

FAFIA #2

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21st January 2006

Introduction

I am fully aware that a fanzine with the title “FAFIA” (for “Forced Away From It All”) should really be a one-shot. Or, technically, a zero-shot. The concept of “FAFIA issue number 2” is, whilst not actually a formal oxymoron, definitely in the category of things that sound vaguely not right. As Douglas Copeland noted in Microserfs, it’s a bit like seeing a monster 18-wheel truck on the freeway with “Neutrogena” written on the side.

Life Imitates Art, Pt. 94

‘I suspect the problem for people like Chris [Garcia] and myself is that, no matter how long we hang around fandom, we’ll never be able to match the health horror stories of the real old-timers. Even in 20 years time when we have our own “excellent stories of surgeries and procedures,” they’ll still be able to trump us with whatever new ailments they have developed by then. Of course, apart from the bragging rights, I suspect that we’ll have the better end of the deal from almost every other perspective.’ – me, letter to Catchpenny Gazette #13.

This is, of course, precisely the kind of blatant ironic foreshadowing that pulp fiction (the kind that Shelby Vick likes, not that Tarrantino film thingy) gets criticised for.

Books Read So Far

Philip K. Dick, **We Can Remember It for You Wholesale**. This is the fifth and final volume of the collected short stories, as reviewed (in part) last issue. How can he write short stories that manage to be compelling and deeply disturbing at the same time? Why is PKD seen primarily as a novelist, when his short stories are so much better (if only because he typically packs in a novel’s worth of ideas)? If I achieved my ambition of having a pet wub, would I own it or would it own me? And how do I justify writing a mini-review that’s really just a series of unanswered questions?

Fi Glover, **Travels With My Radio**. A re-read. A mixture of neo-Bill Bryson travelog and a look at different radio stories from across the world. From the army station run by the Irish UN Brigade in the Lebanon, through to Howard Stern, every lib-ber-rull’s ultimate test as to whether you actually mean it when you say you believe in freedom of speech. The main conclusion seems to be that radio isn’t just TV without the pictures, but a distinct medium all of its own. And one that the internet seems to be strengthening/complementing rather than destroying.

C.S. Lewis, **The Last Battle, The Magician’s Nephew, Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, The Horse and His Boy**. Yes, yes, I know that’s neither the order of publication for the Narnia books (my own recommended reading order) nor chronological order (which is, inexplicably, the official recommended reading order), but as it’s a re-read, I’m allowed to jump about.

Actually, I suspect that just about the only thing that C.S. Lewis might have in common with George Lucas is an inability to judge the correct order that his own material should be appreciated in. Good, simple prose, so ideal for hospital reading. And if the tone and morality is a little bit 1950s Children's Hour in places, so be it. But not *that* 1950s – it mentions Maenads in one book, much to the disgust of one right wing website (as cited in a recent [Ansible](#)).

E-mails

We Also Heard From: David Burton, Dave Langford¹, Eric Mayer, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Nicholas Whyte. Many thanks for all of your good wishes.

Janine Stinson wrote:

What?!?!?!?! Oh good grief! I know angioplasty is safer and much more frequently performed nowadays, but it's not exactly a trot down the lane, either. I shall pray/burn incense/behead a gopher/chant ceaselessly for a no-problems procedure and swift recovery. This news reminds me of my mother's June quintuple coronary bypass surgery, when she thought she was going to have one balloon stent inserted in one coronary artery.

Peter replies:

I should be OK - they've already done the angiogram, so they know there's only the one artery to balloon up. It's a local anaesthetic procedure over here, and I should be sent home the same day once they've actually done it. Of course, there's a small risk that, if the artery won't "balloon" properly, then they'll have to give me a general anaesthetic and go right into a single by-pass, which is obviously a tad more serious. But all the signs are positive.

Jan continues:

Btw, that FAFIA #1 were a right good read, arrrrrr! (The piratical opinion mill makes itself know, as 'twere). I wouldn't read anything for the first 48 hours after the procedure's over, as you probably won't be able to concentrate on anything for more than a few minutes at a time. Be kind to yourself and veg out, if they have telly in your hospital room. Otherwise, sleep as much as you can, whenever you feel like it, because I'll betcha dollars to donuts the nurses (are they still called matrons Over There?) will be checking you blood pressure and temperature every two hours for a while. <g>

Peter replies:

As above, I have actually found The Chronicles of Narnia to be a much better hospital read than Philip K. Dick - the language is aimed at children, so easy to understand even when you're not 100%. And I'd forgotten how strong the narrative actually is.

Actually, when I was in recovery after the angiogram, they did a blood pressure check every 15 minutes for the first few hours. Down to twice a day now.

¹ I appreciate that WAHFing Dave Langford is, as per the last [Chunga](#), an activity normally allowed only to Secret Masters of Fandom, but I plead a dispensation on medical grounds.

The old-style matrons went out several years ago, but we now have "modern matrons." These are more concerned with the professional training and development of nurses, rather than making sure all the bed linen is properly starched ;-). Since A. knows a lot of the senior staff here at the hospital, we have seen both the Modern Matron (who she did her training with), and the hospital's Professor of Nursing (whom she has known for 20 years) who both "dropped in" for a chat with her. I dread to think what the ward staff must think - probably assume I'm some high-powered local dignitary.

Jan continues:

Do please be very positive-minded going into the surgery portion of your hospital stay, and don't push yourself to get out of hospital early.

Peter replies:

I am actually much less nervous about the angioplasty than I was about the angiogram. I guess the angiogram was more fear of the unknown. If the angioplasty goes smoothly, from my point of view, it's just a repeat of the angiogram (but an hour rather than 20 minutes).

Jan continues:

I am living proof that this is A Very Bad Thing, regardless of the reason you went to hospital in the first place. I hope you've made arrangements with Dave Burton to have him or someone else in eAPA act as backup OE in case one is needed (which I profoundly hope doesn't happen).

Peter replies:

I'm sure Dave will step in if necessary, but on the current schedule, I **should** have been home a few days by 1st February. This obviously isn't guaranteed, as the waiting list works on the basis of strict medical need, so if there's an unexpected blip of emergency cases, I would get pushed back.

Jan concludes:

I'm sure all of us in eAPA will be thinking of you and sending all the good vibrations we can muster. My best to A. as well, and when you do start reading again, keep it light until you know you're bored. Then you can tackle the PKD. ;)

Peter replies:

I still think that being semi-anaesthetic is a good condition to try to grok time travel paradoxes, but then that's just me ;-)

Arnie Katz writes:

Unlike some fuddyduddy fans, who aren't comfortable with any fanzine that hasn't cost its perpetrator a small fortune, I immediately launched FAFIA #1 when it hit the mail queue. "Here's a new fanzine from my good friend Peter Sullivan," I declared even though there wasn't anyone else in the room. Talking to myself like that pays huge dividends when Writing It Up. It produces a counter-point to the narrative -- and the punctuation is lots easier, too.

Peter replies:

Who was it who said that the advantage of talking to yourself was that you never had to explain what you meant? Plus, you got a much more appreciative audience.

Arnie continues:

So I got the news about your medical condition and its consequences shortly after Joyce and I returned from the Southwest Medical Center where she had cataract surgery on her left eye. The ironic thing is that it took more time for us to get Joyce to the admittance door -- the Med-Ride car picked us up at 10 Am and they didn't call in Joyce until 1 PM -- than it did for the surgery and post-op recovery. She was back outside by 2 PM and we were home in time to watch a particularly nasty episode of "Divorce Court."

Peter replies:

Mine was almost as smooth, right up to the point where they decided several hours after the day surgery to admit me as an in-patient...

Hope Joyce is feeling better as soon as possible, and pass on our best wishes. A. notes that, when she was a student nurse, you used to have to lie flat on your back for 10 days after a cataract op. I did think about asking whether this was before or after they stopped using the leeches, but since I am dependant on her taking the laptop home to get this sent off, I decided discretion was the better part of something or the other.

Arnie continues:

The smartest thing you did was going straight to the doctor when you noticed the symptoms and the second-smartest was going right for the angiogram/angioplasty procedures. The difference in Joyce since her angioplasty is absolutely incredible. You will have more energy and feel better more of the time than you have in years.

Peter replies:

Well, I did put off going to my own doctor for quite a while, and my symptoms (throat pain rather than chest pain) were untypical. But once you get into the system, the National Health Service is *very* good at pushing emergency and urgent cases along at the sort of speed they need. It tends to be chronic conditions where the politics doesn't work as well as it might.

Arnie continues:

This is going to come in mighty handy once we get you to a Corflu. We Vegas fans like to party late and you'll be able to uphold the Honor of Young Fandom (or something) better now that you've gone ballooning.

Peter replies:

I suspect that I'll be off the booze after this, but can probably match any American science fiction fan Diet Coke for Diet Coke. Which, according to Dave Langford (as per [The Transatlantic Hearing Aid](#)), is all that American science fiction fans drink anyway.

Jim Burgess writes:

Thanks, and best of luck. It is GOOD to be catching these things in advance. I do know all the medical issues involved and I think you got there just in time. It is much worse if you have a heart attack first and that's how they discover it.

My friend and colleague, David Cutler, whose book "Your Money or Your Life" explains why the technology that you're just experiencing is one of the greatest technical advances to human life ever conceived by man, would say that you're just another foot soldier in that advance.

Peter replies:

Thanks. I will probably have a read of it once I am out of here. Although a balloon angioplasty is, I'm sure, a very technical and medically advanced procedure, it also has, as a concept, a pleasing aesthetic simplicity about what it is and what it does. If I can understand it, it must be.

Colophon

FAFIA #2 is a Startling Press Production. Future schedule unknown, although for the moment I seem to be doing quite well with respect to Mark Plummer's line about "Vegas Fandom Daily" in the last Banana Wings. Letters of comment will be assumed to be for publication unless advised otherwise. Errors and Omissions Excepted. "Narnia" is a UK registered trademark of CS Lewis Pte Ltd. So there.