

1986

FANTHOLOGY



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FANTHOLOGY

1 9 8 6

The Best Fan Writing of 1986

published by Dennis Virzi

edited by Mike Glycer

production work by Pat Mueller

art direction by Dennis Virzi



FANTHOLOGY 1986

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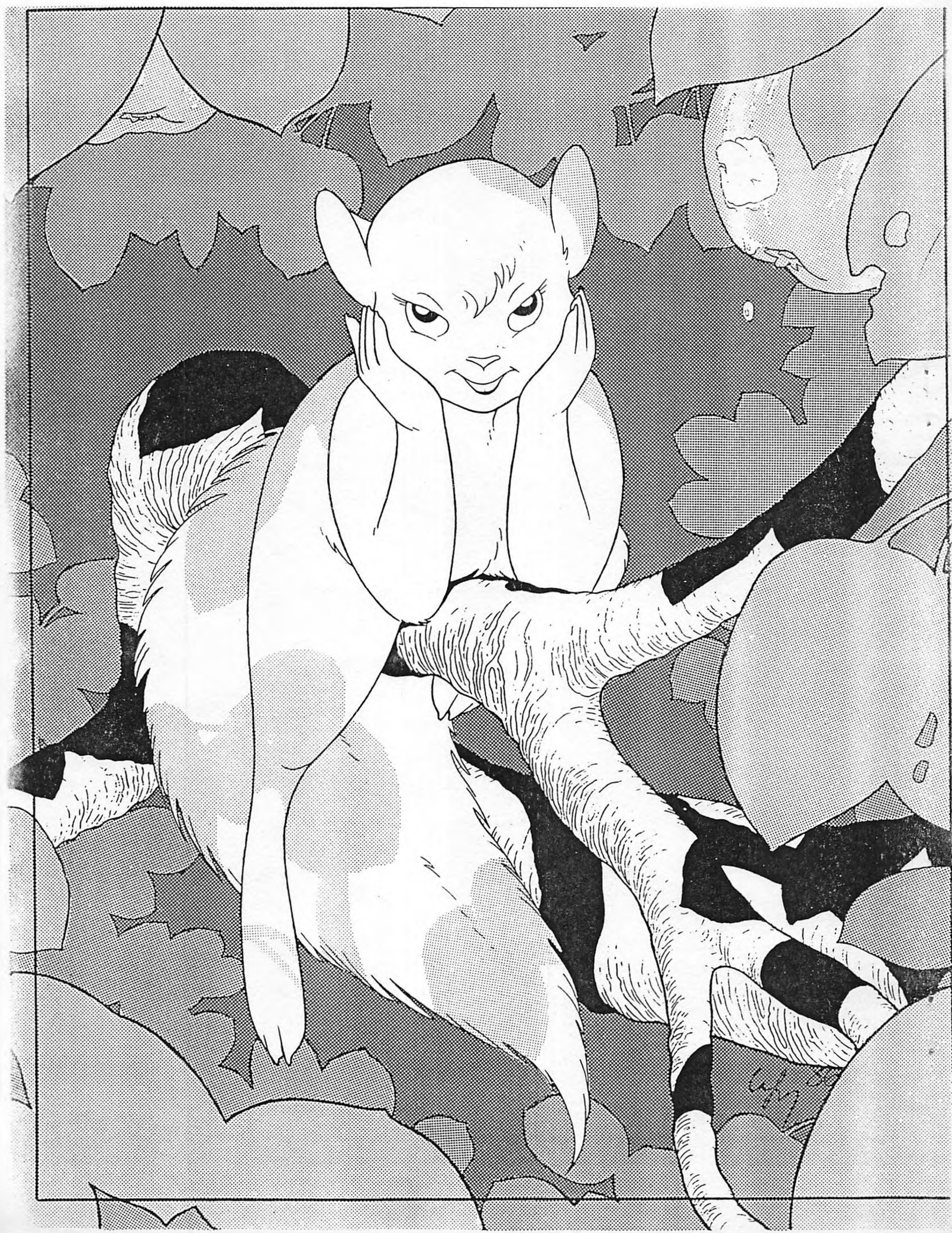
Watch for the 1987 Fanthology, coming soon to a mailbox near you!

1986

SCIENCE FICTION FANTHOLOGY



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FANTHOLOGY 1986

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WHEN INSPIRATION,
LIKE A BIRD,
VISITS ONE, IT
MUST BE HEARD...

...BUT, OH, IT'S
HARD WHEN IN-
SPIRATIONS
DON'T COME UP
TO EXPECTAT-
IONS.

-CLARENCE DAY

SCHIRER '86

FAVORITE 1986 FANZINES

by Mike Glyer

THE LAST *Fanthology* I received a copy of was edited by Bruce D. Arthurs for the year 1975. Others have been announced; most were not completed. The 1984 *Fanthology* Terry Carr announced in *File 770* has never hit my mailbox, and may still be wedged in Carol's computer.

Most of you don't know from experience what a *Fanthology* is, though it's easy to explain. A *fanthology* contains a self-anointed editor's choice of the finest fanwriting in a given year. The editor effectively pays for the right to choose because he's going to do the time-consuming and expensive chore of securing permission and publishing the zine. My *Dream Fanthology '86* has an advantage over the real thing without even counting the labor-saving. In a dream, nothing must be cut to keep down the pagecount to a practical limit for one person to publish.

PARAMETERS: Bearing in mind that these recommendations are purely personal opinion, be forewarned of my ground rules. Only the fanzines sent to me were considered. My focus is on 1986 — my comments about individual accomplishment in that year should not be automatically generalized as my opinion of a person's career. No attempt has been made to deal with my fanzine or writing in this context, for that evaluation is best made by you.

DREAM FANTHOLOGY

Twenty-One Suggestions for the 1986 Fanthology

1. Christopher Priest, "Thank You, Girls", *Chuch*
2. Tim Jones, "Win A Day With Mikhail Gorbachev", *Timbre* #3
3. Dennis Virzi, "An Open Letter To British Fandom", *Texas SF Inquirer* #17
Kate Solomon, "An Open Reply To Dennis Virzi", *Cube* #21
Dave Langford, letter of comment in *Texas SF Inquirer* #18
6. Greg Bennett, "We Remember ... The Missing Man", *Westwind* 2/86
7. David Cropp, "On the Ecological Economy of the Hospital Clipboard", *Tigger* #19
8. Race Mathews, "Aussiecon II Opening Address", *File 770* #57, #58
9. Avedon Carol, "Letter From London July 1985", *Xenium* #14
10. Dave Langford, "Our Lady of Pain", *Chuch*
11. Skel, "The Ballad of Gained S'Mell", *Holier Than Thou* #24
12. Elst Weinstein, "Real Fen Don't Eat Greeps", *Hoaxarama*
13. Milton F. Stevens, "Fannish Squirrel Revival", *File 770* #57

14. Joseph Nicholas, "Distance, Context and the Lucky Country", *Pulp* #3

15. Joe H. Palmer, (column) "Kennings", *Westwind* 3/86

16. Eric Mayer, (column) "Notes From The Outside — A Berry Odyssey", *Holier Than Thou* #23

17. Arthur Hlavaty, (review) "The Cat Who Walks Through Walls", *Lines Of Occurrence* #10

18. Marc Ortlieb, Jim Gilpatrick, Dave McDonnell, et al., "I Have Seen The Light", *Tigger* #18

19. Arthur Hlavaty, "I Was A Teenage Cyberpunk For the FBI and Found God", *The Dillinger Relic* #46

20. Skel, "Pillow To Post", *Time And Again* #2

21. Elst Weinstein, "Disclaimer", *Hoaxarama*

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MORE MEMORABLE FANWRITING OF 1986:

William Warren Jr. "Vigil", *Westwind* 2/86. Patrick Nielsen Hayden, "Close Cap Tightly To Retard Thickening", *Flash Point* #8. Ferk, "Lunacon '86", *Texas SF Inquirer* #17. Charlotte Proctor, "Not A Convention Report", *Anvil* #41. Don C. Thompson, "A Love Affair With Chess", *From The Rim* #10. Mark R. Leeper (review) "The Sushi Handbook", *Lan's Lantern* #20. Don Franson, "The Future of TAFF", *Holier Than Thou* #23. Harry Warner Jr., (column) "All My Yesterdays", *Holier Than Thou* #24.

• • • • •

NOTEWORTHY: Sally A. Syrjala, (review), "Iowa Baseball Confederacy", *Tightbeam* #143. Chuq Von Rospach, "Reviewing The Reviewers", *Other Realms* #9. Andrew Looney, "The Time Traveller's Annual Holiday Party", *The Mad Engineer* #3. Sourdough Jackson (column) "Starship Troupers — Historicals", *DAS-FAX* 6/86. Pat McCray, "The Fosfa Channel", *Fosfax* 10/86. Tim Sullivan, "Right Thru The Wall", *File 770* #60. Walt Willis (column) "The Prying Fan", *Pulp* #1. Dave Wood, "Mexicon: A Usual Lunacy", *Lip* #1. Taral, "The Huitzilopochtli Effect", *Texas SF Inquirer* #18. Linda Bushyager, "Trivial Zoot Suit" *Duprass* #2. Leigh Edmonds, "Fanzines of the Leaden Age, pt. 3", *Fuck The Tories* #3. Brant Davidson, "An Evening With Harlan Ellison", *Worlds Of Wonder* 8/86. James Brunet, "Why Times Are Hard For Hard SF", *Pyrotechnics* #38. Terry Hughes, (column) "Terry Hughes Sez", *Wing Window* #8.

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THE REASONS WHY

"The thing that most disappoints reviewers is when a faneditor with a great deal of potential fritters it away in directions that do not suit the reviewer." — Marc Ortlieb.

I found Marc's quote in *Tigger*, wrote it on the back of an envelope, and kept it in front of me as I pored over the rest of the zines I received in 1986. Ortlieb's remark prodded me toward objectivity. It also led me to identify the way I form opinions about fanzines and their creators.

As a first consideration I go through a fanzine and ask, what is its mission? What purpose was the editor trying to serve? *Mission* is a reason for existing, and the perceived mission of a fanzine strongly influences how it is received by fandom. As I will be discussing, in extreme cases like *The Texas SF Inquirer* and *Fuck The Tories* the avowed purpose of each zine misdirected readers from its most impressive achievements.

The next most important value may be termed *editorial personality*. Everything in a fanzine must be created or acquired by the editor. The focus of attention (issues and interests) set by the editor attracts or screens out readers whose feedback can provide the electricity and sense of action that we see in the most interesting fanzines. Blank paper is the writer's enemy. It takes more than a single announcement of intent to publish to attract the best contributors. They need to believe there is a payoff of egoboo coming in the future, and fanwriters assay fanzines and editors with that prospect in mind before committing themselves.

Then in third and fourth place are the two critical standards most reviewers start and end with: *quality of writing* and *reproduction & design*. These are matters of individual taste, even though most fans would agree about the extreme ends of the spectrum. While artwork and artists are important, and receive a lot of attention in this article, I find great art does not enhance, nor bad art detract, from my opinion of a zine in the same way as good or bad design. Since they're full of words, fanzines exist to be read, and design and reproduction should be criticized on the basis of how it enhances the reading experience.

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FIVE OUTSTANDING FANZINES

Church, Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen
Holier Than Thou, Marty Cantor
Pulp, Vinç Clarke
The Texas SF Inquirer, Pat Mueller
Timbre, Tim Jones

The fanzines of 1984 read themselves off by the numbers, one, two three. The fanzines of 1986 have distinct stratas of quality, but those at the top this time have aspects of greatness that are all different and valuable. Their order is alphabetical.

CHURCH, Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen, editors. Some will say we really don't need a 1986 fanthology —

just reprint *Chuch*. I would have had no trouble picking *Chuch* for number one if the editors — whose writing skills are widely known — had not made the unfortunate decision to minimize their own input. A stronger editorial presence would have stamped an identity on the zine which in its absence looks like a mere flower arrangement of top contributors. Dave Langford and Chris Priest turned in their best articles of the year — and what's not to like about a fanzine so reminiscent of *Twill Duu*? In "Our Lady of Pain" (#10) Langford's texture of quips and evocative atmosphere details humorously distracts readers from a full appreciation of his skillfulness. You can read it and walk away with the intended smile on your face; or you can go back and try to understand how the effect was achieved. This confession, about Dave's love life before Hazel, pelts readers with literary allusions to Lovecraft, Poe, Swinburne and Carroll — just how does he come off so endearingly self-effacing, and innocent, when he's also so cynical and sardonic? Perhaps it's his prescription from Dr. Jekyll. Christopher Priest's autobiographical "Thank You Girls" (#1) recounts a double date that led the teenaged Priest to a 1962 Beatles performance at The Cavern, not to mention a coincidental street introduction to Harrison and McCartney on the way. Priest avidly followed their music from that day on: "Even though they dazzled my girlfriend and mocked my suit, they were somehow on my side."

HOLIER THAN THOU, Marty Cantor, editor. Under the burdens of DUFF Administration *HTT* fell back to two issues a year, and before the second one the spousal editorial partnership dissolved. Marty edited the second issue in 1986 solo, introducing a rococo new layout: a ritualistic blend of LoC fragments and regular columnists that I had already tested to destruction ten years ago in *Scientifriction* 5. Well, those who don't learn the lessons of history... Marty, whose name is synonymous with the cheap shots he takes from veterans of the TAFF feud, not only fails to get his due credit as an editor, but is in a situation where fandom is actively disinterested about his abilities in that respect. All Cantor does is systematically recruit good fanwriters to contribute to his zine through international correspondence, and the lure of a sizable trove of feedback in the *HTT* lettercolumn. As an editorialist Cantor dissipates the capital he accumulates as an editor, no doubt, but overall, *Holier Than Thou* belongs near the top of the class of genzines. It requires no vast leap of reasoning to conclude that the quality of the end result evidences a talented editor.

The two issues of *HTT* held an abundance of good fanwriting. An *HTT* reader with a sense of humor, Don Franson, wrote "The Future of TAFF", a mock interview with Holdover Funds. "Franson: 'Some say TAFF is too controversial. Isn't it the main purpose of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund to bring fans together?' Funds: 'You mean like nuclear fission material?'" Harry Warner's

column "All My Yesterdays" is a more personal version of fanhistory. He began his installment in *HTT* #24 with a priceless comment about an old Ackerman zine: "VOM became the despair of both collectors (for its legal length pages which didn't fit many filing systems) and biology students (for its Vomaidens, full-page illustrations depicting young ladies with various abnormalities that seem to have been unintentional on the part of the artists)." Linda Blanchard's "The Concert On The Cape" continued her autobiography, which admittedly is more interesting for the style of its telling than the incidents involved.

Eric Mayer's column "Notes From Outside" paid homage to Irish John Berry in "A Berry Odyssey" (#16). Eric is among the very finest fanwriters of the 1980s, but he is another casualty of the TAFF Feud. They still deliver the mail from whatever fannish gulag Eric has been confined to — the '86 Corflu was abuzz with talk of his essay that dismissed fanzine fandom as "Cafe Society".

Another stalwart columnist for *HTT*, Skel (Paul Skelton) may well be discussed at length here. "Hopefully Travelling" in *HTT* #23 is a perfect example of the inconsistency of his work. Skel sometimes lights up the page with his brilliance, the reason he is a sought-after writer. He also tends to ignore structural problems in his writing. This time Skel started with five paragraphs of confused introduction unnecessary to build up his main story — a gleefully ironic memoir of Christmas from his viewpoint as a young boy. A common complaint about fiction — he didn't know where to begin his story — certainly applied here. Does Skel really know when he has a good idea, or is he like Dave Locke who assumes everything written in the same blustery, roguish, disapproving tone will be funny? For the latter half of "Hopefully Travelling" is technically well-written, but its idea content is minimal. The pointless meandering that its author mistook for clever mythmaking about the decline of fanzine publishing flops all over the place. Yet Skel comes back in *HTT* #24 with "The Ballad of Gained S'Mell" (#11), a superb article that asks — how would Hal Clement's Mesklinites deal with smelly socks? Skel uses relentless Campbellian logic to reach an answer, a list of household tips on an absurdly cosmic scale. Skel's "S'mell" exemplifies that forgotten aspect of fannish writing which assumes we fans share the common experience of reading zillions of sf stories, such as *Mission of Gravity*. Milt Stevens relies on the same assumption in another *HTT* article, "Callahan's Cross-Time Cat House". The assumption is flattering, but it's frankly less accurate than an assumption that many fans have seen a given sf movie. This situation deserves more study.

In that vein Patrick Nielsen Hayden's *FLASH POINT* #7 (1985) recommended a new convention to embody trufans' interest in science fiction and fanzines. He read the response, crystallized his views in *Flash Point* #8 (1986) and decided to hell with it, he already

has Corflu, and a sercon sf convention wouldn't meet his needs. En route to that conclusion, Patrick provided the first definition of fandom's partial disengagement from the sf genre that has been committed to print. "When I wrote 'Fandom' I was being wistful about how we've lost the wonderful mechanism of science fiction as a reliable sorting device for the discovery of potential trufans." That comment, and others in "Close Cap Tightly To Retard Thickening" are things I wish I'd said first — though I'm just as glad not to have drawn the silly comparison between shy fanzine fans and "extrovert" convention-running fans (be serious!).

PULP, *Vinç Clarke, editor (or at least assembler)*. The arrival of *Pulp* #3, the November issue, while I was drafting this article completely changed my attitude toward the zine. As of the third issue *Pulp* has its own recognizable chemistry — which requires a lot more than protestations of its own importance. Just the production of three issues in a year did something to elevate *Pulp* above other genzines. The first two issues had been readable. Was that its mission, to be pleasantly forgettable? With a line-up of Walt Willis, Chuch Harris, Avedon Carol and Tom Weber, I doubted that was the goal. Willis' column in #1 (a fanciful Kiplingesque explanation of the HP sauce bottle label) was the best thing in the first two issues.

Pulp #3 improved by a magnitude. A good Willis column took the lead. Chuch Harris reported the Carol-Hansen nuptials in his best idiosyncratic style. Then came the surprise of the year, Joseph Nicholas' perceptive analysis of the Australian fanzine scene, "Distance, Context & the Lucky Country" (#14). For once in his life Joseph properly measured the power of his critical rhetoric to fit the stature of his subject. The nonbombastic Nicholas further surprised me by drawing conclusions with which I could agree — something I never had to worry about in *Fuck The Tories*. The net result was a new attitude toward *Pulp*, the home of BNFs who have not lost the common touch, only their minds.

THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER, *Pat Mueller, editor*. *The Texas SF Inquirer* shows off Texas fandom to Texans and the rest of us. Since it's a zine that will be even more talked about in the future than it is now, it needs a concise handle — you can't go on and on with an eight syllable title. *TTSTFI* would be accurate but not pronounceable. I suggest *TXFINQ*. Others may have different ideas.

Despite its quality, *TXFINQ* has not received the recognition it deserves for three reasons. (1) *TXFINQ* represents itself as a newszine, therefore (2) its heavy emphasis on genzine material is viewed as secondary to, and an interference with, its stated mission, and (3) the geometric expansion of genzine material prevents *TXFINQ* from keeping a schedule that would make it an effective newszine. The issues of *TXFINQ* came out last

year in January, February, April, June, August, and December. The January issue was 14 pages; August's was 46 pages; December's was 28 pages.

With phototypeset text, reproduced by mimeograph, and design worthy of a slick magazine, *TXFINQ* is one of the two most professional-looking fanzines — the other one is *The Mad 3 Party*. The zine is loaded with talented writers: reprints from "Vincent Omniaveritas" *Cheap Truth*; the 21-page Bruce Sterling/Lewis Shiner interview in *TXFINQ* #19; all kinds of con reports, fanzine reviews, book and film reviews, articles, letters, news and con listings. *TXFINQ* really winds up being a Texas version of *Psychotic*, usually without enough space to do it right. *TXFINQ* will not make its fullest impact until it focuses on missions it can meet with its available resources.

That is not to say *TXFINQ* is anything less than a front rank fanzine right now, full of spirit and innovation. Consider Dennis Virzi's disingenuous "An Open Letter To British Fandom" (#3) that needled British fans by posing questions about what we Americans should expect at the 1987 Worldcon. For example, he asked: "I don't think of the sheep as a food source (and neither do our Aggies) ... We like hamburgers and steak. Can British food be as *unusual* as I've heard?" He sparked a reply from British fan Kate Solomon ("An Open Reply To Dennis Virzi" (#3) in *Cube* #21. Kate said, "No need to worry about having to eat sheep: meat is a luxury commodity over here, and is only sold in special shops at exorbitant prices. Do be careful with the cod, however: the Chernobyl disaster, together with radioactive dumping from our "home-made" nuclear power stations means that most fish is irradiated." In *TXFINQ* #19 Dave Langford also took up the challenge, with his own funny letter of comment (#3).

TIMBRE, *Tim Jones, editor*. New Zealand's Tim Jones came to my attention in 1984 when he wrote two articles for *Timbre* that I regarded among the year's best. Here was a new fanwriter in a league with humorists like Dave Langford and Leroy Kettle, living on the remote edge of the South Pacific, far out of personal contact with organized fandom, an exciting talent from an unexpected source. "Why doesn't the US (or even Canada, Garth) have new fanwriters as good as Tim Jones?" is not the kind of question that at first glance appears helpful to an appreciation of Jones' fanwriting, but stay tuned.

Tim Jones' two main articles in *Timbre* #3 are "Win A Day With Mikhail Gorbachev" (#2) and "Australia vs. Rest of the World XI". "Gorbachev" is filled with tongue-in-cheek absurdities which flow from its literally-intended title. The article affects a BBC documentary-style narrative in its microscopic but aloof description of morning in the Gorbachev household. Science fictional paraphernalia intrudes near the beginning, not as a deliberate non sequitur (one type of humor), but to

foreshadow a plot-within-a-plot that compounds the original premise into even greater comedy. So well-written is "Gorbachev" that its literary cousins won't be found in fanzines, but among the lightweight, stylistically rich and clever short stories Dozois finds to fill out *The Year's Best Science Fiction*. Maybe Howard Waldrop's early stories looked like this. Certainly in asking "Where have I seen talent like this before?" we can promptly answer why it wasn't in North American fanzines. Talent like this goes to someplace better paying than *Shadow of the Monolith*. If Tim Jones lived in America, by now he'd have moved to New York to read slush while crafting a small number of short stories for *Isaac Asimov's*.

"Gorbachev" has a fannish sequel in "Australia vs. The Rest of the World XI", where fans are Tuckerized as cricketers in a test match. Joseph Nicholas' inattention to a landing spacecraft from the Galactic Federation results in his immolation on a Melbourne cricket pitch. Each article is excellent, and the use of two contrasting styles (ersatz Howard Waldrop and cloned Skel) constitutes a tour-de-force by a fan who deserves much more attention.



THE CLUBZINE SCENE

Charlotte Proctor feels the designation "clubzine" is sufficiently horrible to have lectured her readers that *Anvil* is *not* a clubzine. I suppose I can honor Charlotte's wishes without agreeing with her views. In my view a clubzine is a publication that takes its financial support from a club, avails itself of local talent, and has the duty to provide informational services to the club in its pages. Usually the first scent of the latter, coming from treasury reports or meeting minutes, causes fanzine critiques to pass out face down in their oatmeal. A fanzine tainted by service features is automatically assumed to have no creative fanwriting inside. Such an assumption is unfair and ignorant, but is so prevalent among the people Charlotte wants to impress that she had to advertise *Anvil's* status as a genzine.

Well, of course it is, now. Not very long ago it included a lot of service features — it was unmistakably a clubzine. As such it was also a sterling example of the creative drive and level of quality that could be achieved in producing a fanzine that served a club.

The quality of a clubzine, like any zine, derives from the talent of the editor. A good clubzine editor has the additional need to convince his or her club that his or her vision of the zine justifies the club's expenditure. Editors who can do it all — create a world-class fanzine and satisfy the club's needs — are much rarer than good genzine editors. What's worse, their ranks were seriously depleted in 1986.

Alpha Centura, the foundering Albuquerque club, lost Craig Chrissinger as editor of its *COMMUNI-*

CATOR after the first issue of 1986, and the zine declined immediately. Chrissinger's legacy of solid journalism, and pro-quality design, was impossible for his successor to maintain. The best clubzine of 1984 was gone with the wind. Then, Edmonton's *NEOLOGY* was given up by editor Georges Giguere, but it fared better than other orphaned clubzines because Giguere continued to play some role in production. *Neology* still has a full range of reviews and departments, a deep art file, good repro and layout. It has a good columnist in Albert S. Frank ("Roses and Thorns" — a cheers and jeers format), and even a Russian sf correspondent.

After *WESTWIND* lost Doug Booze from its cabal of editors, anyone could deduce who had been the most significant contributor to the Seattle clubzine's consistently high quality over the past few years. By the end of the year *Westwind* was being edited by Tom Oswald and Jody Franzen, with a hand from club chairman Judy Suryan. Handsomely produced in offset on 11x17 ivory stock, saddle stapled, *Westwind* regretfully could not sustain a level of design consistent with its costs. The layout continued to deteriorate after Booze left, some of the worst being tombstoned logos of the various features, and the badly-reproed newspaper clippings used to illustrate movie reviews in the August 1986 issue.

My disappointment that *Westwind* did not keep to its own high standards of design tended to be more than compensated by the great covers and outstanding fanwriting published by the new editors. At times of loss NWSFS expresses its emotions through great fanzines. Last year's Sturgeon memorial issue was equaled by February's Challenger disaster issue, so magnificently begun in each case by a William Warren Jr. color cover. The crew's smiling faces were drawn in sky blue, over a verse from John Magee Jr.'s poem "High Flight", the lines quoted by President Reagan in those halcyon days when any of us still listened to him.

Westwind has a considerable number of regular contributors, most of whom are not headline talents, but combine together in a warmly enthusiastic blend of tones. "Other Matters" is Dora Auvi's synopsis of sf news and debatable opinions; "Serpent's Tooth" allows the versatile Jon Gustafson to review books. Occasionally NWSFS founder Greg Bennett writes "Inverted Flight". Safely removed to Texas, Bennett can enjoy patron saint status unsullied by month-to-month club politics. He lectures the club from afar in the ghastliest business school jargon: "I'm not really sure how the community of Northwest fans became an extended family, but I can see a few drivers that were around during its oogenesis. Perhaps the most important was that we were applying the concept of participative management before it became the vogue." *But:* this is the same Bennett who wrote one of the outstanding articles of the year, "We Remember ... The Missing Man" (#6), an account of his reaction to the Challenger disaster. Bennett works on the space station program near the Johnson Space

Center in Houston. His vantage point was amid the community most deeply affected by the loss, and he described the reactions, ceremonies and feelings very movingly. I was so impressed I got his permission to reprint it later that year in *File 770*. (And though I find William Warren Jr.'s conversation between three dead Apollo astronauts, on watch in some limbo, touched by creepy pathos, I haven't been able to forget "Vigil" all year long. "Vigil" appeared in the same issue as Bennett's article.)

A couple months later, near the June anniversary of Ted Sturgeon's death, *Westwind* printed "Teddy The Fish", Spider Robinson's vaguely controversial tribute (done in dialect) spoken at the Norwescon banquet. In that issue, Greg Bennett's and George Smith's columns recalled Sturgeon as well — one more of many sparkling examples of thematic coordination raising *Westwind* above the norm.

You don't hear the name *Westwind* being dropped when fans discuss the most creative fanzines. That's why I choose it as the example to make my case that "clubzine" is not a dirty word, or a form inherently incapable of the quality seen in the best genzines. It is certainly harder to achieve that level of quality *and* furnish the club services it expects when it pays the costs of production, but that doesn't mean that fans haven't occasionally succeeded. People who seek out flaws in clubzines will find them — there are many in *Westwind* — but anyone who uses these flaws as a reason not to bother reading clubzines deprives himself of a great deal of pleasurable reading. Taking a Mike Glicksohn quote out of context (he was actually talking about two genzines): "[These] fanzines do publish some excellent material. Unfortunately, they also publish a lot of dull and mediocre material, resulting in publications that are less than the sum of their parts."

I take the liberty of applying Glicksohn's quote here because I feel he's stating a prevalent way of analyzing fanzines. It's one that when taken too much to heart results in fanzines being criticized as static masterpieces, divorced from their vibrant true calling to share excitement and information. It's pointless to concern ourselves with the question of whether *Westwind* is worthy to hang in the Louvre next to *Slant*. Like works of fiction, fanzines should be judged according to what they set out to do. *Westwind*, like many other zines, have a complex mission, and it startles me when intelligent people refuse to deal with those complexities in order to appreciate the good work that is being done. (A closing caveat: I simply used Glicksohn's phrase, I don't necessarily attribute any of these views to him.)

Another clubzine I hold in high regard is *FOSFAX*, the Louisville group's sercon zine, blessed with a team of strong critics captained by Joseph "Readsalot" Major. Over the long haul, just about any kind of fanzine material is likely to show up in *Fosfax*, but a very high percentage of the whole will be book reviews. *Fosfax* is

distributed to a very large handful of writers, whose own feedback to the reviews sets up a critical discussion of sf that's quite interesting. (I hear *Cheap Truth* is also exciting, but after a year-and-a-half trying to get a copy, I read it had folded.) For example, Bruce Gardner stood up for Spider Robinson's *Night of Power*, which he felt was unjustly roughed up by reviewer Stephen Brown in *SFR* (Summer '85). Gardner did a thorough analysis of the book to justify the cutting contempt he expressed for the cliché-brained Brown. The next month two others reviewed *Night of Power* (Major was less kind, calling it a lift from the bestseller *Siege* about race wars in NY). Robinson himself wrote in to help trash Brown. Gardner has a lot of style, and courage to match — "Reading Mission Earth Is Far From Impossible" was actually a forceful, convincing review of a maligned work. Bruce Gardner also turns a clever phrase occasionally, like his review of Gilliland's *Wizenbeak* that begins, "The man who made robots the Jerry Lewis to his main character's Dean Martin..." — a colorful reference to Alexis' *Rosinante* series.

Joseph Major's achievements as a book critic can only be appreciated if you stop and consider how many words of sf, and now much background info on writers and the genre, he takes in to be able to produce an average of 16 book reviews per month — and do them so well. He is a well-spoken and fair critic who comes across as P. Schuyler Miller with a more liberal sense of humor. Almost every one of his reviews involves the sort of personal insights unique to enthusiastic sf readers, reflecting an affectionate but demanding sense of the genre. He's the best in fanzines.

Fosfax is a rather luxuriously reproduced zine (11x17 offset folded to 8-1/2x11) considering that its layout doesn't aspire to anything more than business memo readability. There is little interior art; I sent them a pile of Bill Rotsler illos received with Bill's admonition to send them on to a zine with good circulation and good repro — and *Fosfax* now includes Rotsler illos. Perhaps I should send them addresses for Fox, Taral and Foster — they run atrocious, scrawly cover art on every issue! What a waste of the medium's potential. *Fosfax* comes out every month: that's 12 full-page covers they could use. Artists please take note. (Artists please show mercy on those of us who receive *Fosfax*.) When you have the production values and publishing frequency of *Fosfax*, it's easy to get good art — I suspect the editors just never took the idea seriously.

SOME OTHER MERITORIOUS SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

INSTANT MESSAGE, the NESFA's bimonthly club newszine, is an acquired taste (I saw mention in *Neology* about Duane Cuttrell being the only Edmonton club member who actually reads their trade copy). It's a tremendous scrapbook of fannish life in Boston with char-

acteristic bits of humor.

Even though *THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAAN* (TNFF) and the letterzine *TIGHTBEAM*, primarily serve the insular membership of the N3F, they're rated superior for editing, design, artwork and reproduction. These zines are published in legal length white paper, offset, saddle-stapled. David Heath Jr. edits TNFF, according to the masthead, so I must assume he deserves the praise for a skillful melding of camera-ready text furnished by a legion of contributors. Most of the material in TNFF can be classified as get-acquainted information for members, or detailed reports, campaign platforms, and lists focused on running the N3F. There is little general interest material, but I can only admire the N3F for doing what other segments of fandom are no longer able to accomplish — producing good-looking quarterly fanzines that inspire response and participation from dozens of readers. Neffers natter about science fiction, fannish interests, and a range of topics familiar to fandom. The writing isn't often brilliant, but the process is enthusiastically supported by the members. Issues of TNFF usually include "Trash Barrel", fanzine reviews (quite brief) by Don Franson. This is one of the very few consistently appearing fanzine review lists in 1986, done by a well-informed fan with a strong point of view. He tends to review *File 770* based on what he thinks *ought* to be in it — and maybe he's right.

Chuq Von Rospach's *OTHER REALMS* is a mild-mannered electronic BBS fanzine that periodically transforms itself into an impressively computer-designed xerox zine. In contents, *Other Realms* resembles the reviewzine *Fosfax*. My personal opinion is that for his limited space Chuq uses too many different reviewers, and deprives readers from developing familiarity with the biases and quirks of his writers, and developing trust in their critical faculties. Chuq tried several ambitious things in *Other Realms*, most notably "Reviewing the Reviewers" in OR #9. Chuq analyzed all the prozine review columnists, and gave convincing recommendations. He did the same for the principal reviewers in *Locus* and *SFC*, *Fantasy Review* and *SFR*. Von Rospach was unexpectedly emotional in handling the semiprozine reviewers. In the midst of whipping Don D'Amassa Chuq accused him of not reading all the books he reviews, which is untrue, and is a built-in credibility-killer, being a personal attack on somebody that he doesn't know but his readers do.

Leslie Turek edits Noreascon 3's *THE MAD 3 PARTY*. *Mad 3* is a beautifully computer typeset zine publishing thoughtful, discursive essays on the intricacies of convention running. If *Mad 3* has a glaring weakness, that would be its habit of assembling a panoply of information to help consider a problem, then dealing with it in a "you readers should solve it now that I've pointed the problem out" tone. But if you're a mature fan with his wits about him, you can separate the cotton from the boll.

CANADIAN CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Garth Spencer's *MAPLE LEAF RAG* is a much better fanzine than when I reviewed it two years ago — and not merely because Georges Giguere has assumed the production chores. Garth has a well-defined editorial mission shaping all the departments in his fanzine: (1) to educate neos in the not-always-pleasant reality of club and con fandom; (2) to clearly establish in his readers' minds a nationalistic approach to Canadian sf and fandom; (3) to foster communication between all outposts of Canadian fandom.

BEHIND THE TWILTONE CURTAIN

What is *ANVIL*? Charlotte Proctor has announced it is a genzine. Her conceit is betrayed by the single staple in the top left corner of each issue. Single staples are a false economy and a sure sign of the newszine or clubzine editor mentality. Jack Herman would no sooner regard *Anvil* as a genzine than he would consider *File 770* a real fanzine. But whatever else *Anvil* may be, it was surely a Hugo nominee in 1986. I never thought this was an accident. *Anvil* has a big, international lettercolumn full of enthusiastic, happy readers — a zine which can inspire such response should be reasonably expected to poll some votes. Nor are the readers misguided in their affections. *Anvil* has enviable worldwide connections to Czech, Australian, Yugoslavian, British, and fandoms of all the American regions. Marc Ortlieb, Buck Coulson and Brad Foster appear regularly. Charlotte's 41st issue was her excellent Worldcon report. Another Langford speech transcript was the anchor for #42. There were four issues of *Anvil* in 1986. This fulfills the overall mission of fanzine fandom: to communicate among fans. It is ironic that Charlotte's evident desire to equal the monuments of hyperfandom, which has motivated so much of *Anvil's* rise to the top, must ultimately fail because *Anvil* moves too fast to be placed on a pedestal, and will never please them.

LAN'S LANTERN, edited by George "Lan" Laskowski, was 1986's Hugo-winning fanzine. It contains scads of reviews, following a sercon tradition of another age. It has been my perception that every successful fanzine must have a dominating editorial personality, and it bothers me that in *Lan's Lantern* that doesn't come from Laskowski. Lan is one of these editors who tends to let everyone else in the world take center stage in his zine. When Lan gave Mike Glicksohn the lead editorial in *LL* #20 to dispute *LL's* validity as a Hugo nominee, I didn't consider it fairness, but ridiculous self-effacement. In the final analysis, *LL's* strong editorial personality actually derives from its prolific critic, Mark Leeper.

Throughout 1986, Mark Leeper proved to be very versatile. In *LL* 20 Mark did it all. He wrote one of the lead articles, describing the Golem in a number of fictional works. He did a special series of reviews of film,

fiction, and culture, connected by an Oriental theme. To these he added myriad other reviews. Someday Mark Leeper and Joseph Major will start at opposite ends of the Worldcon huckster room looking for sf books they haven't reviewed. When they meet in the middle they probably won't be carrying very many. A dedicated reader, Leeper's opinion is a pretty reliable measure of whether you should invest your time reading a book. He gives outline information about the story together with his evaluation, and the clarity of his reasons permits you to adjust for personal taste and decide whether you, too, would like the book. Leeper's earnest analysis is balanced with a sense of humor that may not often come to the forefront, but we would know immediately if he was without one. A potent example was presented in his Zen appreciation of the McDonald's hamburger, part of a review of *The Sushi Handbook*. "If we had that philosophy, every time you went to McDonald's you would be served your hamburger at the table. It would come with the top bun off. You would spend the first minutes admiring the top bun. It would be a network of golden brown points on a white background..." Etc.

Besides Leeper's reviews, the strength of *Lan's Lantern* is in its lettercolumn. Good dialog. Lots of egoboo for contributors. The best edited lettercol in 1986.

If Dave Locke didn't act like it's his duty to write his editorials on sacred slabs of stone, *TIME AND AGAIN* could lighten up and be a much better zine. The articles and columns are tops. There are columns by Lon Atkins, Dean Grennell, and a fine article by Skel, "Pillow To Post" (#20), about the anxiety attacks he suffers when he has no fannish mail for a day. Dave can write in this league — if he wrote as much creative material as he did feud material, the rest of us would be less hesitant to crack open the zine. There's a hell of a party going on in *Time And Again* — it's time for the host to attend.

Although I co-published *WEINSTEIN & GLYER'S DISCOUNT HOAXARAMA!* (like that was going to be an easily-kept secret?) I can't permit that to deprive Elst Weinstein of some well-deserved egoboo. While correctly billed as a reprint volume, *Hoaxarama* contained several new pieces of writing, and artwork commissioned for the volume. Marc Schirmeister's "Best of APA H" cover epitomizes the busy ghastliness off the old *Mad* style. He also contributed outstanding interior illos. Mel White furnished some of her best fan caricatures. Foster, Gilliland and Kurt Erichsen were well represented. Elst's brief "Disclaimer" on the colophon page is enormously silly and unapologetic — a friend of mine wants to make a rubber stamp of the wording. There was also Elst's full-length article, "Real Fen Don't Eat Greeps", an acerbic, funny, parody of trufannish machismo. His staccato sentences race through a catalog of revered clichés with strictly humorous results. (#12, #21).

THE DILLINGER RELIC. How seriously can you take a zine title that refers to a gangster's embalmed penis? *DR* occasionally subsumes an second Arthur

Hlavaty zine, *Lines of Occurrence*. In *LOO* #10, Arthur wrote an outstanding discussion of Robert Heinlein's work and reputation among reviewers, challenging their conclusions about Heinlein's recent, poorly-received books, without actually endorsing them. (#17) *DR* is written in diary entry format. As a result, the quality of Hlavaty's writing varies wildly. His best entries are usually inspired by a new book he has read, or an interesting lecture he has attended. Hlavaty has the artist's eye (and should give it back...) It's difficult to pull something from context to use as Hlavaty's calling card — he certainly deserves representation in a *Fanthology* — yet his send-up of the Cyberpunk movement, "I Was a Teenage Cyberpunk for the FBI and Found God" (#19) in *DR* 46 would serve nicely.

When Jeanne decides it's time to do another *WHIMS^{EY}*, you should try to get one. Jeanne Gomoll's soundly considered point of view is written in the de rigueur conversational style. Many truths are uttered. Jeanne, musing about Leigh Edmonds' fanzine criticism in *Fuck the Tories* ("The Leaden age of Fanzines"): "Ironically, it's possible that the critic who examines enough bad fanzines will end up spending more intellectual energy examining those fanzines than the editors expended during their production. No one deserves this." The spirit of *Whimsy* is well defined by Andy Hooper's quote, "Any zine which is able to include a quote by both Garrison Keillor and Doris Lessing without appearing completely insane is sufficiently advanced to be indistinguishable from magic."

The same note of praise could be sung for *THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW*. When Bruce Gillespie initiated his *Review*, it was very formally designed for a mimeograph fanzine — like an elephantine church bulletin. Nor were its contents any friendlier. Succeeding issues introduced more and more of Gillespie's personal writing to the zine, improving it accordingly. By 1986, issues of the *Review* were very comparable to his former zine, *SF Commentary*. There is a section of natter titled "I Must Be Talking To My Friends" in every issue. The 82-page double issue (bah!) 7/8 was loaded with Gillespie's typical "Best Books I Read In 1985" article and its clones about films, novels, classical music, rock music, etc. Like David Letterman's lists, Bruce's "Best of" articles are only a convenient framework for his literary ramblings, and the reader must try not to wonder why he put a book by Theodore Dreiser on a list associated with the year 1985.

With three issues in 1986, *ANSIBLE*'s role as a newszine has diminished. Of course, we all know the axiom that anything you haven't heard yet is news, to you. Dave Langford's capricious wit is the primary lure of *Ansible* anyway. He dispatches putdowns and one-liners at a prodigious rate. Langford is a tremendous fan humorist. The news in *Ansible* only provides a foil for Langford's humor. There is seldom any probing for significant details evident in its news. Except for conreports,

there is only one length for the reportage in *Ansible*: very short. As a reader (or as an editor in search of news worth reprinting) I have never been able to learn in-depth about British fandom from *Ansible* because nothing is analyzed deeper than necessary for its satirical impact. You can get a lot of good information out of *Ansible*, but you can't get that kind of explication of its national fandom that is routinely available in *Thyme*, *Shards of Babel*, or *Maple Leaf Rag*. Langford's attention isn't held by any sociological comparisons, fan-history, or political observations longer than two lines. Even its reliability is open to question, when Langford feels free to include Holland in 1990 at the end of a list of upcoming Worldcons without reference to the existence of another bid.

Ansible is fun and well-written. As a newszine, it is the Emperor's New Clothes.

Like Langford, Simon Ounsley has got down that unassuming, innocent tone which only a wizened cynic can recognize and imitate. And in *STILL LIFE* it's hilarious. *Still Life 3* was dominated by Ounsley's diary of his illness and hospitalization (for a liver biopsy). Comparing Ounsley's diary to the accounts of Dave Locke's boils and other maladies reported long ago in *Yandro*, I recognized that it wasn't ailment humor which left me cold; I was just waiting for it to be done in a way that made me laugh. "The ward is rather like a small seedy private hotel whose residents are too lazy to change out of their night clothes and spend all day wandering in and out of each others rooms." The same issue featured Hazel Ashworth's "Vive La Difference", lampooning fandom's professed unconcern for physical appearance or wealth, in contrast to a reverence for intellectual powers. Quite funny.

SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY #8 continued the standing joke of a fanzine whose schedule is even slower than Ed Wood trying to get to a point. Number 8 united a distinguished cast: Lee Hoffman, Robert Bloch, Walt Willis, Vinç Clarke, Dave Langford, Chuck Harris, Ted White, and others. It's a good issue, full of readable articles, superior in my memory to the previous issue. *SFFY* boasts Stu Shiffman's best work of 1986, a brilliant selection of painstakingly hand-stencilled drawings and cartoons. Shiffman has mastered hand-stencilling well enough to compare favorably with the legendary C. Ross Chamberlain, also represented in this issue. All the writing is good, yet virtually all of the contributors (like Willis and Langford) did finer writing for other zines during the year.

Eventually we must discuss *FUCK THE TORIES*, with its tricontinental editorial staff of Velma Brown & Leigh Edmonds, Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, and Terry Hughes. Mike Glicksohn's comment, *WAHF'd* in the back of *FTT 2*, sums it up well and far more kindly than I would: "I think you've saddled yourselves with a bit of an albatross by adopting this socialist gimmick and encumbering your natural writing skills with a lot of un-

necessary artificiality such as the comrade crap."

LAST BUT NOT LEAST: THE ANTIPODES

THYME, the Australian newszine edited by Peter Burns and Roger Weddall, wanders all over the fannish map — fanzine reviews, media con coverage, sercon book reviews, Aussie NATCON business meeting feuds, etc. John Foyster contributes regularly to *Thyme* — it's good to see John active again. Editors Burns and Weddall have an irreverent sense of humor. They report anything that interests them, and love to stick their beaks into controversy for its own sake — not a survival trait, guys.

Marc Ortlieb's *TIGGER* is another blessed blue paper fanzine, consumed by the "science in science fiction". You'll find the zine running articles about biology alongside letters about Aussiecon II. *Tigger* is the most interesting fanzine I receive from Australia, largely because Marc Ortlieb is almost the only editor there who can tell the difference between dynamic writing and passive scholarly sludge, and elects to publish the former. Two wonderful features of *Tigger's* 1986 run were a worldcon program transcript, and a medical journal parody. "I Have Seen The Light" was a mock revival done at Aussiecon II (#18). Ortlieb, Jim Gilpatrick, David McDonnell, and others were on stage. A general impression can be gleaned from these parting commandments: "First: Thy fanzine shall never contain fiction. Second: Thy fanzine shall never contain pictures of anyone with pointed ears. Third: Thy fanzine shall not mention acts of miscegenation between Vulcans and humans, especially should those Vulcans be male as be those humans." Very dry and self-contained, David Cropp's "On The Ecological Economy of the Hospital Clipboard" (#7) will likely surprise the reader when he finally recognizes how much of it is outright ridicule of scholarly work and the medical profession's pretentiousness. *Tigger* comes highly recommended.

Jack Herman, editor of *WAHF-FULL*, was the 1984 DUFF delegate from Australia to North America. (*Wahf-Full*, along with *Fuck The Tories*, rank among the very few fanzine titles nearly as bad as *File 770*.) Jack is a complex person: it's not always clear which would benefit fandom more — to have his opinions more widely read, or have him hung for espousing them. Jack's forceful, debating society style helps him make compelling arguments, But the quality of the objective content in those arguments suffers because he argues just as strongly whether he knows what he's talking about or not.

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT...

Whatever you do, get out there, avail yourselves of this trove of recommended fanwriting and publishing — and participate in the Hugo voting. What follows are the

contact addresses and subscription rates of the fanzines I reviewed. Be aware there is a fine old fannish custom of having fanzines available for "The Usual", a privileged form of barter. Fanzines obtainable for "The Usual" will accept your own fanzine, a letter of comment, an article, artwork, or other creative contributions in lieu of tawdry cash. It is the most common system for circulating fanzines. Mike Glicksohn says *File 770* is the only fanzine he pays money to receive; go thou and do likewise.

● **ANSIBLE**, David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks., RG1 5AU UK. 5/\$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct., Hempstead NY 11550.

● **ANVIL**, BSFC c/o Charlotte Proctor, 8325 7th Ave. South, Birmingham, AL 35206. The usual, or \$6/year.

● **CHUCH**, Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen, 144 Plashet Grove, London E6 1AB, UK. Available by editorial whim.

● **DASFAX**, DASFA, c/o Don C. Thompson, 3745 W. 81st Place, Westminster, CO 80030. The usual, or \$5/year.

● **THE DILLINGER RELIC**, Arthur Hlavaty, PO Box 52028, Durham, NC 27717. Available for \$1/copy, arranged trade, or letter of comment.

● **FILE 770**, Mike Glyer, 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401. Available for 5/\$4.

● **FOSFAX**, FOSFA, PO Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233. Monthly. Subscription \$9/year.

● **FUCK THE TORIES**, Availability: trades to all 3 editors, letters of comment, material. Valma Brown & Leigh Edmonds, PO Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608 Australia; Terry Hughes, 6205 Wilson Blvd. #102, Falls Church, VA 22044; Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, UK.

● **INSTANT MESSAGE**, NESFA, PO Box G, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge, MA 02139-0910. NESFA's subscribing membership is \$15 for one year. Published twice monthly (except December).

● **LAN'S LANTERN**, George "Lan" Laskowski, 55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013. The usual or \$2/copy.

● **THE MAD 3 PARTY**, Noreascon 3, PO Box 46, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge MA 02139-0910. 6/\$6.

● **MAPLE LEAF RAG** was published by Garth Spencer, 1296 Richardson St., Victoria, BC V8V 3E1 Canada and production editor Georges Giguere, 9645-84 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta T6C 1E7 Canada. The zine is now defunct.

● **THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW**, Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne VIC 3001 Australia. Available for the usual or 5/\$25 US.

● **NEOLOGY**, ESFACAS, Box 4071, Edmonton Alberta T6E 4S8 Canada. The usual, or \$8/year to out-of-town readers.

● **OTHER REALMS**, Chuq Von Rospach, 35111-F Newark Blvd., Suite 255, Newark, CA 94560. Available \$2 per copy, trade, contribution.

● **PULP**, Vinç Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN UK. Available for the usual.

● **SCIENCE FICTION FIVE YEARLY**, editor-in-chief Lee Hoffman, 401 Sunrise Trail NW, Port Charlotte, FL 33952. Availability uncertain.

● **STILL LIFE**, Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village St., Leeds LS4 2PR, UK. Available for the usual.

● **THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER**, published by FACT; edited by Pat Mueller, 618 Westridge, Duncanville TX 75116. Available for the usual, or 6/\$6.

● **THYME** Editorial address — Peter Burns & Roger Weddall, PO Box 273, Fitzroy 3065, Australia. 10/\$10 to US agent Mike Glyer, 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys, CA 91401.

● **TIGGER**, Marc Ortlieb, PO Box 215, Forest Hill VIC 313 Australia. Available for the usual.

● **TIMBRE**, Tim Jones, 20 Gillespie St., Dunedin, Aoteroa, New Zealand. The usual.

● **TIME AND AGAIN**, Dave Locke, 6828 Alpine Ave. #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236. The usual or \$3.

● **TNFF / TIGHTBEAM**, National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F), c/o Lola Andrew, PO Box 713, Webster City, IA 50595. Membership: \$8/year, includes subscriptions to both zines.

● **WAHF-FULL**, Jack Herman, Box 272 Wentworth Building, University of Sydney, Australia 2006. Available for the usual.

● **WEINSTEIN & GLYER'S DISCOUNT HOAXARAMA**, Elst Weinstein, 859 N. Mountain Ave. #18-G, Upland CA 91786. \$3.00.

● **WESTWIND**, NWSFS, PO Box 24207, Seattle, WA 98124. A subscription is part of a \$12.00 per year club membership.

● **WHIMSY**, Jeanne Gomoll, PO Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701. Available for letters of comment

originally published in File 770 #65, March 1987, by Mike Glyer.

THANK YOU GIRLS

by Christopher Priest

WHEN I WAS sixteen years old it was decided I was going to grow up to be a chartered accountant, and my parents therefore signed the necessary articles of indentureship with an accountancy firm in London. The system of articles as a hangover from Victorian days — it amounted to a form of middle-class slave labour — but it did mean that so long as the articles existed I could not be fired ... a state of affairs which quickly turned out to be to my advantage. I was never cut out for accountancy.

It soon transpired that there was an inbuilt grading system in the firm, based on the clients for whom we worked. The talented trainees were usually sent away to check the books of the most glamorous, profitable or powerful clients ... while at the other end of the scale, the ones who learned slowly were sent to the lowlier clients: paint factories, tobacconists, car breakers, and so on. At the very bottom of the grading system was the most unpopular client of all: a slate quarry in a town called Llanruth, in North Wales. The slate quarry — whose office was a squalid, unheated shed beneath an overhang of crumbling shale — was recognized by all the articulated clerks as a kind of tacit punishment.

By the time I was nineteen, in late 1962, I had become a regular visitor to North Wales, and the end of my accountancy career seemed inevitable. (In fact I survived until 1965, when the articles expired, but then I was promptly sacked.) I was fairly phlegmatic about my doomed career; I was already much more interested in becoming a writer, and the fact that I spent every winter in Llanruth at least moved me into a fresh environment,

one that always promised to be more interesting than in fact it ever was.

The trouble with being in Llanruth — aside from the shed in the quarry — was that there was almost nothing to do in the evenings. There were really only two activities open to us: one was to stay in the hotel bar, keep warm, and learn how to get drunk ... and the other was to set forth in search of girls. I have never had a great liking for alcohol, and when I was nineteen my sexual conquests were the sole province of the imagination. Even so, of the two possibilities the latter was the more interesting to me, but my luck remained bad. If there were any girls in Llanruth I never seemed to see them. I usually ended up in the hotel bar with the other articulated clerks, nursing a glass of lager and lime, and trying to look as if I was enjoying myself. In those long winter evenings in Llanruth, time hung heavy.

During the visit in 1962 I was working with a recent recruit to the firm: a young lad from Essex called Tim. Tim was a year younger than me: he was tall, slim, had cool blue eyes and a shock of fair hair. He was distinctly interested in girls, and they in him, but the scarcities of Llanruth would have tested even Casanova. He and I made a few hopeful ventures together into the icy, deserted streets, but his luck was no better than mine and we soon resigned ourselves to long bored evenings in the bar, bragging dishonestly (at least in my case) about past conquests.

During one of these sessions we fell happily into conversation with Alison, the prettiest of the hotel recep-

tionists. Alison, unattainable within her protective shells of job, formal hotel costume, aloof manner and — most significantly — engagement ring, had always resisted our desperate flirting, but off-duty she was friendly enough. When she learnt that we were going to have to spend the coming weekend in Llanruth (the firm was too mean to pay our expenses back to London, except every now and again) she pointed out that there was going to be a dance in the Town Hall on the Saturday evening.

This is perhaps the place to explain that Tim and I were victims of a peculiar adolescent contradiction. Although we were going crazy with the need to meet girls, we were both from the London area. To us, Britain was a country divided in half by a west-east line that ran about five miles north of London. In short, Tim and I were young snobs: we believed ourselves to be sophisticates from the big city, and although we were not choosy about girls we felt that some methods of meeting them were beneath our dignity. We had heard about the dance on Saturday, and had even briefly discussed whether or not to go to it, but in the end had decided that the annual dance of the Llanruth Young Farmers' Association was not for us.

Alison's news, though, that she might be there, plus a tantalizing hint that her fiance might *not*, did suddenly put it into a different light.

When the weekend came we spent most of the Saturday lounging around, but in the evening we put on our business suits and headed for the Town Hall. From the street outside we could hear a local pop group grinding amateurishly through a Gene Pitney number, but as we each paid our two shillings and sixpence, and walked in, they finished this and began massacring a Shadows instrumental. The dance was being held in the central hall, a high, grim room, with paintings of past mayors in their robes of office, and wooden commemorative tablets carved with the names of war dead. For the occasion of the Young Farmers' dance, the hall had been festooned with a handful of balloons. No one was dancing.

Our arrival in this dispiriting room caused a number of immediate reactions, not the least in us.

From our point of view there was a remarkable discovery: the place was *full of girls*, dozens of them, all ages and shapes and sizes, crowding along the edges of the dance floor, their existence in Llanruth hitherto unsuspected. Tim and I exchanged a glance of genuine surprise and anticipation. A small group of young men had gathered in a defensive crowd around a makeshift bar set up at one end of the dance floor. They were ostentatiously ignoring the girls, drinking heavily, bracing themselves for some kind of blundering advance towards the end of the evening. They must also have noticed us, but pretended not to.

Meanwhile our entrance was causing a visible reaction amongst our own area of interest: a ripple of whispering, giggling and barely concealed stares passed along the lines of unattended girls.

Feeling very self-conscious, but also rather flattered and encouraged, Tim and I went to the bar for drinks. Here we quickly realized that we had imagined none of all this: there was a wave of mute but entirely tangible hostility from the men. Once we had obtained our drinks we quickly retreated to the dance floor, where we felt safer.

Aside from the fact we were strangers in town, it was not difficult to work out why we were causing such a stir. Although every girl in the hall was dressed for the occasion, the men all appeared to have come to the dance straight from the fields. Several of them were wearing muddy rubber boots, and more than a few were unshaven and still in their working clothes. Tim and I, by contrast, were wearing dark suits tailored in the narrow Italian style then fashionable: we had button-down shirts, straight slim ties and trendily pointed shoes. Ironically, these were our own ordinary working clothes, but to judge by the way the girls were still staring at us it seemed that for once we were in the right job.

Tim and I consulted briefly and quietly, glancing back nervously at the bar, from where menacing looks were now coming with alarming frequency. We found we were in total agreement on two important subjects: we knew we could have the pick of any of the girls in the room ... but also that our lives were in danger.

We quickly selected the two girls we most liked the look of (no time for anything more subtle than superficial appearance), and moved in on them without delay. We had a couple of dances with them, then the four of us decided to leave before any trouble began. All thoughts of the engaged Alison were entirely forgotten. We waited nervously while the girls found their coats, then left. Behind us, the pop group launched into a hesitant version of Cliff Richard's *Living Doll*.

The girls' names were Liz and Melanie. They were seventeen years old, and although they both came from Llanruth they worked during the weeks in Liverpool, where they shared an apartment. They said they had to return to Liverpool the following evening, and when we told them we were using a rented car they suggested we could drive them there. We agreed at once. The suggestion was underscored by a tacit, unambiguous promise of sexual fulfillment once we were inside the apartment.

Rather to our surprise, they seemed to be as interested in us as we were in them, much of this arising from the fact we were from London. They said they wanted to show us what was going on in Liverpool. They claimed it was now the most exciting city in Britain, that even London had nothing to compare with the "scene" there.

Tim and I, still trading heavily on our imagined London mystique, felt this was dubious, and said so.

"What kind of scene?" we said.

"There are clubs everywhere ... the Iron Gate, the Mardi Gras, the Cavern. And the groups! Have you ever heard of The Beatles?"

Suppressing our snorts of derision, we started to ex-

pand on the cosmopolitan wonders of London's night life (wonders which, needless to say, were unknown to us except by hearsay). The girls, perhaps surprisingly with hindsight, became very defensive. Yes, they knew the group's name sounded provincial and silly, but it was spelt with an "a", and if we heard them play we would find they were as good as anything London might have to offer.

"They've just signed a recording contract with Parlophone," they said.

We knew Parlophone: that was a minor label belonging to the EMI group. Most of their catalogue consisted of dance bands and novelty records. We remained unconvinced, but Liz and Melanie had a trump card.

"Acker Bilk used to play at the Cavern," they said.

At last we were impressed! Acker Bilk played traditional jazz, and Tim and I were jazz fans. *Stranger on the Shore*, a plaintive clarinet solo featuring Mr Bilk, had been in the Top Twenty for several weeks. While Tim and I reflected on this the girls pressed home their advantage. They said that the Beatles had just returned from a long stint in Germany, that they had already released their first single and were now playing the Cavern every Sunday lunchtime and evening as resident band. When we at last condescended to give them a chance, the girls bubbled with excitement, assuring us that one day the Beatles would be even more popular than Adam Faith. ("And Cliff Richard?" we said as a final test. "Possibly," they said.)

We saw the girls again the next afternoon. This time we managed to smuggle them up to our respective hotel bedrooms, where innocent transactions were opened, but not concluded. In the early evening the four of us set off in our rented Ford Anglia for Liverpool, full of our different expectations. Tim and I thought only of the apartment, whereas the two girls seemed to be obsessed with pop music to the exclusion of everything else.

The closer we approached the city the more their excitement increased. They talked incessantly about the Beatles, calling the boys in the band by their first names. Tim and I were not at all pleased with this: the intimacy with which the girls related to the band made us wonder just how well they might actually know them. They seemed, frankly, to be more interested in the Beatles than they were in us. At one point it occurred to me that we had been retained as unofficial emissaries from London, our sole function being that we would carry the message about the Beatles back to the capital. Quiet resentments grew: for us, the expedition to the Cavern was merely a detour on the way to the apartment. It was not an end in itself, as Liz and Melanie seemed more and more to think.

I drove the car through the centre of Liverpool, and Liz directed us to the warehouse district. The mean streets here were closed in by massive Victorian buildings, dark rectangles blocking the sky. Matthew street, where the Cavern was situated, was a narrow cobbled

alley between two of these high, ancient warehouses. I drove slowly along it, looking for somewhere to park. Suddenly, Liz, sitting beside me in the front passenger seat, let out a terrible cry.

"Stop the car! *Stop the car!*"

I braked at once. Liz wound down the window with frantic haste and yelled something to two young men walking down the alley. They came over to the car and leaned down by the window. They grinned in at us, cocky and self-confident. Liz was writhing with excitement, and Melanie clambered forward from the back seat. They both seemed to be breathing with a weird rasping noise. Although they were only a few inches away from me I could not make out a word of anything that was being said; noise was somehow being generated around us, without an apparent source. I saw one of the men kiss Liz, and Melanie thrust herself across Liz to the window, where she too was kissed.

Then Tim and I were remembered.

"George ... this is Chris, and this is Tim."

We shook hands coldly with this loutish interloper. He stared at us, grinning sardonically. "I like yer suit," he said, puzzling me considerably. The girls were firing questions — a new record? not going back to Germany are you? is it true about Pete? where do you buy your shirts? — but now the other one pushed George aside. He leaned through the window, kissed the girls, shook hands with us. "This is Paul. Chris, Tim...."

I revved up the engine, wanting to get away from these two saturnine youths, who were threatening to cut in our dates. I heard George say to Liz, "See you later," and paranoia coursed through me.

I drove the car around the next corner, and parked. The girls were in a state of shock.

Tim said, "Are those your boyfriends, then?"

To our amazement, the only response this got was two loud screams, in unison. Eventually one of them gasped, "Those were the Beatles! THE BEATLES! *George kissed me!* I can't believe it! *Aaargh!*" (And so on.)

By now as irritated with all this as I was, Tim said, "How about finding a pub?"

"They'll be *playing* in a few minutes!"

There was no arguing with this, so we locked up the car and headed back down Matthew Street, the girls hurrying us on by tugging us by the hands.

We reached a dark doorway, which was lit by a failing illuminated sign and guarded by two monstrous bouncers. We were informed the place was full, and no one else could be allowed inside. While the girls argued I felt a strong vibration coming up through the soles of my shoes, and I crouched down and touched the damp paving stones; the music from below was thudding like a jackhammer beneath the street. Then we were allowed past the doormen. We went through the doorway and down into what seemed like a hell of darkness, heat, humidity ... and noise. The air was thick with smoke and

sweat, the music cannoned off the walls and crashed up the staircase towards us. I gulped for breath as we went down, as if plunging panic-stricken into dark water with no known bottom. Peoples stood or squatted on the steps, and we stumbled past them in the narrow gloom. There was a small table at the turn of the stairs; we paid the entrance fees, the girls signing us in as guests. A second staircase led down into the cellar itself, and here we had to push through the crowd to get near the stage. All the while the girls tugged us on, determined to be at the front.

The Cavern consisted of three short tunnels under the warehouse, connected by occasional gaps or breaks in the brickwork. The stage was at the furthest end of the central tunnel: a tiny platform about nine or ten feet wide. A few seats for the audience were in front of this, but most people stood up in an untidy crush. The place was obviously never intended for human occupancy: the curved ceilings were only about eight feet from the floor at their highest point, and because this was where most people wanted to dance we were crowded to the edges. Neither Tim nor I could stand erect. There were very few lights, and no ventilation: condensation literally poured down the ceilings and walls, or dripped on us.

The band on stage as we arrived turned out to be another local group. It took Liz three attempts at shouting their name before we could register it: Gerry and the Pacemakers. Tim and I listened critically, then in the break between numbers gave our opinion. They were playing too loudly, we explained. If they turned down the volume a little, and didn't play so *fast*, then they might realize they weren't in tune.

Liz shrieked at me, "But they're *fab gear!*" She really said this; it was the first time I had ever heard the expression.

After a few more songs Gerry finished the set, and another band began setting up their instruments. This was the Red River Stompers, who played trad jazz. Tim and I instantly brightened; this was more like real music! But Liz and Melanie would have none of it. They pointed out that this was merely the interval act, and so together with about ninety per cent of the rest of the audience we trooped out of the Cavern and invaded the nearest pub. Meanwhile, the Red Rivers stomped their way into their lonely evolutionary niche.

Half an hour later we were back in the Cavern. By dint of determined manoeuvring, Liz and Melanie had taken us to the furthest, most airless end of the right-hand tunnel. We were no more than three feet away from the stage, which was on the other side of one of the gaps in the brickwork. The pressure of bodies forced me against the counter of the place where coats were checked in; the girl who ran this was leaning out so she could see the stage, her shoulder pressing against mine and her ball of fuzzy red hair making my face itch. Liz told me she was called Priscilla White, a Cavern notable. The crowd was surging to and fro, pushing against us. Imme-

diately next to my head was one of the main loudspeakers, giving out loud bangs and buzzes as instruments were connected up. The atmosphere of excitement and anticipation was infectious; Tim and I removed our ties.

The Beatles had been on-stage for some time before I realized it was them: I had thought they were the people who tuned the instruments, or checked the electrical wiring. They looked casual, bored, paid no attention to the crowd pushing forward at the front of the stage. There was some banter going on with the drummer, whose cap had been knocked off by one of the others, and carried around on the neck of a guitar. Girls at the front tried to grab the hat. Then, suddenly, the clowning was over: one of the guitarists stamped his foot three times and they went straight into *Sweet Little Sixteen*. My head, a few inches from the core of the loudspeaker, felt as if it had been clouted with a mailed fist. In galvanic response I craned forward to see the group better: the facade of lazy indifference had gone, and they were belting out the music with a conviction I had never seen in any live group before. The sheer aggression, the driving beat, the explosion of movement and noise, the fabulous, primitive racket... it hit me like a blast of heat from a furnace.

When the number finished the audience began screaming and whistling. The guitarist who had started it all stepped forward, and belowed into the microphone. "*Shamupp!*" Miraculously, silence fell. Liz whispered to me, "That's John, he's the—" He heard her speaking, we were so close to him, and he yelled at her to shut up. Liz sighed, and pressed her body gratefully against me.

A second number began, one I didn't recognize. The audience obviously did, and hooted and whistled enthusiastically. (Later, Liz told me it was the best-selling single in Liverpool, and was in the bottom half of the national Top Thirty: *Love Me Do*.) *Long Tall Sally* followed, in a renewed blast of fiery rock and roll.

John Lennon dominated everything between numbers, but whenever the band was playing he receded into the group identity. Like everyone there, I was thrilled and intimidated by Lennon's raucous threats and announcements, but when the music started I stared in a kind of wild trance at the whole group. Gerry and the Pacemakers had been loud, raw, chummy and incompetent; the Beatles were about twenty-five thousand feet higher in the sky. They looked aggressive and uncouth, they lit cigarettes between numbers, they abused the audience. But they were also highly professional: the songs were well rehearsed and played, they had a conscious group image, they were totally at ease with the audience they so roundly insulted. They wore white shirts, leather waistcoats and trousers, heeled boots. They had their hair combed forward. (*Heeled boots! Hair combed forward!*) They grinned at each other as they played, moved their bodies in time with the music, shook their heads when they chorussed. The overall ef-

fect was to create a feeling such as I had never known before. It was a blend of contradictions. Part of me deeply resented them: I wanted to resist the powerful effect their music had on me, I disliked the way they intimidated me, I was jealous of the way they made the girls' eyes glow.... But at the same time I could not stop staring at them, I wanted the music never to stop, I felt a close rapport with them, an identification with what they seemed, obscurely, to stand for. It was all potent stuff, incomprehensible to me in the heat of the moment, and all I could do was stand there in silent rapture, feeling the music battering the side of my head.

The Beatles closed their set with a second rendition of *Love Me Do*, and encored with *Twist and Shout*. Lennon's screams drilled painfully into me. Then it was all over and we reeled into the rainy street, exhausted, deafened, damp with sweat. None of us said anything. We found the car, drove the girls to their apartment near Port Sunlight and parked under a streetlamp opposite the Kelvinator factory. There was a blue neon sign on the factory wall, glaring down into the car; with our hands and faces livid in its light we mauled the girls half-heartedly for a few minutes, but the Beatles had changed everything. When the girls went inside without inviting us to join them, neither Tim nor I could have cared less. We drove back to Llanruth along the hilly roads, and we talked about the Beatles. We were hoarse from the smoke and the shouting, but we kept laughing.

Two days later, our ears still ringing from the evening in the Cavern, we drove back to Liverpool, picked up the girls and went in search again of the Beatles. We toured several of the clubs, but it was Tuesday evening and the Beatles weren't playing anywhere. We settled for the Swingin' Blue Jeans who were playing at the Mardi Gras, and we sat in the balcony overlooking the half-empty dance floor, drinking beer and talking about the Beatles, talking about the Beatles.

It was December 1962.

We never saw the girls again. At the end of the week Tim and I returned to London for the Christmas break. I spent Christmas at home with my parents, and one evening I went with my sister to a party at the local jazz club. I tried describing the Cavern to several of my friends in the club, but in those days jazz and pop music did not mix socially. The familiar, predictable cadences of jazz made me restless to hear the wilder assaults of live rock and roll.

When I returned to the London office at the beginning of January, Tim had already been sent to check the accounts of a client in another part of England. I was due to return to Llanruth the following week; I drifted through the days, planning a new assault on the Liverpool scene. At the end of the Friday afternoon Tim came into the office to pick up his pay. He saw me at my desk and came straight over to see me.

"Their new record's out," he said, no preamble being necessary. He showed it to me. It was called *Please*

Please Me. We sat and talked about the Beatles, suddenly as exhilarated as we had been after the Cavern. Other people came over to find out what was going on, so we told them, the flame of zeal in our eyes.

"The *Beatles!*" they cried scornfully. "What kind of name is that?"

We said, lamely, "One day they'll be bigger than Elvis."

Still they mocked, but we were sure.

I called in at a record store on my way home, and tried to buy a copy of the new single. The woman in the shop had never heard of it, and when I spelled the name for her she simply smiled. I made her look in the Parlophone catalogue, but the only one listed was *Love Me Do*. At a second shop I was more lucky; I bought one of the three copies they had in stock. I carried the record home, thinking it was the most valuable thing I had ever possessed. I played it as soon as I was home, volume on full, ear pressed against the tiny loudspeaker of my Dancesette portable, trying to recapture the experience in the Cavern. I played the record again and again until my irate father threatened to break it in half. Seven weeks later, *Please Please Me* reached number 1.

Seven months later, with the entire country in the grip of Beatlemania, Tim died of cancer. I went to his funeral with a group of people from the office, stood dry-eyed as he was buried. He was still only eighteen years old. I had never really known him very well; he had just happened to be there at the time, as I had been there for him, and all we had in common were the Beatles. We had hardly seen each other again before he went into hospital, but whenever we met we talked about the Beatles, as unrelenting in our interest as ever. For a time we had sincerely believed we were the only two people outside Liverpool who knew what was about to break on the world. But even this had changed: by the time of Tim's death in August everyone was obsessed with the Beatles, everyone had a story to tell. Tim and I had simply been there a few weeks before anyone else.

I did cry in 1980, when John Lennon was killed. I had never known Lennon at all, not even to shake his hand resentfully through the window of a rented car, but his death was a shocking personal blow, one I shared with millions of others. I never really understood why the Beatles had the effect on me they did; looking back, it seems almost to have had religious qualities, but at the time it was simpler than that. I loved the music, and admired the four people who made it. It was an intensely private feeling, one that was in no measure diminished just because millions of other people happened to feel the same way.

And, of course, feelings changed with time. The early days, when the word was spreading: no one today can imagine what it was like to play a Beatles record to someone who had never heard one before. The amazed rejoicing as the Beatles succeeded beyond the wildest imaginings. The growing sense of disillusion as they were

adopted by the media, by governments, even by parents. The sense of betrayal as they succumbed to drugs and the Maharishi. The feelings of disgust as the businessmen squabbled, the con men moved in, the names were called, the lawsuits flew around.... But through it all the marvelous songs, the unique sound, the witty remarks the candour, the refreshing sense that whatever else might be going wrong the four individuals were still there, hanging on. A personal identification with the Beatles survived all this, even with Lennon, bombed out on drugs and made ludicrous by Yoko, ending up as a sad broken ghost of what he once had been. I trace my own sense of identification right back to the evening in the Cavern, when I had first felt that obscure sense that they stood for something. Even though they dazzled my girlfriend and mocked my suit, they were somehow there on my side, saying things that would never enter my head, living a life I could only fantasize about, yet still manag-

ing to speak for me and make me feel I was a part of it all. It became a truism that the Beatles changed the lives of a generation, but however trite it is I know my own life was fundamentally altered by that evening in a cellar in Liverpool. The miracle of the Beatles was that they could wreak the same transformation in millions, yet leave everyone with a sense of individual gain. They will never happen again.

"Thank You Girls" originally appeared in slightly different form in Chuch, published by Rob Hansen and Avedon Carol.

LETTER FROM LONDON

JULY 1985

by Avedon Carol

ONCE, WHEN I WAS on my way home from the Memphis Blues Festival, I met a gentleman who, I suppose, was trying to be polite but blowing it miserably. He looked to be in his sixties and a very normal, *nice* sort of man. For a bigot. He had decided that I was pretty nice for a Yankee, and he followed this revelation with a sort of question: "You're not Jewish, are you?"

"No, I'm Armenian," I said, without acknowledging that unstated indictment of Jews. I was being polite, you see.

"Right, you're Gypsy, right? You're not Jewish." I gave him the benefit of the doubt — maybe he *thought* I said "Romanian."

"No, I'm Armenian," I said again.

"Yeah, right, you're not Jewish — you're Gypsy, right?" He thinks he's letting me off the hook, eh?

"No, actually, I'm Jewish."

The guys in the pub in Central London were not nice, not gentlemen, and not even close to sixty. They'd had a few, too, and they sort of barged in on my exchange with the bartender to tell me — in geographical terms that meant nothing to me — that I was Jewish. I suspected, though, so I pressed them to repeat the information in more comprehensible terms. "You know — are you a Yid?" Clearly they did not treat "Yid" as a complimentary term.

"I'm Armenian."

"Oh. I guess that was an insult then, huh?"

You stupid bastard. You stinking pasty-faced piece of crap. "No. An insult would have been to call me..." *there are four or five of them, and they are all at least a*

head taller than I am, and they've been drinking, so I say, "Turkish." And they laugh, and I walk away with my change. It would have been an insult to call me "Aryan." It was an insult the minute you opened your stinking mouth and expected me to play along with your creepy values. It was an insult for you to think I'd share your idiotic belief that it was insulting to be mistaken for Jewish. Thank god no one will ever mistake me for one of you.

One might expect that sort of thing to happen instead in the neighborhood I now live in, only a block or three from the West Ham Football Grounds where, it is commonly known, the National Front likes to do a little recruiting. It's a down-market neighborhood full of cheaply-clad people rushing back and forth around the more attractively dressed Indian women in their colorful traditional garments. The Indian women stop on streetcorners and talk to each other while the breeze ripples their saris. They do not rush. They enjoy the socializing of the streets. I often think that these women must constantly invent reasons to go out shopping so that they can congregate in front of the chemist's shop or at the Queens Market.

The Market is wonderful. Everything is about a block away from me, the Market closest of all, and on Thursdays every yard of it seems to be covered with carts and stands selling fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, fresh cream, fresh fish, and every kind of cosmetic and household item. There are dresses and underwear and bangles and beads and spice shops and bakeries — all within a block or two of my flat. On Mondays there are only a couple of carts at the Market, mostly selling items which hold

no attraction for me. On Tuesdays there are carts full of veggies, and a few people selling pantyhose and eye shadow and such. But on Thursdays, ah! What they call "round lettuce" (and I still think of as "Boston lettuce"), fresh and green and sweet for a mere 15p a head. And the prettiest little tomatoes, too big to be cherry tomatoes and just the right size for salads, and not a hot-house faker among them. The garlic is fresh and juicy and huge bags of peppercorns can be found easily enough. And on Thursdays and Fridays, the fishmonger has those wonderful little fake crabsticks I usually only see at sushi bars at home. And you can often find some fairly nice blouses, skirts — or even suits and dresses — for a single pound.

For anything more exotic than everyday things and staples, I must venture away from my self-contained little community. London Transport issues these wonderful flash passes (day passes, week-long passes, month-long passes, and annual passes) for the tubes and buses which create an illusion of freedom and free travel (well, I paid £328 for a year of this "free" travel) that make that easy. One block from home is the tube station, and one stop down I can walk or grab a bus to the Safeway. This is not a very big Safeway and I only go there when in desperate need of Ritz Crackers and smoked mussels. But I can get to South Ealing with my season ticket, too, and Linda Pickersgill promises that if I brave the lengthy journey across town, she will show me the *big* Safeway, where they sell jalapenos. Ealing is not so down-market as East Ham.

Sometimes we go to Ealing to be fannish, but mostly we go into town. We go to the One Tun, of course, which is almost unbearable if the weather isn't good. There seem to be about a thousand people, cramming in like sardines, every one with a glass in hand — and no escape from people you don't feel you have anything to say to. Sometimes, despite the rain and the cold, you just have to squeeze your way out the door and join the handful of desperate types who have preceded you. You might find Pam Wells gasping for breath after her own struggle, listening to Gregory growling. Greg likes to growl about a number of things, not least among them Rob Hansen's appallingly well-balanced behavior. "Grump grump grump," says Gregory.

"What's he on about?" says Rob.

"He's on about, you know, existential angst and all that."

"Oh, everyone has existential angst," says Rob.

"You have never had existential angst!" says our exasperated Gregory, emphasizing every word. We all laugh, since this is true. Gregory and I like to sit in pubs wondering how Hansen can be so bloody happy and well-balanced all the time. "Look at him," Greg growled at me as Rob approached us outside Forbidden Planet one day. "He even *walks* like he's well-balanced."

When the weather in London is nice, it's beautiful. If the weather happens to grace a One Tun night, you can

find the exuberant Arfer Thomson grinning impishly in the street, often in the company of Vinç, who appears to be carrying the world on his shoulders. Even so, he smiles broadly as Arfer bobs up and down joking around with us all. On such an evening, the road outside the Tun seems to hold an air of carnival, with each little cluster of people seeming like another ride or game or concession. Here is the KenTruFandom ride, here is the Gregory Pickersgill shooting gallery, there is the Joe Nicholas Fortune Teller's booth, and so on. Judith Hanna is trying to get people to pay up the money they pledged to sponsor her on her march. Dave Langford is leaning over and cupping his hand behind his ear in an attempt to hear what we mere mortals have to say. Rob Holdstock is everywhere, as ever. Chris Priest never quite seems to get his balance. Abi Frost sips languidly at a glass of wine. Kate Davies arranges things with Pam Wells. And so on, and so on...

Once a month, the women's group meets at the Griffin. The best thing about the Griffin is that it is on Villiers Street, which is one of my very favorites. I just like the look of it, and anyway, it is a very short street which I usually enter from Embankment station (which is my favorite station because it is convenient to everything and it's on the District Line and if you meet people there you can find them easily), and the Griffin is in the middle of the street. There's a greengrocer's cart there with California avocados cheap, too. And it's fun to sit around with Pam and Lilian and Lin and Linda and Maureen and Kate and them and just, y'know, discuss the fate of the world and stuff like that that women do when men aren't around to hear it. "Why are men so *boring!*?" wails Lilian.

"Because their lives have no meaning."

When the pubs close I feel perfectly safe going home by myself on the tube. This is one of the miracles of London — I no longer have that tensed-up feeling that has to create a barrier between myself and the world when I am alone, because there are no cat-calls, no wolf-hows, no creeps who grab me in the street. I'm free!

Except that we don't go to the pub up the street (yes, *that* Duke of Edinburgh) because of the "racial incident" there. And when we went to the Queen across the way, the barkeep started yelling at some of his clientele for being a bunch of "stupid Pakis." And it wasn't even *in* my neighborhood that those creeps asked me if I was a "Yid." It was in a nice neighborhood. At a "nice" pub. And you see, it doesn't make any difference at all to me whether I'm Jewish or not.

I don't mind people mistaking me for Jewish, even the Nazis. What I mind is the constant reminder that people have these attitudes in the first place. I suppose I could prove I was Caucasian (a real one — not an Aryan who misuses the word) if I had to, but why should I, and what if I couldn't? And I shouldn't have to prove I'm not communist (and what if I was?) or gay (you wanna make something of it, punk?) or Catholic or

Atheist or anything else. People have been mistaking me for Jewish all my life. It's never bothered me, although I know there is a certain sort of slime around who would just as soon kill a Jew as look at her. Or a commie (which I've been called) or a lesbian (ditto — before I even knew what the word meant). Whenever someone doesn't like you, they are likely to call you by whatever label the witchhunters are calling witches this century, in the hope that the witchhunters will come after you. I don't resent being classed with the witches — the commie dyke kikes. I am *enraged* that the witchhunters and their sympathizers exist, let alone have the temerity to expect me to play along with their game. I don't mind that people innocently mistake me for Jewish — because all us Mediterranean types look the same to them — or if someone is perceptive enough to figure out what group

of witches I *do* belong to. But I do very much mind the people who think they're better than us witches. And here, in England, I am faced with constant reminders that those people not only exist but don't realize that their sin is a lot dirtier — dirty enough not to parade around in the light of day. Goddamn right I'm a Yid. And a Dyke. And a Commie. I'm a pinko dyke kike and *proud*. What're you, some kinda *Nazi*?

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NOTES FROM THE OUTSIDE — A BERRY ODYSSEY

by Eric Mayer

WHENTHE lithe young woman slipped into the bus seat beside me I couldn't suppress a smile of pleasure. Don't get me wrong — I don't look for brief encounters on my way home from the office and I'm not partial to the dreadlocks she sported anyway. But the girl lacked girth. When you're skinny enough that you resemble a folded paper doll when you sit down you attract those commuters who need the extra space you leave — and then some — so I'm always thrilled to sit beside anyone who wouldn't put a medium sized brachiosaurus in the shade.

It's easier to turn fanzine pages when you're not pinned against the wall and the fanzine pages I'd been turning for the past week — all 184 of them in John Berry's *Retreat From Mogonissi* — were among the most enjoyable I'd ever read. It had been quite a week. While the Number 10 in Seabreeze idled in front of Midtown Plaza I'd climbed mountains in Ireland; while it bumped up Portland I raced around Melbourne in a road rally; when it pulled abreast of the imposing plaster poodle that graces the lawn of the Poodle Shop — just past my bus stop — I was observing through John's practiced eyes the effects of "gravity grappling with centrifugal force" at a topless beach at Makyammos. Luckily, the bus was no more than a block past my house when I was brought to my senses by two aged French ladies, well into their seventies, who "giggling coily to one another, stripped completely and lay back on their towels" looking as though "they'd just fallen out of a starling's nest."

Then the girl sat down beside me and ruined it all. The strange artifact I was chuckling over — too large for a magazine, but not a proper book — must have caught her attention.

"Did you type all that?" she asked, sounding astounded.

"No. An Englishman did," I stammered, volunteering extraneous (not to say dumfoundingly irrelevant) information as I tend to do when caught by surprise.

She gave me a wary look. "Well, that sure is a lot of typing. I'm sure glad I didn't have to type all that."

I was struck. Struck and hurt. She had not asked whether I "wrote" the pages, a feat I would gladly have taken credit for, but whether I had "typed" them. To think that she could have mistaken my sensitive writer's face for that of a common typist! Had the barb been aimed at John instead, I wondered? He had been describing one of those attractive young women who have thrown themselves in his path across five continents, or whom he is constantly stumbling over at any rate (I'm not sure if it's the same thing) with the result that he has not yet made it to South America or Antarctica. I can't recall whether it was the Senior Girl Guides in the railroad car couchette or the scantily clad blonde, refusing the coat proffered by one of the three elderly, distinguished looking gentlemen trailing her down Avenue B Gabriel. In any case, it occurred to me that the young woman's inexplicable remark might have arisen because she was a feminist (do they wear dreadlocks?) who had taken offense at this "sexist" material and had hit upon the typing remark by way of paraphrasing Truman Capote's withering like, to the effect that a certain book was not "writing" but "typing".

Then again, maybe she did think I looked like a typist. How could anybody dislike *Retreat From Mogonissi*?

You might know John Berry as the ATom (Arthur Thompson) cartoon character who seems to accompany nearly all John's fanzine articles, the goggle eyed fellow with the impossible moustache — the moustache

toward which the artist who made it famous has maintained the same expression of bewilderment over the course of more than a quarter century — the moustache which John himself admits was once large (as most definitely not portrayed) but which is now somewhat ragged and grayish, as might be expected of any moustache which has been drooping about fandom for more than 30 years.

Or maybe you know John Berry and “The Irish” John Berry — this despite the fact he is English and has been around Fandom for considerably longer than the fan who, through no fault of his own, Americans have not thought to nickname “The Seattle” John Berry.

The confusion as to John’s nationality may be understandable. Though he has worked since 1975 for the Hertfordshire police in England he was for 27 years a member of the police force in Northern Ireland and was closely associated with Irish Fandom. In fact his first article appeared in 1954, in *Hyphen*.

In 1956 John began to publish — with ATom who co-edited the first 10 issues — the popular *Retribution*, a zine which parodied, in an affectionate manner, such things as detective stories, fandom and fans, and out of which grew The Goon Defective Agency. In *A Wealth of Fable* Harry Warner describes how John Berry and Arthur Thompson as “perfectly matched a fanzine publishing pair as Gilbert and Sullivan had been in a different field”, an observation that can be attested to by anyone who has enjoyed the pairing of a Berry article and an ATom illo — although, surprisingly, John and Arthur first met in 1956 and did not meet again until 1981.

Between 1956 and 1961 John’s output was prodigious — 16 issues of *Retribution*, 16 of *Pot Pourri* and 9 of *Veritas*, not to mention several large one shots and countless articles for other faneds. It has been reported that he once produced 20,000 words of the travel report later published as *The Goon Goes West* in a period of four days spent with New York fans during his 1959 American trip — this despite such mild distractions as being driven out onto the Bowery in the middle of the night by a plague of cockroaches!

Given such production — and determination — it isn’t surprising that John Berry has, by his own count, published 1000 articles in fanzines and written over 1,000,000 words. And his efforts have hardly been geared exclusively to fanzines. He is the editor of *Fingerprint Whorld*, a professional, international, journal for fingerprint experts (which he is) and has written hundreds of published articles on fingerprints, not to mention not yet published short stories, spy novels and sf books.

Though John’s fanzine appearances trailed off, by his standards at least, in the sixties he continued to appear in fanzines into the seventies (in Eric Bentcliffe’s *Triode* for instance and Mike Gorra’s *Random*) and began to return with a vengeance (if not with *Retribution*) with a regular column — “Berry-Center” — in *DNQ* published by Taral and Victoria Vayne.

In one editor’s opinion, “Fandom hasn’t responded particularly well to Berry’s revival.” If this is the case — and it is surely true that any number of lesser, but newer writers, have garnered far more plaudits than John during the past few years — it may be partly because, as John observes, “I have noticed a transition from fannish writing to the point where although I appear in quite a number of fanzines, none of the articles are fannish in nature.” It might also be due to the fact that John Berry is nominally a member of British Fandom, a vocal part of which has, during the past decade, taken it as a matter of faith that Greg Pickersgill spit Fandom up whole, on October 2, 1972 at 9 A.M. — complete with the fossilized remains of Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe and The Wheels of IF just for verisimilitude...

Although one might hope — or dread — that fandom will storm along forever, there’s no doubt that its individual parts are ephemeral. Fanzines are short lived and limited in circulation; fans themselves have traditionally blazed briefly across the fannish heavens before falling, cold and inert, into the darkness of mundania. Even when fans remain in fandom for long periods their creative careers are usually shorter than their fannish lives. More often than not, once a fan has attained a certain amount of recognition/awards/perks he hits the fannish celebrity circuit which leaves him only enough time and energy to produce the occasional, overpraised, bit of work — just enough to justify his continued fannish status. (Compare, for instance, the creative output of TAFF winners before and after their win.)

Thus, John Berry’s feat in making a creative contribution to fandom over the course of four decades is a rare one and if fandom had a Hall of Fame for career achievement, as baseball does, rather than just handing out yearly MVPs, he would take his place there along with such other long-time stalwarts as Harry Warner and Bob Tucker. *Retreat From Mogonissi*, published in 20 copies by John in 1984, offers an overview of one facet of John’s outstanding career.

ATom has supplied the front and back covers to the collection utilising his usual artistic wit and peerless design sense. In between we have, as John puts it in his introduction, “...110,000 words, written over a period of 40 years, describing my visits and holidays to 30 countries, usually accompanied by my intrepid wife Diane. We did not seek out the tourist enclaves, consequently we had many adventures and experiences which are described herein in my delicate and sensitive literary style, which I like to think is full of humour, whimsicality, and with a modicum of exaggeration thrown in for effect.”

In all there are 23 accounts, beginning with John jumping out of a Halifax over Scotland in 1945 (luckily for fandom he was a member of the parachute regiment) and concluding in a A. 300 Airbus somewhere over the Alps in 1984. The articles range from a 600 word sketch of an inflight encounter with a gnarled German frau and

an inscrutable young Chinese girl named Miss Wong (really) to a 20,000 word odyssey through South Africa. The earlier articles, which tend to be shorter, are expertly framed snapshots of John's experiences while the later, longer articles are veritable photo-albums full of such shots.

As travel writing the accounts are not, as John suggests in his introduction, what you might expect. He does sketch in some normal tourist information and each selection has a deft touch of local atmosphere, but John is more inclined to observe people — both the natives and fellow tourists — and to note minutiae which the professional travel writers often overlook. For John also gives the reader the sense (and nonsense) of "getting there" by cramped buses, late trains and airplanes of which he is a connoisseur.

John admits he has been criticised for including "superfluous details about the fundamental functions of the body." In other words, if you would like to be forewarned (as I would) about toilet facilities on the Blue Sky Express, or the flooded bathrooms of Corfu or the decidedly rustic but convenient lavatory on the other side of the stone wall in Valencia do Minho, Portugal, this is the travel collection for you. I found this detail fascinating, since I've always thought that all that stood between me and world travel — aside from money — was the size of my bladder, an impression reinforced one agonizing afternoon visit to Manhattan during which unlimited beer at Beefstake Charlie's was followed by the unlimited line at the Empire State Building where the only toilets were at the top. If this is not up your alley there is similar detail on many other topics like obtaining lemonades in foreign climes and techniques for safely observing German tourists.

In his introduction to John's 1958 collection, *The Complete Fan*, Bob Shaw called him "The man who invented the scientific use of exaggeration", but while John's style might have seemed exaggerated compared to the fanwriting of 1958, today it seems almost understated. John, after all, says that while he has indeed exaggerated the descriptive aspect in his writing he has never invented anything — a statement one suspects few of today's masters of hyperbole could truthfully make.

Then too, there is a difference between producing funny writing, as Bob does, and writing funny — an approach often taken by fanwriters who attempt to wring humour (not to mention interest, or even logic) out of nonhumorous (or boring or illogical) material by sheer force of verbiage. Although a Dave Langford may sometimes pull this off few fanwriters have his ability. (Even Walt Willis, one of fandom's best, fared less well in his early, pun encrusted essays.) Writing, like drawing, requires 90% observation for every 10% execution. Before he writes, the writer must first see what is worth writing about and clever words (or lots of words) are no substitute. "My seemingly mundane work of solving crimes by fingerprints," explains John, "has enabled me to have a

sort of 360 degree radar when I consider things ... searching for imponderables." So, while lesser writers flail away with their noses in their typewriters, striving desperately to force humour unto whatever comes to mind, John observes, extracts from his experience the real humour, the precise things that make a situation funny, and emphasizes them — just enough! Scientifically, as it were! And maybe because he is observing what is going on around him rather than projecting words onto experiences, his humour is self-deprecating, lacking the egotistical bombast so much in vogue.

If we're lucky some enterprising publisher will make *Retreat From Magonissi* generally available in the near future and fandom can incorporate into its collective consciousness the collection's innumerable classic accounts — John being pursued, in a downpour, around a nearly deserted beach at Lyme by a sodden but desperate and tenacious band of Morris dancers — unwittingly earning the fawning gratitude of the head of a delegation to a communist convention in Portugal, much to the amazement and consternation of John's fellow travelers — scoring the winning goal for The Rest of the World against England in a hotel soccer match, despite his best efforts, on a spectacular header assisted by Manuel the crippled waiter — or the snapshot, taken at a police post on the border between South Africa and Mozambique, of Captain Taute, "The Terrier", carousing drunkenly long after the braai (bar-be-que), blasting a transistor radio at the armed guards across the hostile border, singing "Carry Me Back to Old Transvaal".

And what is John Berry up to now, having already produced one of the finest bodies of work, and in *Retreat From Magonissi* one of the best single publications in fandom's history? No, he's not busy collecting kudos. He's pursuing his discovery that our sub-primate ancestors had fingerprints 55,000,000 years ago, and researching ridge detail in sea shells; reading; listening to Ravel and Gershwin and Elgar, traveling ... and, yes, writing. "I've just concluded my write-up about my trip to Romania, and quite fascinating things happened to me..." he reports. And what does John think about his spectacular fannish career? "I think writing for fanzines has been a tremendous apprenticeship for my writing," he says.

We should all be such apprentices...

NOTE: More about fifties fandom, John Berry and Irish Fandom can be found in Harry Warner's *A Wealth of Fable*, from which some of the information in the above article was taken. *Galah Event*, which appears as a chapter of *Retreat From Magonissi*, is available as a separate publication from Taral, 1812-415 Willowdale Ave., Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5B4, Canada. Ask him for details. — Eric Mayer

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“I’M OVER HEEEEEERE, GERHARDT!”

by Jeanne Gomoll

MY GRANDFATHER, Donald Bohn, had been gravely ill for three months, but was still living in his own home when he died in late February of this year. A week before his death, he began counting down the days left until his birthday, saying that he was determined to make it until he turned 86 years old that Saturday. He died on his birthday, just as he predicted.

Actually, it was probably a tribute to the diligence with which he followed doctors’ orders that he lived as long as he did. He’d survived a heart attack and bypass surgery during previous years, but he was a careful man, eating no more and nothing other than what his diet allowed. He always took his medication as prescribed.

My Grandfather was a careful man. When he was still well and would drive to my parents’ home for Sunday visits, he always left early because Sunday was his laundry day and no matter what the occasion, he kept to his schedule. Another day was for cleaning and another for grocery shopping. He wasn’t entirely inflexible, though: his general exception was that fishing superseded any other activity. However, when he wasn’t in his boat out on Lake Nagawaukee, he was on schedule. After Grandma died, he had become a dynamo of housekeeping perfection and an accomplished cook. The rooms of his house always smelled of cleaning fluids; everything had its place. As with all other aspects of his life, Grandpa settled on very definite ways of doing housework and would advise others on the “right” way to clean. Later, when he was too ill to maneuver a vacuum cleaner or drive a car, and my mother and her sisters and brother had begun to take turns caring for

him there, he would keep tabs on the way *they* did the chores. He’d correct and chastise them if they deviated from his methods.

Mom said that after Grandpa died that she and her sisters and brother had half jokingly proposed an appropriate epitaph for Grandpa’s tombstone:

He did it his way.

Anyone who knew him laughed appreciatively when they heard that suggestion.

Grandpa had been a domineering parent. There are stories told about Grandpa’s intractable disapproval of one or the other of his kids for acting against his wishes. Though there was an obviously close and loving bond between Grandpa and his children, there were also tense scenes enacted occasionally, reminders of past disagreements or still simmering misunderstandings. Grandpa could be called careful; he could also be called stubborn, dogmatic and prejudiced.

My mother sometimes commented on the irony of Grandpa’s and my relationship. She thought the situation was especially strange considering my sometimes dramatic rebellion against her own expectations, which — she would point out — were far less constraining than Grandpa’s had been on his own family.

I did like him very much. I loved to hear him talk about his growing-up years in Milwaukee and to his explanations of how things worked. His constant interest in the world around him sparked many pleasant conversations between the two of us, and also made me feel curiously comfortable about the idea of getting older myself. We didn’t always agree, however. Mom was quite

right when she observed fundamental differences between Grandpa and me. He was a man of many biases, and we had grown up in very different worlds. Still, my disagreements with Grandpa were untainted with the jaw-tightening anger that sometimes gripped me when I argued with my parents.

Grandpa would make a statement about young women looking undignified in slacks, or how ridiculous it was for me — a woman — to be interested in some idea. Or he would make a patronizing comment about the “colored” woman who came in once a week to help him with the heavy cleaning jobs. Sometimes I’d chide him for the comments. But it never seemed necessary to defend myself against his beliefs as I did when confronting parental disagreement. And neither did he seem to feel threatened by my beliefs or activities, though they were far more radically opposed to his morals and habits than his own children’s had ever been. We were lovingly tolerant of one another.

The last time I visited him, Grandpa was sitting up in his easy chair where he spent most of his time during the last months of his life. He was fighting too much pain to summon up the additional energy to talk to anyone for very long. As I sat with him on the footstool by his feet, he held my hand tightly in his, breathing noisily through oxygen tubes, and gathered strength. We talked about everyday things, as if this were an everyday visit. He asked how Madison was. We commented on the bitterly cold weather.

Then he asked, “So... when are you going to get married?”

I was silent, just smiling at him. And he shook his head, amused and resigned, and replied for me, maybe with the answer he wanted to hear.

“I know... I know... You don’t want to rush it. It’s good for you to wait until you’re sure. Catherine and I went out together for four years before I married her.” And then he told the story he’d told me several times before, of how he’d met and married my Grandmother.

A little later I tried to tell him something about how Scott and I felt about one another. But then Grandpa’s body convulsed in a painful attack. He grasped my hand with a fierce grip as he gasped for breath, and then my uncle came in to help him through the episode. Uncle Ronnie took Grandpa’s hand from mine and held his father in his arms.

That was an ordeal that Grandpa — and whichever one of his children was with him — endured many times a day during the last month of his life. There was nothing to do but hold him and help him catch his breath and breathe calmly, and to hold his hand while he fought against the pain. Grandpa slept a lot, but woke frequently during the night, needing assistance. He drowsed on and off throughout the day, rousing for short periods of conversation or longer stretches for a game of cribbage. Whoever was staying with him would spend the day helping him to dress, making food for him, keeping track of

his medication schedule, talking with him, but mostly just sitting with him, waiting with him. They would read, play cards with Grandpa, piece together jigsaw puzzles, and watch TV. Aunt Charlotte drew exotic winter scenes in her sketchbook and Aunt Donna tried to paint. But mostly they waited.

There was never a question about whether or not to send Grandpa to a nursing home; in fact, it was never even considered an option. The doctors had predicted his imminent death and so he stayed in his own house — with my mother, her sisters and brother taking turns staying with him. At times it must have seemed like a very special time for them. At others it must have been terrible. Since my mother lived only six miles away, she had been “on call” for a very long time, long before my Grandfather’s health had become critical. She’d been looking in on him on a daily basis for a good part of the preceding year. Later, she was relieved by my Aunt Donna and Aunt Charlotte, both from California, and by my Uncle Ronnie from Washington State. They lived with Grandpa for weeks at a time and their lives were interrupted; they were separated from their own families and witnessed Grandpa’s endurance of more and more pain. But parts of the experience seem to have meant a great deal to them. My Aunt Charlotte, for instance, made peace with Grandpa over a disagreement of many years’ standing. They were all able to say good-bye to this much loved parent in a way that fate seldom allows. And when Grandpa died, and relatives and friends consoled one another at the funeral, there was no cloud of guilt of the kind that so often overshadows this ceremony. I think they all felt as though they had been able to say what they needed to say to their father before he died. Also, there were no regrets that they’d been forced to move him into a nursing home before he died; they’d been there for him when he needed them. Even the remembrance of his pain gave them some comfort: they understood better than anyone that Grandpa’s death had been a huge relief to him.

The week after — during the time of the funeral and burial — all of Mom’s sisters and brother stayed in town. My brothers flew in from San Francisco and Denver; my sister Julie had arrived the week before from Austin. And mixed in with the reminiscing about their childhood, we listened to our mother and our aunts and uncle tell the story of living the last months with Grandpa. And that’s what *this* story is really about...

They talked about the escalating pain of Grandpa’s last weeks, of course, and about the long days and long nights. But the stories they told to us and the moments they remembered most vividly, were about the times of laughter which released them from the tedium of the painful, daily routine. Aunt Donna made us laugh with her telling of being woken at 4 o’clock in the morning by Grandpa beating a pot with a wooden spoon just outside her bedroom. He was feeling good and wanted to eat breakfast. Uncle Ronnie told about how, one night as he

sat up with Grandpa, he unconsciously began to mimic Grandpa's motions. Grandpa was rocking back and forth, enduring a bad bout of pain, and Uncle Ronnie — sitting on the bed facing Grandpa's — began to rock back and forth with his father, empathizing with his discomfort. When Grandpa noticed Ronnie doing this, he stopped, and then began to rock from side to side in counterpoint to Ronnie's motion. Even on some of the worst nights, as this one had been, when Grandpa was feeling too much pain to sleep, they could laugh with one another.

But some of the most hilarious stories were told about times when the outside world gave them reason to laugh and release pent-up emotions.

Aunt Donna told this particular story the first time I heard it. But as more family members arrived for the funeral, the story was retold again and again to newcomers, and Aunt Charlotte sometimes helped in the retelling. Uncle Ronnie's cue was precisely scheduled.

Aunt Donna recalled a bitterly cold day when the roads were icy and the wind chill produced horrendously low temperatures. She happened to look outside through the window in the breezeway (the room between the kitchen and the garage), and noticed a strange car parked in the driveway. Although the driver's door was wide open, there was a man still seated behind the steering wheel — and he appeared to be struggling. Donna called Charlotte out into the breezeway to look, and the two of them peeked through the little window set in the outside door. They watched, mesmerized, as an old man finally pulled himself out of the car and slowly, slowly made his way up the icy driveway, leaning heavily on his cane.

Later, my Uncle Ronnie would be staying with Grandpa when this same visitor arrived again. Ronnie explained that for the second visit, he had gone out to help the old man walk up the icy driveway to the house. It turned out, said Ronnie, for his part of the story, that the man — the parish priest — had terrible gout in one leg so that it was almost completely paralyzed. The way that he managed to climb out of the car was to maneuver a noosed rope around one foot and then to haul the foot up and out of the car. Then, with both feet on the ground, he would lever himself out of the driver's seat with his cane and hobble forward.

But let's return to the very first visit, with Donna and Charlotte peering through the little window at this strange man hobbling inch by inch up the treacherous driveway... Already recalling the end to the story, Donna began to laugh as she described the scene, wiping tears from her eyes as she continued. Finally the old priest had entered the house and told them he'd come to administer the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to Grandpa. They'd welcomed him, and Charlotte went into the living room to tell Grandpa that the priest had arrived. Grandpa spent most of his time sitting in an easy chair there in the living room — talking with his children,

watching TV, but mostly sleeping. He breathed more easily sitting up than he could lying down and he was sleeping when Charlotte went in. He could not be awakened. Undaunted, the priest asked that a card table be set up by Grandpa's chair and he set out the sacramental instruments on it — the linen altar cloth, the chalice, the anointing oils and salts, etc. After everything was arranged, Charlotte and Donna again tried to wake Grandpa. Oblivious, Grandpa slept on.

Finally, the priest admitted defeat and abandoned the ceremony for the day. He painstakingly packed up his valise with the chalice, hosts, salts, oils and all the rest, and slowly, slowly made his way back through the living room, dining room, kitchen and breezeway. Donna was saying good-bye to the priest at the door when Charlotte shouted from the living room, "He's awake now!"

And slowly, slowly, the priest returned to administer Extreme Unction to Grandpa.

By now Donna was hardly able to finish a sentence without doubling over in laughter and was blotting tears from her eyes. Ronnie, Charlotte and Mom were all laughing with her, and the rest of us were holding our sides, watching this storytelling that had already been repeated several times in our presence, and would be replayed many more times (we supposed) when spouses, friends and other relatives were entertained with the telling. Still, they enthusiastically told it again and again, each time using the same phrases and gestures, as they re-enacted the memory as if it were a play.

The main feature, however, was the story that my mother told. Usually she told this story back-to-back with Aunt Donna's story of the visiting priest, and in fact, one story led easily into the next, feeding upon the laughter the first had generated. Both the priest story and Mom's story starred an elderly gentleman visitor who had great difficulty in getting around.

The first time I heard Mom's story, and probably the fifth or sixth time that she'd already playacted the story, we were all sitting around Grandpa's living room two days before the funeral. My brother Rick had just arrived the day before, and my friend Scott had driven me in to town from Madison. Aunt Donna started to urge Mom to tell "the-I'm-Over-Here,-Gerhardt story."

"Come on, Inez, tell Jeanne and Scott the Gerhardt story!" she urged.

Rick had already heard it at least one time, but he was leaning forward, grinning and nodding encouragingly.

"Yeah, Inez," said my dad, "tell it again."

And so Mom stood up smiling, and walked to the scene of the story — a spot on the rug in the hallway between the living room and the dining room. Watching her assume her position was like watching an actor assume a character, and already the audience who'd seen the previous performances began to laugh in anticipation.

Gerhardt Deiner was (and still is) an old man, older than my Grandfather, in fact. Gerhardt was once a giant of a man, well over 6'4", broad of chest and very strong. He used to work with my Grandfather when they were employed by the telephone company; their friendship went back a long way. These days, however, Gerhardt Deiner is severely bent over at the waist as a result of arthritis. He walks with a cane — like the priest (slowly, slowly), and can see ahead of him only if he cranes his head and neck way back. Normally, as he walks he sweeps the horizon with the tips of his shoes.

Well, it seems that one day Gerhardt's car sort of rolled into Grandpa's driveway. In fact it was amazing that he'd managed to drive over at all. Grandpa said later, "Gerhardt shouldn't be allowed to drive." And indeed, it turned out that Gerhardt must have been having some serious problems. When his car had to be moved during his visit to allow Grandpa's therapist to leave, Gerhardt cautioned Aunt Donna about his car before she went out to move it.

"Don't touch the accelerator," he warned her.

Donna and my mother surmised that Gerhardt must have shifted the transmission into "drive" and simply coasted over to Grandpa's house. Luckily Gerhardt lived in the same neighborhood. Anyway, one day Gerhardt's car rolled into Grandpa's driveway and Gerhardt slowly, slowly inched his way up the icy driveway and sidewalk. Donna and Mom had plenty of time to tell Grandpa (who was awake for this visit) that Gerhardt was on his way. When they got back to the breezeway, Gerhardt still hadn't reached the door.

But finally, they greeted him and escorted Gerhardt to the entrance of the living room and told him that Grandpa was waiting there for him.

At this point, Mom playacted Gerhardt's moves, bending over at the waist, and moving with his blind, shuffling motion. Donna eagerly took her place in Grandpa's chair to play out her role in the comedy.

Donna/Grandpa shouted to Gerhardt. "Hellooo, Gerhardt!"

At this, Gerhardt stopped cold. Contorted as his posture was, he must have found it difficult to identify the direction from which sounds originated. And when Grandpa said hello, Gerhardt — still looking at the rug at his feet — began to shuffle slowly around so that he was facing in the direction opposite from the chair in which Grandpa sat.

There was my mother, hunched over at the waist, holding an imaginary cane, affecting an utterly confused expression, and doing a geriatric, slow-motion pirouette. Aunt Donna/Grandpa then leaned forward in the chair and shouted in a deep voice, "I'm over *heeeeere*, Gerhardt!"

Gerhardt swiveled slowly back around with the help of his cane, and peered upward — finally in the direction of Grandpa.

And we all held our stomachs as we laughed at this

comedy of friendship and old age being enacted for us by Mom and Aunt Donna.

Gerhardt sat for a while in the other chair near Grandpa's and the two men talked a bit. The therapist who had been in the other room packing up her equipment began to leave and Donna joked with her.

"We may have an extra patient for you," Donna said.

"Sorry, no "two-for-one specials"!" she answered. And then the therapist drove away after Donna had moved Gerhardt's car with the possibly sabotaged accelerator.

Grandpa and Gerhardt talked a while, but soon Grandpa's breathing became ragged and he leaned back into his chair in exhaustion. Gerhardt didn't seem to notice any problem and went on talking.

"Would you like me to ask Gerhardt to leave now, Dad?" Mom whispered to him. But Grandpa was having too much trouble breathing to answer her.

She moved over to Gerhardt's chair and whispered to the other old man, "Would you mind leaving now? Dad's getting tired."

"*WHAT?!*" shouted Gerhardt, cupping his ear.

Grandpa/Donna began choking and Mom tried to find Gerhardt's cane. As she helped him up out of the chair, Gerhardt swayed back and forth, and seemed about to collapse backward into the chair. Mom grabbed his arm to steady him.

All the while Grandpa was choking and began to turn blue.

It must have seemed as though neither Grandpa *nor* Gerhardt were going to make it out off the room alive that afternoon.

It felt more than a little macabre laughing about this panicky scene. But it was impossible to restrain our laughter, and in fact, it felt like a very good thing to do that evening.

Later, though, the time was not quite so appropriate.

The family — my parents, aunts and uncles, and brothers and sister — had arrived at the funeral home several hours earlier and were visiting quietly with my Grandfather's friends and relatives. It had been a long and very sad day. I was sitting in a side parlor with my brother Rick and sister Julie and a few others, when my Uncle George, Donna's husband, hurried in. His eyes were wide and his expression seemed to warn of some impending disaster.

"Gerhardt's here!" he gasped.

Then I understood. The disaster he was warning us against was laughter. When we heard him say, "Gerhardt's here," our immediate, audience-trained reaction was to laugh. If we'd met Gerhardt out in the lobby and had been introduced without warning, who knows how we'd have responded. As it was, we were barely able to contain bubbling giggles as we experienced flashbacks of Mom's story.

"Gerhardt's here," was whispered around the rooms. There was plenty of time to warn everyone because Ger-

hardt's trip from the vestibule was a long, arduous one. Of course, he was walking slowly, slowly. Just the thought of his deliberate approach, however, was enough to spark an errant giggle here and there among us. Others would "shush!" the giggler sternly. Some covered their faces and their shoulders shuddered in silent laughter. Relatives and friends who hadn't heard the story yet, looked at us curiously, with sort of horrified, fascinated expressions, but their questions were brushed aside.

"Not now, not now. We'll tell you about it later." And we'd look meaningfully at Mom.

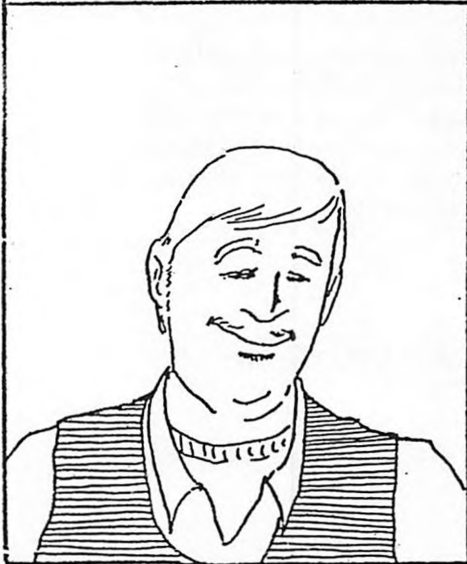
Even today, Mom can still enthusiastically get into the telling of the Gerhardt story. I called her the other day to check out a few details in the story with her, and she easily slid into the story-telling role that she'd played back in February. The story, the laughter, are still there for her — to soften the memory of loss.

reprinted from Whimsy #5, June 1986, by Jeanne Gomoll.



(ADVERTISEMENT)

LOOK AT THIS MAN —
HE SEEMS QUITE HAPPY?



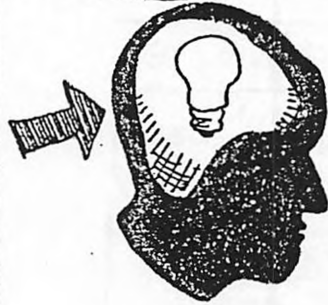
LOOK AGAIN?
HE HAS A PROBLEM!



HE SUFFERS FROM
NAGGING AWARENESS!

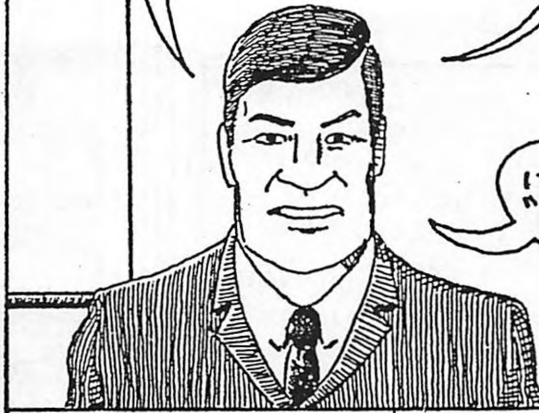


YES! NAGGING AWARENESS! THE HORROR
OF SUDDENLY KNOWING WHO--WHERE
YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU'RE DOING?



NOW THERE'S HOPE
FOR ALL WHO SUFFER
FROM NAGGING
AWARENESS—

THOUSANDS
ARE ALREADY
FINDING RELIEF
WITH THIS
MIRACLE—



IT'S CALLED:
"FANDOM"!

NOT A DRUG—NOT A DIET—
NOT AN EXERCISE PROGRAM—
FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE,
AND IT WORKS WONDERS.
LOOK AT THESE PEOPLE:



THEY KNOW JUST HOW THE
WORLD WILL END! NOTHING
CAN FAZE THEM AS THEY LIVE
HAPPILY, INSULATED FROM A
MUNDANE REALITY BY CON-
STANT SENSORY OVERLOADS!



HOW DO
WE JOIN?!

JUST FILL
OUT THE
HANDY
COUPON.



KW 79
86

Yes, I too want to join Fandom! I
enclose \$5.00 (us) in check or money
order and will wait six weeks.

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Send to KIP WILLIAMS/26 COPELAND LN.
APT. D/NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23601!

CLOSE CAP TIGHTLY TO RETARD THICKENING

by Patrick Nielsen Hayden

FANDOM," in *Flash Point 7*, was heartfelt, off-the-cuff, and redolent of all the faults peculiar to writing done at a white heat. Which is to say it was badly argued, in places overstated, and distinctly half-baked. (May have had a mixed metaphor in there, too; who knows.) That's all right; this is conversation, not the exchange of graven tablets, and much of what you had to say in response was interesting. What do I think now? I'll try to be brief.

Corflu vs. the Mexicon idea. Many of you saw the merits of Mexicon's convention-programming mix, but at the same time felt that duplicating that mix in the States would result in a very different convention. I was particularly struck by Avedon's point — too many walk-ins, no matter how intelligent or wonderful, would make the sort of con we're trying for impossible. We couldn't assimilate them. I also noted Jerry's assertion that he was going into debt to attend this year's Mexicon on the strength of its being a convention of fanzine fans, which he wouldn't do if it were being touted primarily as a gathering of literati, no matter how stellar the intellectual fireworks — a point fannishly equivalent, I suppose, to the old saw that "blood is thicker than water." Funny thing is, I know just what Jerry means.

First principles, then: what fandom is, and what we're up to. No given article or issue of a zine, no program item, no discussion topic (including science fiction itself) is more important to fanzine fandom than the fact that we're all discussing it together as part of an ongoing conversation. The discrete *parts* of that conversation are less important than the network and community it grows out of and which it also simultaneously creates.

We are a gregarious species, and conversation is a sacrament: In the beginning was The Word.

For this reason I agree with Jerry, and with most of the rest of you. Abstractly laudable though "a *science fiction* convention" might be, in North America it wouldn't serve our real purposes, would contribute little toward the maintenance of fanzine fandom as an ongoing conversational community. When I wrote "Fandom" I was being wistful about how we've lost the wonderful mechanism of science fiction as a reliable sorting device for the discovery of potential trufans — but pretending that nothing's changed won't bring it back. (Certainly the idea that "fandom should be about science fiction" is a non-starter. Arthur Hlavaty may *say* that but he definitely doesn't practice it, which is why I find his zines more interesting than 99% of the science fiction I see. SF *can* be tremendous stuff, but in the real world little of it merits the sustained attention of grownups, much less the title "literature of ideas and possibilities." Real life has ten times the ideas, possibilities, and unalloyed Sense of Wonder. And fandom is part of real life.)

Let me be more specific. When I call the ongoing conversation "more important" than any specific topic we might discuss, I mean that no amount of inherent worthiness will sustain *any* discussion in fandom without the sense of continuity generated by those aspects of fandom we habitually think of as "lightweight." Our fanishness sustains our more serious conversations, gives them depth, historicity, and the potential to continue over decades. And this is what distinguishes us from similar interest groups like mystery readers or model-

train collectors: the fact that, in the long run, most of us are more interested in one another than in the ostensible subject. Frankly, I think that's something we can be proud of. There's a persistent tendency in Anglo culture to view this sort of desire as vaguely disreputable, somehow not quite germane, weirdly self-indulgent and sleazy — "cafe fandom," to coin a phrase. Not to put too fine a point on it, I think this is rubbish. What could be *more* important than engagement with one's fellow human beings, I can't imagine.

But it's important to keep in mind that, in talking about the "ongoing conversational community" of fanzine fandom, we aren't talking about an abstract system, a set of game rules, but about fanzine fandom *as it is*, about a collection of *specific* people and friendships, contacts and associations. Looking at that particular group it's apparent that in the last couple of decades our social gatherings have become diluted by a massive influx of people who're less interested in our own peculiar pursuits. These other people have *their* own virtues and are surely entitled to basic human courtesy at a minimum, but their priorities, their ideas concerning what fandom should "be about", are different and — as long as the average convention consists of 700 of them and 10 of us — are bound to prevail. So while intelligent and well-meaning convention fans like Ben Yalow shake their heads and tsk-tsk at the current tendency for fanzine fans to withdraw from "working within the system", to my mind the wonder is that Corflu wasn't started up ten years ago. We *have* worked "within the system," as long as I've been in fandom, and the alienation only deepens. Most fanzine fans aren't the extroverts and get-it — done *mensch*es con fans are. We're introverts; our recreation involves the investment of more energy in fewer people. In that context, Corflu seems an inarguably healthy development: not secession (hardly; most of us will still attend Boskone, Norwescon, the Worldcon and all the rest), but the establishment of one yearly convention where we can be thoroughly ourselves.

But I wasn't arguing with these assumptions in "Fandom." What I was wondering, rather, was whether we *must* confine ourselves to flying the flag of "fanzine fandom" — whether we might not get more of what we want by establishing a convention devoted to, you know, people who read. Which would neatly eliminate the light-saber crowd without leaving out the non-fanzine-oriented trufan types, all the Louise Sachters and David Hartwells most of us consider as much part of the community as any fanzine fan. Jerry and Avedon's points, however, demonstrate the problem with that, and the rest was brought squarely home to me the other day when I received a flyer for a con to be held in Boston next year, one "Readercon", emphasis to be on books and publishing and sf-as-literature. Just what I was talking about, right? Except that confronted with the thing

itself, I can see pretty clearly what it'll amount to: an unusually pleasant small regional, doubtless, with perhaps as many as fifteen people present whom I already know, and the opportunity to meet several more. But *not* the nationwide gathering of hard-core fandom I want, that Mexican amounted to, that Corflu is gradually shaping up as. Jerry Kaufman won't go into debt to come to Boston. Old-timers like Russel Chauvenet and Art Widner won't climb out of the woodwork to attend. No reflection at all on Readercon's organizers: but that's how it is.

In sum, I guess how I currently feel about Corflu is: it's working. When this year's flap over the scheduling conflict is gone, I hope we can continue to encourage the Sachters and Hartwells to attend; I suspect we won't have to do too much encouraging. I still want Corflu's organizers to watch out for the tendency to allow our community to be defined by the rest of fandom. I still regret the loss of fandom-at-large as the cohesive community it once was. But for all that I've been occasionally irritated by the smug tone of some Corflu reports, and by the disturbing phenomenon of people publishing fanzines which they give out at Corflu and don't otherwise distribute — for all that, I still think Corflu is worthwhile, and look forward to the third one with an eagerness I haven't felt since my first year in fandom.

Guests of Honor. I agree with Rich Coad up, down, and sideways on this final point regarding Corflu. My impression is that the original impulse behind the early Corflu's having drawn names from a hat for the GoH slot was a fine and noble one: we're *all* Guests of Honor here ("why, dear, *every* day is Children's Day!"). All of which is good as far as it goes but, point made, something of a waste thereafter. The fact is that there are umpty-ump reverend fancestors among us who deserve to be feted, and never will be by the other cons (example off the top of my head: Elmer Perdue). We ought to remember that making someone a GoH *doesn't* amount to saying that so-and-so is inherently superior to the rest of us riffraff, no matter how badly certain other conventions might pervert the process. Rather, in so doing, we're saying that, hey, we'd like to highlight the degree to which so-and-so exemplifies qualities which we prize. "Honor" is as much for those doing the honoring as it is for the recipients; it's a means of expression, a way of making values manifest. It seems a shame to let the opportunity pass. But I suppose that's up to future Corflu committees, none of which I'm likely to be on in the near future. (Cincinnati in '87; Seattle in '88!)

reprinted from Flash Point 8, by Patrick Nielsen Hayden.

REAL FEN DON'T EAT GREEPS

by Elst Weinstein

JOE TRUFAN was sitting next to me at one of those all-night coffee shops that seem to be all too scarce at most cons. You know, the type of place where just about anything appears on the menu, but if it looks even remotely digestible they stopped serving it at nine PM. Anyways, he turned to me and said in a voice that would chill Minnesota, "Real Fen don't eat greeps." He was at this point devouring some cold rubber chicken along with some tiny dried potato clusters that would have bounced had they been reconstituted before they were fried.

A typical fan, Joe weighed in at 258 lbs., had shoulder-length matted hair of several indeterminate colors, and in mundane life was a part-time computer programmer for the library of a space-related company and was now laid off. "You know that American Fen are all messed up. There once was a time when we were all just like Harry Warner Jr. Real Fans. The kind of guy that could read six novels every night, correspond with a dozen editors before noon and then paste up three zines. He could publish a fifty page genzine each month and attend every convention within a two thousand mile radius. But not anymore. We're a bunch of lazy jerks. Trekkies! Warties! Doctor Whozzits! Wimpy media fan types who relate to media oriented cons and belong to "fan" oriented clubs. What's it gotten us? The British put out better fanzines. The Canadians write better locs. The Australians drink more bheer. The rest of the world is using our fanzines to train their household pets."

The entire coffee shop was entranced. Joe continued, "I ask you: Did Mike Glicksohn ever dress up like Luke Skywalker? Did Bill Rotsler ever draw a car-

toon for a Logan's Runner? Was any SMOF ever caught discussing the merits of cutesy creatures in a "Sci-Fi" Flick in a positive way? Of course not! I'm convinced that things were a whole lot better in the old days when Fen were fen. Media was just something that we enjoyed, not lived. The whole fannish community understood: One false move and they'd get one of our crudzines..."

This made me think. He had a point. With all the recent influx into our group, maybe we were losing that special something that defined our essence, or high sounding philosophic vocabulary to that effect. So, I sat down and tried to get a good idea of what a real fan was like.

1. DEFINING THE REAL FAN

In the old days this was easy. He was the guy with mimeo stains on his hands and various purple blotchy tattoos on his torn t-shirt. He was seen trying to unload one of his printed endeavors on some unsuspecting neo-fan. But now he is under siege. His competition has long since gone over to offset and is now making \$4000 to \$7000 profit per each monthly issue. The cons he used to attend to meet with other fans are now full of Vader-clones or oversexed jailbait clad in provocative, scanty leather clothing. The real fan today is one who can use fandom to triumph over modern day problems. He deducts the cost of his fanzines and con trips as business expenses and promotions; he buys fan art for his office, and brags about intimately knowing the famous *Byte*

columnist, Jerry Pournelle, to his mundane friends. He has no fear of Punk Hairstyles (just the punks) nor hotel managers. He is secure enough to admit to buying *Locus* for more than just the articles. He'll consume just about everything that a party host could place in front of him. But he has his basic guiding principles, one little phrase that can sum up his gestalt: Real Fen Don't Eat Greeps!

2. WHO'S WHO AMONG REAL FEN

Certain pro authors embody the qualifications that distinguish a real fan. For example, George Clayton Johnson eats greeps, Larry Niven does not. Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke are real fen types, but Spinrad is not. Alan Dean Foster probably eats greeps, ditto for Barry Malzberg. Glen Larson has the greep concession sewed up for the entire West Coast. No one is really sure about Ellison. Silverberg wouldn't even eat greeps if they were served with tabasco sauce. Haldeman may eat lime jello, which in some states looks like greeps, but in reality is the acme of fannish existence.

3. THE REAL FAN'S CREDO

Since the bygone era of First Fandom, real fen have had one cardinal rule: never say it with one word when ten will do equally well. That's why fans tend to be overly wordy. But what the Hell, guy, as long as you don't ramble on for more than six pages extra you can get the zine out for only one more postage stamp.

4. THE REAL FAN VOCABULARY

Real Fen don't read "Sci-Fi." They do not have dialogs with "mundanes" except in commercial dealings outside of fandom. They never use the superfluous "h" in words other than bheer, Ghu and ghod. A real fan cannot talk in Valspeak or Preppie. If asked a political question, a Real Fan would first denounce Reagan, the Moral Majority and other miscellaneous fascisti and then proceed to change the subject of the discussion to the latest fan feud, juicy gossip or whom he has asked to write for his zine.

5. THE REAL FAN'S WARDROBE

These are just a few things that you might expect to find lurking in the confines of a trufan's closet: a propeller beanie (with or without solar power-cell), a ripped t-shirt from a previous fannish event, old sneakers, piles of ancient fanzines waiting to be sorted or thrown out, two wide paisley ties (never worn), another ripped t-shirt, a toga-like apparel of unusual pattern (ducks or triangles, but too faded to tell which), a pile of old con badges, a towel, two or three plonkers, and a few assorted items far too deteriorated to be recognized in the native state.

6. THE REAL FAN'S ZINES

A Real Fan puts out a zine for Egoboo. Earning a few bucks and winning the Hugo are nice, but let's face it, that type of activity requires the showmanship of a P.T. Barnum or a C.N. Brown. What is inside a Real Fan's zine? A famous fan who will remain nameless (because I am making him up on the spot and if he did exist would not want to be credited with the following statement) once said: "A fanzine usually has a quantity of collected garbage that's barely good enough to not corrode the printed page, yet can generate a loc to fill space in a later issue." Artwork comes from the best available, but that too can vary: there just aren't that many fanartists coming out of Idaho these days. Contributions must flow as they will. The print run is less than 500 only because there just aren't any more real fans to send copies to.

7. REAL "FEN AT WORK"

Here are just a few of the many occupations that Real Fans have taken on: Computer programmer, Librarian, Jobless, Programmer for a Library, Unemployed, Freelance Writer, Freelance Computer Programmer, Unemployed Freelance Writer, College Student, Unemployed College Graduate, Artisan/Craftsman, Unemployed Artisan/Craftsman, Counselor, Out-of-work, Drifter, Musician, Unemployed Musician, Factory Worker, Professional Author, Professional Artist, Professional Bum, Professional, Unemployed Professional, plus Not Applicable (N/A).

8. THE REAL FAN'S DIET

If a Real Fan doesn't eat greeps, then what the Hell does he eat? Below is a brief list of comestibles that are divided into the seven basic food groups:

- **Munchies:** Chips, dips, crackers, pretzels, corn chips, tortilla chips, cheez curls, popcorn, nuts, dried whatever, crispy things, soggy crispy things and slimy soggy crispy things.
- **Candy:** M&Ms, Reese's Pieces, green things, Gourmet jelly beans, any other candy.
- **Veggies:** Carrots, celery, jicama, guacamole, cherry tomatoes, radishes, and fries.
- **Burgers:** McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King's, Tommy's, Cassel's (but never Jack-in-the-Box).
- **Other Meats:** Fried Chicken, Chili, Hot Dogs, Bacon.
- **Fluids:** Coke, Pepsi, Tab, Bheer, Jim Beam, Blog.
- **Dessert:** Ice Cream, cake, brownies, cookies, etc.
- **Smokables:** Pipes, Cigarettes, Pot.

9. ARE YOU A REAL FAN?

Here is a quickie test for those of you who believe you need it:

(A) You get nominated for a Hugo against *Locus*. What do you do? 1. Stuff the ballot box. 2. Withdraw on principle and commit Hara Kiri. 3. Print up a t-shirt saying "Six-time Hugo Loser."

(B) The local SF club meeting is running an old boring western serial, the only movie playing nearby is "Teenage Hormones in Trouble" and your VCR is out-to-lunch. Do you: 1. Publish a fanzine. 2. Watch TV. 3. Read a book. 4. Call up some twerp in another state. 5. Go see a film by Poland's Franz Kafka.

(C) How many Star Wars miniatures do you or any one of your household have (excluding those in the fish-bowl or terrarium): 1. None. 2. One. 3. Six. 4. All.

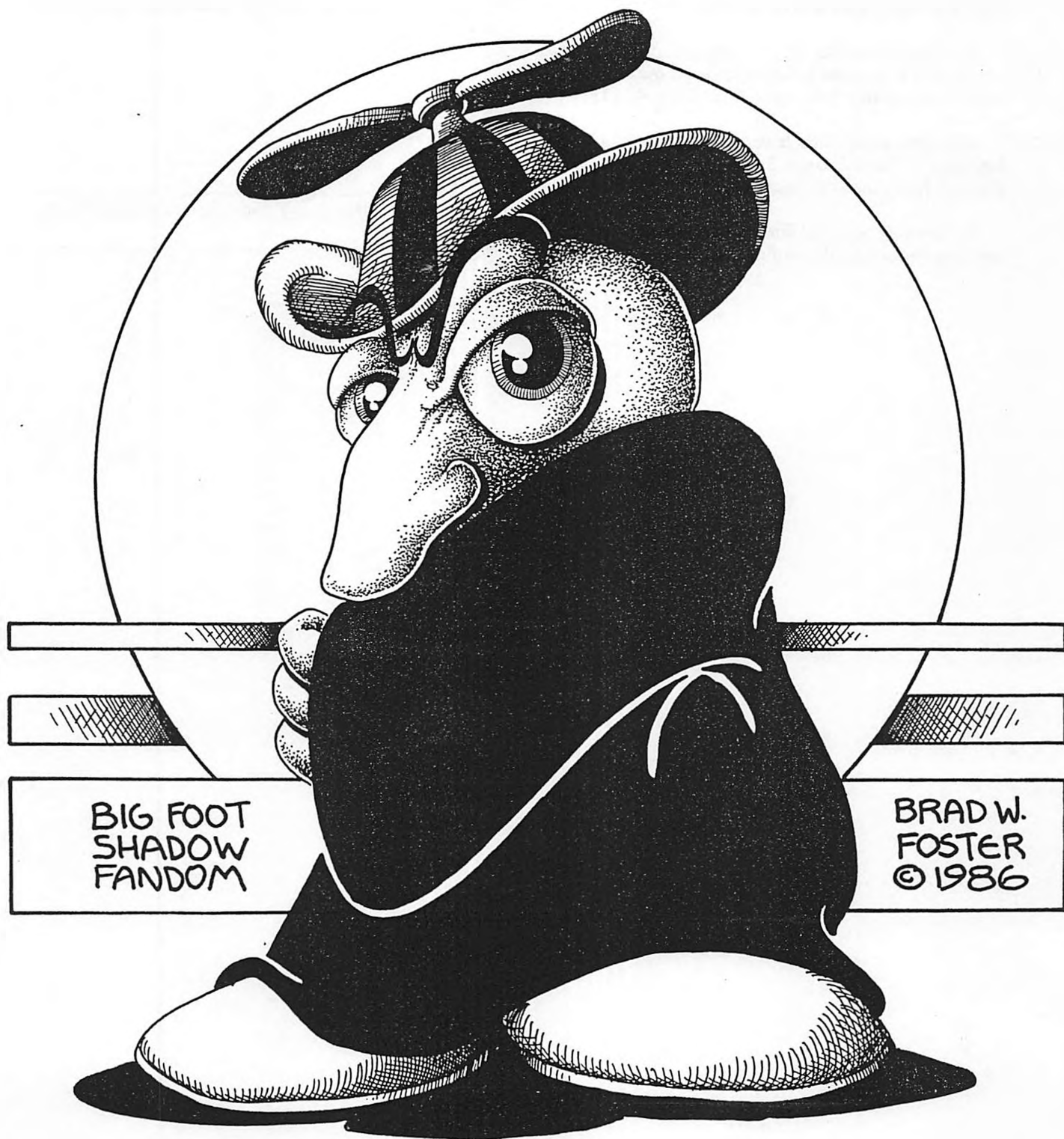
(D) How many times have you gotten laid at a con last year? 1. None. 2. Once. 3. Six times. 4. One hundred times. 5. More than the stars above.

(E) Six very beautiful femfans accost you in the halls and demand a sexual sacrifice. You figure: 1. They've

mistaken you for Harlan Ellison. 2. They're really prostitutes working the wrong convention. 3. You walked into the Twilight Zone. 4. You're gay and male, or straight and female. 5. You must be dreaming. 6. They all get run over by a truck in the next scene.

SCORING: Well, give yourself full credit if you ignored the test like most fans do. Give yourself double points if you answered none of the above, and triple points if you came up with an alternative that makes you money.

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BIG FOOT
SHADOW
FANDOM

BRAD W.
FOSTER
© 1986

HELL, 12 FEET

by Teresa Nielsen Hayden

ITS DAWN, and Claude has shown up again, sitting on the floor next to my mattress. I can barely see him in this light; only his whispery voice comes across clearly. "You could, you know," he's saying. "You *could*."

Could what? That's the question. Because this is Cosmic Claude, mad prophet of Poplar Bluff, voyager into the unknown; hemisemidemigod of grossly dubious notions, Our Claude of Infinite Sorrow, BNF schizophrenic and example to us all. Claude Degler.

Or rather, he *says* he's Degler. I don't feel inclined to believe him; uncharitable of me, but in a night spent staring at the ceiling, a week after attending Constellation, there's altogether too much time to think about too many things. I can always write him off as just another sleep hallucination, I realize; besides, even if he really *is* C.D. I still don't have to believe anything he says, Claude being after all the main proselytizer for breeding camps in the Ozarks, underground cities beneath New Castle, Indiana, and the Cosmic Circle. Not the sort of person you'd go to for sound advice.

"Thane of Glamis and Cawdor, and king hereafter," he suggests.

"No go, Claude, I've already heard about that one. Get lost."

I suspect that my soul may be in danger. The last time I listened to Claude I wound up working on the Iguana-con committee. No, that was the time before last. Never mind what I was doing last time.

"...bid again? Do the publications right this time? Not like Iggy, no more fixing other people's crummy work, and the job is finished before the con even starts. Not that hard, really..."

"Claude, no! Never again! I promised myself after the last one. I *do* fanzines and *go to* cons. I don't *do* cons."

Dammit, where's Patrick when I need him? — though in fact I know exactly where he is: curled up behind me, looking like a lump of bedding. The lump stirs and emits a sinusoidal click from time to time, but I know from experience that he can't be awakened this side of half a pint of coffee, and thus is no help at all.

Claude is an interesting problem. I've had proposed to me, out on the street and during waking hours and everything, the notion that seizing control of my pages of the universal playscript, amending my feminist/consumer/planetary consciousness, will bring forth complementary macroscopic changes; that filling out little pledge cards for Werner Erhard's World Hunger Project will somehow end world hunger; and that if I have faith in the American Economic System prosperity will come back again. I say: maybe. I used to know a guy who believed that his various marginal enterprises would always turn up sufficient income to live on. Some months the money practically had to fall out of the ceiling in time for him to make the rent, but it always arrived. On the other hand, a couple of years later someone shot him (nonfatally). Buying a ticket in the state lottery and

Believing Real Hard is probably inadequate all by itself, no matter how optimistic you feel about it, but perhaps you really *can* re-imagine the universe and have the universe cooperate with you. Belief works wonders, and if everyone will clap their hands there'll be printing on the other side when you turn the page.

Trouble is, turn that particular strategy inside-out like a sock to show its pattern in reverse and you'll find Degler waiting for you there. Muncie Mutants, Planetary Fan Federation, all fandom plunged into war! How far can you take this game?

It is recorded that Victor Neuberg — friend, disciple and catamite to Aleister Crowley — once went around to all their London acquaintances, indignantly telling anyone who would listen that Crowley had turned him into a camel. I imagine Neuberg held himself to have recovered by the time he did this. Anyway, the question I take as one of the really great koans of Western mysticism is: did Aleister Crowley really turn Victor Neuberg into a camel? Only possible answer: Victor Neuberg said so. He was there, after all. A little-known fact of nature is that trees falling in forests *never* make noise, but since enough people believe that they do the fact of the matter is immaterial.

In the meantime, Claude is still at it. "Let's talk fanzines, then," he murmurs. "Third-best fanwriter in the *File 770* Poll. Beaten out by Dan Steffan by a single vote for the *Pong* Poll's "Number One Fan Face." And you only missed a Hugo nomination by some few votes..."

"Really? How many?"

"That's confidential information, sweetie. Now, next year, if you got a little more exposure — wrote articles for some other fanzines, perhaps — plus, given the new fanzine rules in the WSFS constitution, you could —"

"I could shake Mike Glycer's hand after he picks up his Hugo for *File 770*."

"Or in the fanwriter category —"

"Yeah, *sure!* I can hear my acceptance speech now: "It is indeed an honor to stand here in the position so recently vacated by Richard E. Geis..." Besides, if Geis doesn't get it, Langford certainly will. Besides, it's essentially meaningless and anyway I hardly ever even think about it most of the time. It's trivial."

In the darkness I can hear Claude chuckling to himself, and very irritating it is too. "Damn your eyes, Degler, and the rest of you to boot and the Hugos and the polls and egoboo and everything else," I say peevishly, realizing just how tired I am. "It's been a good year for fanning, if nothing else; *Izzard* was the best, almost the only fun I had all year, and the egoboo was more than sufficient. But this chasing after improbable fannish glory — Claude, what good would that do? Would it find us an apartment and jobs in New York City, or make me well enough to work again? Would it get our household kipple out here from Joanna Russ's basement? I went to the Worldcon and the fannishness was thick and heady indeed, but what got me through the con was massive

and systematic abuse of my medications. Don't tell me about all the splendid things I could do if I only tried a little harder."

Silence. After a while I hear faint sniffing noises. "Claude? Don't cry, Claude. I'm just tired and feeling sorry for myself."

"I'm sorry too," he says. "I never tell anybody things they haven't thought of already."

"I know." I meditate upon this. "Claude, did I ever tell you about Henry Argasinski? No? Didn't think so. It goes like this..." And I tell him.

The first reported sighting of Henry Argasinski was in 1975, when he turned up in one of Mike Glicksohn's high-school math classes in Toronto. At that time he was sixteen or so, the only child of two extremely weird offspring of exiled pre-WWI Polish aristocrats. Henry asked Mike about fandom, Mike directed him to OSFiC, and Henry draped himself like an albatross around the collective neck of the Toronto Derelicts.

Given to talking loudly to himself, and long spells of hysterical laughter in restaurants, Henry struck the Derelicts as irritating, not to mention mentally unbalanced. In the summer of 1975 Taral hatched a hoax with Tony Cvetko's help, and shortly thereafter Henry received a letter from "Claude Degler" postmarked from Cleveland, inviting him to found and head up the Canadian branch of the Cosmic Circle. Henry immediately struck up a furious correspondence with "Claude" and started sending out Cosmic Circle publications profoundly similar to Degler's own 1940s CC zines in their incoherence and their tendency to unilaterally appoint unsuspecting fans to high positions in the Cosmic Circle, and profoundly unlike Degler's in their tidy execution. A brick shy a load or not, Toronto fans pay attention to good repro.

After about a month of this Taral revealed the hoax to Henry, prompted by mercy or, perhaps, by alarmed second thoughts about how enthusiastically the bait had been swallowed. Unfortunately, Henry refused to believe him, citing among other things the fact that the letters from "Claude" had been typed on a Selectric, and Taral didn't own such a machine. Victoria Wayne did, but Henry was adamant. He kept writing to "Claude" and sending out Cosmic Circle publications, but "Claude" stopped responding and after a few months Henry apparently ended his Deglerian phase. He stopped hanging around the Derelicts but remained in OSFiC, and became very active in his high-school science fiction club as well. It's suspected that this club was composed half of Henry's vivid imagination and half of some very confused students at his school.

I'll skip another couple of Henry Argasinski stories and run this forward to late 1977, when Henry entered himself in the non-partisan Toronto mayoral election on the Cosmic Circle platform. He proposed to make Toronto the Cosmic City; I'm not sure what all that entailed. His opponents in the race were the very popular

incumbent (David Crombie, I think it was?) and a candidate fronted by the Western Guard, Canada's indigenous brownshirts. They're for racial purity and Canada for the Canadians, and hate blacks, Asians, Jews, Catholics, and people who speak French; their candidates poll a few hundred votes at most.

When the votes were counted the incumbent won with several hundred thousand to his credit, and the guy from the Western Guard collected his couple of hundred. Amazingly enough, though, Henry placed second. Three or four thousand people had voted the Cosmic Circle ticket. No one knew what these voters had been seeking, so high above their normal hunting grounds.

By the time I finish my story it's almost daylight outside. My visitor is no more visible than he was before; in-

stead, he's slowly faded out as the light has come up. In a moment he'll vanish entirely.

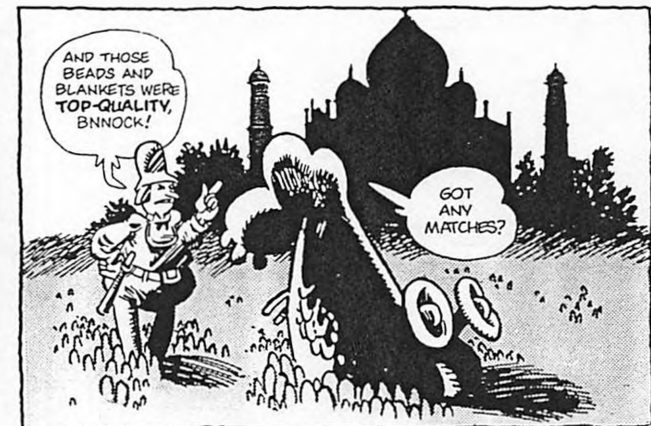
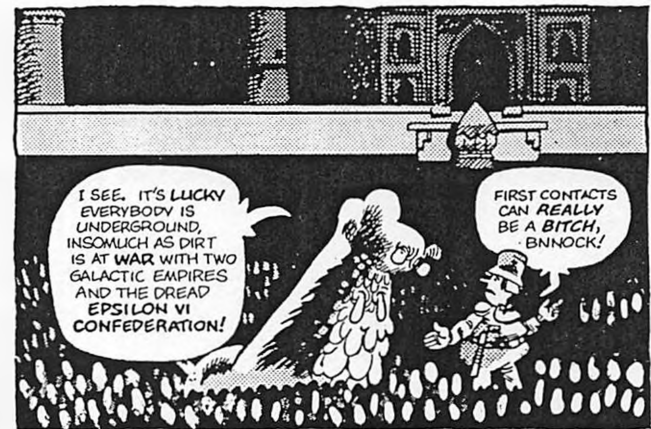
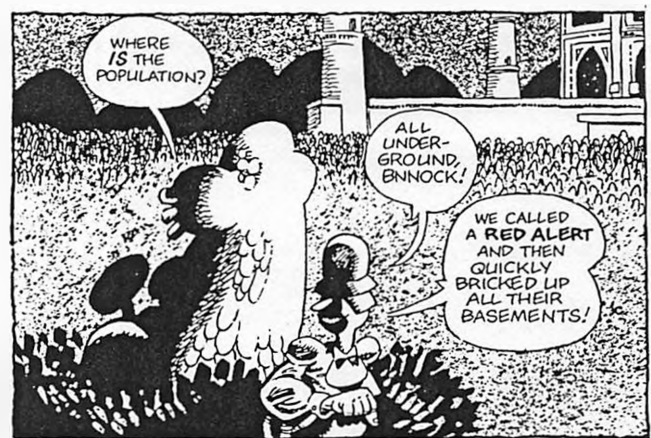
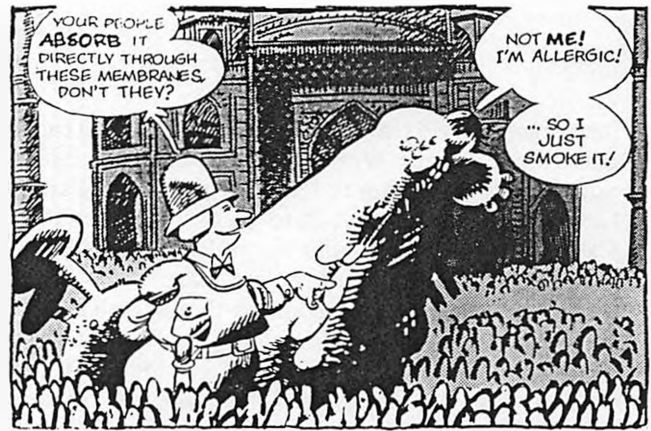
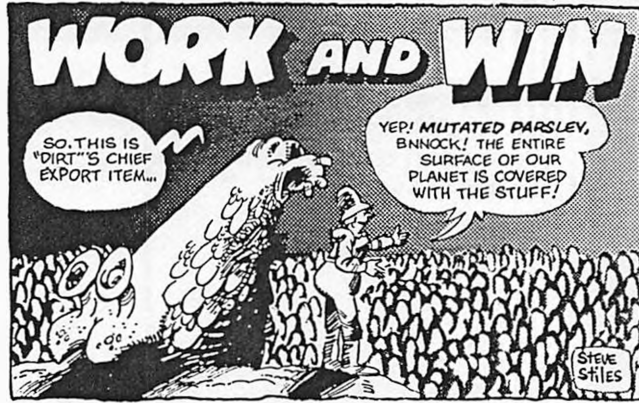
"Pretty good performance there," he says, "but none of that was my doing."

"I know," I say. "It never is."

And then he was gone.

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PROPHETIC FICTION IS THE MOTHER OF SCIENTIFIC FACT



FIZZ! BUZZ!

by David Langford

CHATting RECENTLY about timeless values of human culture such as the price of booze, I had a moment of feeling desperately old. In a relative sense: Chuch Harris remembers with a gloat how he achieved beer bloat for only half a groat or a quarter of a goat, and doubtless Harry Warner's early memoirs record the first hairy eofan rubbing two yeasts together and crying "Eureka! I've invented hangovers!" My own sense of crabbed antiquity comes when young fans hear with open disbelief my senile reminiscence of, "When I started drinking beer, this stuff was one and fourpence a pint...."

It wasn't "this stuff", of course, but some foul fizz served in the pot-houses of South Wales to schoolboys who didn't know any better. Knowing better and making my lemon-sucking face at the mere memory of the bouquet, I mused that even at 7p a pint I wouldn't fancy the muck now... though one does pay thirteen or fourteen times as much for something very similar in the average con hotel. Then memories started trickling back: Proust sailed into the wastes of lost time at the remembered nibble of a biscuit, but Langford is made of sterner stuff. The remembered taste of iron filings.... *In beer veritas.*

There would be half a dozen of us in those smoky pub sessions, all from the now vanished Newport High School, thrown together by vague friendship, throbbing absence of girlfriends, and the natural human urge not to be at home with one's parents. Long evenings of this noble if negative pursuit had to be got through; it was my ever-evil pal Dai Price who introduced the familiar and direly hazardous game Fizz-Buzz.

If you are very lucky, you won't have met it. Semi-drunken cretins sit in a circle, counting in turn, clockwise round the ring: "One." "Two." "Three." At five, and every subsequent multiple of five, the current sucker

must instead give a stentorian cry of "Fizz!" At seven, and its multiples, the word is "Buzz!" and the order of play reverses direction. Anyone failing to make the right noise at the right time must take a huge swig from his beer (amateur rules), drain the glass and buy another (tournament rules), or knock back any drinks in front of him and buy a round for the entire party (insane idiot rules).

Well, it beat South Wales's two permissible conversational topics: women (deeply frustrating, since none of us knew any) and rugby (even more frustrating since, precociously beer-raddled, we couldn't play the national game without wheezing and falling over).

There was actually a weird satisfaction in doing this daft business right, "the solemn intoxication which comes of intricate ritual faultlessly performed" (thus Dorothy Sayers on bell-ringing) — except that the ritual wasn't *that* intricate, and even the double thrill of "Fizz Buzz!" at multiples of 35 failed somehow to reach orgasm level.

Thus Dai and I concluded that the "game" lacked intellectual challenge, at least until so late in the evening that remembering one's name also began to present difficulties on the order of Fermat's Last Theorem. Tentatively we started attaching electrodes to the hitherto sluggish rules. One early experiment, which even the thickest of the gathering could handle, was to assign "Oink!" as the, er, buzzword for all multiples of 3. Dai soon developed a particularly obscene "Oink!" whose mere enunciation came under the heading of gamesmanship. The corpse of the rotten game began to twitch slightly.

"Burp!" for multiples of 11 was the next remorselessly logical addition. By now, some of us were sweating,

concentrating intently, and falling over a good deal sooner than of yore (see above, under Tournament Rules). Then came a quantum leap into genuine mathematical abstraction: "Clang!" was what you had to say each time the count reached a prime number. (After savage debate, the dogma of pure mathematics was cast aside and 1 was ruled to be a prime.) It was around this stage that I stopped remembering petty things like closing times or how I'd got home afterwards. Sanity was finally eroded by the two-pronged introduction of "Pow!" for perfect squares and "Zap!" for powers of 2. Was 1 a perfect square? (Yes.) Was it a power of two? (We decided that $1=2^0$ was a special case and didn't count.)

By now, the alert and intelligent reader will have gathered, there were no bloody landmarks. Pale, strained faces ringed the table, suddenly trying to follow a count which began not 1 2 3 4 but "Clang Pow!" "Clang Zap!" "Oink Clang!" "Pow Zap!" (There was some arcane rule about the order in which you had to pronounce the shibboleths, but this luckily escapes me.) And it was a supreme moment of triumph if, swaying and incapable, we successfully galloped into the straight with "Oink Buzz!" "Burp!" "Clang!" "Oink!" "Fizz Pow!" ... and, at last, the first number in our counting system which came through in clear. "Twenty-six!"

I have never quite worked out what the other pub regulars thought of us, but they used to look worried.

The suggestion of "Ping!" to mark cubes was perhaps unnecessary. Perfect numbers also received short shrift. The whole thing broke up with a serious Dai Price plan to insert a special term for members of the Fibonacci series. ("As you well know, Professor, this runs 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34... not that you need to be told, but we must assume there are some ignorant readers out there." "Quite, Carruthers. Shut up.") An appropriate word in this context might have been, "Argh!" Rather than debate whether 1 should now be intricately coded as "Argh Argh Clang Pow!" owing to its double appearance in the series, we all went to university instead.

I arrived in Oxford, and many splendours and miseries duly followed, but the demented game wasn't so easily escaped — not merely because I inflicted it on university SF group fanatics who madly programmed the Nuclear Physics Dept computers to generate all the correct responses, up to ten thousand. (When I write *Advanced Fizz-Buzz — the Dungeon Master's Guide*, I'll know where to do the research.) Though in a weird way

I owe a lot to Fizz-Buzz, such as a life-long interest in maths, those nonsense sequences were bloody hard to shake off. *Tenser, said the Tensor... Tenser, said the Tensor....* People claim to have been driven half round the twist by obsession with Charles Hinton's coloured cubes for visualizing the fourth dimension (circa 1904). Not being quite intellectually up to that, I still suffered years of fizzes and oinks and clangs running round in my head like mathematically-minded squirrels. It didn't even have the vague aesthetic respectability of something like Mark Twain's supposedly unforgettable jingle *Punch, brothers, punch with care! Punch in the presence of the passenjare!*

(En route I also invented numerous variants like Cantorian Fizz-Buzz, played with all the real numbers between 0 and 1 with special grunts for transcendentals — you go first, thanks; Big Fizz-Buzz, in which anyone reaching the first transfinite ordinal during the course of a normal pub session must pronounce the rune "Someone's Been Cheating!"; and, after a crippling attack of Douglas Hofstadter, Self-Referential Fizz-Buzz incorporating Strange Loops....)

The funny noises within my skull did eventually fade away, but as a possible side-effect I seem to have spent most of my working life doing vaguely mathematical things, from doomsday-weapon simulations to back-of-an-envelope futurology. This abysmal nostalgic wallow has therefore given me the final answer to those who mumble about wasting time in pubs. Placing a hand on my chest and speaking in manly resonant tones, I can say: "I owe my whole career to lousy bitter and Fizz-Buzz." (Death comes on swift wings to anyone who responds, "What career?") Of course, it's kept me from certain pinnacles: my failure to write *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* can be blamed entirely on my schoolday conditioning to think that, for the reasons above, 26 is an infinitely funnier punchline than "Oink Buzz!" I mean, damn it, funnier than 42....

This revised version of "Fizz! Buzz!" is reprinted from Platen Stories by David Langford (published by Conspiracy '87, The 45th World Science Fiction Convention). The original version appeared in Trapdoor 6, edited by Bob Lichtman.

WIN A DAY WITH MIKHAIL GORBACHEV!

A Melodrama In Four Parts

by Tim Jones

I: OFF TO WORK

Mikhail Gorbachev's day begins much like that of any busy western executive. After a vigorous session of sexual intercourse, Mikhail and his wife Raisa (a former student of philosophy at Moscow University who now drives a tractor in the Ukraine) enjoy a leisurely shower together before descending the central staircase of their modest Kremlin apartment to a hearty breakfast: Mikhail, trained as a lawyer, puts on the toast whilst Raisa brews up a stiff samovar of P.G. Tips.

Over the breakfast table, "Mick" (as he's known to his friends) and Raisa chat about the news in the morning's Pravda and the latest gossip amongst their circle of friends — mostly the latest titillating details of Soviet Premier Nikolai Tikhonov's infatuation with a 22-year-old Intourist guide — before sticking the dishes in the machine and heading off to work. For Raisa, it's just a matter of setting the matter transmitter for the banks of the Dnieper and stepping through to the collective farm; for Mikhail, it's a brisk walk across the back yard to his regular job as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Wednesday the 15th of May is a fairly light day for Mikhail, who arrives at the office at 9am sharp, exchanging

quips about last night's dismal tour performance by Moscow Dynamo (they lost 1-5 to Punta Arenas F.C.) as he pushes open the swing doors of the Central Committee's open-plan office and heads for his desk at the back. After taking a quick look at the morning's intelligence bulletins — it appears Ronald Reagan has fallen off his horse again — he welcomes in the man ultimately responsible for preparing them, KGB Chief Viktor Chebrikov.

Viktor, who wears a terrible line in spectacles, is an affable, balding secret police professional. Today, he's looking more than usually pleased with himself, and the reason seems to be contained in a book he's carrying in his one good hand (the deformation of the other is the legacy of the Sverdlovsk anthrax epidemic). The book, it transpires, is Arthur C. Clarke's *Expedition to Earth*.

II: ARTHUR C. CLARKE

"Arthur C. Clarke, eh, Viktor? How do you rate him in comparison with Asimov?" Mikhail, a subscriber to Analog, asks his security chief.

"Well, as an SF writer, I think Clarke's got the edge. He brings a real quality of transcendence to his best

work, so that it attains a numinous quality which belies his claim to be a writer of hard SF. *Expedition To Earth* showcases this well, I feel — stories like “Second Dawn,” “Encounter in the Dawn,” and, particularly, the title story have a haunting, evocative quality which derives in large part from the revelation of powerful contemporary motifs in unfamiliar and often ironic settings. “The Sentinel” is of course of special interest as the progenitor of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and there are a number of stories which deal with matters military in a manner that, whilst wryly amusing, does graphically illustrate some tactical and strategic problems of real contemporary importance. On the other hand, of course, Asimov was born here.”

“True, Viktor, although I don’t think we should let national chauvinism influence our literary judgements.”

“Fair enough, boss. Anyway, getting back to *Expedition To Earth*, there’s one story in it which appears particularly relevant in the light of Academician Ivanenko’s recent invention. Called “Loophole”, it’s cast in the epistolary form —”

“Letters, right?”

“Letters, yes. It starts with an exchange of missives between the ruler of Mars and his chief scientist. The Martians have just noticed the first atomic bomb test, and — well, perhaps you’d like to read it yourself, Mick?”

As Mikhail Gorbachev read of the Martians’ plan to dominate and eliminate the humans through their control of interplanetary space, and of the loophole through which the humans strike first, Viktor Chebrikov’s gaze strayed to the window at the other end of the room. On the other side of that window, the Lubyanka waited to receive its guests, three faceless bodies lay just beneath the melting snows of Gorky Park, and Arkady Renko and a small group of friends sat watching a smuggled videotape of *Hill Street Blues*. In the snows east of Irkutsk, workers on the Baikal-Amur Mainline took care to prevent the skin of their hands freezing to the track, and in the Tunguska the trees were again laid flat. Nude bathers were causing a stir in certain Black Sea resorts, whilst in a dacha just outside Moscow Nikolai Tikhonov expired of a heart attack in the arms of his beloved as KGB cameras recorded the event for posterity. And more coffins returned through the mountain passes from Afghanistan, and Vladimir Arsenyev stood over the grave of his friend, and Stalin’s daughter left and returned in pain, and Stavropol’s favourite son finished reading.

“Hmmm, matter transmitters, eh? I wonder what Ronnie would think of that? Well, Viktor, any other news? Can my doctors be trusted?”

“None of them have shown the slightest desire to appear on U.S. TV, Mick. I think you’re safe there. Well, I must be going. I have an ethnic minority to oppress.”

“Which one?”

“Why, the Russians, of course!”

“One of these days we’ll have to stop laughing at that one. Well, Viktor, show that story to our good friend the Marshal. They may be able to steal the technology to make something of it.”

“O.K., boss. I’m away. See you at the Politburo meeting.”

Mikhail spends the rest of the morning going through his paperwork and reading his mail; there are five circulars, two chain letters, one misdirected subscription to *Krokodil* and no invitations to the Vatican. At lunch time, there’s time for a brisk game of squash with Vitaly Vorotnikov before the 2pm Politburo meeting.

III: THE POLITBURO

The Politburo had traditionally met in a sombre, marbled room, sitting six to a side along a massive table. Mikhail felt that this arrangement wasn’t conducive to increased productivity and efficiency, so had done away with the heavy table and overstuffed chairs and got everybody sitting in a circle on cushions. The older Politburo members hadn’t been entirely happy about this arrangement, and still tended to grumble about it. However, the younger men (there were no female members of this most exclusive male club) seemed to like it, and at the moment it was these men — Vorotnikov, Egor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Chebrikov, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Gorbachev himself — who called the shots.

Everyone is in their seats by 2pm sharp, and Mikhail opens the meeting by pinning a big sheet of paper to the wall and asking for agenda items. Ligachev, who had charge of the minutes of the previous meeting, reminds everyone that the Geneva summit and the forthcoming grain harvest were matters that hadn’t been finalised at the last meeting. Other items include progress on the BAM rerouting, another increase in funds for technical intelligence, and the colour scheme for the Politburo’s new Zil limousines.

The meeting opens with a sharing session, wherein each member lets the others know how they’re feeling, so their private, personal problems won’t fester unacknowledged beneath the surface of the meeting. Nikolai Tikhonov, who’s still alive, announces that he has never felt better; Chebrikov winks at Gorbachev. Andrei Gromyko, who is becoming slightly deaf, queries why anyone would want to feel butter. Shevardnadze, newly appointed Foreign Minister, reveals he’s had an exciting day broadening his knowledge of geography, and now knows where Africa and Australia are. Someone whistles a derisory bar or two of “Georgia On My Mind”. Generally, everyone has had a good day, although Vorotnikov claims Gorbachev has obstructed him on a couple of key points, then must hasten to explain he is talking about the lunchtime squash game rather than weightier matters.

The Geneva summit (where Mikhail plans to try for a propaganda coup by challenging Reagan to see who can stay on a horse the longest), BAM, a 25% increase in funds for purchase of Western microcomputers and microengineers, and the grain harvest (about which there was general agreement that having one would be a Good Idea) are all sorted out quite simply. As everyone fears, the big clash between Gorbachev's new guard and the remaining old-timers comes over the Zils' paint-work.

The matter had first surfaced under Chernenko, and in keeping with the dour Siberian's approach the normal black colour scheme had been approved. However, Geidar Aliyev had felt even at the time that something more dynamic was called for, and was now proposing a trendy metallic red with racing stripes down the sides. Rumour has it that he was originally planning to include mag wheels and furry dice in the package, but decided this might lessen their dignity in the eyes of the Russian people.

After Aliyev has put forth his proposal, there is an uneasy silence in the room. Gorbachev, who is facilitating the meeting, asks if there is any disagreement with it; President Andrei Gromyko rises to his feet.

"For 25 years, I was the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union. For all that time, Soviet representatives have maintained the most punctilious dignity and reserve. The western imperialists seek to portray us as barbarians, but we have shown that we are the true standard-bearers of civilisation. Our sober black Zil limousines have been an important part of our image as serious, responsible world leaders. I could never agree to such a proposal."

"Does that mean you'd be prepared to block consensus on it, Andrei?"

"Yes, Mikhail, I would."

"Well, does anyone want to try to change Andrei's mind?"

Ligachev, who has a certain reputation for over-enthusiasm, rises to his feet.

"Listen, Andrei, we're living in the 1980s now, not the 1950s. We're talking marketing, we're talking positioning, we're talking selling ourselves in the marketplace. Today's Politburo needs to project a positive, up-market image, inspiring confidence amongst our customers. Professor Lysenko over at the Soviet Institute of Psychodemographics tells me their latest survey indicates that more Greater Russians in the 16-25 cohort know that Wham! recently played China than are aware that the Central Committee recently approved the latest five-year-plan. Our collective name-recognition factor, with the understandable exception of Comrade Gorbachev, is less than that of Elton John's percussionist. The citizens of Ust-Kut have recently petitioned to have the main of their main street changed from Lenin Prospekt to Lennon Prospekt! When this sort of thing is happening in *Ust-Kut*, need I say more?"

"Egor, interesting as all this is, I don't see why it means we have to have red Zils with racing stripes down the sides."

"Because they're new! They're modern! They're positive! They project the go-ahead image we need. Personally, I'd be prepared to compromise on the racing stripes, but after all, Comrade Gromyko, red is the colour of our Union's flag. Are you suggesting we should change it?"

Mikhail senses that tempers are rising. A good facilitator must be able to strike a balance between non-intervention when a meeting is flowing smoothly, and knowing how to step in when things are going off the rails. Now is a time for the latter.

"It's obvious we have considerable disagreement on this issue, and I don't think we can reach a consensus at this meeting. What I'd suggest is that a few people who've got strong feelings on the issue get together and see if they can work out a compromise proposal, or a new and better one, to present to the next meeting. I won't join that group myself, but stepping outside my role as facilitator I'd like to suggest a dual fleet, one in black for the more ceremonial occasions and one in red, with or without stripes, for trips to the movies and so forth. Are there any volunteers?"

Aliyev, Ligachev, Vorotnikov and, after some prompting, Gromyko, agree to meet sometime in the next week to find a solution. The present meeting closes with an evaluation; everyone (even Gromyko) agrees it has gone well. Under Brezhnev and Chernenko, everyone would have headed off for a few vodkas at this point, but the fate of Grigory Romanov and other victims of Gorbachev's anti-alcoholism drive persuades them all to settle, in the public interim, for tea, coffee and Milo. By the time the dregs are drained, there's just enough time for Mikhail to pick up his dufflebag from the office before heading home to cook supper.

IV: EXPEDITION TO EARTH

After the evening meal, Raisa and Mikhail would normally head out to the theatre or maybe a movie, or invite a few friends round for a Pepsi. Tonight, however, they're off to Sheremetyevo Airport to greet the winner of the U.S.-Soviet Friendship Society's "WIN a day with Mikhail Gorbachev" competition. This competition attracted over 10,000 entries, despite unfavourable comment in the U.S. media, and represents a significant propaganda victory for the Soviet Union. Contestants were required to write an essay on the subject "U.S.-Soviet Relations: Where to from here?", and as a tie-breaker had been asked to complete, in 25 words or less, the sentence "I would like to visit the Soviet Union because..."

Although the tie-breaker had not in fact been required, the winner's essay standing head and shoulders

above its competition, his sentence had read "I would like to visit the Soviet Union because I have in my possession complete design drawings of the prototype Strategic Defence Initiative anti-missile laser system." It is fortunate the tie-breaker wasn't needed, as the winner's version contained 26 words and would undoubtedly have been disqualified.

His name is Jim Beam, and he arrives via Heathrow by Aeroflot. He is met as he steps off the plane by senior officers of Soviet military intelligence, who relieve him of a folder of drawings he obligingly presents to them, and after submitting to a final search he is permitted to meet the Gorbachevs and the press. After exchanging pleasantries, the threesome return to the Kremlin for a private get-acquainted chat in Mikhail and Raisa's apartment. "That means *private*," Mikhail insists, shooing away the lurking Kremlin guards.

When the door has closed behind the last of them, it is Raisa who speaks. "We have been awaiting this meeting for a long time, Sryvin. But why did you choose such a public method of arrival?"

The Ambassador to Earth of the Galactic Federation peels off his false head, legs and genitals, places them in a small attache case, and squats before them in her true form. "An old Earth custom, I believe — of hiding in plain sight. How could anyone so public as Mr. Jim Beam, notorious Commie sympathiser, be other than what he seemed? Well, we can dispense with Mr. Beam now. How soon can you leave?"

"I've told my colleagues on the collective farm that I'm taking a week's holiday — I believe that will be sufficient? I've packed my bags, and we recovered the atmosphere suit and other equipment from the Tunguska a week ago. The matter transmitter brought them in easily. I'm ready when you are, Sryvin."

"Very well. Mr. Gorbachev, would you like to come with us to farewell your wife?"

Mikhail indicates that he would. The aliens' ship is waiting in a forest between Shar'ya and Kirov; their mat-

ter transmitter, of which an embarrassed Academician Ivanenko is still trying to provide a convincing explanation to the military, sends the threesome through one at a time. The ship is the conventional saucer shape; a ramp extends to the ground, and between the pine trees small figures on trolleys are moving through the mist, collecting specimens. Before Raisa puts on her atmosphere suit and goes off to the headquarters of the Galactic Federation to present the case for Earth's admission, she and Mikhail say goodbye. They stand at the foot of the ramp, holding each other close.

"Keep everything ticking over while I'm away, won't you, Mick?"

"I don't expect any major problems. I'm sure we'll reach a compromise on the Zils without Andrei losing face. Nothing else should be too difficult — for me. You're the one who's got the hard work ahead."

"Oh, I think I'll manage O.K. It's a formality, really, isn't it? ... Well, Sryvin is starting to look impatient, probably. I have to go. I love you, darling. Take care."

"I will. You take care too. I'll take a day off when you get back, eh?"

They held hands as long as they could whilst Raisa sealed herself into the suit. Then they separated, and she walked slowly up the ramp as the returning alien scientists whirled past her. When they had *all* returned (for extraterrestrials learn from their mistakes), the ramp was closed and the spaceship rose silently upwards. As Mikhail stepped back towards the locus of the matter transmitter, the sky filled with light and a peal of thunder echoed over the sleeping land.

reprinted from *Timbre* 3, edited by Tim Jones.

THE BALLAD OF GAINED S'MELL

by Skel

WERE YOU AWARE that there are aliens amongst us? No, I thought not. Hardly anyone is. Aware, that is. Why, I wasn't even aware of it myself until just the other day, though of course being a Science Fiction fan I have long been alive to the possibility. I think my introduction to the concept came with Eric Frank Russell's *Three To Conquer*. You recall the plot, I'm sure — Viruses from Venus stage a sit-in in the central nervous systems of the three intrepid US spacemen who formed the crew of the secret American expedition to their world and culture. Wearing the Earthmen's bodies in much the same way that Joan Collins wears her Paris fashions, and obviously impressed by the standard of Terran couture, they head back to Earth in secret in order to pick up a more extensive wardrobe.

Fortunately for the survival of the human race there are a couple of ways of recognising these starwolves in sheep's clothing. Your basic average everyday telepath can spot them a mile off because of their habit of thinking to themselves in Goose — "Gabble, gabble, honk" being one of their most frequent thoughts. Now thoughts like that may be ever so soothing and reassuring to a Venusian Virus doing his early Christmas shopping in an alien land, but to even the dimmest witted telepath they are a dead giveaway. Luckily for the scheming aliens telepaths are not ten-a-penny in our society. In fact there's only the one, who luckily for us turns out to be the Hero (later on there turns out to be a second, an attractive female who ends up as the Hero's girl ... but we shouldn't be amazed at such a fortunate coincidence, because Heroes tend to get breaks like this. Let's face it,

there is a school of thought that says you basically make your own luck and, Heroes, being what they are, are just better at it than the rest of us.).

As luck would have it there is a second way of spotting people who have been taken over by the aliens — they like eating Menthol-Eucalyptus lozenges. This revelation came as a great relief to me. Having previously tried a menthol-eucalyptus lozenge I couldn't figure out how anyone even remotely human could enjoy such a foul-tasting abomination. Apparently Eric Frank Russell was of a similar opinion, for obviously he too thought that you'd have to be an alien to obtain any pleasure from sucking such muck. This opinion must also have been shared by all the Australian Science Fiction fans who must have taken the novel to heart and gone sniffing out Eucalyptus-smelling aliens wherever they could find them, which goes a long way towards explaining how come the numbers of the koala fell so drastically in such a short space of time, leaving them today as an officially endangered species.

Of course, the "Aliens Among Us" theme didn't originate with Eric Frank Russell's book; nor, unfortunately, did it end there. Television also indicated some concern on the topic. An early example was of course "The Invaders". David Vincent saw them. Unfortunately David Vincent was the only one who ever did see them, or at least the only one to both see them *and* survive to the end of each episode. Seeing aliens, unless you're The Hero, is a very risky business and not being a hero-type I immediately made up my mind that if there was one thing I definitely didn't want to see, it was aliens. In fact

I resolved that if ever I saw David Vincent walking towards me I would shut my eyes and refuse to open them again until Cas assured me that he had gone away.

Television viewers of more recent vintage might point towards the producers of "V" as another TV example of the genre, but pointing to the producers of "V" is something I would actively discourage, unless the thing being pointed was both loaded and lethal. Suffice it to say that anyone who is even remotely aware, science-fictionally, is alive to the possibility, if not the possibilities, of "Aliens Among Us". Thus it was that, being an SF fan I spotted the evidence of just such a situation where millions of others apparently did not. I think I am safe in assuming that I am the only one to have discovered, and *fully understood*, the clues indicating their presence. Let's face it, if the world were aware, you'd think it would have rated at least a paragraph or two in the newspapers, wouldn't you? Of course it would. Even the *Daily Express* would have been forced to give it a mention at the foot of an inside page somewhere, possibly even curtailing its fourteen page editorial comment on how lucky we are to have this particular Tory government to be unemployed under, or possibly even interrupting one of its seventy-two anti-Arthur-Scargill stories with a word or two to the effect that we'd been invaded by Aliens From Outer Space (a threat surely only marginally less terrible, even to the *Daily Express*, than Left-wing, Trotskyite, Militant Tendency subversion of the Labour Party). But no, I don't recall ever having read a word about the threat, which would seem to indicate that the world is unaware of its peril. I mean, it's not just that the evidence is too recent for I chanced upon it in the March 1980 issue of *Punch* magazine which is surely long enough ago for every newspaper except *The Star* to have featured the news in an edition by now. Notwithstanding this, the article in that particular issue of *Punch*, "Lumbared" by Basil Boothroyd, not only revealed that there are aliens amongst us, it also revealed that Basil Boothroyd was one of them. You want proof? OK, let me quote the damaging first paragraph in its entirety:

"Socks are the worst. Getting them off last night was easy. A matter of scraping the ankles together. Flies do it. But that's why they're inside out this morning, and rolled into round lumps that just kick along when you try to get a toe in."

No, it's not the inside-out flies. After all, you have to grant an Alien Being a degree of unfamiliarity with the English language. I think we can safely assume that it is the socks which are inside-out. Which in itself is a dead giveaway. I mean, in this article where the creature that was pretending to be Basil Boothroyd was doing its utmost to convince us that it too suffered on occasion from back trouble, just like the rest of us human beings, whilst it was concentrating on this, it allowed something else to slip out. Aliens do not have sweaty feet. Aliens can in fact wear a single pair of socks for more than one day.

Let's face it, we know what a ludicrous concept this is to any human male. We know that when you or I take our socks off we must either declare a total exclusion zone of at least fifty yards or face a lawsuit brought by Amnesty International, the R.S.P.C.A., the N.S.P.C.C., and doubtless also the R.A.C. Yes, wearing the same pair of socks for two consecutive days is banned by the Geneva Convention. Right there immediately below "a dirty thermonuclear device" and above "mustard gas" and "biological warfare". Why, if you're a man you only have to remember the last time you took your own socks off. "Daughter," you said, "take these socks upstairs to the linen basket, and bring me down a fresh pair, please." Daughter inches her way forward, already accoutred in a Second-World-War-surplus gas mask. She carries one of these long poles with gripper-fingers at the end which are used in laboratories dealing with highly radioactive or infectious material. Gingerly, with her ten-foot pole she approaches your socks, snags them up and conveys them to the laundry basket. You know from experience that, come the weekend when she asks for her pocket money, she will also be asking for her duly negotiated hazard allowance. It seems at first glance a bit excessive to be paying your own children danger money to take your socks away, especially when you recall that you used to hold your nose and carry your own father's socks up to the laundry basket *with your bare hands*. However, as you look down at your own dermatitis-ridden and chanced hands you realise that your children are not so much more mercenary, as simply more toxically aware.

Oddly though no SF novel has yet been written in which the fate of the Earth, of its soon-to-be-enslaved billions, hinged upon the Hero's keen and discerning olfactory abilities. In fact it is more than merely "odd". After all, surely each and every science fiction writer, *without exception*, cannot have made the assumption that all alien races will have sweaty feet? If that's to be the case then I wouldn't want to be in the position of Barlennan's future missus, when he takes his socks off, all 200 of 'em. No wonder no female Mesklinites would come anywhere near Dondragmar's crew in *Mission of Gravity*. It is to be hoped that they didn't also suffer from flatulence. Christ, if they farted as well it would take about 200 gravities just to keep the smell down.

Actually, I wonder what would be the situation regarding smells on ultra-high gravity planets. After all, smells are caused by molecules in volatile gases leaping about hither and yon, aren't they? Let's face it, at those gravities, a molecule is going to have all on just crawling off to die somewhere. I mean, we're not talking about the energy levels of suns here, just smelly socks and, however bad they are, they're hardly in the "solar furnace" category. So how do smells behave under extremely high gravity? Are they affected? Would a Mesklinite for instance take his socks off over a bowl, and would the smell sort of glop down into it and slop around a bit? It's certainly something that you would have to think about.

If that is the case, just how do you get rid of smells on Mesklin?

Now at first thought you might think there'd be no problem. If they can't get out of their containers, simply hammer a cork in and forget them. Out of sight, out of mind. The problem is that in no time at all you're up to here in bottled smells. All it would take is one mesklinquake and the entire race would be wiped out in the most horrible fashion imaginable. No, the smells would have to be disposed of somehow. Which brings us to another point — do smells break down under such incredible gravities? If so, what is the half-life of a fart? Actually this probably gives us a clue as to how the smells are disposed of on Mesklin. Your Mesklinite carefully peels his socks off over a mesklinware bowl. This in turn is poured gingerly through a funnel into a crock and corked. The crocks are then encased in concrete and dropped overboard into the deepest parts of Mesklin's oceans ... and isn't this really a far better justification for the Mesklinites to have developed seafaring than anything Hal Clement ever came up with?

An alternative method of disposal would of course be, as in the case of nuclear wastes on Earth, to bury it at the bottom of deep mineshafts, but as no Mesklinite worth his salt would risk having n-zillion tons of fall-able material over his head, there can't be any mineshafts on Mesklin. Just about their only other option would be to dispose of smells by pouring them down cracks in the Mesklin crust. This of course raises another spectre — what happens to them then? Down there near the centre of the world they are subjected to the immense pressures of the rest of Mesklin above them. Are they compressed? Is it possible that there might be worlds so massive that the smell at the centre became so compressed that it changed into a Neutron Smell or, at an even greater extreme, a Black Smell — a smell so dense that not one whiff of it could ever escape? A smell that, to all intents and purposes, was not truly in our universe at all?

Such smells would of course defy the normal laws of Newtonian physics. Space and Time would be as one to them. Just as physicists are now beginning to speculate that Black Holes might be the basis for some future "hyperspatial" method of traversing galactic distances, just so would Black Smells negate the vastness of the space-time continuum. Aromas would be sucked down into a Black Smell, only to reappear into our universe thousands of light years away, at the other end of these gravitic wormholes in space. Come to think of it, this is the obvious explanation for those strange and offensive smells that keep manifesting themselves in my living room just as I'm finishing my late-night snack of beans-on-toast.

But how many SF authors have really, seriously, developed concepts such as this? Go on, how many? None, that's how many! And yet, it isn't even as if they were ignorant. I mean, they don't even have that excuse. No less an authority (can there be less an authority?) than Brian Aldiss has given the game away. Science fiction authors

are fully clued up on the subject of sweaty socks. Brian wrote in a fanzine article about the sorts of things that used to take place at some of the early British science fiction conventions. Apparently the highspot of the occasion was where some of the Pros would get together in one of their rooms and hold a competition. They would all take their socks off and throw them against the wall. The winner was the author whose socks stuck to the wall the longest before falling to the floor. All this of course was long ago, before the Pros sacrificed literary credibility on the altar of populism, and moved over to the Hugos instead.

Nope, all those Good Old Boy SF Writers simply couldn't imagine any creature whose feet didn't stink, despite figuratively having their noses rubbed in at least one terrestrial example. Women! Here is the *real* proof of the sexist underpinnings of male-dominated sf. It's nothing to do with the preponderance of brainless female leads as The Hero's cock-fodder. The lack of credible and sympathetic female characters doesn't come into it. The real proof that all male science fiction authors are blinkered sexist pigs is that they've never shown any awareness that there are people whose feet don't smell. They simply weren't aware that "women" were "people".

Of course the reason why women's feet don't smell is now finally understood by medical science. I heard some biochemist discussing it on the television once. It's because their trousers are tailored differently. Probably something to do with them being made broader in the hip. Anyway, it's definitely their jeans. It's because of their jeans that women don't sweat. I heard it quite distinctly. Well, we all knew that women don't sweat. Bloody hell, I may not be terribly well educated, but I'm not ignorant! Not only don't women sweat, they don't even bloody well perspire. No, what women do is "glow", or "blush", or mostly "bloom", and we all know that sweat smells bad whilst "blooms" are supposed to smell sweet. Even Will Shakespeare, about as good an old boy as they come, had to admit that a rose, by any other name, would smell like a bloom, or something to that effect. And would anyone deny that old Will was A Good Old Boy when it came to sexism? Why, even his pen-name, "Shake-his-spear", lets you know where he was, you should pardon the expression, coming from. He didn't want anyone to associate his work with concepts like bakin'.

Anyway, it's this great semantic divide that dooms us men to have smelly feet. Men sweat, whilst women bloom. It's a pisser. We men got our feet dealt off the bottom of the semantic deck.

Mind you it isn't only women's feet that don't smell. Women do not make offensive smells of any sort, or so they claim. I've never met a woman yet who has admitted to farting. I mean, I have sat there, in a bus, nothing but women around — and suddenly there's this horrible smell. I look up from my fanzine, trying to see if some-

one's thrown a decomposing ferret onto the bus, and all the women are looking at me, and let me tell you, if looks could kill I would be reading that damn fanzine posthumously. And it isn't fair, because IT WASN'T ME! Unfortunately it isn't etiquette to stand up in the middle of a bus-full of ladies and scream "IT WASN'T ME!" Miss Manners does not cover this situation at all, she just sits there, smugly silent.

Like Cas. We will be sitting there, watching television and suddenly the wallpaper will start peeling off of the walls. Unfortunately I won't be able to see this too clearly because my eyes will be watering. Yes, both of them, and believe me it takes some fart to make a glass eye water! A miasma fills the room. There can be only one explanation — 30 million rats have been rotting under the floorboards for several decades — unless ... I look towards Cas who is smiling smugly as I lay gasping and choking on the floor. "You've farted!" I cry, or rather croak, or wheeze. But will she admit it? Will she bug-gery!

The thing is, women have TSC. I capitalise it because it is a strange and wonderful power about on a par with ESP, or Extra Sensory Perception. Women may not have ESP, but they do have TSC, Total Sphincter Control. There's not a sound. It's incredible. Now with me, as with most men, there's a sudden pressure in the bowelly region, followed by the sound of someone ripping up several telephone directories in front of fifty million microphones, but with women ... total silence.

You can't even take evasive action. You don't know it's coming. There's no Early Warning System like with us men. For instance, when you're drinking with the guys, say Mike Meara, and you hear The Crack of Doom, there's no panic. You make your way to the nearest exit in good order and assemble at the official Emergency Point for roll-call. Then you wait an hour or two for the "All Clear" and troop back into the building. No problem, except that with Mike Meara you also need thirty-two fallback emergency areas for when the first thirty-one, one-by-one, become untenable. But that's not an insurmountable difficulty.

With women though it's different. There's no warning. The first intimation you have that a woman has farted is that your leg drops off. If you happen to be drinking and don't immediately notice this, then your first awareness of the situation will also probably be your last. Your one remaining chance is to hop to the side of the room and throw yourself out of the nearest available window. Of course if you happen to be on the twenty-second floor then the result will be almost as bad as if you'd stayed in the room.

So there I lay, going green at the edges, as Cas smiles ineffably down at me. This is a Total Sensory Experience. Not only can I smell it, I can taste the fucking thing.

Hell, I can bloody well see it. I can feel it. "You've farted!" I gasp accusingly, as it knees me in the groin.

"Me?" she responds, shocked. "Don't be silly. Women don't fart."

To be perfectly frank, as I lay there wheezing and choking, there are times when I wish to Christ that women did have a room of their own! The simple fact is that I, like most men, have no problem with the concept of women taking responsibility for their own destinies. No problem. I just wish they'd also take responsibility for their own farts.

I mean, just who do they think they are kidding? It's not as if women's farts smelled even remotely like men's. Maybe it's caused by the biological breakdown of a completely different set of hormones. I dunno, but the fact is that to a man a woman's farts smell completely alien. Completely. Alien. Hmmm...

I begin to see it all now. Suddenly it is as if a veil has been peeled back from mine eyes. I can see clearly now. If Aliens are creatures that don't smell, and women are creatures that don't smell, then women must be aliens. No, don't mock. We're all aware of all those old "I'll never understand women" schticks, you know, the ones that claimed they must be an alien species because of their alien thought processes? Well, it looks like there might be some truth to this after all except that it isn't their mental processes that reveal their alienness, but rather something more fundamental — we men simply got things arse over tip, as usual.

Aliens don't smell, and neither do women ... or rather, neither did women. My mother never made an offensive smell in her life, as witness her reactions whenever my father took his shoes off. And one thing I can guarantee — my mother never farted! Unthinkable! An amazing awareness and understanding comes over me. Aliens don't make offensive smells, women didn't make offensive smells, but now they are starting to, they are becoming furtive farters. The only logical conclusion is that women are aliens who have lived amongst us so long that they are finally beginning to mutate towards our norm. They are beginning to smell. Is it any wonder that women are going through a gender-wide identity crisis? Why, even the worst excesses of feminism are understandable now. It's always tough when you get more than you bargained for. It's one thing to get the vote, it's quite another to get the fart.

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I WAS A TEENAGE CYBERPUNK FOR THE FBI AND FOUND GOD

by Arthur D. Hlavaty

HERE WE GO AGAIN. Once more there is a new literary movement in sf. Twenty years ago, it was the New Wave; now it's cyberpunk. The patterns repeat, in truly Hegelian fashion. Thesis: The new movement is the greatest thing since sliced bread. The new movement is pernicious and sinful. Antithesis: The new movement is a figment of the imagination; there is no such thing. Synthesis: There is no such thing as the new movement *and* it is the greatest thing since sliced bread or pernicious and sinful. Then come the unfair critical studies (like this one) which attempt to force the new movement into the mold of the old one. These, however, have a certain plausibility, since there are always similarities, such as:

The Founding Genius. The individual and idiosyncratic writer whose work lends stature to the movement and whose acolytes, by attempting to write like him, demonstrate that he really is inimitable: *J.G. Ballard / William Gibson*

The Designated Wit. A genuinely funny writer who is close enough in spirit to the movement to be cited as evidence that it does have a sense of humor: *John Sladek / Rudy Rucker*

The Outsider. The writer who's doing the same sort of thing, but for social or political reasons, never is included in lists of the movement: *John Brunner (Stand on Zanzibar) / K. W. Jeter*

The Namer. The writer/critic who started all the

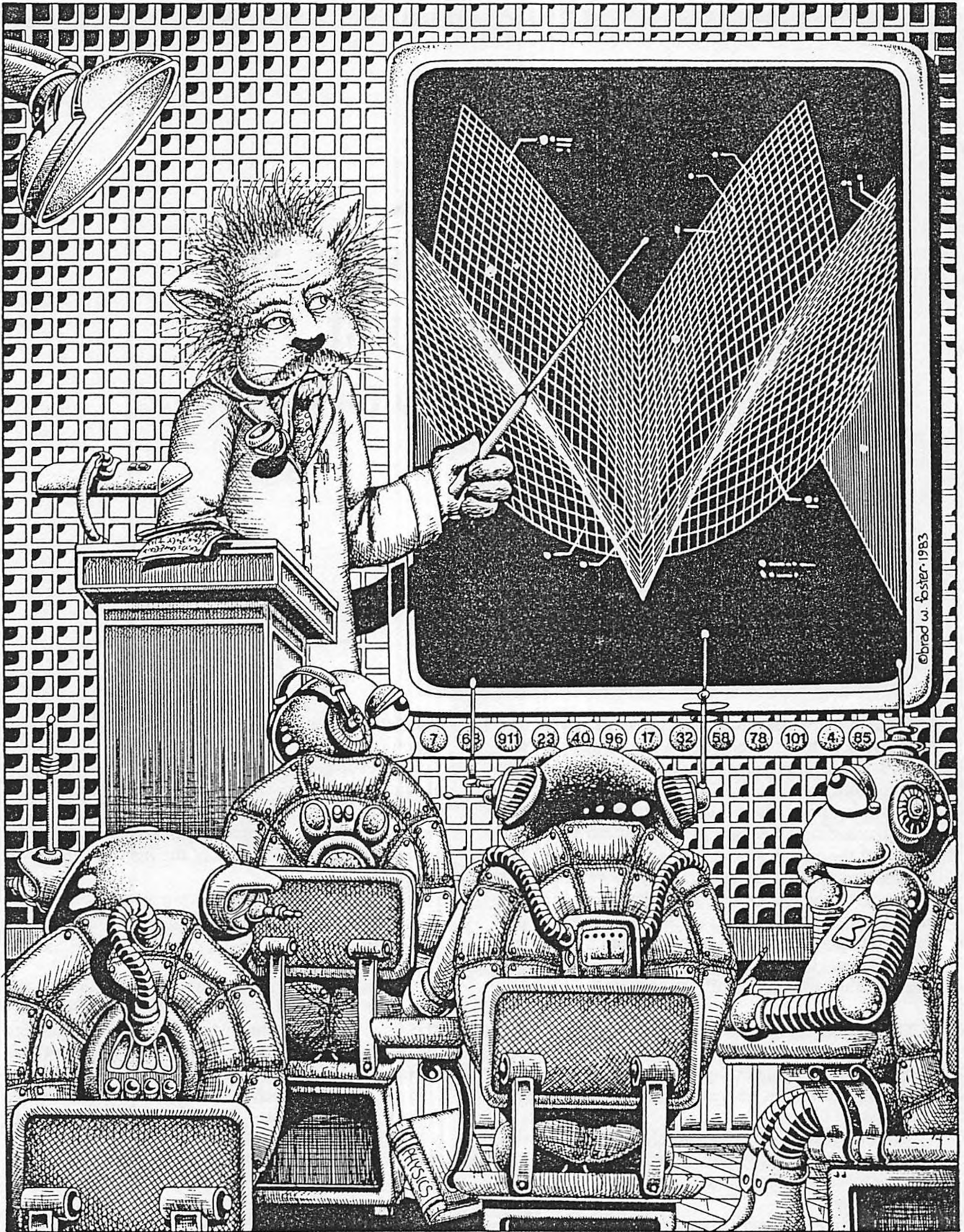
trouble by inventing the term: *Judith Merril / Gardner Dozois*

The Propagandist. The author of manifestos explaining why the writers in the group are brilliant, and everybody else is boring old farts: *Michael Moorcock / Vincent Omniaveritas (who holds in his hand a list of 57, or perhaps 180 or 23, agents of the right-wing/militarist conspiracy)*

The Feuder. The one whose own work is forgotten as he battles with boring old farts and others: *Charles Platt / John Shirley*

Obviously, the list is not complete. I can't find anyone in the Cyberpunks who plays the role of **The Godfather** (the older writer of stature who joins the movement and tries to raise it to his level — Brian Aldiss) or **The Token Woman** (who does one fascinating but not entirely comprehensible story which is always mentioned in discussions of the movement — Pamela Zoline). It is probably too much to hope that we don't have **The Smutmonger** (who writes emetic explicit sexnviolence — Langdon Jones).

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WE REMEMBER ... THE MISSING MAN

by Greg Bennett

MELVA TOOK THE new kids from Rockwell upstairs to watch the launch on the direct video feed. She's teaching them how to manage all the data that go with each Shuttle flight, and watching the launch seemed to be an important part of their education. One of them had never watched a whole launch and climb to orbit, not even on television. They were in the engineering wing of Building 30 at the Johnson Space Center. Mission Control is in the operations wing of the same building.

I was two miles away, sitting in my boss's office in The Tower. We were puzzling over how to manage part of the engineering in the Space Station program. The Shuttle flights we were worrying over won't happen for seven years; but the nature of our job is such that we have to project minds into the future, and then look back to see how we got there.

I didn't know they were going to launch that morning; I thought they'd been weathered in. It didn't matter much; neither payload had major launch window constraints, and there was plenty of time to turn Challenger around for Galileo.

"Go for throttle-up," came the voice of CAPCOM from the air-to-ground audio.

For a moment, it looked as if the solid rocket boosters had separated early. Melva stared at the television screen.

"That's not right," was all she said. She stared at the TV monitor for a few more seconds, and then walked out of the room, alone. The new kids were left to fend for themselves in a room full of silent, staring veterans of the space program.

A disembodied shout came through the door of my boss's office. I was talking at the time, and didn't hear what the guy said; so I ignored it.

"What!" my boss exclaimed. It wasn't a question.

I looked up from the paper I'd been scribbling on and saw his face, pale, staring at me with a look of disbelief. I must have looked puzzled. "Someone said the Shuttle exploded."

We were out of his office, roaming the halls, searching for someone with a radio or television set. There was nothing on air-to-ground. It should have been saying, "Press to MECO." Everyone was tuning in radios to the local news station. It was true.

This was a recurring nightmare I'd had since I started working in the Space Shuttle program. I'd always assumed that the nightmares were my subconscious preparing me for something like this, since none of us ever seriously considered it in our conscious thoughts. If that was preparation, it didn't help.

I couldn't breathe; my heart was arrhythmic, pounding. For the first time in my life, I felt faint. I was in shock. I knew I was in shock, and it didn't help.

No one knew anything. Lots of guys were punching numbers on the telephone, calling our troops in Mission Control. They didn't know anything, either. It was true.

"Who was on board?" I already knew, but I had to ask. I had to be sure. We were going to float a keg at the Outpost when they got back. We always do. El was going to have a luau; I had wondered if it would be worth it to wheedle an invitation.

My boss reached into the top drawer of his desk for the flight manifest.

"Scobee, Mike Smith, Onizuka, Resnick, McNair," he read in a monotone. "An engineer from Hughes named Jarvis; and Christa McAuliffe, the teacher."

"Did you know any of them?" he asked.

"Some of them," I managed. I'd never met Jarvis or

McAuliffe. I wasn't sure who Jarvis was.

"I coached Onizuka's kid in soccer," he said.

I nodded. It was what I could do.

We tried to get some work done. I'd never realized before what a happy sound it was to hear Sally shout "Hey, JR!" down the hall on the third floor of Building 4. The Third Floor — a place forbidden to all but the privileged few. The signs say so. It didn't seem to be such a privilege any more. It will be a long time before I go there again.

"I have to call my wife," I told my boss. He nodded. He was dialing his telephone as I left his office.

On Friday, they closed the Johnson Space Center, and the President came for the memorial service. At first, it was almost like a picnic. We weren't laughing and joking, but we weren't somber, either.

I stopped by the engineering wing of the mission control building to pick up Melva, Judy, and Mindy. The grassy mall between Building 16 and Building 2 looked really nice for a winter day. They'd moved some trees, and planted bushes in the bare spots that were being prepared for spring. There were only a couple thousand chairs, so most of us had to stand. That was OK. One of the troops from my Space Station Orbital Operations group found us. He was worried about writing an abstract for a conference in September. We worked on that.

It would be nice to have some portable director's chairs that wouldn't sink in the soft ground. We worked out some designs. I scribbled drawings in my Day-Timer.

They'd asked us not to bring purses or briefcases because that would slow down the lines at the security check points. The President was here. I'd be paranoid, too, if someone had shot me. Mindy and Judy had left their cigarettes in their purses, back in the office. I had a pack of cigarettes. We wiped them out while we waited for the ceremony to start.

A light plane flew in from the north, headed over the site. A blue-and-white helicopter intercepted, and chased it away. I noticed an identical helicopter hovering high in the distance, hiding between two huge bluffs of cumulus clouds.

It was really warm in the sun. I was glad I'd worn a light tan sports coat. A lot of the guys were wearing black. When those clouds moved in front of the sun, it

was chilly. They turned on the stage lights to illuminate the front porch of Building 16.

Steve Hawley's dad read a prayer. I didn't know he was a preacher's kid, too. It was like my own dad's prayers — sounded like a sermon in disguise.

Then, President Reagan spoke. It became real; this wasn't a picnic. It really happened. "We remember..." he said. I remembered. It really happened. They wouldn't be back. I had to be strong for the girls. I am imperturbable; just ask Bill Warren, he did that stationery for me. The shock broke; the grieving began. Psychologists would later say that this was the whole point of the memorial service, that it was exactly what we needed. I held it in.

We sang "America the Beautiful." I could follow the tenor until we got to the refrain, but had to switch to baritone for that. I could still hold it in.

Then the T-38's came, loud, fast, low over Building 16. The wingman broke away and flew straight up into the clouds... the Missing Man. I can't take the Missing Man. I never could. It didn't matter; I was wearing very dark sunglasses. I could look away from my companions, follow the sound of the T-38's long after they had disappeared into the clouds over Clear Lake. They couldn't see me through their tears, anyway.

The shock was broken; the grieving had begun. It was time to get back to work.

There's really no end to this story. It will take a long time, and there's work to be done. That work seems even more important now, because we are no longer just working to drive against new frontiers to advance the status of all mankind. In a field where a sense of wonder is part of the job, that is almost commonplace. But now, in addition to that, we set out with new determination to ensure that our friends will not have died in vain, and, step by step, to carry their memory into the far reaches of the universe.

*Greg Bennett
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