



TRUERAT

ATE

1957-1958

SPECIAL FOOD ISSUE

Peter Roberts writes on currying non-animal meat and favour, and how potatoes' eyes are looking up this year.


Graham Charnock writes on the wealth of interesting things he has discovered in Graham Hall's vomit and how they got published.

John Brosnan writes on the smelly and voluminous after-effects of Guinness and why he has no friends.

Leroy Kettle writes on toilet walls and gets in trouble with the lady attendant.

Harry Bell writes on his own in a very small room with a Little Gem typewriter, his teddy and these headaches.

D. West writes on and on and on and.....

 If there's an X in this box it's because I put it there. It's my bloody box and I'll do what I want with it.

Credits:-

Articles -- as indicated.

Cover -- Harry Bell Esq

Cartoons -- all by D. West except for one, though I've changed the captions on a couple because they weren't very good. Not that they're terrific now but they're certainly an improvement on what came my way from Bradford. Not that I'm ungrateful of course, but just being grateful isn't a great criterion for printing poor D. West captions. Not that all the captions are terrible. Just the ones I changed. The ones that are funny now. Those ones.

Underwater editor -- Me

Underwater layout -- Can't get anyone to own up to this. Sorry.

Normal layout -- See if you can find any. I've looked through the bloody issue eight times and it beats me. I had some when I started out.

Paper -- Croxley 8x10 Blue 71g/m² weight. Several reams.

Ink -- Ryman Duplicator Ink -- Black for Roneo. Lots.

Correcting Fluid -- Invert and Shake. Sveral bottles, but it's run out.

Duplicator -- Roneo 750 with overhead cams.

Just because this isn't necessarily your last issue unless you send me a loc, a trade or a photo of raw Swedes in interesting positions, don't get too fucking complacent. This has been an unveiled threat.

This fanzine has the Peter Roberts' Seed of Approval.

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From: Leroy Kettle, 43 Chesholm Road, London, N 16.

OK, for the purist out there, this really is TRUE RAT EIGHT

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BIG ALL-HUGE ALL-VAST ISSUE
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GUIDE TO RAT LIES

Well, he says defensively, it feels like a guest editorial. I'm not exactly comfortable sat here in the middle of all this talent like a burst gooseberry. The responsibility lies heavy (and as yet not fully realised) on my shoulders for ensuring that others' words and drawings of wit and wisdom appear reasonably quickly, legibly and tidily. (Reasonably.) Actually, it's not that bad. I'm not likely to have a nervous breakdown because I've misspelled some of the long words that Charnock uses or because I've missed a phrase out of one of the jokes that John Brosnan has so laboriously copied from the backs of a gross of second-hand matchboxes with all the effrontery of someone who's trying to pretend he hasn't done it a hundred times before. In fact, having done most of the stencils as I write this I find that the plod of copy-typing is easier than the strain of creativity. Even the fucking plod of nineteen D. West review stencils. Even that. (Putting out Daisnaid thinly disguised as a column for me, mumble mutter mutter hope the shoelace breaks on his duplicator).

The most aggravating thing actually is the fact that my stencilling does not improve with practice and my stencils look as though someone with TE was reading them during an attack. White corflu is less obvious but apparently less efficacious. At one point in D.'s reviews I was supposed to be typing "counter-witticism". When I had achieved "counter@wiicis" I went to bed. I missed a whole lump out of Peter Roberts' article and, my mind numbed by corflu fumes and hours of semi-concentration, I poured corflu over so thickly that I couldn't type through it. After some time with a razor blade and a bad temper I thought of using another stencil. I sometimes have these flashes of insight...

Anyway, you can see what the result is. What you hold in your hands is more than a fanzine. If you're lucky it's a ----- it's a ----- . Fill in anything you please I suppose. Nothing too dirty though. Wouldn't want the Post Office to open it because it's been returned by Fuckin' Disgusted of 6 Westbourne Park Villas.

Well, in-depth humour apart, you've got here True Rat 8, amazing transitional issue from personalzine to genzine. Some time ago everyone used to write hopeful little editorials about how they'd do eight issues a year now that their premium bond had come up and they'd bought a duplicator. Six months later when the second issue came out they'd apologise because they'd missed a bus or overslept or hadn't got the sixpence the Tooth Fairy had promised. I've managed two issues a year for three years now, which is no great deal unless you know me. Even allowing for the increase in size I think I can make three issues a year fairly easily and with the minimum amount of brain surgery. And with help. Regular, though alternating, columnists will be Graham (I know someone's writing about me again) Charnock and the lovely Dave Langford (of whom it has never been said, I can assure you). Occasional and lazy columnist will be Peter Roberts (Absolutely Colossal Name Fan. Yes, really, this big. Well, this big anyway.) writing on old fanzines because I'm too mean to give him blank paper or better jokes than this one. Fanzine reviews will be by

a large assortment of talented people with brains and intelligence and well-hidden abilities. Next issue Jim Linwood, everybody's favourite itinerant reviewer, will be reviewing the next batch of itinerants as and when they arrive. It's worth looking forward to next issue just for Jim's reviews. (He paid me to say that.)

As twenty five of you will know (that's the 25 of you still receiving TR out of the thirty who got the first three issues) this is my second genzine. Well, it's almost my second genzine. The first would have been called Pottage and was destined to be typed and duplicated by one of the many women John Hall erroneously claimed to have at his beck and call in the days when loose change to him was £1 notes. She was certainly at his beck, at it all night long if I remember well, but when it came to being called to put out my fanzine the silly bitch lost all the material and the love of a good hunchback. (Now a fat hunchback says one who knows.) Mind you, fandom probably lost little in the process. I recently came across a BSFA Bulletin where Pottage was advertised as a 'funzine'. In fact it would have contained an enormously long supercrud story by Bryn Fortey, an article by Jack Marsh proving that fans were homosexuals (although he now denies having written this), a story about a flying saucer by a certified friend of Jack, an incomprehensible and thus avant-garde story by John Hall and some real rubbish from me - plus a cover, which I still have in my possession should anyone wish to use it for a fanzine called Pottage, by Audrey Walton. So it goes.

Since then I have learned some things. Not a lot though. Two things I've learned are that I don't like interdelineations nor fillos. Or, at least, I don't like the way they're usually used. Artwork should add to an article. If the illustration has no relevance then it shouldn't be used. Unless it's your own article -- you can make whatever mess you want of it then. But if someone goes to the trouble of writing something for you then the least you can do is ask them if they mind it being overrun by five eyed blobs of ink going 'Poot' or something equally witty. Fillos after articles are OK and you needn't even ask my permission to put them there. Interdelineations I don't like for similar reasons. Whether someone's spent a year or a day writing for your fanzine I don't see how you can stick in your favourite second-hand quip as though it was all that was needed to relieve the tedium. Do what you want outside the article, but give the writer a chance during it. There, that's my serious bit for Mike Glicksohn this issue. Come back and read it again when you've dried out Michael. It won't make any more sense but you might live longer.

Somewhere above I hinted that I now have a duplicator. A manual Roneo 750 with an electric handbook. Only cost £15 though. My grateful thanks to all who have suffered my assistance while they duplicated True Rat in the past, and I hope you won't turn me away in the future if this issue comes out anything like P*RK*RS P*TCH.

Recently, on the back of a Robert Hale book amidst quotes from the East Hebrides Glockenspiel Renovators Gazette ("Marvellously inventive sci-fi") and Brick Watchers News ("Marvellously inventive sci-fi"), I saw the following: "Marvellously inventive sci-fi" -- Friend. Well! you may think. And well you may think it. Because that's quite true. Unless someone tells me differently I shall assume it's a friend of the author but it might even be a friend of the publisher or even of the editor of The Brick Watchers News. My mum is even now writing to Sidgwick and Jackson. "Deserves a Huge and Nobbly" -- Leroy's mum.

Now that that gratuitous and egotistically offensive advert for New Writings in SF 28 is over and done with I can return to my one true love Jack Marsh. Recently, Jack passed on to me an article which he had copied from an early 60's Playboy. It's called Girls For The Slime God and is written by someone called William Knoles who appears to know a reasonable amount about pulp SF and to write about it in a funny way without being patronising. Actually, it's quite possible he's got hold of a handful of old magazines and used those to write the article, but I don't think so. I wouldn't want to reprint the whole thing as it gets a bit repetitious and isn't exactly new stuff to your hardened pulp cynic, but here's a paragraph to relieve the tedium of the editorial as I don't have any interdelineations to hand just now:

A quivering bosom was no novel sight for a Thirties s-f hero. Space Girls expressed most of their emotions through their pectoral muscles. Bosoms swayed, trembled, heaved, shivered, danced or pouted according to their owner's moods. In fact, if a hero in those days had been a little more observant and had carried a tape measure, he could have saved himself a lot of trouble. When he opened the air lock and a gorgeous stowaway fell out, uniform ripping, it usually took him five or six pages to find out whether she was a Venusian spy or not, whereas the reader knew at once. If her torn uniform revealed pouting young breasts, she was OK - probably someone's kid sister. If she had eager, straining breasts, she was the heroine. But a girl with proud, arrogant breasts was definitely a spy - while a ripe, full bosom meant she was a Pirate Queen and all hell would soon break loose.

Accompanying the article was a handful of fake magazine covers by Bill Elder. IMPRACTICAL SCIENCE-LIKE STORIES was the best title. All the others were not too improbable. Captions ran beneath the titles: Fiction is dirtier than science; Sexy science is fiction with friction, etc. The most interesting thing however were the cover stories, or, at least, one of them: The Creature With The Good Looks, Gefilte Fish-Men Of Pluto etc. The one which caught me by surprise was Venus On The Half Shell. It's not in keeping with the style of the other 'stories' titles. If any of you knowledgeable fans out there know of anything to show this is more than mere coincidence I'd be amazed.

EXTREMELY SERIOUS BIT

Britain is fine (according to what I hear anyway) in '79.
Peter Roberts for TAFF.

This has been a True Rat Pubs VOICE OF THE PEOPLE message. Take it or leave it.

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✓ Siamese twins of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your -er- er -
You have nothing to lose.

**

✓ Famous last words number Pig: But can you look me in the eye and say that
Dr Mesmer?

**

"In human eyes there are complexities frogs know not" -- MAN PLUS.

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Ten fans were asked if they preferred reading Goblins Grotto or having half their brains scooped out. Fifteen out of ten preferred having half their brains scooped out. Afterwards they preferred Goblins Grotto.

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Beneath the facade of infinite depression there lay infinite depression. Only now can the true story be told. (Music available True Rat Pubs, 3s 6d)

GRAHAM CHARNOCK

GRAHAM'S CONVENTION; a few case notes

Some convention reports come over like Country and Western songs, glorifying the heartache, parading out the exquisite maudlin misery of a love affair which didn't live up to your expectations but it doesn't matter any more. Even the bad times are good. But of course life isn't like a sentimental ballad, and far less like some convention reports I've read. The bad times are surely bad and no amount of cosy nostalgic recollection can scrub you clean of that dirty feeling some bad times give you.

(Oh no, not another downer piece from Charnock. Sometimes I wonder where that boy's head is at. Can't we have something jolly and ho-ho and tru-rattish, a parade of Holdstock follies, Kettlisms and Westoid dementiae?)

Well, I'm sorry but my head was pretty messed up at Owens Park and I can't in all honesty remember one occasion when I righteously lost myself in laughter and well-being; there was always an edge, an undercurrent. The nearest I came to mirth was a kind of strangled snigger when Ian Watson fell backwards off his chair. Greg Pickersgill for one is mystified at the liaison that exists between Ian Watson and myself. Sometimes I'm mystified myself, but when he fell backwards off his chair it went a little way towards clearing the matter up. We both like to laugh at each other, often in a callow cowardly fashion. Normally I would have made more capital of this incident, but I was in a strange state which the manner of the Watsons did nothing to temper. Watching Ian and Judy Watson get progressively drunker (or apparently get progressively drunker; all is shadow and mystification) is like watching two chamelions thrown against a rainbow. You are never quite sure of their true colours. When Ian fell off his chair he did at least, for a flash, for an instant, become just like any other human being who has lost this dignity. It was a moment's insight that was valuable for someone whose head was pretty messed up.

(Don't you think this is a bit directionless, Charnock. We want to know how you fared, sure, but not in the ovens of this Auschwitz of fandom. Give us your adventure and impressions, not a self-directed diatribe on your state of mind.)

We found a nice steak restaurant, the Rats, and ate there twice. On both occasions I came away in a mood of blank depressed melancholy, profoundly affected by the apparent depression of other members of our party. Why? The mood of others was not my fault, was not my concern. Why? I can't explain this without a diatribe on my state of mind.

Put simply, my state of mind was paranoid. Now paranoia is a jargon word I've thrown about with the best of them, usually using it as a clever-clever way to represent a fairly normal healthy fear. But you know it goes a little deeper than that. Until a few months ago I'd never experienced real symptoms of paranoia. I don't know why it suddenly started a couple of months ago,

(Charnock)

unless it was job-related. Most of my minor psychoses are. Anyway this, as I see it from my non-informed layman sufferer's point of view, is what was happening: for whatever reasons I was generating a degree of self-directed hate and anger. Unable to handle this I was externalizing it and projecting it onto others whom I visualised as resenting and conspiring against me. I would stand in bus queues obsessed for no good rational reason with the idea that people were plotting to push in front of me, going through scenarios and dialogues in my mind, finally pushing in front of someone myself and then brooding for the rest of the day about what that person was thinking about me. I would arrive home in a state of agitation and do nothing but anticipate the people downstairs making a noise with their stereo. If there should be some action down below I would work myself hysterically to the point of confrontation, then chicken out because ultimately I was afraid of what they might think of me. This constant brooding about how other people interpreted me, and the feedback effect of how I must modulate my behaviour in order that they should interpret me in a good light was the underlying symptom of my paranoia, the major abnormality of my state of mind. A healthy condition for a convention, eh?

(I wish he'd shut up. What about the convention programme? What about that groovy talk by Bob Shaw?)

I didn't see much of the convention programme. I was too busy trying to keep my profile not only low but well nigh invisible. My sole ambition was to cause offence to no one; I couldn't bear the idea of being a candidate for the cause of anyone's misery. So when Greg asked me if Bryn Fortey could sleep on my floor, I simply (but with a chill of apprehension) said no. Whereupon Greg said something scathing about my lack of charity and fannishness which crippled me and sent me away crippled to bed and crippled me for most of the next day when I came damn near to quitting and going home. This is a good example of how a fairly harmless remark can feedback in the drum of a paranoid's head and near shake him to pieces. For a reference point, this was the morning we were all in a peculiar mood and Malcolm Edwards failed to achieve glory and a possible future as the BBC's resident expert on Robert Silverberg by missing the quiz.

Yes, I caught Bob Shaw's talk. It was a safe moment for me, because it was a guaranteed good-time ... for others. There was no misery or ill-feeling in the audience for my paranoid's nose to ferret out. By the same token I was unable to watch Gerry Web make a fool of himself before Silverberg's panel. I had to leave. Do not mistake this for concern for others' feelings, but rather fear lest their despair and anguish should reach out and find a butt in me.

But there is a limit, it is true, to the burden anyone can shoulder and I never seriously believed the convention's apparent failure to delight was anyone's fault but the committee's. Their failure at least allowed me an opportunity of pure hate and anger that was not somehow self-directed. It seemed so obvious, in my more rational moments at least, that the convention was failing because the committee were simply not putting their arses into it, were not sweating, were not struggling until their nerves were shredded the way I had struggled at Seacon to ensure people enjoyed themselves. I hated them for that.

As far as the rest of the programme was concerned, I caught one reel of The Man Who Fell To Earth and liked it immensely because its vacuous posing

(Charnock)

seemed in keeping with the character I was myself playing in the super-budget cast-of-hundreds movie the cosmic joker was making right there at Owens Park.

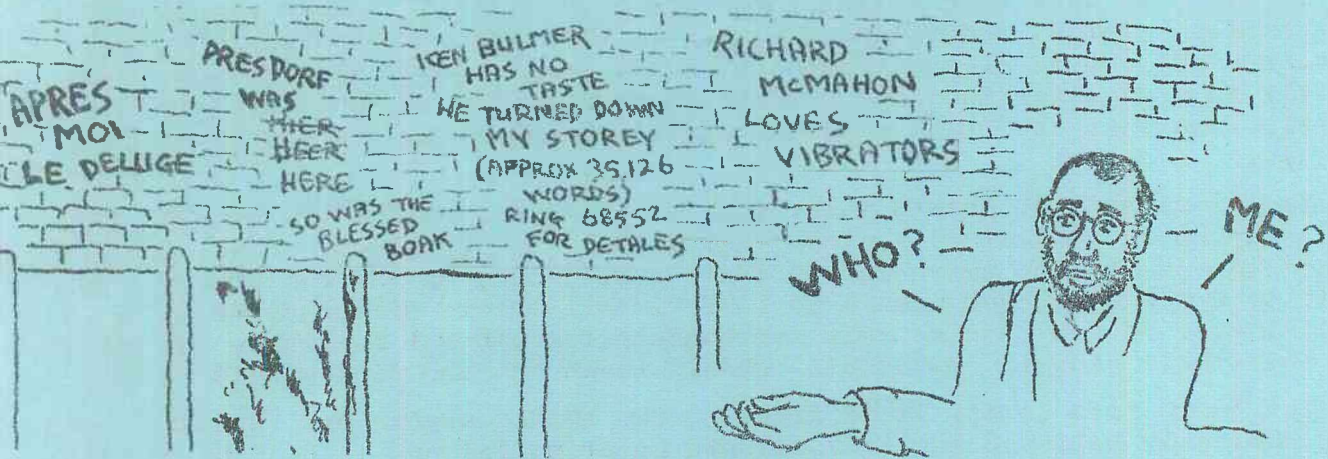
(I didn't even know this kind of thing went on at conventions. You can't help feeling sorry for the guy, I suppose. But I wish he'd fall to earth himself.)

Oh yeah, I guess I transcended paranoia for a short while during the infamous Ratfan v Gannets football match. Thank heaven for that blissful period of cortex death when my intellectual processes were suspended and I was snug and curled up down there in my brain stem, pumping blood and gasping air, trying desperately to kill myself with exertion. Damn near succeeded too. Afterwards I was afraid I'd gone too far and some blossom of disturbed blood would flower in my skull or heart, some aneurism or haemorrhage. He died that the sins of the convention might be forgiven. But that was generally a good time, so I won't dwell upon the moment I faux-pas-ed at referee Bob Shaw: "What's the matter with your eyes? Are you blind?" when he made an adverse decision. It later transpired that the Gannets had bribed him with offers of drink, which knowledge arrested this faux-pas in its slow passage towards my guilt centres. Yes we can forget that.

(You'd do well to forget the whole thing, Charnock. I'm sorry I ever asked.)

Just remember that you did. Next year I'm going as a schizo.

GRAHAM CHARNOCK



* *

If you don't support Peter Roberts for TAFF then return this fanzine immediately and wash your mouth out. This doesn't mean that the above cartoon is of Peter Roberts. Actually it's meant to be Graham Charnock. Peter's just off the edge.

*

Holder of Guinness clerkship the first class, Secret Master of -- actually I'm not allowed to say but it's pretty incredible -- and well-known mango about town:



ISH PISH? NO NO
THISH ISH PUB?
NO NO NO
ISHKEBAB? PUBUBUB?
NO NO
PISH POSH PISH?
NO NO NO NO
PUB AND THISH?
AHA!
PUB YOUR
ISH!
RIGHT RIGHT
MINES A
GUINNESS

PETER

ROBERTS

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE GOLDEN AGE ---

If you are one of the brave fannish souls who has read Sam Moskowitz's hefty history of pre-war fandom, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*, you'll know all about the drear round of politics, power struggles, and infighting which make up the subject of the book: the eclipse of the Terrestrial Fantascience Guild, the rise of the International Scientific Association, the New Fandom/Futurian battle, and so on, and so on. Moskowitz's book painstakingly describes a tangle of cliques furiously clashing and feuding with each other, like an account of clan battles in the Border country or factions in the Balkan Wars. If the reader isn't careful, he'll find himself mesmerized by this historical drama of pre-war fandom in action; if he keeps cool, however, he'll remember that these grand events were played only with a cast of dozens - and most of them no more than schoolboys. At the end of all this sound and fury, *THE IMMORTAL STORM* nonetheless leaves the impression of a fandom far removed from that of the present - a group of sf hobbyists producing dull journals and obscure organs, absorbed with itself and its paper organisations. About as fannish as a non-stop BSFA Annual General Meeting.

Maybe it's true. Certainly Moskowitz has painted it that way and Jack Speer, the other early fan historian, has described this period (which he calls Second Fandom) as a time when "fans found a new center of interest: themselves and their own activities" and when "fan feuds reached the proportion of fan wars".

After all, this was the era of the left-wing Michelists, later called the Futurians, that ultra-sercon group of New York fans who involved them-

(Roberts)

selves in all the feuds, published pamphlets and propaganda under mastheads such as the Committee For The Political Advancement Of Science Fiction, and whose hardcore managed to get themselves excluded from the first Worldcon of 1939 as a danger to the convention. The Futurians (and they included people like John Michel, Don Wollheim, Jack Gillespie, Fred Pohl, Bob Lowndes, Dave Kyle, Dick Wilson, Cyril Kornbluth, Jim Blish and Isaac Asimov) when not involved in feuding devoted their energies, quite successfully, to editing, agenting, and writing. As I said, pretty sercon by any standard.

But that's all second-hand history. I thought I'd burrow into my fanzine stacks and see if I could find any contemporary material that reflects this ultra-sercon age in action. That's really the idea behind this article: to see what a present day fan, a comparative newcomer, can make of fanzines from forty years ago.

Not too surprisingly, I didn't find much. The average circulation of a fanzine in 1937 (when FAPA was formed) was no more than 20-30 copies (hence the original idea that FAPA would contain all fan publishers quite comfortably) and the estimated size of active fandom was a mere fifty fans. So, it's asking a lot for one of these fanzines to have crossed the Atlantic, survived the war, rested quietly for thirty years, and finally to have ended up in my wardrobe in 1976. Still, there are some oddments: the final, 21st issue of THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER OF SCIENCE AND SCIENCE FICTION, for example; official organ of the ISA, dated June 1937, and edited by Don Wollheim with John Michel as assistant and Fred Pohl as 'Office Boy'. What's it like?

Well, it's all true. Here's the feud in action, just like Moskowitz has always said (see Chapter XVII of THE IMMORTAL STORM for "The First Convention And The Death Of The ISA"). Here's President William S. Sykora's bitter letter of resignation as the last, disillusioned champion of science in sf - "Scientifiction, far from stimulating study of true science, has become a sort of pseudo-scientific refuge for persons either incapable of pursuing a technical career, or else too lazy to do so." Here too is the editor's deflating comment - "The world is divided into two sections according to Sykora: Technicians and scum." Here indeed are a dozen closely-typed pages of ISA argument, vituperation and character assassination. Good, solid Moskowitz material.

But then - would you read VECTOR or THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN for a view of fandom in 1976? More fool you, if you would. Let's take a look then at the 'personal' fanzines of the radical New Yorkers - those cold-eyed, politically motivated fans who believed in the Michelist credo that "science fiction is a force; a force acting through the medium of speculative and prophetic fiction on the minds of idealist youth; that logical science fiction inevitably points to the necessity for socialism, the advance of science, and the world state." Here then is one of the early Michelists in action:

DICK ARMSTRONG AND THE MARTIAN INVADERS

by Don Q. Jote

Dick Armstrong turned to his friend Jack on his heel and he said we have to get away from here quick because I don't know what people will think if we don't go out and kill those Martians so they heard a roar as they got into the control room and the space ship was off in a cloud of dust they got very space sick because it felt very funny and then they had to let the space ship run all by itself but they had a trusty robot who took care of the space ship so it didn't go off its path and

then when they got better it was very monotonous so they tried to while away the time playing monopoly but it was no use and they had a fight and Dick knocked Jack into the airlock and the airlock came open and Jack fell out into free space Dick took his space suit and ran out quick to get himso Jack was saved they landed on Mars and went out they tested the atmosphere it was the same like a high mountain on Earth so they went out and they met a bunch of Martians they took their rocket pistol disintegrators along and they were going to shoot the Martian invaders but they learned the language and they said I am hungry by rubbing their stomach and the Martians looked very funny because they didn't have any clothes on and they took Dick and Jack and gave them food Dick ate a lot and Jack learned the language so they got land sick because they weren't used to being on land and when they got better it was very monotonous and they played monopoly Jack won so he took the Martian princess and he said we'll go far away and we'll kill the jovian outlaws Dick had a girl too she looked very funny because she had a small head and they went into the space ship they got very space sick and when they got better it was very monotonous so they played monopoly and then they got out of the space ship and they went to meet the Jovian outlaws and they shot the Jovians down like a dog they took their rocket pistol disintegrators along and they lost their girl friends in the Jovian fog on Jupiter and they looked and looked and Jack tied a cord onto the space ship and when they went back to find the space ship it wasn't there and they couldn't find it it was very dark because they were so far from the sun they were on Jupiter where it is very far from the sun and Dick yelled but nobody answered so Jack went looking for the spaceship and he fell down so Dick picked him up and he said my pal and tears came into their eyes then they found the two Martian princesses and all of a sudden they felt a bump on their heads and they looked up and there was the space ship and they got in and went back to Earth and they married the Martian princesses so they came out ahead anyhow.

Yes, well, that piece of lunacy is about as radically committed as "Bigles And The Giant Algy From Outer Spase". It comes from a tiny publication (part of a short-lived idea known as "Mijimags") called THE VOICE OF THE GOSTAK (No1, Dec 1937), edited by no less than the arch-Michelism, Frederik Pohl, who undoubtedly penned the Dick Armstrong saga himself. It looks pretty fannish to me, and that's the point. For all their publicizing, organizing, and feuding, most of these maligned leaders of Second Fandom look to me like real fans. After all, Don Wollheim, the man who wrote the Michelism manifesto and easily the most well-known and active of the Futurians, was Grand High Cocolorum of IAOPUMUMSTFFUSA, Unltd, the pro-staple faction in the Great Staple War of 1934, whilst Bob Lowndes, another sercon NY fan, was in with the SPWSTFM, the original anti-staple faction led by Bob Tucker. And it was Wollheim too who instituted the worship of GhuGhu in 1935, with John Michel, no less, as High Priest and other Futurians prominent in the Ghuist hierarchy. Now you can't get much more fannish than that - even I cringe at the super-faanishness of Ghuism, the mock religion that has ultimately led to Pete Presdorf putting superfluous 'h's in every other word. Moskowitz, needless to say, was even less amused by all this; Ghuism and the Staple War got no more than a grudging paragraph each in THE IMMORTAL STORM, together with a couple of free sneers at such juvenilities.

(Roberts)

Back to the Futurian fanzines and I've dug up three issues of Dick Wilson's ESCAPE (1939). This is a small genzine and a surprising one. Why? Because it's very much in the style of modern fanzines; there's a lot of fannish chatter, some fan fiction and columns (mostly by Kornbluth), covers by Dave Kyle, and what may possibly be the first set of 'bacover' quotes (later the hallmark of HYPHEN) titled "Words of the Wise" - here's one from Pohl:

"COME ON IN - THE WATER'S SLIME"

A lot of the material is too obscure to reprint - a mass of pre-war fannish in-jokes. One of my favourites, however, is too long to reproduce in full, but worth mentioning: it's by N.O.Null and is called "The End Of Bob & Koso". These were two egregious characters (an Earthman and a Martian) in a wretched sf series by J.V.Taurasi; ESCAPE's version of their end is splendidly done with ghoulish relish. Bob falls into some machinery:

"The cogs were beginning to grind up Bob's thighs. Several bolts of high voltage had hit Bob and left his face and chest blackened, blistered masses of cocked flesh. A bolt set his clothes afire and another split an oil tank and set that on fire. The burning oil rolled along the floor and set fire to everything. It rolled over the rest of Bob and ended his screams as it neatly burned him to a crisp. The cogs continued to gobble their way into the ashes of his bones."

Meanwhile, Koso is going mouldy:

"Koso staggered around blindly in searing pain. He banged up against things and stumbled about trying to scratch the mold off. But it was no good. He finally fell to the floor as the mold ate his legs loose, and thrashed around."

Bob and Koso's death agonies are generously given a full page and more. Great stuff.

I was going to reprint a few fannish anecdotes from ESCAPE, forerunners perhaps of TRUE RAT's 'Open Flie' column; but I reckon I've gone on long enough already. I think I've made the point though, and I'll just give it a last airing. It's simply this; that these early years of fandom aren't the dull sercon wastelands suggested by Moskowitz and, to a certain extent, Speer. When you leave the secondary sources and read through the fanzines for yourself, they're frequently entertaining and amusing - most particularly those of the allegedly sercon Futurians whose publications are (not surprisingly with their later fame) intelligent and literate. Reminds me of Ratfandom....

Anyway, let's close with a final reprint: a poem from another Michel - Wollheim 'Mijimag' called THE MENTATOR MAGAZINE (No 1, "3A.Gh", which I reckon is 1938). Most of this eight pager is complete Ghuist gibberish, but here's an odiment that takes my fancy. The author is unknown, but I'd guess it's Kornbluth. Anybody arguing?

YE SPAYS FLYGHTE
by Onondaga S. Dowlaps

Ytte was a blake an starrelyt nyghte
Wi hoote of byrde an owle
Ye spaysshyppe mayd a prittie syghte
Quha mayd ye people yowl.

(Roberts)

They filld yt up wi' gasse an oyle
Quhatcost tuppence or moar
Ye flyers wirked wi' swette an toyle
To shutte ye yron doar

Ye people ren fro' au abowte
An mayd a fryghtfull rowe
Then au ye men they gayv a showte
Ye tubes beganne to blowe

They fyzzed an burpped an flaymd agayne
Ye shyppe did gently roake
An wi' a burst of fyrie rayne
Blewe up wi' smellie smoake

Ye moral, my goode Ynngglyshe folke,
Yt tys ye will of God
That homble man shoulde never polke
Hys noas to farre fro' sodde.

PETER ROBERTS

((THE IMMORTAL STORM is currently in print with Hyperion press and should you be foolish enough to want a copy in order to check Peter's facts or start a fire then any reputable dealer - or the usual ones - will probably have a copy. Don't try to borrow mine Holdstock. I might want to read it again in the next five years.)) ((Oh, all right. I might want to read it for the first time.))



EXCITING NEWS FROM THE TRIBUNALS -- the column that spins all the beallst

Man sacked for stopping work abruptly gets
Tribunal clerk fails to find amusing filler.
Luckily end of page comes to assistance.
Bring on the dancing asterisks.

OPEN FLIE -- the column that tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth - if there's no other way out.

Ian Maule remarries -- Ian Maule, having turned his back on effervescent games-player John Piggott (former chief whip of Bubble and Squeak the famous Ealing thong and dents team), has 'gone straight' in an effort to achieve respectability, less messy creature comforts and a soft shoulder to cry on during the imminent failure of Checkpoint -- the newszine that makes OPEN FLIE look like The Times. Ian, never at a loss to fail to publish something interesting, was not available for comment. "I have nothing to say," he refused to say.

Secret Master of Gossip, Peter ("Call me Peter Weston") Weston tells us that popular Birmingham fan and drunkard Kevin Easterhope has got a funny little bird on the end of his chin. As yet this has not been confirmed by a second source. Peter Weston has a funny accent.

Up and coming young corpse, John Brosnan, has been hired by 20th Century Frocks to write and make the dresses for their new film OOZE FIRST. The plot revolves around several quite annoyed slugs who crawl riot in a sink. John, whose cut is reputed to be - oh, ever such a lot - can now afford to have all his growths removed. You all know the ones. Yes, I thought they'd probably dribbled on you at the One Tun. These growths will star in John's next film .
UUURRRRGH! about a middle aged failed humourist dying of cancer.

Robert Holdstock, author of repute and other words (though mostly of half a syllable or less) has moved to a new house not a million miles away from a pub. Mr Holdstock, who spends long seconds of his drinking time at the typewriter playing at being a novelist and collapsing, is working on a new epic tentatively entitled BLOODSHOCKFUCKSMASHKILLPOKEGUTS which he hopes will make, if not his name or fortune, at least his psychiatrist sit up and take notice. Mr Holdstock is currently as pissed as a newt. (An alcoholic newt: Biology Ed.)

Malcolm Edweeds (little or no relation) is the new boss of the vowel department at Robert Hale. Apparently his job is to check that neither of Hale's authors (in any of their manifestations) suffer from loose vowels. Rumours that he was once employed by Victor Gollancz Ltd as soft drinks-boy and book-end are fairly exaggerated.

GRONK-- the column that takes notes when people least expect it.

"It looked just like a lump of gristle": Simone Walsh during a short conversation about Ian Maule. The editor declines to comment.

"It's all in the flip of the wrist at the end": Malcolm Edwards on his eyesight.

After I wrote to D. West recently suggesting that I retain a cartoon he did of his wife and Pat Charnock so that I could possibly use it in a future issue, he replied suggesting I forget about it as he had drawn Malcolm Edwards, not Ann West. I apologise to some of those concerned. Anyone who can figure out who D.'s other cartoons are meant to be will win a free pair of spectacles.

END OF PAGE

Great eldritch fanzine-reviewers of our time. No 1 in a series of 1:

D. WEST

FANZINES

Taran taran taran taran. Roll on drums. Roll on floor. Roll in aisles. Roll in stones. Is there no end to this man's talent? Well, yes, there is, actually.

And so much for the lead-in, a preliminary flourish lifted bodily from an old Graham Hall loc and intended to help this article merge itself at the edges into the surrounding mess of squeaking inanities and hysteric ephemera so characteristic of this publication. It is said that in the same way as pets acquire the characteristics of their owners and vice versa (scratch the back of Kettle's neck and he'll make a noise like a dialling tone; offer Charnock a saucer of milk and he'll start to shake all over) just so do fanwriters acquire the dominant traits of the zines for which they write. At this very moment I feel an osmotic influence seeping through my ever-open pores. I am in TRUE RAT. I look at the lines above and begin to bounce excitedly, uttering high-pitched giggles. Were I within the covers of STOP BREAKING DOWN I would scowl, sneer horribly, lurch forward with a splintering crash of chair legs and utter a sharp barking laugh not unlike the sound of someone's arm being broken. And for VIBRATOR, of course, I would by now be lying underneath the table, alternately tittering and hiccuping quietly as I made unsuccessful slobbering attempts to bite the legs of nubile passers-by.

But this is TRUE RAT. So - even if I make an effort to pull myself together - the setting of the West word machine has been changed slightly and what boils up from the steamy bubbling depths will inevitably have some furry taint -- a Hard Water's Gonna Fall - derived from spoutings of Kettle. As you can see, as you can see.

But I intend to fight it all the way. The first fanzine reviews I did (for PARKERS PATCH) were - like its editor - nasty, brutish and short. Those for my own DAISNAID were longer but otherwise similar. Struggling against the deplorably contagious frivolity of TR I may - hopefully - here rise to the occasion and produce genuinely inspired criticism that is tolerant, serious, intelligent, helpful, constructive, good-tempered, modest, friendly and brilliant.

On the other hand, who needs reviews like that anyway?

In the far off olden days when I was an undemolished serious SF reader, BSFA member and halfhearted fringe-fan I used to write locs that were tolerant, serious, intelligent etc etc. Mostly they never got printed, or even acknowledged. I worked away at such laborious and conscientious correspondence for several years. All to no discernible result. Finally - SPRONG - something snapped. Or - PZZST - the great flash of illumination. I realised that I was Living A Lie. I didn't really want to spend my time pointing out a few typos here and there - applauding the jejune triumphs of meagre talent - carefully

(west)

avoiding the deflation of those with no talent at all - respectfully saluting the fake profundities of trufaans addicted to a jungle jargon of grunts and whoops - inshort, I didn't really want to carry on like a willing inmate of some Golden Twilight Home for Aged Mentally Defective Gentlefolk. What I wanted to do - at least half of the time

- was to get in there and kick the shit out of them. I decided that Daisy Chain Fandom needed the excitement of an occasional swift boot up the backside to vary the monotony of the non-stop lick. The whole scene should be less like a prayer meeting in a Tea Shoppe - weak tea, limp sandwiches and pious self-satisfaction - and more of an impromptu cannibal feast - blood, guts, and not a few casualties. So I abandoned my fake personality of Niceness - not immediately, it fell away in pieces - and took to writing letters sprinkled with snarls, maledictions and recipes for unnatural methods of self-destruction. Nobody took any more notice than before, but I certainly felt better.

And so I came to fanzine reviews. For it must be said that one of the great disadvantages of locing a fanzine is that the editor, if he dislikes or disagrees with what you are saying, can simply bin your letter and put you down in the WAHFs. Some faneds are more conscientious than others, and make a particular point of publishing any unfavourable criticism they receive; others are less scrupulous and will even chop you from the mailing list if you express opinions that are less than flattering. Review the bastards and they have no escape, and no way to keep up the old facade of universal peace and brotherhood in beautiful mediocrity. Even if they maintain a dignified silence the fact that the criticism has been made publicly is bound to have some effect.

But why bother? After all, isn't fandom all about friendship, and isn't friendship all about being nice to each other?

Well, no. Not quite. Fandom - in the beginning - is all about shared interests, and shared interests don't necessarily make for friendship. Quite often they make for heated argument and a polarisation of attitudes so complete that only a state of armed truce is possible. Members of parliament, for instance, have a shared interest in running the country (so the theory goes, anyway) but that doesn't make them less vehemently partisan and disputatious in their differences of opinion and outlook. Some measure of respect - and even friendship - may be given to able opponents, but few points of view remain un-aired throughthe fear of damaging someone's self-regard. And real friendship, it should be noted, has more to do with honesty than with pandering to conceit and vanity.

Yes, but fandom isn't as important as that. It's just a hobby. So why rock the boat? Why not let everyone be happy and sit around basking in that lovely warm mutual admiration? Does it really matter if bad writing and crippled thinking pass uncriticised or even commended?



Yes, it does matter. The heart of fandom is the stimulus provided by contact and the exchange of opinions, and unless such dialogue is conducted wholeheartedly and without reservations, evasions, polite inanities, major and minor concessions and compromises with received opinion, and all the other de-based coinage of casual social dealings - not to mention downright lies, crooked reasoning and bent logic - then the whole business will have about as much value, interest and importance as a brainless chat about yesterday's weather forecast.

There are only three good fanzine reviewers working at the moment: Greg Pickersgill (STOP BREAKING DOWN), Jim Linwood (no fixed abode) and Malcolm Edwards (MAYA). This is the trio at the top; there are other writers who have the ability to equal their efforts, but not the inclination. Writing good fanzine reviews is not easy; any lack of natural aptitude for the task has to be made up for by a great deal of mental straining and hard work. Most people don't bother - they write mailing comments instead.

Mailing comments are essentially miniature letters-of-comment. Fanzine title - contents checked off with brief yes/no comment - final tag of "liked it"/"not so good this time". This kind of summarising approach - as in Keith Walker's FANZINE FANATIQUE or Ethel Lindsay's SCOTTISHE - can be useful for reference purposes or helpful if you're looking for new zines, but has little or no value as real criticism. To be fair, many faneds know this, and make no bones about the fact that their "review" columns are essentially a device for the doling out of shots of that strange fannish drug: "egoboo". You send me your zine - I mention your name and say something nice - or not too nasty - about what you've done. Everybody who gets a lot of fanzines probably uses this method on some occasion or other when they're pressed for time. It's a useful expedient, but too often leads to a permanent lowering of standards, with faneds dispensing rubber stamp judgements which would be condemned immediately as altogether inadequate if sent direct by letter. The longer loc-substitutes which are sometimes passed off as real reviews are little better, the greater wordage simply making room for a more comprehensive catalogue of contents and gut reaction thereto. They would rarely be considered good letters; they can scarcely ever be considered good reviews.

The basic difference between a letter of comment and a review is - or should be - that whereas the loc is concerned with specific issues raised within the fairly narrow range of a single issue of one fanzine, the review must give a general verdict and bear in mind the whole of fandom and the fanzine scene. Good locs and good reviews will often be similar, but even bad locs are frequently better than some of the stuff that is passed off as "reviewing". Most faneds don't really want criticism; they want a dose of egoboo - a show of interest - a token of appreciation. The preference for locs is understandable in that - apart from considerations of length - most reviews are simply hasty and indifferent substitutes for genuine appraisal and response. One could effectively make a mockery out of FANZINE FANATIQUE and SCOTTISHE by obtaining copies of all the fanzines listed and then responding by sending them the review from FF or S cut out and pasted on a postcard. After all, that is what Walker and Lindsay are really offering That, and the chance to read a collection of sub-miniature locs to other fanzines at the same time. The various fanzines are all considered in isolation, without any save the most perfunctory effort to relate them to each other or to the great mass of fanzines in general. This isn't criticism, it's cataloguing, and - as with a phone book - one name

(West)

more or less would only make a difference in the degree of completeness. Thirty fanzines reviewed separately produce thirty little locs of derisory quality; thirty fanzines reviewed together should produce one overall picture taking into account of the way in which all fanzines are related and act upon each other and also offer criticism - not just reaction - of individual items seen within this context.

Complicated - and also sounds rather as though I have some notion of a fannish ideal, a set of standards by which all fanzines should be measured. Not so. Naturally, I have my own ideas on the perfect fanzine, but this is purely a matter of personal preference. My point is that if fanzines are examined each on its own there will inevitably be a lack of clearly formulated critical standards of any sort, personal or general, and response will degenerate to the level of snap judgements based on the feelings of the moment.

There is a school of thought which holds that you should always think of something good to say about any fanzine - praise the successes and tactfully ignore or minimise the errors. Whether this approach stems from cowardice, diffidence or genuine kindness, the final result is to exalt mediocrity at the expense of talent. To give praise where no praise is due and to withhold censure where that is due is to debase the coinage of criticism; to dispense plaudits and strictures with the facile brevity of the mailing comment review is to devalue the currency entirely. Any one article is part of a whole fanzine; any one fanzine is part of the whole scene. To review the parts without the whole, in the manner of checking off items on a list, is about as meaningful as reviewing the separate pieces of a jigsaw (nice bit of sky there - don't like the shape of that one much) and failing to comment on the complete picture.

In view of the above, Mike Meara may have some justification for his request that KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE not be reviewed. KFN is a diary format personalzine and as such calls for a direct and personal response - conditions that inevitably show up the unsatisfactory quality of the mailing comment type of review. Any review of a personalzine is bound to be a substitute loc; the only alternative is what is essentially a review of the personality of the editor. Neither of these is likely to be very acceptable to someone who just wants a bit of egoboo or a few interesting paragraphs and bugger the clever stuff about his character traits. So though Meara is edging rather close to the "no reviews unless they're good reviews" line, he does have a reasonable point of view, considering the useless stuff he's likely to get from most directions. Some parts of some issues of KFN are more interesting than other parts of other issues; that's about all you can say without getting down to the sort of specifics that are necessary in a loc but redundant in a review. Whether or not you like the whole zine will depend on the degree to which your personality and tastes fit in with those of the editor. That's not a taboo subject, but neither is it one to deal with in a two line throwaway.

There is, of course, also the matter of writing talent. But where personalzines are concerned this is often of secondary importance. (Within reasonable limits of literacy, that is.) The number one is the editorial personality. Thus, A may be a better writer than B, but B may be a novel and eccentric zany, whereas A is just a solid citizen and a dull dog at that. On the other hand, B may be someone who thinks he's a novel and eccentric zany and is actually a pain in the arse...

Personalzines are hell on reviewers, and a challenge I largely decline this time. There's the Meara's KFN, Paul Skelton's INFERNO and THE ZINE THAT HAS NO NAME, Ian Williams' SIDDARTHA, the Charnock VIBRATOR, David Bridges' ONE OFF and Richard McMahon's INVERTED EAR TRUMPET. Like them or loathe them, you have to strain your brain to think of anything to say about them. That isn't even a complete list - there's also THE GRIMLING BOSCH, TWLL DDU, THE SOUTHERN VOLE, WHATSIT, and several others that I've heard of but not seen yet. There's a lot of them, and the dividing line isn't always clear. For example, I include IET 3 although it has an article by Graham Poole, and I could equally well include various other fanzines that are only marginally dependant on outside contributors. In fact, dammit, I'd better stop drawing lines and say something about all of them regardless.

THE ZINE THAT HAS NO NAME is chiefly remarkable for its fanzine reviews. These are of the "Fanzine? What Fanzine?" variety and devote a great deal of space to ignoring the fanzines they're supposed to be dealing with. Still, that's the way with personalzines; any point is just a jumping off place for random thoughts... G. Charnock manages to be rather more concise in VIBRATOR, probably because he knows he'll fall off the chair before he's typed a very large number of pages... Harry Bell manages a similar brevity with GRIMLING BOSCH but probably for different reasons... Dave Langford gets ripped off again in Liese Hoare's SOUTHERN VOLE, which includes much material from TWLL DDU ... or maybe it was the other way round... Ian Williams is Ian Williams is Ian Williams... and so on through an infinity of mirrors... SIDDARTHA is a real personalzine... You don't hardly see zines like Ken Cheslin's WHATSIT no more... Apart from Terry Jeeves' ERG, that is... Graham Boak's review (K) of INVERTED EAR TRUMPET offers a good example of the personality being reviewed rather than the fanzine... and not the editor's personality, at that...

And so much for the mailing comments. In another review of INVERTED EAR TRUMPET (different issue, but you wouldn't be able to tell from the review) Skelton mentions all the new fans coming up: "... publishing their fanzines that I've not come across before, mentioning hordes of otherfans who have never impinged on my cosmos. They all seem to know each other. They have their own elder gods, speaking with awe and reverence of such as Keith Walker and Graham Poole." Well, it's good to tell they're real SF fans. The suspension of disbelief implied in the discovery of any divine spark in Keith Walker is far beyond the capabilities of mere mundanes. Graham Poole is marginally more credible in the role of Little Greeneyed Idol From the South of somewhere or other, but only just. Still, he does seem to have a large number of aides, acolytes and associates. Where his foot falls, a new fan group springs to life; whenever he sleeps, a new fanzine is dreamed up. The exact number of Poole publications is a little difficult to decide due to his habit of including one half of them as inserts in the other half. The latest bundle - principal parts SPACES 1 and SPI 5 - shows this Organisation Fan diligently at work, exploding with enthusiasm in all directions. One doesn't quite know whether to applaud or take cover. The roots of this ambivalent attitude may be found in three quotations from the letter column:

"You seem to be introducing a lot of neos into fnz fandom so give yourself a pat of the back." (Dave Rowe)

"Yes, for the guy-on-the-street SF still brings to mind hideous BEMS with slimy green tentacles grasping nubile young females and fighting off square-jawed all-American spacemen with ray guns etc."
(James Parker)

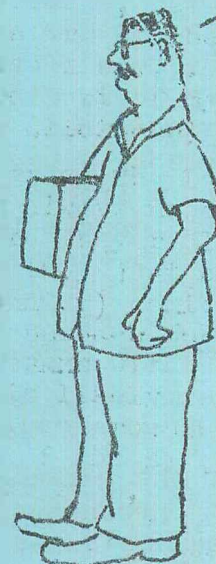
(West)

"I assume that when Alex says 'fandom' he thinks of that larger body of sf readers who enjoy sitting in an audience and listening to the people that write the stories they enjoy reading.... To them a con is a chance to meet an Arthur Clarke or Robert Silverberg, get an autograph or two and learn a bit about what the creators of the genre think about it. They are consumers, spectators if you like.... The thing is, though, they have no automatic right to be part of my fandom, just because we both happen to read sf." (Mike Glicksohn)

Yes folks, it's the Fandom Generation Game, or the great Who Do These People Think They Are? Moan-In. Trouble is, while fandom always needs new faces are these Poole-neos coming too fast and thick? Are they real genuine apprentice fans worthy of the Glicksohn blessing, or are they just crudeaters one rung up the ladder from Trekkies, Do Whosits and (shudder) comic fans? The trouble with the get-out-and-drag-on-in-off-the-streets approach to recruiting is that you get people who not only think that SF is all REMS with slimy green tentacles etc but actually like it that way. The result is likely to be a "fandom" of the sort that pop stars acquire: a bunch of mindless groupies with an insatiable appetite for endless discussion of the trivia of the SF genre. I see somebody's started a Perry Rhodan Club already... Next step, the Chris Priest Appreciation Society (President: John Brosnan)... In a little while any author without a supporters' club will be lying awake at night worrying, wondering where he went wrong. (Probably used too few REMS and too many long words) So this is a Good Thing?

Echo answers Don't Know. Enthusiasm can't be all bad, but when it's the kind that means a lowering of standards that are already none too high... on the other hand, what goes down may eventually come up, if the descent into crapathy is survived...

Does it matter? Well, of course it matters to those who see their seniority being made irrelevant by a bunch of upstarts who don't know who the proper BNFs are, for gheodsake. No respect, damnit. And from another point of view it's rather disheartening to face the prospect of today's more active fugg-heads raising up a vastly increased new generation in their own image. But the proportion of lamebrains to bright sparks is likely to remain much the same, so where's the sweat? On the whole fandom does need recruiting agents like Poole. The "familiar whine of the disaffected neo" - to use Graham Boak's choice phrase - does have the merit of disturbing the slumbers of over-complacent oldtimers. As Glicksohn suggests - in a letter someplace else - it's only the real tough ones who'll make it anyway. Natural Selection Rules - you have to have a fairly thick skin to withstand repeated doses of comments like "shows promise," "could improve," "may be worth watching," and "deserves



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THE MEAT
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encouragement." This is the kind of largesse Ian Williams distributes in fanzine reviews in SPI. Other reviewers are even more irritating, giving the impression that they see themselves as Broadway critics whose word can make or mar, or talent scouts dangling the prospect of some future contract to greatness. "Yes, he was nothing but a no-account neo till I discovered him and spread the word..."

Blah. If anybody ever said to me, "You've got a lot to learn," I'd be inclined to give him a swift crack round the ear as an indication that he too had a lot to learn if he thought I'd put up with such patronising remarks. However, it must be admitted that the temptation is almost irresistible at times, particularly when one is confronted with such an example of copiously misapplied talents as Paul Ryan's ORYAN (formerly ORION, formerly ORION EXPRESS)...

Science marches on, and the day of the lithoed crudzine has dawned at last. Admittedly the reproduction makes it readable, but here are all the identifying features - good and bad - of the genus: enthusiasm, ambitious plans, a hunger for material so indiscriminating that any old junk will do (I've just sent him an article), total blindness to the difference between editing and compiling, complete innocence of the principles of punctuation, new and original ideas on the spelling of various words, a typing finger so palsied and erratic that the most commonplace sentences are transformed into cryptic utterances of oracular significance and mystery, and bad art. The last named is really the worst failure of all, since it means that the one positive advantage of litho - ease of good quality artwork reproduction - has been wasted. Greatly to his credit Ryan does make an effort to utilise the facilities litho offers - there are several full page and numerous smaller illos - but the larger part of his work is flat and uninspiring, overstylised to the point of suggesting child art, but without the corresponding sense of vigour. That this is the result of a wrong choice of technique rather than a basic lack of talent is obvious both from various touches in the larger drawings and from one or two smaller and much more freely executed sketches. If the careful but sterile production of sub-standard graphics could be abandoned in favour of fluid illustration then it is possible that ORION might even become an example for slicker but less venturesome zines - such as MAYA with its plethora of meaningless fillers - to admire and follow.

That's the basic defect. The rest - lack of editing, poor typing and spelling etc - is not too vital and will probably be put right with practise. One correspondent advises: "Don't be put off by the knockers, however august they may be." Apart from its value as the starting point for yet another soft-porn costume drama ("You presume upon your position, Sir Jasparr," she said coldly, and drew back her white skinned shoulders in a shrug of proud disdain. Cowed by the swell of her august knockers he slunk away, snarling.) this is sound counsel which Ryan should follow. (Though the same letter contains a couple of sentences that must cast doubts on the writer's qualifications to offer advice on any subject: "The frontispiece conjures up thoughts of a 15th century traveller's accountant on a voyage betwixt the spheres in search of the source of music from them" and "The flowerpower era dawnded with pycodelic turn on music and hard drugs in the van (of course) were the 'Beatles' ". Maybe it's his handwriting.) Perhaps ORYAN should be called a neozine after all. Neos soon turn into fans; only crud is for ever.

And that, unfortunately, seems to connect quite neatly with Dave Cockfield's ATROPOS 2. Theoretically this one could get better, but on the whole

(West)
it
or

would be more desirable for it to get considerably worse. An all-the-way mudzine - like the appealing ARDEES - has a fascination and interest denied to pale and cringing imitations. ATROPOS is just a balloon of a fanzine; inflated size without substance, insubstantial and flimsy material stretched out to the very limit. Cut by twenty pages - the inane article on Rosicrucianism and the abysmal fan-fiction junked, the over-bject editorial trimmed, all but the last paragraph of the plot-summary book reviews chopped - it might have been half-way readable as a personalzine, but in its present dropsical condition it isn't worth more than a heavy sigh.

So here goes with a heavy sigh. And thereafter many more heavy sighs are heard throughout the land as various readers ask: "But can't a faned put what he likes in his own fanzine?"

To be sure - that's what fanzines are all about: complete freedom to publish whatever you choose. But it must be obvious that there's precious little point to publishing your ish in an edition of more than one if nobody's going to read it or if the readers are likely to feel their time might have been more profitably and enjoyably spent on some activity such as picking their noses. You can publish what you like, certainly, but the rules of the game say you've got to make it readable. The fact that your own material may have a vague connection with SF is not, on its own, enough. Maybe it used to be, but those days are gone.

Yes indeed. Another sigh, this time for that long lost era when I avidly followed the debates on Heinlein in the pages of the sixties ZENITH/SPECULATION...

GHAS 1 brings it all back. Gregory, Harvey and Simmons, former Leeds University Group members (LUG would be a better acronym than the Germanic LUUSFS) have produced a neat and attractive serious SF zine. There's an editorial that manages to stay modest without becoming servile, yet another interview with Harry Harrison - interesting as such gossipy pieces usually are - and various articles and reviews, all reasonably well written. The layout, reproduction and artwork (better than usual) are all satisfactory without being outstanding. A good first issue, and lacking only the usual feedback from the readers. In fact, a good fanzine - of its type. Qualified approval is the most I can offer since at bottom I can never muster a great enthusiasm for this kind of material. Too much of the sort of criticism featured in GHAS has value only on a very abstract level: it's just academic muscle-flexing. David Pringle, for instance, devotes several pages to a carefully reasoned argument on "Science Fiction as an American Popular Art", and despite the obvious intelligence of his writing the final response is a shrug and a muttered "So what?" Maybe he's made a point, maybe no. Who cares? This kind of article is irrelevant in just about every way possible: it does nothing to increase or deepen the enjoyment, appreciation or understanding of the SF reader and nothing to stimulate or improve the art of SF writing. It's neither use nor ornament. Why, in what is supposedly a forward-looking artform, is there so much grubbing about in the kipple of the past, such a determined raking over of Influences, Developments, and all the other compare-and-contrast devices of degree-mongering scholarship? All is grist to the thesis mill, I suppose. Trouble is, these mills grind slow and they grind even the chaff exceeding small, so that the resulting dusty flour bakes up into cakes so severely indigestible that even the hungriest culture-vulture might be excused for turning up his beak at them.

In the old days - when it was only illiterate engineers and the odd arty-crafty nutter who read SF - the critical scene was much simpler; a matter of self-defensive boosting of ghetto products against the sneers of the outside world. Now SF is halfway respectable and any Liberal Arts educated dolt feels safe to burble on about it. Used to be that the writers wrote, the readers devoured, and everybody got on quite happily without giving much of a fuck one way or another about Significance. Too good to last. All kind of dismal donnishness is beginning to rise up.

Gloom, gloom. I'm not against SF criticism as such; some of it - such as Aldiss' BILLION YEAR SPREE - is both entertaining and valuable to readers and authors alike. But I fear the onset of a creeping tide of pseudo-erudition. Pringle's article is well-written, and whatever one thinks of his arguments they are arguments and could be debated. But in this case both the literacy and author's intelligence are nothing more than camouflage for the essential worthlessness of the whole exercise. An exercise it remains, and having no great taste for this brand of Art for Art's sake I wish he had directed his energies elsewhere - to the practical substance instead of the academic shadow.

Tuff luck, D. West - as our editor might cry - Gotta move with the times and this critical bit is the coming scene. Sour agreement. So am I an evil old reactionary? Bit prejudiced, maybe. Hate these young layabouts with the long hair, for instance...

Not so long ago: bang thump tootle, the Bingley College Rag Procession passed the bottom of the street. Persons in bedsheets and strange headgear jumped up and down, uttering happy studentish cries. They even came round and conned me into buying a copy of the Rag Magazine. This turned out to be full of jokes about sheep. I know this is a woollens area, but what the hell - these were clean jokes. I felt like making a complaint under the Trades Descriptions Act. Asimov got it wrong: it's not violence that is the last resort of the incompetent but Bingley Coll of Ed.

Still, why is it that students - apart from the notoriously dim local nob - so often bring on this feeling of mild embarrassment tinged with irritation? It's not simply that I'm getting old; I felt much the same when I was that age myself; one reason why I declined all opportunities of further education after leaving grammar school.

I suspect the reason is that while most students are not lacking in a sense of humour - witness their readiness for all sorts of frivollings and fooleries - they are frequently lacking in any sense of absurdity. The readiness to make a fool of yourself in the cause of a joke usually is an admirable trait, indicating as it does an appreciation of the fact that appearances are of little or no importance, but student clowning owes less to such conscious realisation of the irrelevance of convention than to a self-absorption so complete that it simply blocks out the reception of any social disapproval. It's not that they don't care what people think, more that they just don't notice.

Ah - you might say - lack of self-consciousness, very good, shows they're developing free untampered personalities. Possibly. But lack of self-consciousness is by no means the same as lack of self-importance. Students will often seem, in the exuberance of the discovery of their own intelligence, to strike attitudes and adopt characters which might be called "posing" or "pretentious". Such terms, however, imply a certain measure of conscious fraud - the attempt to display yourself as something you are not - and here this does not apply.

(West)

The only deception involved is self-deception: the face has adopted the mask and the actor lives the part with no perception of the fact that he is being laughed at rather than with.

So where the fuck - you may be asking - is all this getting us? And why does it have to be done by way of student-bashing, an exercise so popular that it must be All Wrong? Well, I am attempting to describe a certain disease or affliction which has no name and therefore must proceed indirectly by way of such case histories as best display the symptoms. The malady is endemic among students, being particularly liable to attack those of youthful (or sheltered) high intelligence, and they are picked on here simply as a group well known to all and furnishing a large number of readily identifiable sufferers. And to get right down from the general to the particular, the patients at the receiving end of my experimental diagnosis are Dave Langford and his two fanzines (Kev Smith assisting on the first) DRILKJIS and TWLL DDU.

A delicate operation is called for here: making a separation between real defects and purely subjective dislike of certain stylistic mannerisms. Langford is a very good writer; so good, in fact, that he (or any of his admirers) could probably destroy all my arguments with the counter assertion that the "faults" I claim to see are actually subtle strokes of an exquisite irony laid on so finely as to escape my coarse perceptions. It may even be true. But to set doubt aside; Langford's weakness is his constant consciousness of his own talents, unsoftened by any appreciation of the fact that not all his audience may share such undergraduate delight in cleverness for its own sake. His affectations of whimsicality - "The mighty engines surge with power... the fabric of space is rent ruthlessly asunder... and Fred - C registration, MOT (failed) - is whistling up the M6" - continually jar and irritate. Such archness is very well in small doses, but like "camp" (thankfully a jargon that seems to have fallen out of fashion) it becomes tiresome when persisted in. Langford doesn't keep it up continually - God forbid anyone should - but there are enough spasms, twitches and bubblings of this near-tweecness to diminish the effectiveness of the genuinely witty passages. He indulges too frequently in the peculiarly juvenile antics of the hearty intellectual: the pseudodramatic brow-clutchings and exclamations, the assumption that any old allusion can be made funny by emphasis on the quotation marks. There's the impression he's always ready to shout "Aha!" or maybe "Zounds sirrah, he cried," before going into some burbling routine of jocosity replete with references to obscure learning. Silly-clever, in fact.

The first issue of TWLL DDU is probably the worst. Here the fanzine's title goes unexplained. Instead we get: "Next step was a title. Innate prudery restrained me from using twll d'un, a Welsh idiom which parallels a French one; the final title is science-fictional enough, with due and necessary apologies to (I think) the Leeds U clubzine."

Real cute, that, managing a double size portion of foreign language snobbery complete with added hint that he's so well in there he even knows the more obscure dirty jokes. Only surprise is he doesn't throw in a Gaelic equivalent as well.

Look, Langford, any more of this real hot shit and come the next Maricon Linwood and I will sure as oeufs are oeufs back you into a dark corner where after a brief discontinuity you will be not merely blackballed but no longer intellectual con cojones. Then we drape a placard inscribed LHOOQ round your neck and throw you onto a burning pile of whichever part of the BSFA library

is waiting to be auctioned off.

And that's what you get for being the best new fan writer since Raleigh Evans Multog. Unless, that is, you can produce something original that doesn't lean so heavily on the twin crutches of self-defensive parody and satire and the inward-looking eye of intellectual narcissism.

Langford also appears in K, a publication that may be supposed to take its title from the Kitten group, though after reading the first issue Kafka seems to have equal claims. It's a good fanzine - in some ways - with a varied collection of contributions from Ben Indick, Mae Strelkov, Syd Bounds, Terry Jeeves, Graham Boak and Dave Cockfield. Cockfield springs a real surprise here with a quite readable con report. All hopes for ATROPOS are not lost, it seems. Or maybe it was the result of editing? But surely not; the editorial presence shown in K is so bizarre that one can only attribute the quality of most of the contents to happy chance. Dave Rowe in particular displays such a tenuous grasp on reason, reality, logic and (while I'm at it) grammar, spelling and punctuation that it seems inconceivable he could ever rise to such heights as the editing (in any constructive sense) of anyone else's work. This impression is confirmed by the news that with the departure of co-editor Bernie Peek K will have to fold. Quite obviously, while it's Rowe who does the grandstanding in the letter column and elsewhere it's Peek who does the real work and gets it all together.

But here's the man himself in all his remarkable splendour, scratching his head over an unforeseen reaction from Pat Charnock: "pat has somehow got herself worked up over the 'British Fan Editors Award' - parody, where as the covering letter from Gray quiet clearly states 'should you discover the slightest tinge of animosity then pass it on quickly, for it isn't aimed at you.' No one's getting at her or Wrinkled Shrew, that should be perfectly clear..."

Now. The problem is: should one accept that Rowe is really the complete half-wit he appears, or is it possible that for strange purposes of his own he is slightly exaggerating his mental deficiencies? To take the conscientious public servant line, I suppose one must attempt to lighten his darkness by explaining - as to bears of very little brain or to single celled organisms of no brain at all - that if you slap someone across the face then assure them that if they find the slightest tinge of animosity they should pass it on immediately as it wasn't meant for them.... well, they will not always be very happy with the situation, or very much inclined to accept subsequent exclamations of innocent surprise and regret for injuries suffered.

Here's another sample (all strictly sic) of the Rowe apologia: "Grays views and criticisms comes from an honest care and regard for fandom, if Gray ever noticed a point of disagreement he'd usually argue it out directly with the person involved either in person or by post, and not by an adolescent bad-mouthing campaign. He has always been more interested in seeing fen produce

WHY DIDN'T THEY
GIVE ME SOME STICKS
OF ROCK?



(West)

better fnzs and making helpful criticisms and if any of the fnzs I've been involved with have ever come to anything, it is because he impressed that on me, at a time when other so-called reviewers were either content with any crud that came along or in search of the bigger 'better' sarcasm."

Come back Bernie, all is forgiven.

Though it must be admitted, he really knows how to tickle your fancy, does our Dave. That bit about "helpful criticisms", for instance. And then the virtuous rejection of the "bigger 'better' sarcasm!.. In case you didn't realise, this is Graham Boak he's talking about. The quotation, in fact, is part of a report on Mancon, an occasion on which other reporters than Rowe might have said that Boak was not very noticeably eager to "argue it out directly". It might even have been added that he'd apparently made the discovery that both "adolescent badmouthing" and the search for the "bigger 'better' sarcasm" were quite fun things (from a safe distance) once you got going. And since he got going he's not shown much sign of stopping...

All this folderol, of course, has its beginnings in the ructions surrounding last year's Nova Award. The organisation of the Nova suggests - at first - some slightly modernised version of the Conservative Party's mysterious method of choosing a leader in earlier days. "Soundings" are taken, there are "consultations" and finally the number one is announced by the "Magic Circle". But, of course, there is some sort of vote, so perhaps the American system with all its emphasis on backroom deals, power-broking and general fixing would be a more appropriate parallel. On the one hand we have the forces of Righteousness: Graham 'Goldwater' Boak (In Your Heart You Know He's Right - In Your Guts You Know He's Nuts) and Dave 'McCarthy' Rowe (Chairman, Un-Fannish Activities Committee) and on the other hand a rabble of Rats screaming for dope, sex, and the blood of Good Citizens. Yes, folks, your duty is plain: never mind the fanzines, just follow Boak. Think what a great Chief Executive he'd make...

I mean, unlike Gerald Ford, Graham Boak can not only fart, walk and chew gum all at the same time but he can do all these things on only one foot, the other being firmly fixed in his mouth. However, as he hops erratically on his way, sucking with pious self-satisfaction on a size fifteen fandom bovver boot, a message of doubt and disquietude may even now be swinging slowly from branch to branch of the treelike ganglia of the Boak central nervous system.

Why is it - as both the US president and GB must dimly wonder from time to time - that virtue is not rewarded? Why don't the Good Guys win? Why do people have to keep arguing? Why can't they see the One True Way?

Hardly realistic, I know, to set Gerald Ford and Graham Boak side by side. The first has the potential of bringing about the destruction of a large part of the earth while the second is capable of doing about as much damage as a house-fly banging its head against a windowpane. Still, the insect whine of a local Boak impinges on the consciousness as much as the elephantine but distant galumphings of a US president. And the bringing together of this Lewis Carroll duo is suggested quite irresistably by their similarities and their contrasts.

Both are intellectual mediocrities who profess a staunch determination to uphold certain Moral Values and both - despite experience - display the same

tactical incompetence in their politicking. The chief difference between the two is in the degree of their innocence. For all his decades in the game Ford strikes one as too dumb to be devious, too transparent to be tricky. Sententious though he may sound, he means what he says. The only problem is picking the occasions on which what he says means anything at all. Boak, on the other hand, is marginally less incomprehensible but very much more disingenuous. A Pax Romana pacifist and a moralist of the Pecksniffian school, he is also a polemicist who takes care to couch his insults in such terms that he can afterwards issue injured-innocent denials of any conscious evil intent.

CYNIC 9 is the latest Boak publication. There's a clever cover by Harry Bell showing - appropriately enough - a bugeyed Don Quixote tilting at a windmill-like spacecraft, an interesting letter column and some excellent fanzine reviews from Jim Linwood. There's also the editorial writings - interesting in quite a different way. Like K, it's a good fanzine in some respects; like K again, its editor seems to be a visitor from another dimension; a strange continuum where facts and logic are wholly subjective and not of this earth. Such dottiness might be almost endearing in other circumstances - after all, there are many quite amiable fans who have difficulty with the ordered presentation of their thoughts - but since the Boakian folly is combined with one of the most astonishing displays of self-revealing nastiness ever seen in a fanzine the humorous aspects of the case seem rather insignificant.

Whereas Dave Rowe is merely a noisy, clumsy, excitable puppy yapping furiously at his rubber bone of contention, the craziness of Boak is deeper and more serious. Plainly he has long ago passed the stage of wondering whether he's making a fool of himself; possibly he even intensifies his assault on the processes of reason in the hope that the display of such a shambles of false syllogism and specious induction will stupify his audience into a state of unresisting catatonia and enable him to carry off his lunacies by default. Certainly a substantial section of fandom seems to have been stunned into mute acquiescence. There's such a horrid fascination in the obscenely naked spectacle of Boak squeezing the last unctuous dribblings of weak venom from flaccid reasoning and boneless logic that one feels slightly embarrassed about interrupting. It's like a capsized, half-squashed dung beetle, wallowing in its own noxious emissions as it tries to find a footing; the thing can do one no harm - perhaps only follows the dictates of its residual dirt-picking instincts - and although its continued existence seems a blot on the face of the earth the thought of the stench and the messiness its destruction would release is so distasteful that it seems best to pretend it hasn't been seen.

Unfortunately, it's not likely that Boak will go away if you ignore him. Instead he will continue his self-appointed task of stirring the shit before spreading it far and wide. So whether you regard him as a pusillanimous little prick (should you discover the slightest tinge of animosity here, pass it on quickly, it isn't meant for you) or just plain deranged, it seems he has to be paid some slight attention, if only for prophylactic purposes.

CYNIC 9 (which should have been subtitled TABLETS FROM SINAI or PILLS TO PURGE FANDOM) has Boak flailing about with his halo in a manner malicious yet inept, raising a few lumps here and there with the flat of his weapon but mostly shedding blood freely from a multitude of self-inflicted wounds. This wrongway kamikaze attack is directed at numerous targets: various con organisers ("And this shower are hoping to organise Britain's next World Con?"),

(West)

Pat Charnock ("After all, no-one wanted to insult Pat"), Ratfandom in general - Malcolm Edwards in particular - and a selection of others along the way. The Boakian method of sneaking up on a logical argument by way of prejudiced fancy masquerading as fact and non sequiturs dressed up as reason almost defies description. Truly he may claim to be the founder of a new super-science (the Art of Seeing Things Only One Way) and the discoverer of a marvellous philosophical principle (I Think, Therefore It Is So) that supercedes anything fudgy-duddy old Descartes ever dreamed up. Logic there is, of a kind, but it's the kind that occurs in proofs of the "all cats have tails - grey cats have tails - therefore all cats are gray" variety. Of sense, common or uncommon, there is none whatsoever. Here's a sample:

"To change the subject slightly I'd like to draw your attention to Malcolm Edwards' comment on WS in MAYA 10.

"It seems to be labelled outside London as a rather in-group Ratfan zine, which is a vast injustice that I hope will evaporate in short order."

He means, in fact, outside Ratfandom. I know several London fans who think it a Ratfan zine. What he is really saying is that everybody in fandom is out of step except for Ratfandom. Quite why it should be led to think of it as a Ratfan zine I don't know - Ratzines seem pretty good to me, as a general rule.

His comment set me thinking of the general British attitude to Londoners. Namely that they are too big for their own boots, to say nothing of their hat-size. Unfriendly, clannish, snobbish, sneering and ignorant of the realities of the country. It is all true of course..."

Of course, of course. This is the Boak technique; wrap your insults round something ("Ratzines seem pretty good to me") that can be pointed to afterwards as proof of innocence. It's an objectionable method and mostly used - as here - on arguments that aren't even remotely tenable. Hardly a case of everybody in fandom being out of step except for the Rats, more everybody in fandom being out of step except for Graham Boak - the highminded Brutus, willing to wound and yet afraid to strike without first preparing a good set of excuses.

What a tiresome fellow he is. What a godawful pain in the arse. Long, long ago there was some legitimate reason for complaint; the rather blundering manner in which last year's Nova Award was presented. Long, long ago such criticisms as were necessary should have been - were - made and the matter dropped. Boaks claim to any sympathy for his sense-of-outraged-dummy melted away as soon as it became obvious that his "issues" were merely pretexts for a general meanminded attack on almost everybody in reach. And now he goes on - and on - and on.

Provides plenty of material for comment, I suppose. Too much. In fact, in the end it just becomes wearisome, like trying to have an argument with a very small, ill-behaved and rather stupid child; you're not likely to lose in the ordinary sense of having your points proved wrong, but you may retire defeated by the sheer impossibility of communication.

So who's the villain? The real genuine deepdyed villain of the piece? The Nova Award itself, of course, the great fannish non event of the year that wastes so much time and energy and causes so much ill-feeling. Most such awards are slightly silly; fannish awards are positively farcical. The Nova and the FAAN must surely have had their rules framed by the sanest of people since it seems unlikely that there can be two different bodies capable of

(West)

contriving such amazingly foolish auto-destruct mechanisms. Strange Powers at work. Almost makes you believe in the Secret Masters of Fandom. Trouble is, it looks like they're a bunch of idiots.

Perhaps it's significant that the Nova comes from Birmingham, an area that despite the size of its fan group hasn't produced much in the way of fanzines for several years. One wonders why, if they never bother with the bloody things, they go to the trouble of promoting an award? Guilty conscience?

There's the voice of prejudice for you. Thanks to geographical isolation I'm a fanzine fan rather than a socialiser and can scarcely be brought to regard those who take little or no part in fanzine activities as being fans at all.

And after that, I suppose theoretically I should fall on the one Brummie zine currently available - Kevin Easthope's LOGO - with cries of joyful appreciation. Unfortunately it's not a very good fanzine. All credit to Easthope for publishing it at all in the face of the apathy that seems to surround him, but not much credit for the contents. Apart from a Bob Shaw article (reprinted) LOGO bears a strong resemblance to a sixties PADS zine. There's the same fanzine mailing comments, random filler artwork, rambling letter column, the same editorial gibberings with the slightly edgy over-jokey air of inanity that once seemed so prevalent. Some of the humour does work, but more often it just disappears in a welter of forced daftness.

There is one genuinely and appealingly silly idea: a trade boycott of "secret" fanzines. Apparently it hasn't yet occurred to Easthope that the restricted circulation of "secret" zines probably means no great loss for those excluded since work which can't be shown to anyone but your old buddies is hardly likely to be worth reading.

One fanzine which is, if not secret, selective, is Lisa Conesa's ZIMRI. Kevin Easthope isn't the only one complaining about ZIMRI's apparent reluctance to trade: grumblings have been heard from several directions. Perhaps the editor values her own product more highly than what she's offered in return - justifiable, to some extent, since ZIMRI obviously calls for much more than the usual expenditure of time and money. All the same, it does seem a little excessive to ask contributors to enclose a stamped addressed envelope with their offerings. Either delusions of grandeur are setting in or this is a clever ploy to indicate how everyone is panting to appear in ZIMRI's pages - competition so fierce that only one out of ten is granted the supreme accolade of acceptance. Hold out for your full rights, boys, and insist on a properly printed rejection slip as well.

Anyway, setting aside the minor editorial vagaries, ZIMRI 8 is an attractive and enjoyable zine. With the exception of two excruciatingly coy vignettes from Edward Lutzyn (which may be to the taste of others) the artwork is good to excellent. The written contributions (including most of the letters) are uniformly good, even the book reviews and some of the poetry being not without interest. (That's the nearest a book review and poetry hater can get to a compliment without doing himself an injury.) The only overall defect is a certain lack of editorial presence: there's the air of a rather anonymous compilation rather than a sense of some strong personality pervading and drawing together the contents into a unified whole. Despite the duplicating, it feels like a litho zine.

EGLADIL, on the other hand, actually is a litho zine but manages to look

(West)

like rather spotty duplicating. Fannish dedication, I suppose. The fact that the artwork (mostly well executed but mostly derivative) comes out perfectly indicates that the fault lies with the editors rather than the printer. Other faults that lie with the editors are a predilection for gushing praise, exclamation marks and the use of such forms of address - apparently in all seriousness - as "dear reader". There's also a letter column that prints extracts from seven letters, only two of which are more than four lines, and then lists over forty WAHFs. Either they get some pretty dumb mail or they aren't using much discrimination. (Alternatively they're keeping the lid on a whole lot of rude remarks.) Interesting to note that about half the names were unfamiliar. You in your small corner - I in mine. This is Fantasy Fandom, rather than SF.

Myself, I stick to liking imaginative literature - which means almost anything not written to a tired old formula. Genre labelling is a critical convenience and a publishing sales device; in every other way such classifying are merely building or maintaining the ghetto walls. Ballantine's Adult Fantasy series (lauded in EGL/DIE may have been a good thing for Ballantine, but otherwise it's simply keeping Fantasy in the same grubby niche that SF occupied forty years ago. Instead of attempting something new, aspiring Fantasy writers produce purple pastiches of yesterday's gimcrack rubbish. The real originals are produced in spite of the prevailing trend rather than as a linear development. Ah, be thankful you're a Science Fiction fan. At least our boys have got round to discovering such new-fangled novelties as James Joyce and even the (now rather ancient and faded) Modern Movement.

You can tell, can't you, that I don't really go for this fey faerie fold-erol too much. Or even leather jockstrappers like Berk the Barbarian, Conan the Conk (Portnoy should have had REH's problems - let him complain then) and all the other boys with the musclebound brains.

No, much more in my line is something in the Gothic style: blood, terror, death, darkness, destruction, decay, gloom, horror, fear and loathing... Yes, give me some of that good old Pickersgill any day.

STOP BREAKING DOWN has been left till last in these reviews in hopes that a sudden inspiration stike would provide something brilliantly nasty to say about its editor. Nothing turned up, so I have to fall back on the usual line of guff about what a cruel, sadistic, ruthless monster of a faned he is; a sort of fannish King Kong with a taste for creating widows and orphans then telling them in great detail just where it was their old man went wrong. Pity it's mostly mythology; you can get some real wordage out of lines like that.

Anyway, the London loup garou has been behaving like some demented fannish whiz kid recently, zooming out three substantial issues at intervals of only six weeks or so. Anybody would think from such lunatic enthusiasm that he'd just discovered fanzines for the first time. On the other hand, looking at the contents, you couldn't maintain that opinion for very long. Such expert arm-twisting of contributors argues long experience.

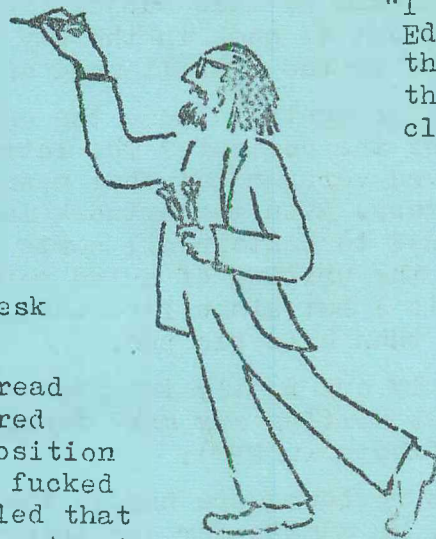
These days it's music, music, all the time in fanzines: not just Dylan (who used to be a strong favourite in the sixties) but Space Rock and all kinds of LP synthetics I've never heard of. Still, I know I'm always a few years behind the times - it took a while before I caught on that Johnny Cash wasn't the change from a Durex machine - but SBD really brings it home. Here's a Harry Bell cover with an instrument I've never even seen before. At first glance it could be a guitar, but whoever heard of a guitar with four frets, an ultra-

(West)

short fingerboard, ten strings, the sound hole in the wrong half of the body, two bridges and a top made of wood about four inches thick? Maybe the guy that's carrying it - who looks like the result of miscegenation between Walt Disney and R. Crumb - built it himself to take account of his three finger hands. Nice one, Harry.

Trouble with Pickersgill is he writes these fanzine reviews. They're detailed, they're thorough, they're exhaustive, they're authoratitive and frequently they're definitive. They drive other fanzine reviewers nuts. How can you avoid coming over as a plagiarising yes-man when you're following in Pickersgill's footsteps? You're reduced to picking at nuances, detecting near-invisible and probably unintentional subtleties, or being plain contrary and taking an opposing position just for the hell of it. Maybe it's good for the art, but it certainly makes your brain hurt. Hence the desire to zonk him over the hairy head with some ultimate crusher of savage counter-witticism. It's too much, it really is.

Also too much is the Malcolm Edwards' conreport in SBD 3. Inbetween eulogies of famous writers (Shaw, Silverberg, Holdstock, etc) and criticisms of the Mancon committee he refers to me in terms of such glowing disrespect that I had to go lie down for half an hour. It's not fair, deliberately confusing me with my grandfather Herbert West. And the implication that I resemble something kept in a jar on H.P. Lovecraft's desk is not appreciated.



"I could hit Edwards between the eyes if they weren't so close together."

The real sting, though, came when I read the back page news miscellany and discovered that Little Mal is shortly to take up a position with V. Gollancz Ltd. Now that really has fucked up my plans completely. I had it all settled that Gollancz were to have first chance of my next potential bestseller. But now it looks like by the time I have it written this little creep will be Managing Director. So I'll have to send it to Robert Hale after all. Proof, if ever there was, that the road to Hale is paved with good intentions.

Sod off, Edwards, you nameless brachycephalic spawn of mephitic primordial slime-pits. Any more crap like that and I'll have the Austral League membership withdrawn. I got influential friends too, see?

To turn to something less distasteful: SBD also has an Overseas Editor (presumably allowed to lick the stamps for the three copies bound for foreign parts) in the person of Simone Walsh. Her column rambles over various subjects: the difficulties of contending with a perfectionist editor, the deficiencies of various con sites and the impossibility of allegedly male chauvinist con organisers such as P. Weston, who ought to be wary of making jokes about subjects on which his own position is nowhere clearly stated. There's also a poem which - apart from its own merits - has value as the inspiration for a brilliant parody in Bryn Fortey's pastiche-zine SUPER CRUD 69. Fortey's position on feminism etc is by no means clear, either, but that's irrelevant since he manages to be genuinely funny without sounding offensively patronising.

(West)

Simone does at least have a couple of advantages in dealing with the cut and thrust of editorial Pickersgill: she's on the spot to protest in person, and - even if the protests fail - she knows that the alterations will be executed with reasonable competence. Ann West (wife of D. West) has had neither of these consolations, having been dealing long-distance with the notorious ("an editor must edit") Brian Parker of PARKERS PATCH.

PP3 arrived the other day, hot from the presses. Hot indeed, since the high temperatures accompanying its fevered production had caused the ink to behave like rancid butter mixed with soot and the stencils to acquire the characteristics of well-crumpled randomly perforated used fish and chip paper. Still, that wouldn't have mattered, but for the fact the old editorial meddling urge had struck again. The Ann West material originally consisted of three letters, here printed as one article without any explanation or comment on origin and with a number of cuts made without the knowledge or subsequent approval of the writer. It's a readable piece - apart from a certain lack of punctuation - and it might be argued that the cuts have made it hang together better, but I feel that any editorial alterations to such casually produced work should be made subject to the approval of the contributor. The cuts may not amount to much in the way of wordage, but they do make a significant difference to the overall mood and apparent intentions.

Anyway, if he wants to come the editing bit, why doesn't he do something about the rest of the contents? The letter column for instance is supposed to be a new improved version but that means nothing more than that it's a different sort of mess. Even the artwork isn't very interesting. There's a cover which is supposed to contain all sorts of subtleties (he's made arrangements with Kettle for the writing of a loc going into detailed ecstasies on how clever it all is) but since I've forgotten what these are I can't say it looks like much more than a feeble pun.

There's only one really important point about PARKERS PATCH: it's finished me off for writing any more fanzine reviews. What else, after a loc like this (on my efforts in PP2):

"D. West's reviews were hardly the work of someone closely in touch with fanzine fandom. He admits for one thing that he hardly ever reads an American fanzine. I don't think anyone should attempt extended reviewing of even British fanzines unless he can see them, not in isolation, but as part of the whole field."

That was a quotation. From Darroll Pardoe. I mean, I'm not making it up or anything.

Sigh. And I did think - for a moment - that I could get away with sticking to thirty or forty British fanzines and not bothering too much about the several hundred American publications. Though really I should have read them all, and also got some background on the Canadians, the Australians, the Germans, the Swedes, the French, the Belgians and the Japanese. But there you are - I'm just naturally a slacker. I figured twenty years of SF and a dozen or so years reading a few hundred different fanzines might allow me an outside chance to sneak in. Why didn't somebody tell me that it takes more than such a brief and superficial acquaintance to make a real fanzine reviewer?

Of course, I was doomed from the start. Apart from an appalling lack of knowledge of Japanese fanzines, I've never been able to maintain the proper

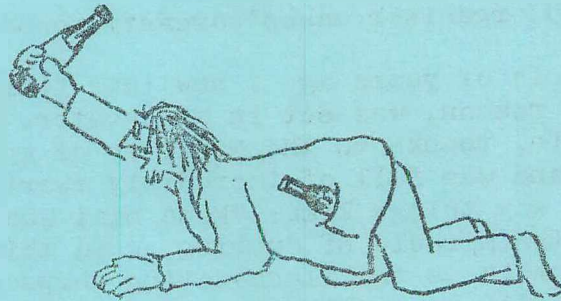
respect for those who talk of "Roscoe" and "Chu" and "Trufaanishness". And since the exalted beings who dwell in fandom's topmost ivory towers naturally believe in the Tooth Fairy, they are likely to visit the awful doom of their disapproval on all those who are less than wholly reverent.

So this looks like an appropriate moment to retire from the scene, totally cowed, crushed, humiliated and defeated, my hopes blasted, my ambitions brought low, my self-esteem reduced to zero. I am not worthy of this sacred trust. My footsteps falter - my vision dims - others must seize the torch from my palsied hand - the race is not to the swift, nor yet the battle to the strong... Insults I can take, indifference I can endure, but against the Olympian gormlessness of Darroll Pardoe there is no defence.

Better luck next time.

D.WEST

"Have some sake Darroll,
ol' buddy. Sorry
I can't offer you one
of their fanzines."



* *

I KNOW WHAT I LIKE -- good stuff since last issue.

Harry Bell's cartoons in MOTA 18: cartoon strip in ONE-OFF 3: David Bridges in ONE-OFF 1: Harry Bell's cover for Goblin's Grotto 3: Richard McMahon on dentists INVERTED EAR TRUMPET 4: Peter Weston's Slice Of Life MAYA 11: Bob Shaw's Return Of The Backyard Spaceship ibid: Ian Maule's letter ibid: Mike Glicksohn's The Best Is Yet To Come XENIUM 2.6: Harry Bell's cover for CYNIC 9: Jim Linwood's The Inner Focus and Harry's cartoons for same ibid: Harry's Early Warner System cartoon XENIUM 2.6: Harry Turner's cover ZIMRI 8: Lisa Conesa's cat and rat cartoons ibid: Rob Holdstock's Two Letters and A Cry Of Despair ibid: Malcolm Edward's con report STOP BREAKING DOWN 3: Greg Pickersgill's fanzine reviews STOP BREAKING DOWN 2 & 3: Simone Walsh's ALTERNATE TITLE S.B.D.2: Harry Bell's cover S.B.D. 3: Grant Canfield's The Report From Point 30 and cartoons MOTA 17: Dave Langford on getting married TWLL-DDU 3: Bryn Fortey's SUPER CRUD 69: Dave Langford on Mancon TWLL-DDU 2: D. West's Daisnaid: Dave Locke in Scientifriction 5: Mike Glicksohn in MAYA 10:

Thank you all for those. That's the stuff I can remember. There's a lot more I enjoyed but none of it stuck. There was a lot I wasn't wild about as well. Some of that stuck but I'll avoid mentioning it. Very subjective. Not your actual crit. Still, I really am grateful for all the fanzines I get, more or less. Someone else's list could well not contain anything in mine. So it goes.

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The first cretin to say he didn't get a copy of ibid gets a lifetime subscription to ATROPOS. Aaaagh, I've been rude to Dave Cockfield. He's huger than me. A lifetime subscription to -- to -- er -- umm--- oh shit what's more tedious than ATROPOS. GOBLIN'S GROTTO? NESFIG NEWSLETTER? MAYA? Think fast kid, the overweight vengeance of the Gannets is pretty bloody nigh. Too late

John Brosnan describes himself as, "a human being in name only. I was the only boy at school to get an A at shit-stirring. Since then I've been a professional drunkard, an amateur drunkard, a drunkard with and without portfolio a short order drunkard, but now I'm a piss-artist -- and drunkard." We hope that when Mr Brosnan remembers where he left his typing fingers he will write something good for us. Until then --

JOHN BROSNAN

THE LIVING DEAD AT MANCHESTER MORGUE
or

A Seacon 75 organiser makes sarcastic comments about Mancon 76.

A couple of years ago I saw this Italian horror film which, for some inexplicable reason, was set in Manchester. It was about these corpses who come back to life, thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture who had cocked up an experiment, and was full of incredibly swarthy-looking policemen who I kept expecting to say things like: "Mama mia! Whatsa goin' onna here?" but instead, thanks to the miracle of dubbing, said things like: "Hello, hello, what's going on here?" as the flesh-eating corpses ambled towards them. It wasn't a bad horror-film as Italian-made horror films set in Manchester go but not the sort of cinematic experience that lingers in your mind. I'd forgotten all about it until I attended this year's convention in Manchester and then it all came flooding back. There were several parallels between the two events. Both, for example, took place in Manchester and both involved a lot of vacant-looking zombies that staggered around and frequently fell over. The major difference was that the film only lasted about two hours and the convention lasted over four days.

Peering back through the murky mists of my increasingly defective memory the first highlight of the con that presents itself occurred during the ride up to Manchester in Brian 'Pigpen' Parker's car. In an attempt to block out the appalling singing that was coming from the car's other occupants (they included good ol' Peter Roberts, and Piggott and Maule the well-known comedy team) I was staring hard at the passing scenery when all of a sudden - as we writers say - a giant, penis-like shape reared up above the trees. "Gee, look at the giant penis-like shape rearing up above the trees," I said. The next moment it was like being in the middle of a scene from Bullitt with cars hurtling all over the place in front of us while Parker manfully wrestled with the wheel screaming, "I don't want to die!" I the back seat Roberts was yelling, "Bury me deep in Cornwall, boys!" But by some miracle we escaped death and destruction and continued on our way. "I've gone all shaky," said Parker shakily. "You're shaky," I said. "Someone hand me a box of kleenex and some new underpants."

"It was all your fault," said Parker. "You shouldn't have told me to look at phallic symbols." "You're the driver. You're not supposed to look at phallic symbols."



Rearing giant penis-like shapes can make you blind.

"It wasn't a phallic symbol, it was a water tower," said Piggott with the authority only he can muster." At least it stopped the singing.

The next moment of shock/horror occurred when we arrived in Manchester and got our first look at the con site. It looked like an advert for The Towering Inferno. All it lacked was a crown of fire, a couple of circling helicopters and Steve McQueen clambering down the side with an aging film star under each arm. "We're all going to burn to death," I said quietly.

But despite my worst fears I didn't end up on the top floor of the tower next to a defective fire escape but on the ground floor of another building only a few miles from the con hall and bar. The main attraction of my room, apart from a bed with a wooden mattress, was the fact that I could stare out of my window and see Peter Roberts. I spent many a happy hour watching Roberts getting up in the mornings. It was a fascinating experience - I'd never seen a truss with a bunny motif before. Roberts, through some incredible cock-up on the committee's part, had been made 'Pan Guest Of Honour' and it was quite sickening to see the way he soaked up all that misplaced adulation. I tried to put matters right by informing a few of the people queuing up to kiss the hem of his robe that he was a notorious paedophile and liked eating live swallows but it was all in vain.

Another guest of honour, but one who received less coverage in the con booklet than Roberts, was Bob Silverberg. He wandered about the convention looking more and more dazed. My first sight of him was on the Friday morning when I was walking across one of the quadrangles towards the breakfast room. Silverberg, and his wife, had obviously just finished their English breakfast, college-style, and he looked as if he had just been hit in the bollocks with a damp kipper. He probably had been, come to think of it - or he still hadn't recovered from the 500 mile drive from the airport in Skelton's car.

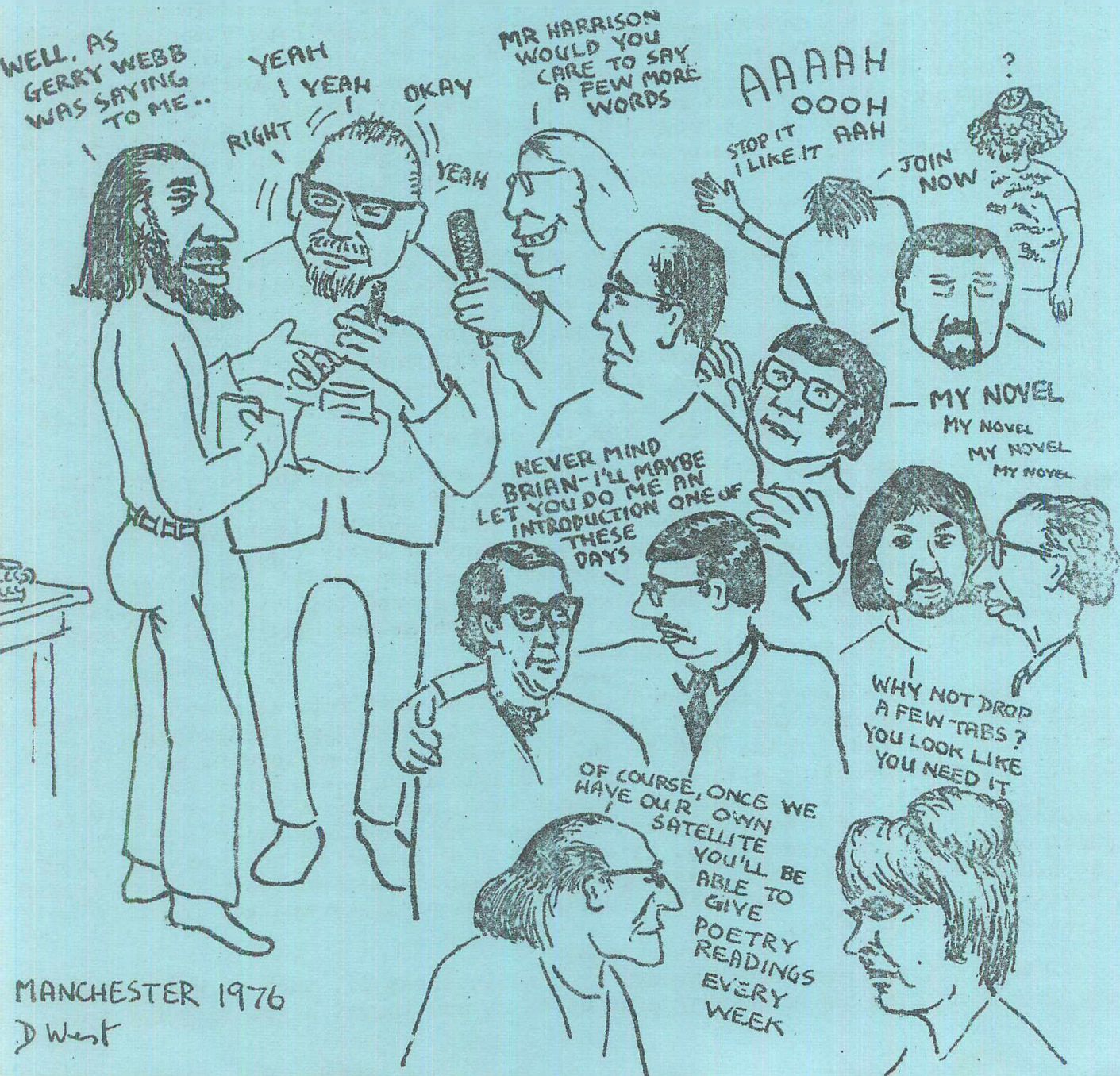
One of my personal highlights of the con was meeting the legendary Walt Willis. As I sat around a table in the company of such legendary personalities as Willis, Roberts, Maule, Weston and, of course, myself, it occurred to me that there probably hadn't been such a gathering of witty talent since the days of the Algonquin Hotel's famous Round Table when people like George Kaufman, Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker all sat around being witty and pithy. Unfortunately Willis spoke so softly I couldn't hear one witty word he said but it was still a very memorable occasion.

I suppose the 'great fannish football match' must rate as some kind of highlight, if only for the sight of a major part of British fandom being booted from one side of the park to the other by a lone policeman. The match itself was disappointing - there wasn't a single injury - and somewhat one-sided. It didn't seem fair that the Gannet team, who were all fat and flabby, should be up against a team that consisted of such slim and svelte players (with one overweight exception). It was also embarrassing to see the captain of the London team, Little Mal, kissing and hugging his team-mates at the slightest excuse. There are times and places for that sort of thing and the football field is not among them.

Other odd moments drift through my consciousness ... such as when an old man with long hair and a handbag came up to me and thrust a greasy pound note

(Brosnan)

in my hand. "Want to earn some money?" he asked. "Not that badly," I replied coldly. "You don't understand," he said then pulled a T-shirt out of a paper bag. "I'll give you the quid if you agree to wear this." I looked at the garment suspiciously. "Why," I asked, "do you want me to walk around wearing a T-shirt with the words THE SPICE MACHINE stencilled on it? Are you advertising a restaurant or something?" The old man went pale. He stared at the shirt with wild eyes. "Oh bugger, they've got the spelling wrong!" He then tottered away and I didn't see him again after that. They seem to be letting just anyone into cons these days.



MANCHESTER 1976

D West

(Brosnan)

Another odd moment was when I was speaking to Julie Davis, ex-editor of the greatest sf magazine of all time, bar none. For some reason she appeared to be travelling incognito and was wearing dark glasses and a hat with a very low brim. "Gee," I said, "If the people here knew who you were you'd enjoy a great deal of much-deserved acclaim." But to my surprise she reached down, grabbed a handful of my T-shirt (advertising THE HORROR PEOPLE - a book available from MacDonald and Jane's for a mere £6.50) and lifted me off my feet. "Listen, you little shit," she snarled, "you breathe a word to anyone as to who I am and I'll shove your teeth so far down your throat you'll need to shove a toothbrush up your freckle to clean them." And I'd always thought she was proud of SF MONTHLY. I know I was.

The sight of the film committee struggling up the stairs with what appeared to be an old gas stove was an unusual one. "What is that thing?" I asked. "It's a 35mm projector," was the reply. "We're going to use it to show The Man Who Fell To Earth." I then asked where the second projector was. "We've only got one," they told me. I made my excuses and left. The subsequent screening of Roeg's doubtful masterpiece was as dire as I had anticipated. The 2 hour 20 minute epic had about five intervals, thanks to reel changes, and, because of a lack of sufficient light, appeared to have been filmed in Murk-O-Vision. If the ManCon committee pay me a suitable sum I will not mention this atrocity to Roeg the next time I see him.

One film that was shown during the con was of last year's Season ... and it brought tears to my eyes. The sight of that lavish hotel was too much to take when compared with the grotty, crowded student bar around which ManCon revolved. As I remarked to someone later; "The past is like a foreign country. They did things differently there ... and a hell of a lot better."

JOHN BROSNAN

RESULTS OF THE 1975-1976 TRUE RAT FREDERIK POLL

1. Frederik Pohl -- a good winner. Zillions of points. Look out for this one. Should do well.
2. Fredric Brown -- a good second. Quite a lot of points. Look out for this one some of the time. Should do fairly well.
3. Fred Hoyle -- a good third. Some points. Look out for this one if you're desperate. Might not do extremely badly.
4. Frederik Poll Charnock -- because of the uncertainty of the judges as to the existence of this entrant it comes last. In a sillier year it might well have won. So it goes. Absolutely no points. Oh, all right then, one.

Two people more than last year voted in this, the first British Frederik Poll. In the event of anyone else voting Peter Roberts had the casting vote.

"Policemen run in our family," -- MAN OF CONVICTION.

This is a Secret Fanzine

so

SOD OFF

LETTER COLUMN - the column that prints the letters.

Brian Robinson, 9 Linwood Grove, Manchester, M12 4QH.

Presdorf showed me True Rat.

Fuckin' far out - elbow my left tit, baby!

((((Those among you who wonder what makes Manchester the intellectual centre of British fandom need wonder no more. This was the first letter I received and it really touched me. Right here.)))

Vernon Brown, Aston University, Gosta Green, Birmingham, B4 7ET

The labelled skeleton on the cover has saved me from a potentially embarrassing position. Before TR7 if someone had asked me why animals struggle and bite if pulled away from their rooting in the food dish I would have answered that they were angry at being deprived of their food. Now, of course, I realise that they are angry at being interrupted in the middle of an orgy of self-abuse.

Uncle Graham Charnock, 70 Ledbury Road, London, W 11.

I figure I don't really owe you a letter of comment since I helped you sit around reading letters to Shrew while somebody else duplicated your fanzine, but I'm sending you one, if only to teach Peter Roberts some kind of moral lesson. In fact only to teach Peter Roberts some kind of moral lesson. Peter, as you know, feels that when a fella duplicates a chum's fanzine it discharges any duty to write a letter of comment to a chum's fanzine. In fact Peter would really rather not write anything at all, but duplicate everybody's fanzines, menus, change-of-address notices and invitations to parties, and thus end up ruling the world. I'm sure. The fact remains that since we Charnox became self-sufficient duplicators I still haven't had a letter from Peter. I'd strike him off my mailing list if I hadn't pinched the mailing list from him in the first place. Oh poot.

Well, what can one say about Mancon Five that doesn't sound like a lonely nun playing with herself. I think the highlight was the fannish programme organized along the line of Seacon's. And what a great fanzine Atacon turned out to be. Don West calls this plonking sarcasm.

Anyway, good fanzine Roy. I reckon between us Me, You, Gregg and maybe Don West could take over fandom, in that order, leaving a tiny corner of the habitable universe to John Hall. Pet sends her regards and we have taught the cats to teleport their turds. Watch out.

P.S. Here's one for the true rockfans: In what song by what person does the immortal line "Put my socks in a cedar box and get them out of here" appear?

((((Were they Michelangelo's dogskin socks? I could understand it if they were Michelangelo's dogskin socks.

Fortunately you trained your cats well and the turds have been landing in Robert's personalised litter tray. He's a bit choked about it actually, but he dodges most of them. Are you sure you're playing fair? Some of the turds seem at least Pat-sized and one or two could only have been produced by a well-worn male human digestive system after consumption of much cider. Pretty smelly one, Grah.

I thought the attitude was If you've ever bought a drink for, spoken to or lived in the same city as someone who's sending you a fanzine then you need not loc it. Malcolm and Rob regularly duplicate True Rat and loc it too. This is what I call unnecessary unfunny and rather silly sarcasm the purpose of which is to reach these here brackets.)))

Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario (no second n) M6P 2S3

Very funny verrrrrry funny. I suppose you think it's cute that you spent a lousy 17^{1/2}p just so I could read your insults in record time, after waiting the best part of a year for a little off-the-cuff egoboo in the previous issue. Ho ho, Mr Cattle, how droll of you. "Amok slug" is it? Well, you'll get yours, vermin-head. Just you wait until I'm the TAFF winner at some future Mastercon! There I'll be, down in the bar, fivers literally falling out of my pockets, buying double whiskies for every fringe fan in sight, treating the Trekkies, showering the SFM types with largesse, even picking up the tab for the Pickersgill groupies and it'll be tough shit for you, Charlie! Continental breakfast with a tea-bag for Kettle, while the rest of us guzzle Guinness and dabble in doubles. And when I'm called upon at the banquet to make my hands across the ocean speech, my message from North American fandom to our English and European brethren, I'll unfurl a forty foot banner with brilliant yard high letters that will say "Sod off, Kettle!" to thunderous applause, no doubt. You won't get away with this, you swine! "Amok slug" eh? Well, so's your old man.

((You gotta win TAFF first, Michael. Who says we want a hairy little American comix fan over here anyway. Mind you, I like your effrontery in casually mentioning in a letter to me that you'll keep half of English (or British) fandom pissed for a convention just to show me. That should win you a few votes from the few (very few) people who haven't been forced to buy you a drink in order to help you pass out quicker. The only reason I'd be voting for you is much too personal to go into here sweetie.)))

This positive plethora of airborne ratzines is becoming tiresome. I assume you're all trying to "get it up" for mancon, and will fall back into the comatose state we've come to associate with Rats of late once England's annual extravaganza is over. (((Hal))) Just for the record, Mr Kipple, I copied down part of Brosnan's zine for future quotation but I didn't do that to you. (It was hard, but my spite and vindictiveness know no bounds.) (((Not even Sydney. I thought everyone knew Sydney.))) I'd like you to come down with a very painful series of boils on your penis which would last for years without once providing any sort of worthwhile material for fanzine writing, rendering you sexually hors de combat for the duration.

((Amazing how hardened fan-writers try to translate anything into readable fannish prose, however trivial the event and sometimes however personal. I occasionally find myself thinking I can write about this even while it's happening and thinking of choice lies and misinterpretations to make it all sound interesting. I wouldn't like to be in the position where all I had to write about was painful boils on my penis. You don't need to exaggerate.)))

Your reply to Terry Hughes has been dealt with and I must say it's a pretty shabby way to treat 50% of your oversea response and 100% of your commonwealth reaction. Now that Howard Hughes is dead and we can expect Terry to spend the next few years of his miserable life trying vainly to prove he's some remote bastard son, you might need me to provide some non-insular, non-Anglo reaction and then where will you be? There simply aren't any other North American fans with the knowledge of English fandom, the stamina to wade through the pages and the monstrously overbloomed desire for fame and glory needed to write you a loc. Hell, not even Sam Long locs TRUE RAT .. which has to be a mark in its favour!

((Sorry. Sorry. Actually I always wondered how come a comix fan got on so quickly in fandom. It's your old man of course. Son of Glick. What made Michael run, indeed? Incidentally, no review of Xenium I'm afraid. Good ish though. Well, goodish. Well, very enjoyable actually. Yeah. Right on.)))

D. West, 48 Norman St, Bingley, West Yorks.

You seem to be rather short on effective gags this time. So hows about nicking a few, like from this lecture tape by Isaac Asimov where he tells how he rebuked Arthur C Clarke: "Arthur, that HAL computer of yours violates the First Law Of Robotics," and Arthur has them all rolling about laughing themselves sick with the lightning reply of: "So what?" I mean, that comes from MENSA, and SF readers are supposed to go for the giant brainbox stuff. Now that I'm a member myself. Don't have the sense of humour. (((Plonk plonk??)))
But I suppose you couldn't really use that, what with it having shown up in an ad in the Seacon programme book. Which some kind person sent me the other day. Damned poor show I call it on the part of these Seacon so-called organisers. Obviously read so much of this Buck Rogers stuff they've started believing in time travel. So what - in such guilty circumstances - are you going on at the Manchester lot for? I mean, they answered all my letters within two weeks and have duly sent confirmation of my booking. Not to mention a map showing just where Manchester is. So you leave them alone, you poncy southerner. Us lads who know who is what have to stick together. You some kind of Vegetarian? You can hardly avoid cynical reader thoughts when the one and only fanzine review is of Pickersgill's STOP BREAKING DOWN. Not that I disagree, particularly. But you should have slung in a few more titles to make it look like you were trying. Attack best form of etc. Too much self justifying.

(((Of course, the other extreme is to send me 22 pages of fanzine reviews just so you can praise Pickersgill right at the end. A labour of love indeed. Now, as to those programme books. I blame the weather. Anyone arguing.)))

Bryn Fortey, 90 Caerleon Road, Newport, Gwent, NPT 7BY

Hey, that Brian Parker is quite a card. I quote from his LoC in TR7 in which he was discussing a LoC he received from Graham Poole . . . "A very entertaining and witty style very much in keeping with the tone of PP1" . . . and he said it almost as if he meant it. Watch out LRAK my lad, that Parker could become a satirist of note.

* * *

That's not many locs I've printed. This is mainly because almost all of the others are too flattering to publish. Honest. Ta very much. I even got four people not wanting outside contributions in TRUE RAT. Ta again. Next issue should see a longer and more lively column. As it is WAHF:
Richard Barycz, who sent a huge letter which couldn't really be used except too extensively because of innumerable cross-references and changes of train of thought. It was a longer loc than all the others put together. It was almost as long as long as D. West's reviews. Blast from the past Richard.
Merf Adamson who says his new zine is coming out in June. "No way am I going to break this deadline." Oh yeah.
Tom Perry: "Is a poof what I think it is?" Well, Tom, it's like this . . . No, it's like this . . . Well, no, it's-- Oh, ask John Piggott.
Kev Williams, Ray Harrison, Ritchie Smith, John Steward, Big Johnny, Terry Hughes, Joseph M. Nicholas, Richard McMahon, Eric Bentcliffe (((I'm trying Eric I really am))), Dave Langford, Rich Coad and Jim Linwood.

* * *

Deadline for next issue is end of November. It should be out by the end of December. Look for it at Easter.

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18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42
Cut out and stick on as appropriate.

APOLOGIES - the column tht (sorry) that alepogises (sorry) apologises four (sory)
(sorry) for mistak

- 1) You may have noticed that the electros, particularly the names, are a bit wrinkled. Any advice on how to fit vinyl stencils to ordinary waxed ones would be gratefully received. I did some with sellotape and some with Cow Gum and corflu. Bear in mind I'm not very ept at this sort of thing.
- 2) Parts of some pages are a little faint. I have an irrational fear of stopping in the middle of a run. I'll get over it someday.
- 4) This issue seems a little like TRUE RAT with articles by other people stuck into it. I'm hoping to get it together a bit more next time. Springs eternal, dunnit?
- 5) Anything else.

* * *

Those of you who send John Brosnan fanzines c/o 43 Chesholm Road without sending me a copy (Zine That Has No Name and Triode to name but one) (bitch bitch) and any others of you (tax inspectors, health inspectors, Salvation Army) who wish to get in touch with the editor of Scabby Tales and the author of James Bond In The Cinema, may wish to note his new address:-
Flat 5, 8 Abercorn Place, London, NW8.

Chris Fowler might like to note my new address -- see last issue and this issue Christopher. Incidentally, liked the letter columns in the last two Vectors.

43 Chesholm Road, London, N 16 to save you the trouble Chris¹/₂ (sorry)

* *

Bacover credit; Unknown friend of John Ingham's.
Thanks to all contributors for their generous efforts.

*

This has been True Rat 8. The time is 10.55 a.m. on Friday 27th August and Chris and I are going on holiday tomorrow. I can't really be bothered with filling all this space with merry quips and things.

See y'all at Novacon,

This has been a twisted stencil production.

