



The Drink Tank 378

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Your Editors
James - Vanessa - Chris
Journeyplanet@gmail.com

SO, Westercon's done come and gone and it was a good time. There was a fair bit of good news, and to me personally, the biggest was the fact that Vanessa and I announced our engagement! That's right, we're gettin' hitched! It's awesome and I can not wait!

Westercon was also the first time I attended a con with Vanessa. I really had a lovely time, the whole Fan Guest of Honor thing being AWESOME! Getting to chat with Cory Doctorow for an hour in the Fanzine Lounge, then interviewing Bradley Voytek, the Zombie Doctor, and getting a lot of wonderful time at the Match Game. Vanessa and I also had some lovely Us Time, which made me happy. All in all, a really fun con! Mary Robinette Kowal, Howard Tayler, Cory, Dan Wells, and Brandon Sanderson were lots of fun as GoHs, and I briefly talked with Larry Correia, who was really nice. I may not like what he did to game the Hugo System, but he was very pleasant!

In other news, I'm moving into the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Technically, I'll be living in a Holler. I love that fact. It does feel a bit isolated for me, but living with Vanessa will be very nice. Also, there's a REALLY good Mexican place in town!

World Cup happened. Germany won in a highly efficient manner.

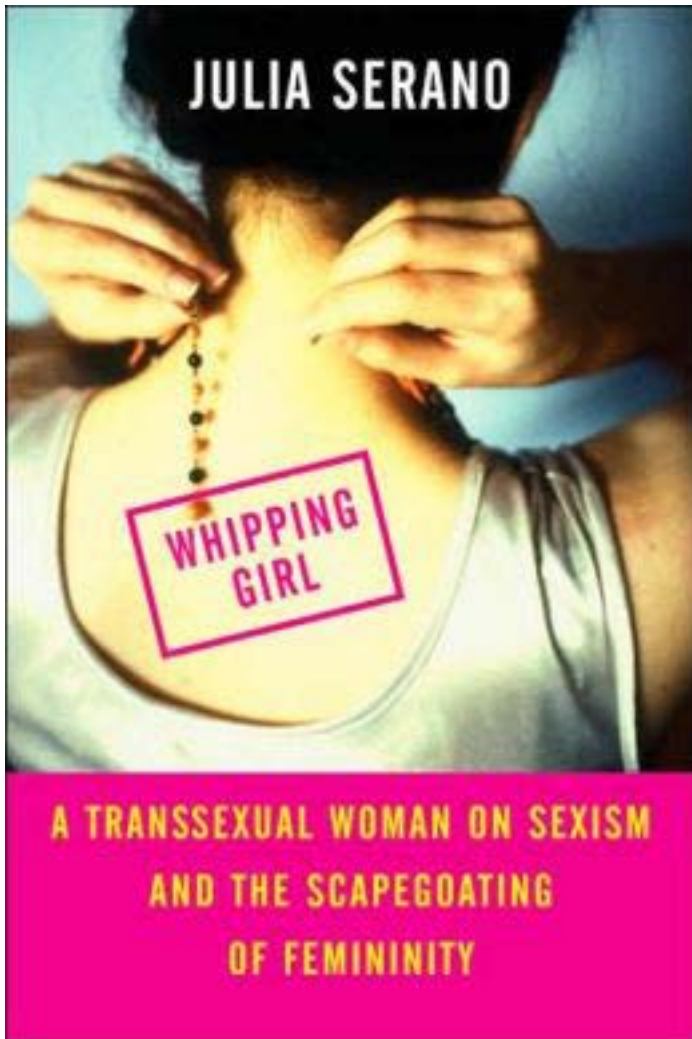
Starting work on a bunch of stuff, most notably a new zine (DangerZine, dedicated to the show Archer), the Dr. Who issue of Journey Planet, and working on a couple of themed issues of The Drink Tank (The Wild Party, My Other World, which will be about what we ALSO do along with being writers/SF fans) and so much more.

There's also the final issue, #400, looming, mocking us gently.

Luckily, I've got James and Vanessa to keep me going and keep me sane.

Cover photo's by me, all other art and photos are by Vanessa!





**Whipping Girl: A Transsexual
Woman on Sexism and the
Scapegoating of Femininity
by Julia Serano
Reviewed by Chuck Serface**

Some months ago on a cold winter's evening, I decided to stop at a favorite restaurant in Mountain View to dine, to read my book, and to shake off the emotional detritus of what had been a truly horrible day. The food was good, the book not so much, but on the way out of the restaurant I encountered a young couple who instantly enlivened my squandered spirit. I hypothesized that the young man had spent a goodly portion of the afternoon honing his appearance. Not a coifed hair was out of place, and his Italian suit was impeccably tailored. But, oh, how he paled in comparison to his companion. Dark haired and curvy, much like Maria Grazia Cucinotta in *Il Postino*, she cradled the most chromatic bouquet of flowers, resplendent with buds of yellow, blue, indigo, red, orange, a vibrant rainbow rising and then cascading down over her arm. This could have been a first date ordered straight from the hall of Eros, or it could have been a special anniversary. All I could tell as I passed and nodded was that this lad possessed serious intent and the young lady, smiling like she'd hit the lottery, was in a most receiving mood. I'm a sucker for romance, and this momentary encounter provided the perfect poison for my winter blues.

I exited the restaurant, and began bouncing along the street until needing to stop at a cross walk. A man stood next to me, and began a conversation as we waited for the light to change.

"Did you see the man in the dress?" he opened.

"I saw no man in a dress," I answered.

"You walked right by him. The guy with all those flowers and with the kid with the Bieber haircut. Definitely a dude."

Although the light had changed, I wanted this man to understand what he'd really seen. "Sir," I began, "Maybe two decades or so ago, that person's doctor announced to new parents that they had a son. Time went by, that child became an adult, and told those parents now you have a daughter. Whatever ensued beyond that, fate brought her to a point where she met the young man in question, he found the most outstanding batch of flowers he could afford, and tonight at least two people in the world are glad she's all woman."

The man pondered my words, then shrugged and separated from me as we began to cross the street. Fear not, however. Even his assessment of the situation couldn't snuff my ebullience.

Thinking back, I now realize where my analysis fell short. I assumed

that this young woman might have told her parents that now they had a daughter, but in truth she always was their daughter, one trapped in a body that didn't align with her actual gender. In other words, what changed was her body, not the essence of who she is. In *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Julia Serano describes her perspective as a trans woman:

A lot of people assume that trans people have an addict-like obsession with being the other sex: the more we think about it, the more we want it or convince ourselves into believing it to be true. I have found that being trans is quite the opposite: The more I tried to ignore the thoughts of being female, the more persistently they pushed their way back into the forefront of my mind. In that way, they felt more like other subconscious feelings, such as hunger or thirst, where neglecting the urge only makes the feeling more intense with time. (81-2)

A feature that appeared recently in *Time* dubbed the transgender issue "America's next civil rights frontier." Indeed we've moved well beyond diagnoses such as "gender identity disorder" and "gender dysphoria," but much work remains to do in the transgender community's struggle for equal consideration. Rather than recounting her realignment journey Serano chooses to focus on this struggle. In fact, her book, while somewhat of an autobiography, more aptly reads as a manifesto. She opines:

Perhaps no sexual minority is more maligned or misunderstood than trans women. As a group, we have been systematically pathologized by the medical and psychological establishment, sensationalized and ridiculed by the media, marginalized by mainstream lesbian and gay organizations, dismissed by certain segments of the feminist community, and, in too many instances, been made victims of violence at the hands of men who feel that we somehow threaten their masculinity and heterosexuality. (11)

For Serano, transphobia and sexism are closely linked. Much of what she's experienced reveals deeply ingrained societal attitudes about what constitutes masculine and feminine with the feminine losing out. Over time, we've learned that gender roles perhaps aren't so opposite, that what was once taken for granted as biological instead could stem from culture, which, as stated before, scares the hell out of not only mainstream males but many in society. The author expresses great frustration with those who question why she decided to transition. Why have we fixated so deeply on the narrative of transition, the surgeries and psychotherapies?

Isn't it enough to know that, as Katy Steinmetz reports in her *Time* article, "For many trans people, the body they were born in is a suffocating costume they are unable to take off?" Why shouldn't they align their physical and subconscious genders, and just simply answer, as Serano might, "Because I just am a woman (or a man)" (88)? She further elucidates her argument as follows:

Let's face it: if cissexuals didn't have a subconscious sex, then sex reassignment would be far more common than it is. Women who wanted to succeed in the male-dominated business world would simply transition to male. Lesbians and gays who were ashamed of their queerness would simply transition to the other sex. Gender studies grad students would transition for a few years to gather data for their theses. Actors playing transsexuals would go on hormones for a few months in order to make their portrayals more authentic. Criminals and spies would transition as a means of going undercover. And contestants on reality shows would be willing to change their sex in the hopes of achieving fifteen minutes of fame. (88)

By "cissexuals," Serano means those whose physical genders have matched their subconscious genders from birth. I, therefore, identify as a cissexual male while Serano identifies as a transsexual woman. She admits that these scenarios are ridiculous to many, because they sense that our physical sex runs far deeper than our outer bodies. And that's what frustrates Serano the most. Why can't cissexuals understand that their confusion or disbelief rises from the comfort they feel in their own bodies, their own gender concordance?

Next, Serano adds gender entitlement to the mix, explaining how transphobia and sexism are intertwined. Certainly masculine traits receive higher appraisals in many societies, including ours. God forbid someone's son show signs of being a "sissy," and often those reluctant to take action are told to "grow a pair" or to "man up." Another way of interpreting, "Why transition?", then, is "Why would anyone give up the privilege of masculinity, of being a man, to become a woman?" I'm reminded of that classic episode of *All in the Family* in which Sammy Davis, Jr. visits the Bunkers to retrieve a briefcase he'd left in the cab Archie drives. After both have settled into a conversation, Archie asks Sammy, "You being colored, well, I know you had no choice in that. But whatever made you turn Jew?"

Transphobia plays out on many levels. In the media, trans women often fulfill one of two archetypes, the pathetic transsexual or the deceptive transsexual. Pathetic transsexuals are those characters, whether fictional

or nonfictional, who don't "pass" as women and pose no threat. Serano uses Roberta Muldoon, the trans woman portrayed by John Lithgow in *The World According to Garp*. Deceptive transsexuals, on the other hand, do pass and pose threats usually to male antagonists. Serano notes that this tactic "emphasizes their 'true' maleness," making them "pawns to provoke male homophobia in other characters, as well as in the audience itself." Remember Dil, played by Jaye Davidson, from *The Crying Game*? I still can hear the shrieks and groans of my fellow audience members during the big reveal scene, which happens while Dil and the male protagonist, Fergus, are preparing to have sex. In the end, such images either reinforce transphobia, insinuating that it's ridiculous for "men" to even attempt passing as women. If they do pass, however they then are deceivers attempting to emasculate their victims. In the real world, of course, trans women aren't trying to pass as women or to deceive. They are women -- the end.

*"Perhaps no sexual minority is more maligned
or misunderstood than trans women."*

The author illustrates ways in which feminists have been guilty of transphobia as well. Historically, trans women have been denied access to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, because organizers refuse to acknowledge that trans women are women too. The list of prominent feminists who have issued derogatory statements about trans women includes Mary Daly, Germaine Greer, Andrea Dworkin, Robin Morgan, and Janice Raymond (233-4). Serano maintains that divisions between trans activism and feminism are artificial in that, and now we reach her major assertion, "much of the anti-trans discrimination that trans women come across is clearly rooted in sexism" (235). Here once again I quote her at length:

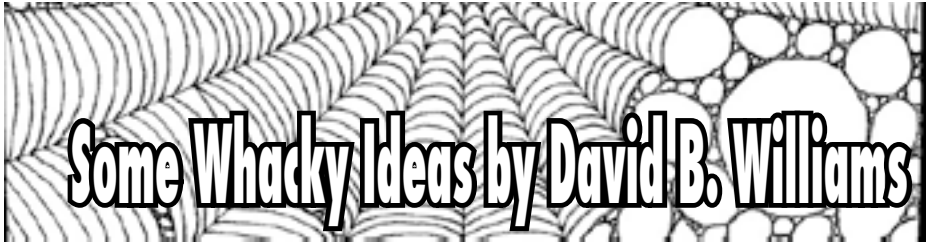
This can be seen in how the Powers That be systematically sensationalize, sexualize, and ridicule trans women while allowing trans men to remain largely invisible. It's why the tranny sex and porn industries catering to straight-identified men do not fetishize folks on the FTM spectrum for their XX chromosomes or their socialization as girls. No, they objectify trans women, because our bodies and our persons are female. (235)

As a cissexual, heterosexual male, I need exposure to the opinions of trans males before I can fully embrace Serano's assertion. I readily accept

that trans women and women in general have received horrible seating at various societal tables, but I'll accept not so quickly that trans males haven't faced their own trials. Nonetheless, Serano's predicament has been compounded by her identifying as a lesbian. Many don't understand that gender identification and sexual preference operate on different spectra, and thus discriminate once again based on confusion and discomfort.

Overall, Serano provides a provocative and useful discussion. She even offers her own theory on the origins of transsexualism based on what she terms "intrinsic inclination" (99). I have quoted her liberally, but only because Serano so often outlines concepts much more clearly than I ever could. I urge all to read *Whipping Girl*, no matter where you identify through the many layers of personhood. Katy Steinmetz, the author of that *Time* article, notes, "Trans people are significantly more likely to be impoverished, unemployed, and suicidal than other Americans." This doesn't have to be so. If, like me, you're a traditional male but one who has suffered due to lack of skill or interest in sports or from exhibiting another trait typically labeled as feminine, don't say, "Well, I've suffered too." Say instead, "I haven't suffered as much, and I must understand why no one should have to suffer at all." The next civil rights frontier indeed has arrived, and it's about time.





Some Whacky Ideas by David B. Williams

In *The Drink Tank* 355 our kindly editor allowed me to rant about a proposal to abolish the Fan Hugos (“The Fan Hugos:Threat or Menace?”). Now, in issue 372’s outstanding assessment of the 2014 Hugo nominees, my hackles are ruffled again. I refer in particular to the section on the Best Fanzine nominees. There, we are reminded that (even after the 2012 WSFS vote to limit the Fanzine Hugos to fanzines) four of the five nominees for the 2014 Best Fanzine Hugo are actually blogs.

At least, now we know our enemy. Someone had to ignore or twist the rules to permit blogs to be eligible for nomination, and in Robert L. Rede’s essay in the same section, we read, “this year’s administrator seems to have categorically stated that they are.” The Loncon website identifies that individual as Dave McCarty.

I can think of two explanations for this ruling. First, Dave is living with an intellectual disability that prevents him from perceiving the difference between apples and oranges. Sure, both are fruits; both are round and about the same size; both are covered in a skin and contain seeds. But apples are not oranges. If there were a Best Fruit Hugo, then the nominees could include both apples and oranges. But here’s a whacky idea: If the award is called the Best Apple Hugo, all the nominees should be apples.

My second explanation is more sinister. Dave just doesn’t give a damn about fanzines. He reads blogs and is ignorant of, or indifferent to, or possibly even hostile to fanzines. As suggested in Chris’ remarks, a growing number of Mass Fandomites seem to think fanzines are old-fashioned, out of date, uninteresting. But as I asked in my first rant, “So what?”

Here’s a whacky idea. Fanzines may be old-fashioned, out of date, and uninteresting (present company excepted!). But where in the rules does it say that fanzines must be trendy? This Hugo is called the “best fanzine” award, and by Ghod the Best Fanzine Hugo nominees should be

fanzines, regardless of who may think they are sad relics of a bygone era.

So what's going on? I am reminded of the recent burst of chatter in the media about some universities awarding athletic scholarships to video gamers. The talking heads were all agog about video gaming being equated with athletics. They were right to be agog. Video gaming may be a competitive "sport," but it is certainly not athletic. What's going on here is the misappropriation of athletic scholarships to recruit video gamers.

Now, someone may be able to make a good case for schools needing to recruit video gamers with scholarships. But the schools are playing a game too. They are diverting athletic scholarships to this new purpose rather than dealing with the difficulties of creating and raising funds for gaming scholarships. This means that fewer athletes will receive athletic scholarships, just as fewer fanzine editors will receive Fanzine Hugos because the award is being misappropriated to honor bloggers. (I will not be totally surprised if Chris Garcia and James Bacon prove to be the last actual fanzine editors to win a Best Fanzine Hugo.)

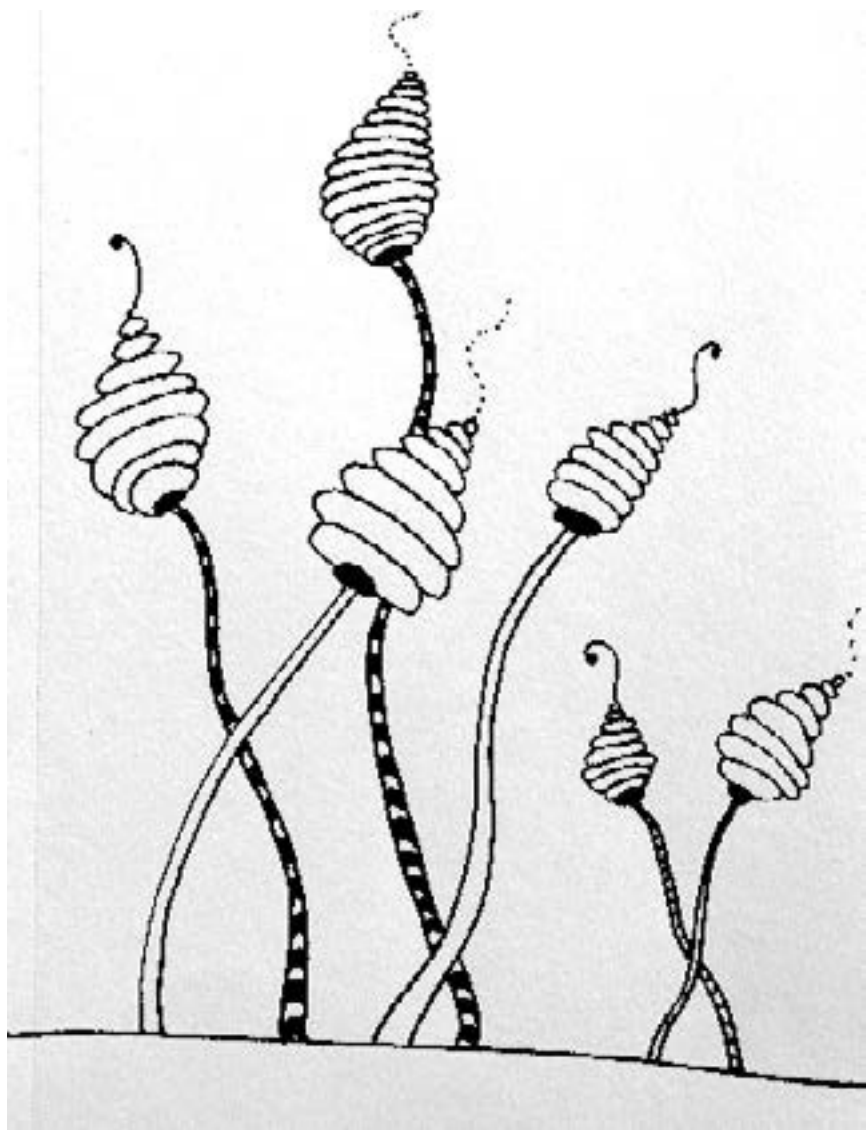
In an ideal world, the bloggers would have declined these nominations. But I understand their thinking. What the hell, if the Hugo administrator says they're eligible, why not grab a Hugo, even if that means depriving fanzine editors of an honor intended for them? It's a dog eat dog world, so take what you can get.

But here's a whacky idea. Instead of cheating fanzine editors out of their legitimate recognition, why doesn't the Worldcon address the real problem head-on and inaugurate a Best Blog Hugo – and any others that may be needed to deal with the new world of the Internet?

Rules exist for a reason. Rules define the terms of play and ensure fairness. Why can't a 25,000-word story win the Hugo for Best Novel? Because a story that length is not a novel. Why can't an animated movie win for Best Graphic Novel? Both tell stories with pictures. But a movie is not a graphic novel. Why can't a blog win for Best Fanzine? Because blogs are not fanzines.

Rules don't achieve their purpose if they aren't enforced. Hugo Committees should do their job and make possibly unpopular rulings on eligibility. I suspect that the committees may be letting things slide because they don't want to deal with the inevitable outcries from those who will disagree with their decisions.

Ha! I foresee the day when I will win the Best Fan Artist Hugo



for my excellent body of fanzine writing. Writing is an art form, isn't it? So why can't I win Best Fan Artist for my writing? All I need is enough nominating votes and a Hugo Committee too indifferent or too timid to uphold the original intent of the award.

Clearly, the Best Fancast category has not solve the problem that inspired its creation. Maybe "fancast" isn't the right category. Best Website Hugos were awarded in 2002 and 2005, and that broad category pretty much covers anything that appears on the Internet. We need something that will include blogs, podcasts, and all the rest of the Internet menagerie.

Last year's Best "Fanzine" winner, *SF Signal*, is an excellent website, worthy of recognition. But it is not a fanzine. It should have won Hugos as Best Web Site or Best Blog or whatever. Periodical publications with dated or numbered issues, released in invariant formats, should be winning the Best Fanzine Hugo.

I see that the Best Fan Artist Hugo is also experiencing category creep. A jeweler won last year. No doubt the costumers are waiting in the wings. Fortunately, this isn't my fight. If the fan artists are willing to see their category stretched to include non-illustrative art, so be it.

But here's a whacky idea. The costumers already have the opportunity to win Best In Show at the Worldcon Masquerade and *similar* recognition at other major cons; let them be content with that. The non-illustrative artists can enter their individual works in the art shows at Worldcon and other conventions, all of which award prizes. So be it. There's nothing in the Holy Bible or the U.S. Constitution that says there must be a Hugo Award for every field of endeavor and every category of attainment.

This two-part diatribe was initially sparked by the suggestion that the Fan Hugos should be abolished. If some fans have their blood up and need to abolish something, how about the Semi-Pro Hugo category? The Semi-Pro Hugo was created to honor the best semi-professional fanzine. The operative word here is "fanzine."

In the 1970s and 1980s, several fanzines attained huge paid circulations. Science Fiction Review, for example, peaked around 3,000 and earned a profit of about \$1,000 per issue. These "semi-professional" fanzines also paid contributors, charged for ad space, and sold many copies off the racks in specialty bookstores. So you can see why these fanzines were considered "semi-professional." But the era of big fanzines is long over, and the Semi-Pro Hugo no longer serves its original purpose.

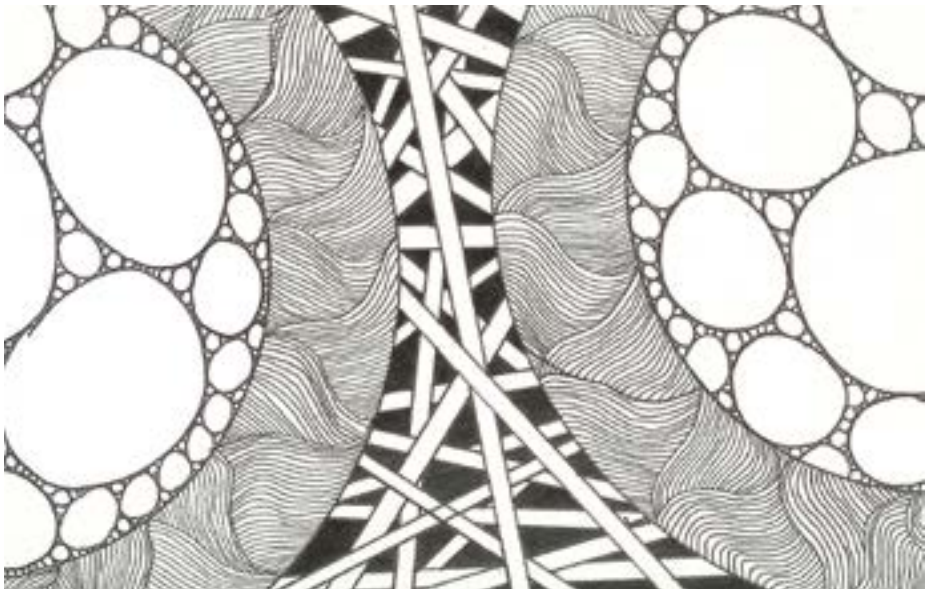
The Best Prozine Hugo was discontinued more than 40 years ago, replaced by the Best Editor Hugos (opening the honors to book editors as well as magazine editors). In the meantime, the original meaning of semi-pro fanzines has morphed into "semi-prozines." This category is now populated by low-circulation fiction magazines – not what was originally meant by semi-professional fanzine.

Here's a whacky idea. A prozine is a prozine, even if its circulation falls below an arbitrary number. Let's judge the editors of these little pro-

zines in the Best Editor category and the content in the fiction categories (at least one story from a semi-prozine has already won a Hugo). Why do we have a Little Prozine award when we no longer have a Big Prozine award?

Let me conclude with one final whacky idea. Is it too much to expect that the Best Novel Hugo will be awarded to a novel and the Best Fanzine Hugo to a fanzine? It's a matter of fair play. Fanzines may be considered as historical relics in some quarters. But the current fanzine field is quite lively, dozens of excellent fanzines are being published, and I can think of several that are worthy of a Hugo nomination. The editors of these fanzines work countless hours, and some of them spend thousands of dollars, to produce and distribute their fanzines each year. They put in the work, and then their chance for Hugo recognition is snatched away. (Come on, Charlie Brown, take another run at the football.)

Future Worldcon committees and Hugo administrators should at least be honest about what they are doing. Don't misappropriate the Best Fanzine Hugo by ignoring or twisting the rules in order to recognize blogs. Just change the name to Best Blog Hugo. Then you won't hear any howls from me when all the nominees are blogs. My dudgeon will only be elevated if some future Hugo administrator rules that fanzines are also eligible. Fair is fair. It's now the Best Blog Hugo, dammit, so keep the fanzines out of it! Apples are not oranges, and fanzines are not blogs.





A Brief Response to Some Whacky Ideas from Chris

While I can't argue with a lot of what Dave Williams says, I do feel a couple of things have to be noted. First, Dave McCarty's not to blame here. The problem is one of precedent. Last year, the Administrators allowed a blog in on the ballot instead of exercising the amendment that was passed in 2012. Thus, there is standing.

Did the 2013 Administrators make a mistake? In my eyes, yes.

Do we have to continue on with it? Sadly, it appears so.

Continuity is essential, and while I think the choice of last year's administrators was wrong, they made it, it stood, and that's that.

Yeah, McCarty's a friend, and I think Dave Williams misses the point a bit - it isn't just the current year's administrator that makes the calls - it's every other year's administrators as well. Fannish Common Law you might call it. Does Dave love Fanzines? I dunno, but I don't think he doesn't give a damn. I think the team (and it's a team) made a call.

Now, on the Apples vs. Apples argument... well, I got no argument. I am in total agreement. There SHOULD be a Best Blog category, and a Best Fanzine Category. The fact is, there's one fanzine up for Best Fanzine. Yes, Blogs deserve recognition, and yes, the ones that are up there are really good, but if you call something Best Something, then the nominees should be somethings.

Of course, it ain't easy being an administrator. They must balance all sorts of concerns, and more often than not, they seem willing to go along with the Will of the Voters, I don't always agree with that path, but I can't fault them for consistency. When they make a judgment like they did last year with Mary Robinette Kowal's *The Lady Astronaut of Mars*, there is often major push back. Still, I think that we need to think long and hard about what really matters.

What I'd really like to see is stronger, more definitive rules. Yes, they would be more restrictive, and yes, they might result in a few more categories, but if you look at other major awards, most of them have gone that route and they still have great importance.



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