

precrastinations nine iconography

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ISSN: 2049-1859 (Print)
ISSN: 2049-1867 (Online)

Editorial.

The more observant amongst you will have noticed, no doubt, that this is my first fanzine of the year. Some of you will know that my last fanzine was released in March of 2010, making this a gap of over eighteen months. This issue should really have been released at Novacon 40, with *Procrastinations* #10 following at Illustrious, but those plans were disrupted by a sinus infection and final year examinations respectively. (Sinus infections are not in any way fun.) Frankly, though, you don't really care. You just want to read the articles contained within – and who can blame you?

This marks the first time the editorial has been moved to the inside page, rather than being on the front cover. This is as a result of the formatting changes required for the transition to publishing in the ePub format, alongside the paper and PDF copies that were already offered – I'm still working out how best to offer both as I write this, and it's proving to be an enjoyable challenge. I talk more about first times in my closing remarks, which, as ever, remain on the back cover.

This issue's theme is personal heroes, inspired by the death of Steve Jobs in October, and I've asked fans to write about people who inspired and influenced them, or to write about the concept of role models and icons more generally. I am a huge fan of the articles that I've received this time around, and I'm really rather proud of how on-topic everyone is.

The contents this time around include contributions from the three candidates to make the TAFF trip to Olympus 2012. I do hope you will read their contributions and vote. I've expanded on this request in our first article, with details about the current race, my TAFF trip and a bit of talk about my TAFF report. It's nice being back in the editor's chair for this issue. Enjoy!

Procrastinations is edited by John Coxon.

Issue #9 published on Saturday 12th November, 2011.

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The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund.

John Coxon (editor, Procrastinations; 2011 TAFF delegate)

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, or TAFF, was formed in the 1950s as a method by which science fiction fans on either side of the Atlantic Ocean could cross to the other side, courtesy of donations from other fans. Obviously, back then, it was horrendously expensive to travel from Europe to North America (or vice versa!), so this was very useful indeed; nowadays, the fund exists to help those without the means to travel get to conventions in other countries and explore the world.

As you may or may not already be aware, I won the TAFF race earlier this year. The results were announced just after *Illustrious*, the Eastercon in Birmingham; I won by virtue of something called the 20% rule, which I'm sure will be an interesting footnote in any chronicles of the history of the fund written in the years from now. I went to *Renovation*, the 2011 Worldcon in Reno, Nevada; I also travelled to Toronto, Seattle and the San Francisco Bay Area as part of my trip.

Since departing on my adventure to visit our North American cousins, I have written a lot. In fact, it's somewhere over the 24,000 word mark at this point (the word count keeps changing as I edit, so a more precise number would be pointless). These adventures are being published in a variety of fanzines, as follows:



- *Banana Wings* (edited by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer)
- *Chunga* (edited by Andy Hooper, Randy Byers & Carl Juarez)
- *The Drink Tank* (edited by Christopher J. Garcia)
- *SF/SF* (edited by Jean Martin, España Sheriff & Tom Becker)

The trip report will eventually be available as a compiled work. It will consist of the text of the report (including several bits of pieces

that will not appear anywhere other than in the finished product!). Alongside that will be a variety of photographs and hopefully some illustrations from awesome fan artists (if you would like to contribute artwork, please do get in touch with me at the email address on the front page!). I've also arranged for several awesome, prominent fan writers to write articles about their experiences at Worldcon, which will form a large part of the document and hopefully give a really interesting and dynamic view of what Renovation was really like!

The trip report will be published after the current race has concluded, which leads me very neatly onto talking about the current race! The candidates, announced in October, are Warren Buff, Kim Kofmel and Jacqueline Monahan. Each of them has contributed an article to this fanzine, so please do read them and then vote! A ballot form is tucked handily inside the fanzine you hold before you, and you can vote at Novacon or mail it to me using the address written on the paper; there really is no excuse!

The 2012 TAFF trip will send whoever wins to Olympus 2012, which will be held over the Easter weekend at the Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow airport. More details are at www.olympus2012.org, and if you haven't yet registered, you really should! The Guests of Honour are George R.R. Martin and Paul Cornell, with Margaret Austin and Martin Easterbrook appearing as the Fan Guests of Honour.

Of course, Eastercon will see fan fund-related programming, whether it's TAFF or GUFF (our sister fund, which sends Europeans to Australasia). I will be doing some sort of panel related to my TAFF trip and there will be fundraising, too. Hopefully, I will be selling copies of a finished and printed trip report to the eager masses whilst I'm there.

If it wasn't for the generosity of the fans that donate to TAFF, I wouldn't have been able to attend Renovation, and countless other fans would have been deprived of similar experiences. The funds promote the sense of community that is so integral to fandom, so please do vote in this TAFF race!

My Three Heroes.

Christopher J. Garcia (editor, *The Drink Tank & Journey Planet*)

It would make sense that a guy who has spent the majority of his life involved in some form of writing would have at least one author on his list of heroes. I do, but the truth is he's the least of the influences that have been cast on my life. There are, in fact, two others who have been huge influences upon me and could well be called my idols. Of these three, one was a newspaperman, who happened to be the greatest fan writer the world will ever know. Another, a showman of the greatest kind. The final one? Well, I'll let that be a surprise.

Let's start with the fan: Harry Warner. For more than six decades, he read and wrote to just about every fanzine that was produced. Harry, called the Hermit of Hagerstown, only attended a couple of conventions in his life, including the one where he was the Worldcon Guest of Honour. In many ways, he was the exact opposite of me: a recluse who seldom visited folks, a guy who was an incredible writer and tireless in his communications. All things that I am decidedly not.

I grew up reading Harry Warner's letters of comment. I loved them. He had a way of making every one of them feel like it was special, different, and considered. He was amazing, and when I finally read his book, *A Wealth of Fable*, I was hooked. I'd read some of his articles in the *All Our Yesterdays* line, but didn't get around to reading the book until much, much later. Harry was the consummate historian – he detailed everything from the surviving records, not from personal experience. That allowed him to make connections, and since he was reading and corresponding with everyone around the world, he had an unparalleled view of the field.

The second of my heroes, and this one is obvious, was Forrest J Ackerman. The man was the FAN! He collected pulps, collected memorabilia, gave tours of his home, wrote, edited and agented; all to various degrees of success. He was beloved, and it was his tour of

the Ackermansion in 1984 that turned my attention to the idea of being a curator, changing my life.

I met Forry a few times. I was supposed to be on a panel with him at Loscon one time, but alas, he was very ill and couldn't make it. Without Forry, the man who sent a letter to one of the names mentioned in the Letter Columns, we wouldn't have what we call fandom today. He was an amazing guy, the only guy. He loved life, he loved fans, and he loved science fiction. In return, he was beloved – that is a rare, rare thing.

And that brings us to the final hero for Christopher J. Garcia. That would be a man by the name of Carl Ray Stevens, although he'll always be remembered as Ray “The Crippler” Stevens.



As a wrestler, there are expectations. You're supposed to be larger than life, crazy, a star. Ray was obviously that, and though I only saw him towards the end of his career, I knew that he was the kind of guy I wish I could be. He lived fast, go-kart racing (I met him the first time at the Malibu Grand Prix when I was a kid!) and hustling, drinking and carousing. He wrestled like a wild man, putting everything he had into every match. I loved watching him in the ring, especially when he would climb the turnbuckle and deliver the Bombs Away Knee Drop right to his opponent's throat! That's my kind of guy.

From him, I got what might be my ultimate trademark: going the other direction. He was famous for his tag team with a fellow named Nick Bockwinkle (one of my all-time favourite wrestlers) who was famous for two things. First, his vocabulary and ability to talk like a professor and still hold people's attention. Second, anger, as he was another of wrestling's all-time great heel wrestlers.

They gave interviews where Nick would get on the mic and describe how he would place a knee in the chest, driving his metasternum in. Then, it would be time for Ray to speak. The best example was when they faced a team that included Billy Robinson, one of England's greatest and most physical wrestlers. Nick did a three minute description of how he would take him apart using his guile and skill, and then Ray took the mic.

"Only two good things ever came out of England, and Elizabeth Taylor's got both of 'em!" he said, and walked away.

Moments like that taught me the ultimate rule – come up with a way to grab people using as big a phrase as possible, perhaps even working a bit blue, and then hit the road. Make it count.

So, there are my three biggest heroes. Oh, and John "The Rock" Coxon. Can't forget Coxon!

Steve Jobs.

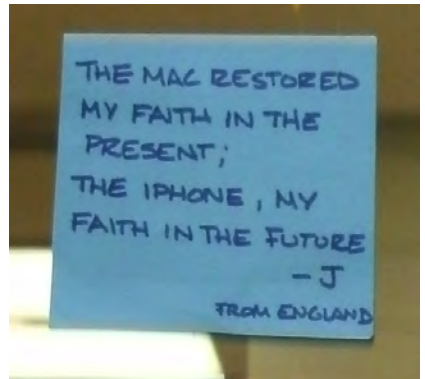
John Coxon (editor, Procastinations; avid Mac fanboy)

Steve Jobs passed away on 5th October, 2011. I read about it on Twitter, firstly; this is so often the case in today's modern world! Obviously, I immediately wrote two articles about his passing for two different fanzines. I left a tribute, in the form of a post-it note, at the world's largest Apple Store, in Covent Garden, London; España left one for me at the San Francisco Apple Store, pictured below.

I was saddened to learn of Steve Jobs' death; but my next reaction was surprise. Not surprise that he had died – I think, like most people, I had guessed that was coming when he resigned as CEO of Apple – but surprise that it affected me so badly. I was completely floored, firstly by the fact he had died and secondly by the fact that it hit me so hard.

I guess what this really demonstrates is that actually, the passing of someone you didn't know can really affect you. I know nothing about his personal life, and what I do know is taken solely from his keynotes and the anecdotes written after his death.

But Steve really and seriously influenced my life through Apple. My first decent music player was an iPod Mini. The first time I got my own computer (one that worked well) was a MacBook, and we spent my birthday taking photographs of ourselves with Photo Booth. The first time I used a mobile phone I actually enjoyed using was an iPhone, which I mostly used to follow the cricket.



For further musings and thoughts on Steve's death, you can look up the other two articles I wrote. One was for *The Drink Tank* #300; the other, for *SF/SF* #122. Both are available, of course, on www.eFanzines.com.

Threesome.

Jacq Monahan (2012 TAFF candidate)

Let's begin with that old party question: If you could have dinner with any three people, living or dead, who would they be?

Everyone, it seems, starts with Jesus. Mahatma Gandhi is a close second. Once again, I am the odd man out, figuring that Our Lord, in His omnipresence, would have the good manners not to take up a chair as a discorporate entity, especially with the understanding that He's got a standing invitation to any gathering I assemble anyway. Parochial school attendance from the age of four to seventeen has tattooed me with catechism and dogma; I also kiss any religious item that might accidentally fall to the floor.

Gandhi wouldn't eat, and I'd be insulted. Nice guy, but lousy dinner guest. No shoes, no shirt. And sorry, my lasagne's full of meat.

My trio would consist of two wildly disparate artists, Jackson Pollock and Frida Kahlo, and singer/songwriter/musician Bob Marley. These three have been my preferred guests for years now, and someone once remarked that I'd chosen a misogynist, a feminist, and a peacekeeper. Perhaps we'll all eat on paper plates.



None of them lived even fifty years on this earth, but each left a sensory impression that still reverberates in a sometimes lock-step world where nothing seems new but fresh disasters. I admire their vision, innovation, perseverance, authenticity, and in Marley's case, generosity. None of them were particularly afraid of death, an attitude that helped each of them maximise the years they did have. They simply hung the visual and audio evidence of their existence around like curtains that still adorn the world's windows – perhaps not everyone's taste, but too compelling to remove.

Paul Jackson Pollock's abstract composition (created by flinging, dripping, pouring, and spattering) emerged from his own mental roadmap combined with a controlled physical dance around his supine canvas, harnessing gravity, paint flow and absorption. There were no accidents. Said Pollock, "There was a reviewer a while back who wrote that my pictures didn't have any beginning or any end. He didn't mean it as a compliment, but it was."

Reclusive & volatile, Pollock battled his depression and alcoholism, and gained a reputation as a foul-tempered drunk. Apparently his 'drip' technique did not apply to his drinking. A master of chaotic motion, Pollock proved the point by killing himself in a one-car collision, steeped in booze and bravado. He was 44 years old.

No, toddlers, monkeys and elephants cannot replicate a Pollock. Neither can the smug art 'experts' that find him random and reckless. Well, they can, but you'll always be able to tell the Pollock from the 'paint parrots'. They mimic but never match the skill, the precision or the premise of the master media manipulator – and I don't mean electronic.

Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderón de Rivera threw herself into her paintings as if the creation flowed from her veins instead of her slim, sable brushes, fashioning what she described as "my own reality." That reality included childhood polio, an actual impalement during a bus accident in her teens (it pierced her uterus), and 29 operations in 32 years.



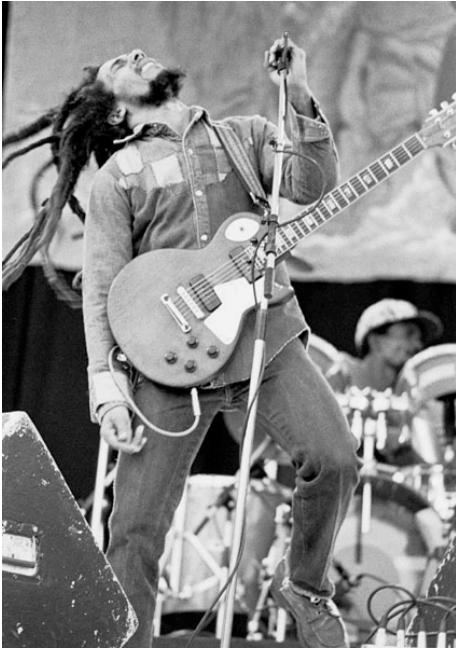
We know her as Frida – she dropped the ‘e’ for the more Mexican spelling of her name. We know the iconic unibrow and the Indian Tehuana costumes. We recognise the flower in her hair and the moustache she never tried to hide. Instead, she painted it into her many self-portraits. Leon Trotsky was one of her lovers, but the larger than life, unfaithful muralist and husband Diego Rivera was her greatest emotional extravagance. She could never have children.

“I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best,” she once declared. Even more vehemently: “I was born a bitch. I was born a painter.” She was 47.

Robert Nesta Marley would not save his own life if it meant amputating a cancerous foot – he danced around on stage too much. “My feet is my only carriage,” said the born-in-poverty Jamaican and proponent of Rastafari. A poet/musician and herbal connoisseur, Marley had one wife, numerous lovers and even more children (a baker’s dozen, all told). He even claimed two daughters

that he knew other men sired so that they could be taken care of by his estate.

“Herb is the healing of a nation, alcohol is the destruction,” stated the peaceful protestor, realising that there are mean drunks everywhere but a definite dearth of marijuana maniacs. The man was mellow but not naïve, once acknowledging that “The truth is, everyone is going to hurt you. You just got to find the ones worth suffering for.” Marley sang and danced until the cancer cut in as a final, fatal partner. As he faced death in a Miami hospital, his iconic dreads fell from his head like the sad, descending notes of a fading tune. He was 36.



Short lives, long legacies, and an insistent authenticity bind my dinner guests together in spirit, if not temperament. Manoeuvring in a harsh, and critical world, they kicked conventions and constraints aside to say this is me – I can be no other way. I will have a roomful of anti-posers around my tray of antipasto.

I will seat Marley between Kahlo and Jackson. There will be an ashtray on the table, a bottle of scotch, and a vase full of dahlias. An acoustic guitar will sit in a corner of the room.

We will begin with that old party question: If you could have dinner with any three people, living or dead, who would they be?

I would go first.

Idylls or Idols: Inspiration in Retrospect.

Kim Kofmel (2012 TAFF candidate)

I'm clearly a horrible person, because often when I meet or read about someone generally considered inspiring, I think "just hearing about them makes me feel tired". Usually that is a response to the litany of things the person does: maintain good grades in school, excel at athletics, lead the debating club, work a political campaign, volunteer with the deserving, earn scholarships and win medals. In short, an all-rounder with a fabulous career ahead of them or already in progress.

I think I react that way in part because I see it as just another facet of our social obsession with the extremes, whether it be extremes of performance, of success, of sacrifice, of fitness, of behaviour, of thinness, of wealth, of opinion... Allowing the extremes to become the measure of value for the rest of us sells all of us dramatically short, I think.

My family background probably influences that perspective. I was raised by parents who shared two striking characteristics: they were very young children during the Great Depression in small-town Ontario, Canada, and they were both only children. Being raised as part of a string of siblings by people who had no siblings is rather like being raised by wolves; everybody was making it up as we went along. On one hand we were raised to be independent individuals who would not mindlessly follow along with a crowd. On the other hand, I'm not convinced we were raised to be leaders. And non-leaders who aren't followers are an odd lot. Finding and building community becomes, shall we say, an interesting pursuit.

One outcome, however, is the tendency to sit back and look at those who would lead with a slow consideration. It is a fairly decent inoculation against unthinking patriotism, blind loyalty, and cultish religiosity. Not a guaranteed immunity, but a chance, at least, of not being swept up in things best not swept up in. It can be very cold out there, watching everything and testing who to trust and what to get involved in.

Which is not to say that I don't have idols, or people who inspire me. I've had my share of pin-ups, male and female, sometimes for how they look, sometimes for what they do, sometimes for the image (or character) they project. I was a great tearer-upper of film and fan magazines when I was a teenager. My wall was the victim of many push-pins. To this day I'm surprised my Dad allowed it.

But when asked about people who inspire me, I find that I don't think so much about individuals. I think about categories, or maybe more accurately I think about groups of people, and mostly I think about librarians, academics, and Girl Guides.



Librarians, like any set of individuals, have a range of attitudes and behaviours, but in general librarians are oriented to the preservation of and access to information. Censors and book thieves are the enemy, as are budget-cutting philistines who think that one book is as good as another. Libraries formed one of the core experiences of my childhood, a gateway to worlds of experience and knowledge.

In particular I was and still am inspired by the librarians at the local branch I used for most of my childhood, a pair of grown-ups who let me take anything out of the library that I wanted, regardless of my age, and who let me take out more books than the limit of the card allowed. I assume they spoke to my parents first, but I don't know that. As a child, it never even occurred to me to wonder about whether they had my parents' agreement. It was just an understanding between me and the librarians.

They even gave me books that they somehow acquired but that would not be added to the library (massively dated formula romantic intrigue, but a fascinating read nonetheless). It was in that library that I met the particular librarian who explained to me what I would need to do to become a librarian, which I promptly forgot

about because it would take sooooo long...but then remembered during my undergraduate in time to tailor my last two years of classes to fit the grad course requirements.

Coming to the subject of academics, I truly admire the professors I worked with during grad school, especially my advisor and those on my dissertation committee. Scary as shit, those folks, but they were fascinating and thought provoking and all busy creating within a very specific environment.



I live in a larger society that finds it fashionable, amusing, or comforting to denigrate academics. Some of the topics of inquiry do sound freaking whoo-whoa if you spin the phrasing in particular ways, but when did investigating the world or expanding knowledge become devalued? I can tell you things about how people look for information; that is part of my specialty, and you know what? It matters, because how people look for information affects what information they find, and these days, what you don't know can kill you, literally or figuratively.

Girl Guide leaders put up with a lot, in general as part of the job and in specific with me. I can only imagine the mental gymnastics that had to go on to handle having an agnostic anti-monarchist nascent feminist in the Girl Guides of Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. Volunteers, every one of them; all of them dedicated to providing an opportunity and a community of service and activity to young girls. The hours that they put into the organisation, which included not only planning for and running events on many scales, but the actual tedium of running an organisation of national scope with international ties... I know from my own adult experience that they likely derived a great deal of personal satisfaction and self-actualisation from their activities, but they did so as a result of service to the community.

Most of my influences were women. It's not surprising, really, given that I was a girl growing up in yet another time of dispute over the meaning and enactment of being a woman in society. And most of them are people who found a way to say to me "be what you want, be active, be happy." Even my mother, a nurse who had what I realise now must have been a pretty damn good career, but gave it up to be our stay-home mom (with all that entails, good and bad), when I asked her if she wanted me to be nurse when I grew up, told me "You should do something you want to do; but I wouldn't mind if you were a doctor."

I think I confused them by becoming what I am, but I could never have become so without them.

Inspiration is a Great Place to Start.

Warren Buff (2012 TAFF candidate)

For a man who lived so very, very poorly, Friedrich Nietzsche taught me a lot about how to live. I've never been one for having heroes who are squeaky clean, and often recognise that I wouldn't actually like my favourite thinkers if I met them. Nietzsche was a misogynistic jerk, a syphilitic madman, and a rube who was taken in by Wagner and German nationalism. Yet, in spite of those glaring flaws in his personality, and never living to see it, he was perhaps the most important philosopher of the twentieth century.

See, Nietzsche had a lot to teach me about living with an awareness of the moment we exist within, and about the nature of power. Fortunately, he wasn't a systematic philosopher, so his ideas can be fairly treated as a toolbox from which future philosophy can be made. His existentialist ideas are one of the best examples of this. There's been a lot of development of existentialism since guys like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Dostoyevsky were writing, but they're kinda the key early figures. Nietzsche focuses a lot on our desire to experience, the life-affirming urge. It's part of his big concept of the will to power – most of his ideas tie into that, one way or another.

Importantly, he looks at parts of human experience that normally get lumped in with either problematic emotions or things we don't want to experience. His analysis of greed, for instance, is that greed, fundamentally, is an expression of wanting more – more of life, more of experience, more of everything. And that, really, is a good desire to have; lacking it would mean not wanting to live more, which would be pretty boring – or, worse, wanting not to.

He even looks at the nastiest sorts of experiences, the pain and violence we can endure –we've all heard his line that whatever doesn't kill us makes us stronger – and even those, he affirms. Because they're still experience. They mean we're still alive, and existence, fundamentally, is better than non-existence. Those ideas helped carry me through the angst of becoming an adult, and I revisited them many, many times.

He's also what could be called a tender-minded atheist. This isn't a knock on his ideas, or a joke about syphilis rotting his brain, but rather means that he believes in a non-theistic world because he takes greater comfort in it (as opposed to Sartre, a tough-minded atheist, who is terrified of the idea of a rudderless world, but convinced of its truth). For Nietzsche (and Camus, who writes in response to him), the absence of a deific arbiter of value means that we are free to create our own meaning for our lives, and thus guaranteed to be able to live meaningful lives.



Understanding this helped me to be a more mature atheist (well, token physicalist, but that's overly specific here) – too many atheists come off as rebellious adolescent jerks out to tear down any system that doesn't agree with them. I've come to understand my stances as my own statement of faith, one I can't prove, but which lends my life meaning. I want to live a meaningful life, and for others to do the same, even if we disagree on why our lives are meaningful.

So, back to that idea of the will to power, or, in German, Wille zur Macht. I was thinking about the word Macht, which appears to be cognate with the word might (as in mighty). It's related to the German verb machen, which means to make or do. Nietzsche was a philologist by training, so I think exploring his word choices in this manner is reasonable. Macht isn't the only German word that would be appropriate for "power" – Kraft and Stärke would also be fairly appropriate. Stärke pretty clearly refers to physical strength, while Kraft is largely internal, though can refer to agency as well. Macht has more connotations as both physical and social power, and I fixed upon its connection to machen. Maybe I'm understanding this differently than Nietzsche, but as he was a toolbox philosopher, I don't really have a problem with that.

For me, the Wille zur Macht refers not simply to physical power, or to coercive power, but to the whole range of abilities to make and do. And thinking about it this way, especially while reading *The Genealogy of Morals* (which is tough enough as it is, since it's got some really distasteful bits where Nietzsche's clearly beginning to go nuts, almost in a Pet Sounds sorta way), reveals a narrative that most of the adherents of some sort of philosophy of strength miss.

The individual can become stronger – you can gain physical strength, material assets, even the ability to make others do your will – but eventually, there is a limit to the strength of an single person. From this point, only two real options are present: you can either decline until something bigger comes along and wipes you away, or expand your concept of self to encompass a community. The truly strong are not those who learn to dominate, but those who learn to cooperate. Coming to this understanding has allowed me to resolve the ethics of strength with the progressive ethics of the late twentieth century, and I think there's a lot of worthwhile ground to explore there.

Would Nietzsche have agreed with me? Almost certainly not. We might have even wound up yelling at each other if we tried to discuss this stuff. But I've found his ideas to be a really wonderful leaping-off point for my own.

So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish.

John Coxon (editor, Procrastinations; ex-secretary, ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha)

Douglas Adams passed away on 11th May, 2001, at the age of 49. Two weeks later, the first Towel Day was organised, on 25th May; it has remained this date, annually, since then. I got into *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* later than that, however, during a sleepover the ensuing summer.

I was a huge astronomy nerd, with aspirations to become an astrophysicist (a goal which I have since achieved!). I saw, on the shelves at my friend's, a tape marked *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and I rather naïvely assumed that it was a documentary. I told my friend I wanted to watch it, and his face lit up because it was “really funny”. I was a little confused, but we watched it anyway.

We got up to the end of the fourth episode – just as Ford and Zaphod are singing the Betelgeuse Death Anthem – before we went to sleep. I remember my sides aching from laughing so hard, due to how funny the series was. I'd never laughed that hard at anything on the television before! I eagerly borrowed the tapes from my friend, and took them home to finish the series. My father, who had been a fan of the *Guide* when he was a student, was keen to encourage this behaviour, and as a result I received a copy of the first radio series on cassette, that Christmas.

The first series is called the Primary Phase; very soon after receiving and listening to those tapes, I had obtained the Secondary Phase and eagerly shared the tapes with the aforementioned friend. I found it fascinating that the story, at the end of the first radio series, diverged from the TV series, and I really loved the second series.

I remember looking at the blurbs for the books online. The first book appeared to cover the first three episodes, roughly, of the radio series, so I reasoned that the books were probably half a series each. This meant that the fifth book, *Mostly Harmless*, must be extra material not in the series – as a result, I promptly borrowed it from the school library. As anyone who's familiar with Douglas' writing

will know, the books and the radio series are two almost entirely separate stories, and so reading the fifth book as if it would follow on from the fourth made very, very little sense. The fact that *Mostly Harmless* is fairly hard to follow even if you've read the first four books definitely didn't help matters.

I borrowed the first four books, which the school library had in an omnibus edition, and sat down to read them. I got hooked; they were amazing. I knew I needed to find people with whom I could discuss this stuff, so I got our dial-up connection running and began searching for groups of Douglas Adams fans. That's when I discovered alt.fan.douglas-adams, which was arguably my first entry into SF fandom. I also discovered (and joined) ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, the official appreciation society.

The story of my first ZZ9 AGM was documented in *Procrastinations* #1, although the image of that AGM to the right is new! Suffice to say, I got into fandom and made some friends there. Eventually, I joined LiveJournal; a ZZ9er found me, and told people to add me. I later attended another AGM, and started to go to the local SF club's twice-monthly pub meetings on the recommendation of a ZZ9er. I went from attending twice-monthly pub meetings to rather wanting to attend a convention, and eventually wound up attending my first Eastercon in 2007. I haven't looked back since!



Douglas Adams has had a profound effect on my life. His writing was something that really kept me uplifted during a fairly wretched and lonely time, and his work is the reason I am a member of the fantastic community I call SF fandom. For both those things, I would love to be able to shake his hand and thank him; sadly, that will never happen.

When Heroes Go Down.

España, Sheriff (editor, SF/SF & Yipe)

he•ro

Noun. A person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic qualities or has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal.

When I saw the theme of this issue, my first thought was that I would probably not contribute. Not because I have anything against heroes, but because I couldn't really think of anyone, living or dead, I have ever thought of in that way.

There are plenty of people I admire for one reason or another: Dorothy Parker, Kurt Vonnegut, Hunter S. Thompson, Goya, Frida Kahlo, Rod Serling, Katharine Hepburn, and Vincent Price, to name a few in no particular order. However, I wouldn't feel comfortable calling any of them a hero. It is such a loaded word, and no matter how great or accomplished the person, I can't bring myself to use it. Role model is a better descriptor, but still used in a way that doesn't stand up well to the sorts of flaws and failings to which everyone is, in the end, prone. Both words are so incredibly limited, and ultimately damaging.

People are just too complex, in my eyes, to hold up to such scrutiny. The first disappointment most of us experience is that day, as a child, when we realise your parent's aren't immortal, and that they don't have all the answers. It is natural, I suppose, to then turn elsewhere to fill that yearning for some sort of adult wisdom. Surely someone, somewhere has gotten it right? Some charismatic celebrity, brilliant artist, or long-dead public figure has to have figured out how all the pieces fall together; and that must mean, that if you follow their example, so can you.

Perhaps I am over-simplifying. Not everyone expects their role models to be perfect, or emulates them quite that consistently. But when, as a culture, we idolise certain people, it sure seems that way. And, when they inevitably turn out to be just as human as the rest of us, we love tearing them down almost as much as we enjoyed

raising them up in the first place. The focus created by this way of thinking, whether by large groups of fans or one person's way of looking at another, seems to be a way to set everyone up for disappointment.

No-one is all good or all bad. Being talented doesn't make someone a good person, righteousness doesn't make them kind. Observing from too great a distance, such as the one created by uncritical admiration, does a disservice to both ourselves and the object of our admiration. They are no more perfect than we are, and perfection is a small, brittle thing when compared to the messy contradictions of a full human being.

This is not to say that our admiration is unwarranted. From our infancy, we learn through example; mimicry and modelling are how we learn right and wrong, what makes us happy, and what we can and want to be. Emulating the best in others, what we wish to see in ourselves, helps us realise our potential. But we need to do so on our own terms, with open eyes and realistic expectations. Ultimately, no one person can serve as a role model. In the real world, one can admire aspects of one individual, but platonic ideals exist only in the intelligible realm. The concept of "hero" is an too big a burden for one person to carry.



Confessions of a Fanzine Editor. Part 2.

Dave Haddock (editor, The Banksoniain)

Mr Coxon asked me to write about “personal heroes/role models/inspirations”. Maybe it is the fact that I am about twice John’s age, but I had problems with the heroes/role models aspect of his request as I don’t really see authors in that light. However, thinking about the request, I got onto the question of why I write about the things that I do, which took me towards thinking about what do I bring to fandom, and why? I think it is fair to say that in some small circles I may be regarded as the “Iain Banks” guy, or the “*Hitchhiker’s*” guy. I am going to concentrate on the former as John is writing about Douglas Adams, but it is fair to say that the same focus is applied to both these aspects of the specific fandoms I am active in.

I outlined the underlying reasons I have for writing in an article in *Procrastinations* #7, but here I will go further. I have this desire to inject facts into an argument. I just do, and sometimes you have to apologise for that, as it can upset people who don’t think that facts should play any part in an argument. Iain Banks is not a blogger or a tweeter (neither is Douglas Adams – if he was alive, he would be) so there are times when I read what other people have written about him, and feel the need to correct the factual errors. I think that contextual information is important, and I see no reason why people should get it wrong, and if they do, why they shouldn’t be corrected.

Often, one factual error can end up being compounded. For instance, in his Edinburgh Book Festival appearance in 2006, Iain talked about his time playing the game *Civilisation*, and also about the fact the book he was working on then was late. A journalist for the Independent put these two statements together. A few blog posts appeared, with embellishment at every turn – the Independent didn’t mention a version number, but it must mean the current one so let’s add that – and soon, Iain’s Wikipedia page was saying that his Civ V addiction is delaying his next book.

I wouldn’t say Banks was my hero, but I wouldn’t be going around injecting facts if I didn’t admire him. He was the author that got me

back into reading novels. I read Clarke, Heinlein, Asimov and others before university, but I stopped reading for pleasure when it came to my degree. Then, I was given an Iain Banks book by a flatmate – I read his other books, and that other fella Iain M. Banks got me back into SF stuff. As such, I feel he deserves false impressions of him to be corrected – the truth can stand for itself.

I have read and archived many interviews with him, and attended quite a few of his public appearances over the last decade. So, I have the material to find a relevant quote from the man himself. With the fanzine I have taken this to pre-emptive lengths. In my pretentious moments I like to consider myself a contemporary chronicler of his current work, and a contextualiser of his earlier work. I don't do reviews. I know I am not objective enough.



I could write about other authors, but I feel the world has no need of *Stross Relief*, or even *D'ye Ken McLeod?*, since both authors have a blog. (I did succumb for last year's Novacon, and produced the Aldiss-focused *Septillion Year Spree* – eligible for a Nova, I am informed.) But I feel the world will always have need of *The Banksoniain*, which will return in February and look at, amongst other things, the development of Iain's new book. *Stonemouth* is listed for publication in April next year. Get those facts out early.

Letters of Comment.

Christopher J. Garcia writes:

OK, it might be a bit much to call this a loc, but we'll see. First off, I'll be in the UK in a week and two days! I'm very much looking forward to Eastercon. I loved the last one I was at and I can't wait to get to hang out with y'all! It's gonna be a blast!

It was indeed a blast to see you again, Chris! The newsletter team never knew what hit them!

OK, every time I hear the words *Transformers*, the bile rises to the back of my throat. I've never made it more than ten minutes into either of the films. Even Megan Fox's lusciousness can not drag me kicking and screaming into either picture. You know how much I loved *Iron Man*, I believe we enjoyed it together at the Metreon in San Francisco. I adored, far more than I should have, *Dark Knight*. I consider it the perfect comic book movie. 2008 was a pretty damn good year for summer blockbusters. 2009 wasn't a bad year for big movies, either: *Star Trek* alone made it worthwhile, but it also had a good *Harry Potter* film. Of course, there was also that *Transformers* movie and *Angels & Demons*, but there were smaller films like *Jennifer's Body*, *Fanboys* and *District 9*, too.

The second Transformers film was, as I said last issue, not great; Iron Man and its sequel (alongside most of the other Avengers films, actually) are far superior to either flick, in my opinion. Even Thor was great, and it had a plot that made no sense!

And there was *Sherlock Holmes*. I loved *Sherlock Holmes*. Robert Downey Jr. has settled into being an action hero. I mean, the guy's super-talented, and he manages to wring awesome out of every script. His Holmes is rougher around the edges than almost any other on screen, and right up there with the book. I also think that he somewhat upstaged my hero, Jude Law, who played a masterful Watson. Rachel McAdams didn't screw the film completely, but she wasn't great. I'm excited for the next episode, and I like that Guy

Ritchie fellow. He's a very playful director and I cannot argue that he's got exactly what they need for Holmes! When he's done with the series, I'm betting they'll pull up a lesser director like Paul Anderson: Not the awesome PT Anderson (who did *Magnolia*) but the one who did *Mortal Kombat*. That'll suck.

To talk about the Avengers some more, one of the things that annoys me about Marvel currently is the tendency to change directors. Jon Favreau is no longer being allowed near the Iron Man franchise, which some say is because he's too expensive – if that's true, it's bollocks, since I think he did a really good job with the first two. What's wrong with just letting a director run with a franchise until they're finished with it?

Lloyd Penney writes:

It's just after Corflu, and not sure if you were there. I've got a paper version of *Procrastinations* #8 with me, and I've got a few minutes to get a letter of comment done. I came in a close second for Best Letterhack, so I'm pretty happy about it.

I was indeed at Corflu, since it was held in Winchester, and British Corflus don't come around so often – I made the effort to be there with a couple of other people, and it was a really great convention, although I don't remember now if I wrote a con report or not. And you're clearly the best letterhack currently writing, even if I am slightly biased by the fact you loc every issue!

I didn't care to go and see *Transformers* and *Iron Man*, not really being interested in toys and comics, but we saw *Star Trek* and we did buy the DVD, although we haven't had a chance to view it yet. So much of the *Trek* movie bothered me, and I had to keep reminding myself that this was an alternate timeline, and a reboot of the franchise. Things like the destruction of Vulcan and the Spock/Uhura relationship were...odd. Yet, Zachary Quinto was a great Spock, and Karl Urban nailed McCoy exactly. Maybe I should say these actors did great impersonations of Nimoy and Kelley. In the long run, it doesn't matter who plays who here; there are more

adventures to be had, although rather than going back in time and changing the timeline, I'd rather say on our original timeline and find out what happened next. The Generation After? I look forward to seeing the gag reel, or blooper tape, following a proud tradition... Somehow, those of us who like the original Trek or any of its sequels are nerdy, and those who like the new Trek are cool.

I must confess that despite enjoying the movie, I have not really experienced much of the franchise beyond catching the odd episode on repeat. I did watch the whole of the first series of TNG, but I got distracted before I had time to go on to watch the rest. My little brother has watched all of Star Trek ever in the last six months, so maybe I should just ask him to précis it for me!

I have always enjoyed the *Sherlock Holmes* series with Jeremy Brett from Granada Television, hard to believe more than 25 years ago now. The recent movie with Jude Law and Robert Downey didn't attract me at all, and now I hear of a new television series based on *Sherlock Holmes*, taking place in the modern day. All I can say is the canon is taking a real beating these days. The modern day makes the worst assumptions about Holmes and Watson, and Frodo and Sam for that matter, and any other pair of men who might have a close friendship. Today, we'll probably mention homosexuality, while in a previous era, these close friendships were common and valuable. I wish we didn't make those assumptions, but we do, mostly because we'd rather laugh at what we don't understand.

I love Holmes and Watson's friendship, and I felt it came across very well in the movie. I actually genuinely think that the new film is the closest to the books that any adaptation has ever been; the other adaptations seem to forget the fact that the man was a sociopathic drug addict who liked violence and firearms. I have a copy of The Complete Sherlock Holmes on my bookshelf, and I regard the books with great affection and fondness.

I've seen the steam-powered Dalek online many times. Have you seen the steampunk *Star Wars* characters? Someone had some fun with that.

I have now – or at least, what I presume are the ones you mean (they're on www.starwars.com at least). They're awesome!

Found out that Toronto was the first city to have a zombie walk, and I must correct my letter, the organiser joined the convention, but as a guest.

I enjoyed Toronto greatly on my TAFF trip, it's a city full of character and I really must come back someday. Anyone want to organise another Torcon?

All done, it's all I can think of at this point. I gather Chris Garcia is heading off to the UK shortly...I think he's going to the Eastercon. Wish I could go, too. Take care, see you next issue, whenever that will be.

Turns out that it was eighteen months later, Lloyd!

John Teehan writes:

Great set of zines you have here. (I've been reading some of the back issues as well.) I enjoyed the most recent issue especially as you discuss a number of movies I've enjoyed immensely this past year.

Thanks very much, both for reading the archive and for writing – it's nice to hear from new readers!

Iron Man was a great flick and, for me at least, the first superhero movie made by Marvel that I feel comes closest to catching the original spirit of the source material. I'm very much looking forward to the sequel and am intrigued by some of Jon Favreau's occasional tweets on the subject.

I'd agree with that – it was a lot of fun, and very action-packed, in exactly the way I figure a superhero movie should be.

Here's my take on the new *Star Trek* movie. Its biggest triumph was in not invalidating several decades worth of fan-created or inspired lore. It did nothing to erase all those great *Trek* zines of the 70s and

80s. All those debates on the makeup of Spock's blood or where McCoy's daughter went to school – or, for that matter, what Uhura's first name was. It didn't make worthless all the fanfiction which many fans poured much time, heart and soul into. Abrams revitalised the franchise, but not at the expense of its legacy and the legion of fans that kept the franchise alive even during the dark years.

I agree wholeheartedly – the new movie was a love letter to the original series but in a way that was accessible to a new crowd. I thoroughly enjoyed every second.

I had a hard time during the first half hour or so of *Sherlock Holmes*. The week prior to seeing the movie, TMC had a Basil Rathbone marathon. Seeing the Guy Ritchie version so suddenly was like shifting paradigms without a clutch. Once I got over myself and saw what an interesting interpretation of the Holmes/Watson relationship was taking form, I was hooked. I was less impressed with the “analytical fighting” scenes: They struck me as a gimmick for the inevitable video game. I'd hesitate to attach labels such as “steampunk” or “science fiction” to the flick, though. But I identify a certain spirit of steampunk adventure and industrial design – if not the actual steampunk gadgets and reimagineering that define the subgenre. I think some of the confusion arises from the shared time periods. As for the movie itself, call it a good, fairly intelligent, adventure movie.

I don't think steampunk was a major part of the film, but I'd struggle to describe the device at the end as anything but science fiction. I must confess I thought the film was great, as I said in response to Lloyd; the books are still better, though. I thought the fighting would work very well in a game, so I see your point, but I still rather liked the concept.

Again, great zine. Looking forward to seeing the next issue.

And again, thanks for writing in! (Please accept my sincerest apologies that it took quite so long to pen this reply.)

Credits.

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Closing Remarks.

This issue of *Procrastinations* achieves several firsts, for me. Firstly, it's the first issue of this zine that I've written in Pages, rather than in Microsoft Word – I wrote *ReTweet #1* in Pages, but that was just two sides of A4 with two-column formatting and a couple of pictures, whereas this is a little more complicated. It's also the first issue that will be readily available as an ePub book!

I will continue to distribute the zine, in paper, at conventions and events I attend. Hopefully, I will be distributing it at more events than previously, because I have graduated and no longer have any excuses for not doing the writing I am supposed to be doing. Outside of conventions, paper copies are available by trade only, though; and if you don't mind the PDF/ePub then I'd appreciate you telling me.

This is also the first issue of *Procrastinations* that has included fan artwork, courtesy of España Sheriff and, indirectly, Anne Stokes. I've also been hugely abusing Flickr's advanced search features, and I think the design of this issue is a little more solid than previous ones – I genuinely feel this is one of the best issues I've constructed yet. If you would like to contribute artwork, please email me, since I am way too shy to ask!

This is also the first post-TAFF issue of *Procrastinations*. It goes without saying, since the last was in March 2010, that I completely failed to take one on TAFF with me; I did, however, manage to contribute a sizeable chunk of paper to the WOOF distribution at Renovation, so I don't totally suck.

Thanks go to the TAFF candidates, and to Chris Garcia, España Sheriff and Dave Haddock for writing articles. I found the different takes on the subject by different people very interesting, and I hope you did too – if you have any thoughts on the theme, please write in. Also, if you have any comments regarding the ePub file, please write and let me know. More letters of comment! More, I say!

This fanzine is unstapled to support
Warren Buff/Kim Kofmel/Jacqueline Monahan for TAFF (delete as applicable).