutenants" in military fiction, or described the physical attributes of female scientists but not the male scientists. Le Guin discusses fantasy, with kings and noble princes doing great deeds while the women simpered and had to be rescued.

Brian Aldiss has a pointless article about drug-induced dreams, followed by Thomas Disch with a lengthy poem about writers, the quality of which is even worse. Disch mentions Spam (the meat, not the emails) and obscure writers few ever read outside an English literature class, but no toasters, brave or cowardly.

Bruce Sterling takes on deconstructionism, semiotics, postmodernism, and all the other nonsense churned out by tenured academics, none of which had any lasting value in literature. It was standard procedure for literary critics to confuse their personal opinions with how the world operated. A man with a hammer sees everything as a nail, and an academic supposes that everything written conforms to his literary hypothesis. As Sterling notes, the majority of people on this planet get along just fine, raising children and paying mortgages without noticing that [name of literary fad] had any influence on their lives.

Damon Knight closes off the issue himself, discussing SF history from his point of view as a childhood reader and then a published author. He covers the slow changes in SF, from John Campbell Jr to Horace Gold, and on to the modern era where girl-lieutenants became just lieutenants. He notes what many others did before him, that Campbell changed the course of SF but then became ossified in his later years and let the field go past him.

You wouldn't think a first issue would have letters to the editor, but this one does. In announcing MONAD in a prospectus, Knight had mentioned that the essays would be restricted to writers and that fans or critics were not wanted. Tom Whitmore, a name I have never heard of, wrote indignantly that he was a fan, a reviewer, and a book dealer, and why was Knight being so mean to him? Wisely, Knight did not reply; the letter spoke for itself about what was wrong with fandom.

MONAD #2 (1992) begins with William F. Wu writing about the problems he had in the 1980s with editors who would not accept Chinese characters other than the usual stereotypes. It is very common for North American Chinese to

use both an English and a Chinese name (as does Wu), but when he sent in a story to a British editor that used characters called Julie Huang and Jennie Chen, the editor wanted them changed to "more typical" names such as Lotus or Jade.

Wu had written a non-SF novel about Chinese immigrants in the 1800s. The female editor wanted him to add in a romance between a white man and a Chinese woman. Wu pointed out that would not make any sense in the story, but offered to write in a romance between a Chinese man and a white woman. She rejected the novel. Wu noted that the covers of his SF novels did not depict Chinese characters, as apparently that hurt bookstore sales. Another story was based solidly on Chinese mythology but because it had no evil mandarins, dragon ladies, or chop-socky martial arts, the editor rejected it with the remark "Lacks Oriental flavour".

Brian Aldiss then compares British versus American fantasy in a rambling essay that doesn't tell us much. He figures British fantasy is more about ghosts and American fantasy is more violent, but fails to present any evidence to sustain his thesis. Mostly he just strings together various anecdotes and random thoughts. A waste of ink and paper.

Gary Westfahl considers the philosophy of ten-volume trilogies and all those endless sequels that re-tell the same plot over and over because that's what the readers want. He coins a large number of neologisms to classify the different types of sequels, which are mildly amusing.

John Barnes then replies to Bruce Sterling's essay in the previous issue but doesn't say an awful lot. Or, I should say, he does, but with the same kind of jargon that academic lit crits use to pretend they know more than the general public about literature. Thomas Perry has an article on Robert Heinlein's story "Life-Line" (the first one he sold) that goes into excruciating detail about the plot. He considers the possible contradictions and obsesses about every little item.

John Sladek then interviews himself but since he doesn't explain the background or the stories he is writing about, the reader can't really understand his answers. Gary Westfahl returns for the final essay, a defense of academic criticism and its jargon. He does this by going after the Panshins and others not in the tenured crowd. The essay is generally a slugfest that wouldn't change anyone's opinion on either side.

Can Lit.

Canada takes second place to no nation when it comes to the parasitic class of university academics in the humanities. Likewise for pretentious small-press magazines full of fiction and poems read only once by anyone other than the author and then deservedly forgotten. Canlit, as it is popularly known, is a subject I avoid from painful experience, but in thinning out my library I came across a copy of the small-press magazine OPEN LETTER, subsidized by the Ontario Arts Council.

The issue at hand is dated 2002 Fall, with the theme of "Little Literary Serials", which was why I had bought it. The essays review various groups of small-press magazines in Canlit and are too boring to discuss individually. What is amusing is that each author considers his (there is only one her) magazine the leader in Canlit, the only one to be genuinely avant-garde, and all the others just bland, middle-of-the-road magazines that dare not to dare. Just as anarchists spend most of their time slagging other anarchist factions, so it is that Canlit editors and authors would sooner feud with each other than pay any attention to the real world that pays their university salaries and funds the little magazines.

There are laments that the outer world won't take seriously the Latinate jargon used by humanities academics to sound as if they were on an equal footing with scientists. One author printed mini-stories on the back of business cards, yet astonishingly no one hailed him as a genius. Other publishers declared their magazines to be cutting edge but only published poems about someone's angst or their childhood memories of the countryside. Others confused the frequent use of four-letter words with avant-garde concepts, as if the same sort of thing couldn't be heard in any roadhouse.

Ross Priddle, a sometime Calgarian (I don't know where he is now), used to trade zines with me when OPUNTIA was on the Papernet. His specialty was handwritten zines. There is an article in this OPEN LETTER about how he tried to send copies of his zine to the Legal Deposit Office of the National Library of Canada. Normally they are quite the storm troopers when it comes to getting zine publishers to send in deposit copies. In Priddle's case, though, they sent him a sniffy letter that his zines weren't good enough: "*We would ask that you remove the Library from the mailing list.*" Laugh, I thought I'd die.

BOTANICAL FICTION: PART 6
by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 5 appeared in OPUNTIAs #316, 317, 320, 323, and 325.]

You Are What You Eat.

Watch your diet. There is no moral superiority in vegetarianism, especially on alien planets. Michael Coney warns of this in his story "Whatever Became Of The McGowans?" (1970 May, GALAXY). Settlers colonize an alien planet that has no animal life, but they find they can eat food processed from the local vegetation. The alien plant cells infiltrate their bodies. They slow down the humans' time sense and gradually turn the settlers into trees.

In the mystery genre, the same story was told in a more mundane way in Joseph Brennan's "The House On Stillcroft Street" (1975 June, ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE). A house is planted with carnivorous ivy, which eventually infiltrates the house and, once inside, the owner's body. Friends come visiting and find an ivy-covered zombie which attacks them.

Switching to murder mysteries, such fiction relies on somebody poisoning somebody else. Many plants evolved toxicity as a defense against herbivores, toxicity which humans have long used as a defense against annoying relatives or neighbours. S.L.M. Barlow's story "Black Spot" (1966 May, THE SAINT MAGAZINE) is about a woman who tries to murder her asthmatic father by putting poison ivy extract in his inhaler. She is found out by a fellow gardener, who uses jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) as an antidote. The plant is well known for centuries as a treatment for skin rashes caused by poison ivy or other causes, although I wonder if it would actually work for inhaled ivy extract.

"The Forgotten Murder" by Elizabeth Ferrars (1978 January, ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE) is about a feud between two neighbours, who end up trashing each other's garden. One kills the other by beating him to death, but then dies a bit later because the victim had previously poisoned the cucumbers in his garden with insecticide. Don't try this with your annoying neighbour, or, in the alternative, pay cash for the insecticide in a garden centre without security cameras.

Edward D. Hoch was a prolific short story writer with several different mystery series. One of them was about the for-hire thief Nick Velvet, whose specialty was that he would only steal apparently worthless objects, not jewelry or cash. The story "The Theft Of The Dead Houseplant" (1984 October, ELLERY QUEEN'S) has him hired for $25,000 to steal a dead plant from a man named Rusher Bates. The plant turns out to be aconite, *Aconitum variegatum*, commonly known as monkshood from the shape of its flowers, or wolfsbane because it was commonly used to poison them. The individual specimen in question died because half its root ball was chopped out and the extract used to poison Bates's wife. The extract simulates cardiac arrest.

Carolyn Wheat, an appropriate name for a writer of botanical fiction, had the story "The Adventure Of The Angel's Trumpet" in the 1998 anthology HOLMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS. A young woman is accused of poisoning her grandfather with seeds of *Datura sacra*. Holmes reveals that the victim took the seeds voluntarily as part of a winter solstice ritual, thinking they were hallucinogenic.

Several decades ago there was a brief fuss about flatworms that apparently could transmit memory via RNA. Mary Caraker took this idea for a short-short "The Innocents" (1989 August, ANALOG). Humans have landed on a planet and communicated with the sapient aliens, a primitive people who wish to have teachers sent to them so they can learn more. The aliens live symbiotically with sentient trees who communicate with them by fruits that contain information and knowledge. The aliens eat the fruit and absorb the knowledge thereby. What the humans don't realize is that the aliens intend to bury the teachers adjacent to the trees, which will absorb the knowledge.

Alien Vegetables Among Us.

Many plants produce hallucinogens as a defense mechanism against herbivores but which backfired against them once humans evolved. Drug dealers have become good plant breeders, producing marijuana plants far more potent than in the Sixties. James Morrow extrapolated this in his 1984 novel THE CONTINENT OF LIES. It is a world where genetically engineered fruits called cephapples or dreambeans are used to produce long movie-like dreams.

"The Hidden Ears" by Lawrence A. Perkins (1969 January, ANALOG) posits that aliens would be just as susceptible to recreational drugs. In the story, aliens

make a secret landing on Earth to steal a vegetable product that acts as a narcotic drug on them: corn cobs. Not a particularly interesting story.

"Seeds Of The Dusk" by Raymond Z. Gallun (1938 June, ASTOUNDING) is set in a far future Solar System billions of years from now when the Sun has shrunk to a white dwarf and the planets are slowly dying. A sentient plant species has spread by spores from Jupiter's satellites to Mars, only to find it dead. The last gasp of those plants is to fire more spores into space where they will drift until they find a new habitat. One such spore lands on Earth, inhabited only by a degenerated race of humans and an intelligent species descended from crows. It manages to get a foothold and the plants begin spreading, not as mindless weeds but as sentient plants capable of planning strategy against enemies and anticipating problems. The war goes on, and it is a war, and finally the plants succeed. This is a high-concept story of the kind that gave SF its start back when men were men and women were daughters of mad scientists.

"The Wind From The Seven Suns" by Jack Gaughan (1981 March, ASIMOV'S) is about an old-timer on an acreage who is visited by a sapient alien which looks like a lettuce with mobile roots. The story is mostly narrated by the alien who talks about its life, drifting from one star to another. The alien goes on so long the old man names it Windy. It finally goes back into space, to continue its drifting and no doubt inflicting further boredom on other races unfortunate enough to come into contact with it. A different sort of story concept, aliens who bore people.

Carnivorophytes.

"The Garden Of Hell" by Leroy Yerxa (1943 May, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES) is about a man visiting a strange Mexican valley called Tipico. Roses grow in wild profusion, with a heavy scent that drugs the inhabitants like opium and makes them servile. The valley is ruled by an evil man who grows the roses. The plants are carnivorous and need human blood to produce their scent. The hero is determined to stop this horror. You can guess the remainder of the plot.

"Symbiotica" by Eric Frank Russell (1943 October, ASTOUNDING) is about a spaceship landing on an unexplored and verdant planet. The crew tangle with assorted life forms such as humanoids who are symbiotic with carnivorous trees, shrubs that fire poison darts when disturbed, trees that have mobile electrified branches that zap their prey, and various other types of vegetation that seem to be more dangerous than the animals. This is an ecopuzzle story. Once the survivors of the spaceship figure out what's what, they abandon the planet. I had trouble with how sloppy and undisciplined the crew behaved; they were the authors of their own misfortunes.

Seen in a Calgary residential neighbourhood.

Forestry Made Difficult.

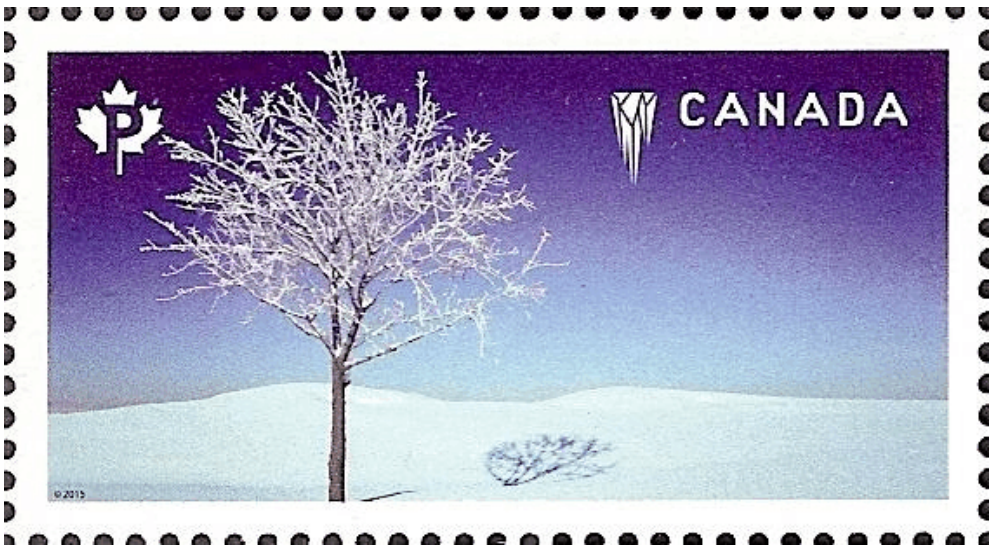
"The Creeper" was a 1938 episode of the old-time radio show THE SHADOW. (This and thousands of other OTR shows are available from www.archive.org as free mp3s.) Lamont Cranston, in reality The Shadow, and his girlfriend Margo Lane were vacationing in the woods when, as usual, they stumbled across a crime.** Lumberjacks are dying from tree falls at an unusual rate, and just after each casualty, a deformed creature called The Creeper is seen nearby, cackling with laughter. Cranston qua The Shadow investigates and learns that The Creeper was a victim of a tree fall that left his body mutilated and him only able to scuttle along on all fours. He is determined to take revenge against the lumber magnate by disrupting the operations.

** One remarkable aspect of this radio series was that, despite a very prudish era of broadcasting, Cranston and Lane were always traveling together in remote places, obviously sharing a hotel room or tent, and having breakfast together. Yet the prudes never seemed to have caught on that they were sleeping together, just as few realized that on the show GUNSMOKE dear Miss Kitty was a prostitute.

"Waves Of Ecology" by Leonard Tushnet (1974 March, MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF) is about a secret, self-appointed group who want to do something about air pollution in Los Angeles, California. They breed and plant a boulevard tree whose fruits are inedible, fall onto the pavement, and are crushed when driven over by vehicles. The crushing releases a powder that soon destroys tires, triggering a major problem in a city dependent on the automobile. Eventually government authorities identify the trees as the source of the problem and rip them out, although they never locate the secret group.

The story seemed unrealistic to me, not because of the trees but because of the way the author depicts the L.A. city departments' behaviours. The Parks Dept. know they didn't plant the trees but shrug it off and say it's up to some other department to look after. As someone who spent 31 years with Calgary Parks Dept., I doubt that very much. Bureaucracies are very jealous of their prerogatives, and there would have been an investigation. This would have given the L.A. Parks Dept. a chance to request more staff and funding and expand its empire.

"Homo Sap" by Gary Jennings (1979 March, MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF) deals with a mad scientist who didn't think things through when he decided to make trees mobile so they could hunt for water and nutrients instead of waiting for them to trickle down into the soil. The scientist uses a special spray which tends to drift, and any human spritzed with the stuff soon begins to develop roots instead of fingers. A mobile forest may not be intentionally malicious when it comes through a village seeking water and nutrients, but the effect on the village is still the same. A humourous story verging on the bawdy.



SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Johnston, Sarah H. (1990-10-01) **Desperately seeking authority control.** LIBRARY JOURNAL 115(16):43-46

Extract: "*... a vivid example of the importance of authority control in the online catalog of the University of Texas at Austin (UTCAT). A patron in search of the mediagenic singer Madonna's "I'm Breathless: Music From And Inspired by Dick Tracy" found an entry for the recording, but it was listed under "Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint". When the recording was catalogued, it was entered under Madonna, which is a Library of Congress reference to "Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint", so the OCLC system automatically changed the entry. ... The miscast references in UTCAT were resolved with the addition of a birth date to the singer (1958) as well as a reference from her full name, Madonna Louise Ciccone.*"

Speirs: An older reference which I spotted. It's funny because it's true.

Wixted, J.T., et al (2016) **Estimating the reliability of eyewitness identifications from police lineups.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 113:304–309

Authors' abstract: "*In contrast to prior research, recent studies of simulated crimes have reported that (i) eyewitness confidence can be a strong indicator of accuracy and (ii) traditional simultaneous lineups may be diagnostically superior to sequential lineups. The significance of our study is that these issues were investigated using actual eyewitnesses to a crime. Recent laboratory trends were confirmed: Eyewitness confidence was strongly related to accuracy, and simultaneous lineups were, if anything, diagnostically superior to sequential lineups. These results suggest that recent reforms in the legal system, which were based on the results of older research, may need to be reevaluated.*"

"*According to the Innocence Project, eyewitness misidentification is the single greatest cause of wrongful convictions in the United States, having played a role in over 70% of the 333 wrongful convictions that have been overturned by DNA evidence since 1989.*"

Maixner, F., et al (2016) **The 5300-year-old *Helicobacter pylori* genome of the Iceman.** SCIENCE 351:162-165

Authors' abstract: "*The stomach bacterium Helicobacter pylori is one of the most prevalent human pathogens. It has dispersed globally with its human host, resulting in a distinct phylogeographic pattern that can be used to reconstruct both recent and ancient human migrations. The extant European population of H. pylori is known to be a hybrid between Asian and African bacteria, but there exist different hypotheses about when and where the hybridization took place, reflecting the complex demographic history of Europeans. Here, we present a 5300-year-old H. pylori genome from a European Copper Age glacier mummy. The "Iceman" H. pylori is a nearly pure representative of the bacterial population of Asian origin that existed in Europe before hybridization, suggesting that the African population arrived in Europe within the past few thousand years*."

"*The highly recombinant pathogen Helicobacter pylori has evolved to live in the acidic environment of the human stomach. Today, this Gram-negative bacterium is found in approximately half the world's human population, but fewer than 10% of carriers develop disease that manifests as stomach ulcers or gastric carcinoma.*"

Yang, Y.C., et al (2016) **Social relationships and physiological determinants of longevity across the human life span.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 113:578–583

Authors' abstract: "*Two decades of research indicate causal associations between social relationships and mortality, but important questions remain as to how social relationships affect health, when effects emerge, and how long they last. Drawing on data from four nationally representative longitudinal samples of the US population, we implemented an innovative life course design to assess the prospective association of both structural and functional dimensions of social relationships (social integration, social support, and social strain) with objectively measured biomarkers of physical health (C-reactive protein, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, waist circumference, and body mass index) within each life stage, including adolescence and young, middle, and late adulthood, and compare such associations across life stages. We found that a higher degree of social integration was associated with lower risk of physiological dysregulation in a dose–response manner in both early and later life. Conversely, lack of social connections was associated with vastly elevated risk in specific life stages. For example, social isolation increased the risk of inflammation by the same magnitude as physical inactivity in adolescence, and the effect of social isolation on hypertension exceeded that of clinical risk factors such as diabetes in old age. Analyses of multiple dimensions of social relationships within multiple samples across the life course produced consistent and robust associations with health. Physiological impacts of structural and functional dimensions of social relationships emerge uniquely in adolescence and midlife and persist into old age*."

"*After the busy years of midlife, maintaining social connections in older adulthood plays a vital role in protecting health. Chronic conditions naturally increase during late adulthood as part of the aging process. However, socially embedded older adults experience fewer disease risks, and our results from the NSHAP analyses suggest a causal role of social connections in reducing hypertension and obesity in old age. The deleterious effect of social isolation, in particular, was estimated to exceed that of diabetes, a well-known clinical risk factor for many chronic diseases including hypertension. Our findings therefore point to two life stages when the development and maintenance of social relationships can be especially critical for reducing future health risks and, in turn, reducing the high cost and consequences of chronic disease for individuals, families, and society as a whole*."

Speirs: As a wage slave, I knew many colleagues who only had friendships via the workplace. They retired at 65 with no hobby or social groups, and usually died within a few years or had poor health such as morbid obesity or confinement to wheelchairs. I planned my financial affairs so that I could retire in 2010 at age 55. I also planned lots of social activities such as volunteering for the Calgary Philatelic Society and going to parades and festivals as much as possible. I keep fit hiking in the mountains adjacent to Calgary, and make it a point to get out of my house every day and go downtown or some other place. Many people say they socialize on the Internet, but that isn't the healthy face-to-face social contact recommended by this and other studies. Join a club and live longer. Don't be a hermit in the middle of a city.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets. Please include your name and town when sending a comment. Email to opuntia57@hotmail.com]

FROM: Frederick Moe 2016-02-08
36 West Main Street
Warner, New Hampshire 03278

Freedom APA is an alternative Amateur Press Association with one expectation: participate where, when, and how you are able. Four bundles are mailed per year. The next mailing is scheduled for May 2016.

Annual membership is $14 for USA, $22 for the rest of the world, plus a minimum of one bundle item inclusion per membership year. Bundle items may include mail art, homemade journals, chapbooks, zines, CDs, cassettes, envelopes, bookmarks, letters, or whatever you choose. Membership dues may be sent via Paypal for singinggrove@conknet.com. Cheques may be made payable to Frederick Moe (real-mail address above).

Freedom APA is intended to be fun and embrace the spirit of personal journalism, zine making, letter writing, graphic arts, mail art, DIY printing, poetry, homemade music, creative projects, podcasting, and more. Freedom APA is not an organization nor will it have officers or by-laws. With your help, I plan n making this an enjoyable APA mailing circle full of creativity. Freedom APA is a postal-only activity and does not currently have an online presence other than this posting. Thank you!

ZINE LISTINGS

[I only list zines I receive from the Papernet. If the zine is posted on www.efanzines.com or www.fanac.org, then I don't mention it since you can read it directly.]

THE FOSSIL #366 (US$15 per year from The Fossils Inc, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan Street, Denver, Colorado 80209) The Fossils Inc is an organization more than a century old. This is a group of zinesters interested in the history of zines over the past 150 years. The latest issue contains an extended essay on the origin of zines as we know them today. Jessica Isaac has studied the beginning of zinedom in the 1870s, when cheap tabletop printing presses became available, and, something which hasn't been noted before by zinesters, the concept of leisure and teenagers began to develop. Traditionally, around the world, children were put to work as soon as they were able, and schooling beyond the primary grades was a luxury. In the late 1800s, a middle-class began to develop in North America and Europe which had the ability to keep their children out of the workshops. Those children looked for activities to keep them busy, and printing a zine was one of them. The first amateur press association (apa) formed was the National APA in 1876, and thousands of zines were published. NAPA still exists today.

Isaac points out that zine publishing was strictly for teenagers up until the turn of the last century. Many power struggles within apas were caused by a generation gap, as the younger folk tried to evict their elders (who were often only a decade older). Various apas rose and fell, and schisms and empire builders came and went. The flame wars on the Internet are descended from those days more than a century ago.