

spare

# R A N D O M

No. 2.



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\* R A N D O M 2 is produced  
\* by Daphne Buckmaster  
\* 8, Buchanan St,  
\* Kirkcudbright, Scotland  
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it is \*  
also being sent \*  
to a few \*  
who are not \*  
in OMPA \*  
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# RANDOM THOUGHTS

ONCE AGAIN I am turning out my own OMPazine at the last minute. With the deadline three days behind me, the mailings bundled up and the stensilling of O.T. already started, I feel I have time to sit down and turn out a few pages before March is upon me. And with a mailing consisting so far of a mere 86 pages, I think I really ought to have a go at getting it over the hundred mark.

Wonder if I can? Only eleven contributions and three of them single-pagers - this must be the smallest mailing ever, I should think.

The thing which interested me most in the last mailing was the discussion about the subject of 'women' in SCOTTISHE. As I read it, my mind was full of comments. Mostly of the "but... but...but..." type. Let's see how many of 'em I can dredge up. Firstly, Bill Donaho says every woman he knows dislikes other women and this was in answer to Juanita Coulson who had said that few of her friends were women. Now I don't think it's fair to compare a fanne's attitude to non-fan women with other womens' attitude to each other. After all, male fans are not much en rapport with non-fan men either, judging by many of the remarks seen in fanzines, all fans, both male and female, seem to hang on to fandom because only there do they find the type of people who speak their language. Why Bill himself once said (and I remember the phrase because it was so eloquent (if that's the right word)), "Fandom is the best source of 'people-type people' I have found since leaving college."

Secondly, there is the point made that women are always competing. In ordinary, everyday life I agree this is largely true. And I suggest that it is a result of the type of society we live in rather than something intrinsic in the nature of women, as such. All human beings want their merits recognised but whereas men can do this in their jobs, their position in life, etc., women, in their role of wives, can get recognition only from the egoboo of having nice houses, possessions and clothes etc. It is noticeable that women who have a career in which they can use their individual abilities - especially if it's a profession such as teacher, doctor, architect, etc - are said to be more like men. But it is not that they are "like men" at all; it is that they are no longer have the need for the artificial attitudes that women in the non-paying status jobs as wives and mothers have been forced to adopt. This is demonstrated by the fact that the same individual girl often appears to change character entirely as soon as she takes up full-time housewifery; one sees women who have been efficient and intelligent in their outside jobs apparently become completely dependent and unable to think for themselves as soon as they become a house-

4 wife; I see that Bill Donaho mentions this very thing himself in respect of his cousin and in the difference in response of girls in class according to whether boys are present or not so it's pretty obvious that it's a case of "the done thing". Girls are told from an early age that "boys do not like intelligent girls" so one can hardly blame them if they start to hide any intelligence they've got in the presence of boys.

But I think there is a confusion between "intelligent" and "studious" or "earnest". I doubt if anyone, of either sex, really likes a girl (or a boy for that matter) who is always studious and earnest about everything. Intelligence is a natural characteristic that everyone must use to some extent and is not necessarily associated with a serious or earnest outlook. Because of this confusion, girls grow up to think that they must act stupid or near-stupid if they want to have boyfriends.

Another reason for the convention that girls should not be too intelligent stems from the old days of our grandmothers' time when, if a woman was to do her full share of work in rearing a family and looking after a husband, she had to spend literally all her waking hours doing scrubbing, cooking, washing, sewing, etc., and, naturally, any tendency towards intellectual leanings had to be discouraged or the family would have suffered, gone hungry, or become ill through lack of cleanliness, because of time taken by the wife in reading or writing instead of doing the housework. And since women were neither required nor allowed to take part in community affairs, such as voting, etc., it was best that all their attentions should be directed towards the housewifely virtues.

But things have changed and, as usual, it takes a couple of generations for popular opinions to catch up. With the advent of leisure through labour saving devices, women have been enabled to take part in things outside the home, to go out and earn money if they want to. There is no longer any need for them to suppress their mental abilities and, in fact, it is generally agreed nowadays that the country needs every bit of brainpower she can get these days, regardless of the shape of the body it appears in. I don't think that men have any inborn dislike of intelligence in women though no doubt they, too, are affected by the convention in-so-far as going along with the idea that women should not be too intelligent. Of course, nobody of either sex likes another person to be always telling them they are in the wrong or acting superior to them. This is not a question of sex but of common courtesy for both sexes.

As for marriage, one can hardly believe that any man, once he is out of the adolescent stage, really wants to marry the silly type of woman unless he is a) of very low intelligence himself or b) so rich that she won't be required to do anything but look decorative anyway. Contrary to popular belief, intelligence can be used in housekeeping and the work is all the better done for it.

I do agree with Elinor's remark (as quoted by Bill) when she says, "Women like other women better than they realise. This "I can't stand women" jazz is partly to indicate their complete eligibility for masculine society". This is sometimes necessary, I should think. After all, if men, some of them anyway, take the attitude that they "don't like womens' chatter", what can one do, if one is not to be ostracised by them, but suggest that one is not like that oneself? This same problem crops up, not only in the man-woman relationship but anywhere where there is prejudice between one group and another. A person gets condemned along with the rest of his group, because of some real or imagined defect in that group, regardless of whether he himself has that particular defect and the only two courses open to him are a) to try and convince the ones who are prejudiced against his group that they are wrong - which is pretty hopeless - and b) to admit that his group are like that, but that he is different.

I wasted a good many years on the first alternative, namely, trying to convince men that women were not so stupid or inferior as men were taught to think. Needless to say, I was not only knocking my head against a brick wall but I got myself a reputation for being a "feminist". So we women are in a cleft stick. If we speak up for our sex, we are called feminists (a sort of term of abuse) and if we go along with the male view of our sex we are thought to be traitors to our own sex! It's a case of 'give a dog a bad name and hang him'. Whatever one does, one is in the soup. So what attitude would men have us take towards our sex? Should we say, yes, women are stupid creatures aren't they - in which case we are likely to get called catty, or should we say, no, women are as sensible and intelligent as men are - in which case we get called feminists?

Luckily, it is by no means all men who look down on womens' company (and the number who do are getting fewer with each generation, I'm sure) especially men who are intelligent themselves, so I have found that just to talk naturally, be oneself, and not make any claims either for or against one's sex as a whole, is the best way to go. And I think most of the women in fandom do this too. There's so much to talk about with a group of fans that one doesn't often hear remarks made about females in general except by way of a joke.

I do not believe that, in ordinary everyday contacts and conversations, there is any need to draw attention to one's sex at all. One of the best compliments I ever had was from a man who had been talking with me for about a couple of hours at the Globe one Thursday and at the end of that time he suddenly said, "You know, I quite forgot I was talking to a woman!" I know that, according to accepted convention, it would not have been regarded as a compliment at all; for according to convention - especially as interpreted by the womens' magazines - we are expected at all times to do everything to heighten our femininity.

But I think this attitude is overdone. Femininity should be emphasised for parties, dances and other occasions when men and women get together expressly to enjoy each other's company. I'm all for being 'feminine' on such occasions - but must it be extended to every waking hour? The women's magazines, of course, have an axe to grind in this matter. Since most of their income is from the advertisements of cosmetics and clothes, they naturally have to push the idea that a woman should spend every spare moment applying fresh make-up or getting her hair set or shopping for clothes, etc. Unfortunately, The Woman, or one of its sister-mags is every woman's Bible today and what it says goes. It is said that if one is a woman, it is natural to pay attention to feminine attributes and not to "ape men"; it is assumed that not to be female in a positive, noticeable way is equivalent to being "mannish". The ridiculousness of this idea becomes apparent if we apply this same argument but from the man's point of view. Is a man expected always to be paying attention to his masculinity? Must he spend every spare moment developing big muscles and swinging from tree to tree - or from the chandeliers, perhaps - so as to make sure he is not "aping women"? Of course not. A man is expected to be just a natural human being, not an imitation Tarzan. Why then cannot women, too, be natural human beings instead of imitation Marylyn Monroes or Florence Nightingales? As one of the early suffragettes said to the accusation that she wanted women to be like men, "We do not want to be like men. We want the right to be like ordinary human beings."

Most of us try - to be normal, that is - and when we are busy, either in the office, the shop or the home, we do usually succeed. Notice that when there is important work to be done - especially emergency work - we all, both men and women, just get on with it and forget all about which sex we are. It is only when there is nothing much important going on or when the occasion is social that we suddenly seem to become conscious that we are women and must act as such. In current everyday life, there is rarely much of great importance going on. Most jobs are routine, do not require either hard thought or even hard work (though naturally there are exceptions) and this, perhaps, is why the business of being feminine has started to intrude at every hour of the day.

But it is not only women who suffer from conventional notions of what constitutes 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Many a young man with the sensitivity to appreciate - or perhaps to create himself - music, painting, and other fine arts, has been subjected in the past to ridicule for being 'effeminate'. Here again, we have an attitude that was perfectly valid 50 or so years ago. In a time when it was a case of every hand to the plough in order to survive, the dreamy-eyed youth was certainly no asset to his community; indeed, he was a downright hindrance. So, here again, it has been a question of bringing our attitudes in line with present day circumstances.

It seems that as we get further and further away from the days when we lived, both men and women, by manual toil, and nearer to a more civilised type of living, a way of life that is based more on emotional and intellectual characteristics than on physical energy, the difference in outlook and appearance between men and women will tend to disappear.

Do I hear indignant shouts of "No. No. Vive la difference!"? I'm sure I do. But listen. The superficial differences that we spend so much time cultivating are not important to sexual attractiveness. If you doubt this, take a look at the Bohemians/Beats/Intellectuals or whatever you like to call them. In every popular newspaper and periodical one can read indignant letters saying that you can't tell one sex from t'other among these people. They're not far wrong, either. The girls with their duffle coats, fisherman sweaters, slacks, sandals and straight hair are "not attractive" by conventional standards. Yet the same outraged matrons who sneer at these girls for "not making the best of themselves" as it is called, are the first to look down on them for their "lack of morals"! How inconsistent can you get?

So that is why I say we do not need warpaint and feet-distorters and perspiration-stoppers and all the other aids to ill-health in order to attract the opposite sex. Sex appeal is something that comes from your personality. You either got it or you ain't. Or rather, if you're alive and healthy and behave in a natural fashion, then you've got it.

Which brings me back - after a bit of a circular detour admittedly - to the point that sooner or later there will be no need for any remarks of the "I like women/I don't like women" type because a truly civilised individual can be him/herself and not have to conform to arbitrary characteristics which are supposed to be 'masculine' or 'feminine'.

I believe that attraction must necessarily occur between masculine and feminine personalities - but that is not the same thing as between male and female. For it is quite usual for a person to have a "feminine" personality and a male body or a "masculine" personality and a female body. None of us need look far among our acquaintances to come across instances of men with gentle passive natures and women with outgoing, decisive natures. Looked at in this way, some instances of homosexuality can be explained normally - i.e. a man with a male personality attracted towards men with a female type personality. The attraction between the male and female personalities is normal - as anyone would agree - and the fact that they don't have bodies to match is an unfortunate subsidiary factor. The same could apply in the case of two women - one 'masculine' and one 'feminine'. This is supported by the fact that the type of men who deliberately set out to attract homosexual men always put on feminine airs and that many homosexual women have a masculine air.

Usually, of course, what happens when a person does not have a body to match his/her personality is that a man with a feminine-type personality marries a woman with a male-type personality, thus making a 'normal' match. And I suggest that, contrary to popular belief, such marriages are not necessarily unhappy. We all tend to feel sorry for the 'henpecked husband' but, surely, if a man has a passive nature, he'll be quite satisfied to let his wife run things and the only thing that makes him unhappy, probably, is the fear that people might laugh at him.

To sum up this business of personalities, I believe that personality can differ just as much between different persons of the same sex as it does between persons of opposite sexes and that much unhappiness is caused by the arbitrary conventions as to what characteristics should go with what type of body. The sensitive boy and the tom-boy girl are natural types that we've all known in childhood, but as they grow up they are pressurised by social disapproval into trying to be what they aren't. It is not quite so bad nowadays as it used to be because we are already half way along the road from a life depending on physical labour towards a life of leisure and appreciation of finer things. And in this more civilised life we shall not need such a rigid division between men and women on an artificial basis.

.....Well, I seem to have got well away from what I originally started to talk about but thank you, Ethel, for stimulating me into filling up nearly six pages. (Nearly made a typo there and wrote 'sex pages'. Reminds me of the time I wrote to a fan who asked for my zine and said, "I have put you on my mailing list". Luckily I noticed it before I sent it, and altered it!)

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Another of last mailing's zines which spurred me on to comment was VIPER. Welcome to OMPA, Bill; if anyone can stir a bit of liveliness into the present near-senility of this apa, I'm sure you can. I'll start by ignoring the long quotation on page one, partly because I've already written five and a half pages about sex and partly because I can't understand what the hell he's talking about. Turn over and we come to your personal introduction. Reading between the lines, I see you as such a mild sort of person. Odd. How can the editor of such a riproaring magazine as HABAKKUK be mild?

The most absorbing part of your comments, for me, was the part about Anglofandom. One so rarely sees any serious comments about us as seen from U.S. fandom - except for the oft-repeated stuff about Anglozines appearing neater, etc. You have a good point in saying that England is so much smaller than U.S. that we all know each other but, really, it's not quite so much smaller as it appears on the map. What you Americans tend to forget is that getting from place to place here

takes about three times as long as it does in America. For instance, the trip from London to Manchester is a mere 200 miles but takes six or seven hours; over there, the same distance would take you - what? - about three hours? You have no idea what it is like travelling long distances on roads built for only a half or a third of the traffic we have now. It's the bends and twists that slow us down; the frequent villages and the traffic lights. The Turners from Los Angeles who toured British fandom in their car recently said they would never have believed the time it was going to take them to get across England - their estimated schedule was way out. Things are improving now that we have a couple of stretches of Motorway, but....!

So you see we don't get to see each other quite as much as you U.S. fan probably imagine. Moreover, fewer of us have cars or any other form of private transport. So, apart from conventions, our meetings are mostly restricted to those who live in the same town or, say, area of ten or twenty miles. And not all of us go to every convention - unless it happens to be in our own section of the country.

On the question of in-groupishness, many American zines certainly seem to have this characteristic - to me, anyway. You say that you think U.S. zines are only ingroupish about things in fanzines but I don't agree with you there. There seems to be a lot of writing based on meetings of one sort and another and depending for its effect on knowing the persons concerned. After all, as well as the national Cons, you also have lots of regional Cons each of which is probably as big as our national Cons which means that US fans know each other in groups - even if they haven't met the members of other groups. Examples that come to mind of 'group' type zines (and I don't use the word in any way detrimentally) are J-D ARGASSY, VOID and CRY - those are just the first that come to mind.

Your point about British zines suppressing controversy too much for your liking seems, from the context, to refer to personal disagreements about plans, activities etc., such as Convention squabbles, money matters and other things that cause ructions from time to time. If so, then I think, myself, that such things should be repressed. In practice such things usually blow over but, once published, they can go on for ever almost, what with people defending themselves against attacks that have been made, or that they think have been made, on their characters, demanding apologies, explaining misunderstandings and whatnot. You say it is possible to have controversies without degenerating into personalities. True in theory, perhaps, but, in practice, people do identify themselves with their views, especially when the disagreement concerns something that is important to them, money, etc.

You are probably right about British fans being older before they begin to publish, due to lack of money. Tho' I really don't know what the 'British way

of looking at things' refers to; or 'British flavour'. To me, there is as much divergence of opinion among us as there is between us and yourselves. I'd like to hear more of this question as to the differences (or similarities) between British and U.S. fans. There may be a lot more misunderstandings - like the one I've just gone into re the notion you have that England is so small that we can be dashing about visiting each other all the time! - lurking in the depths of American consciousness.

I enjoyed Ted White's account of the soapbox scene; is it usual over there for different people to get up on the box one after the other? I've never seen it happen here and I've spent a good many idle hours in the past listening to the orators - if they can be called that - in Hyde Park and Lincoln's Inn Fields but never have I seen members of the audience take their turn on the box. The only time when one speaker changes for another is when the two are partners relieving each other. The soapbox speaker I best remember was a man who'd found himself a place in the little cul-de-sac that runs between Foyles' bookshops in Charing Cross Road. I was wandering around with Bobbie waiting for the theatre to open when we came across this little crowd, and having nothing better to do, we stopped to listen. (Remember, Bobbie?) The man speaking was about 25 with a red beard and a very handsome face and was speaking in favour of anarchy. I fell for him immediately much to Bobbie's disgust and we must have stood listening to him for about an hour. Oddly enough, he didn't manage to turn me into an anarchist. At least not for more than 24 hours.

Thanks for reprinting that Jack Speer article. (At least, I assume it's a reprint.) Very sensible advice - especially his remark that people who refuse to comment on comments can never take part in a conversation. I have often wondered what reason some people have for not wanting to join in the commenting; I don't think any of them ever give a reason.

"Most women seem to have an outraged horror at anything mathematical." Well, there must be plenty of women mathematicians around and an awful lot of women math. teachers. I think that both men and women find maths a more difficult subject than almost any other (no doubt because it's about the only subject that is completely abstract; all the others have at least some practical facts to get a grasp on) but women don't mind admitting it because maths is not considered a 'feminine' subject anyway. If a man's not good at it he just keeps quiet about it but a woman can make the most of it by taking it as proof of how 'feminine' she is! Hah! I've already said enough - too much? - about women in this issue so I'll leave it at that. I will query your statement, though, that the ability to read a language is not easily lost. I did quite well at French and German when I was at school but I can't say that I find them easy to read now. I can get the gist of French but not quickly enough to follow, say, a radio announcer; German's even worse because of the large vocabulary and so many

words that are very similar and therefore confusing.

I, too, think that the mailing comments -- if, with those, you include the various editorialsramblings, natterings and what-have-you -- are the best part of apazines. As you say, it's the spirit of closeness and contact they give. When I started circulating ESPRIT as a generalzine I, at first, thought I would give up OMPA because I got more response to the genzine than I ever got in OMPA. But I soon realised that if it weren't for OMPA I would have nowhere to write the odds and ends that pop into my mind from time to time and that there is no place for in the editorial of a generalzine. In OMPA, I can just ramble on putting down anything that occurs to me. Admittedly, I use the last mailing as a jumping-off board, but it doesn't matter if one digresses in an apazine and I invariably do.

On your postmailing, I'm with you about the desirability of needing four members to put forward a proposal rather than an individual and also that the proposal should be discussed in the mailing before the ballot is put out. I agree, too, -- I seem to be in a very agreeable mood at the moment! -- that the egoboc poll should have weighted categories.

AND THAT will have to be all, for now. Since I ran off the first page -- several days ago -- VIPER 2 with 42 pages has arrived and also BJOTTINGS. So the mailing will not be as small as I had thought. Good.

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IF I SENT YOU THIS AND YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF OMPA it is because I thought you might be interested and any comments you care to send are likely to get published in the next issue. I shall be pleased to hear from you.

# FANZINES FOR SALE

Owing to lack of space, I am selling the following:

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Clarke); TRIAL (Dot Hartwell); From \*, 6d each or 3/6 the lot.

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