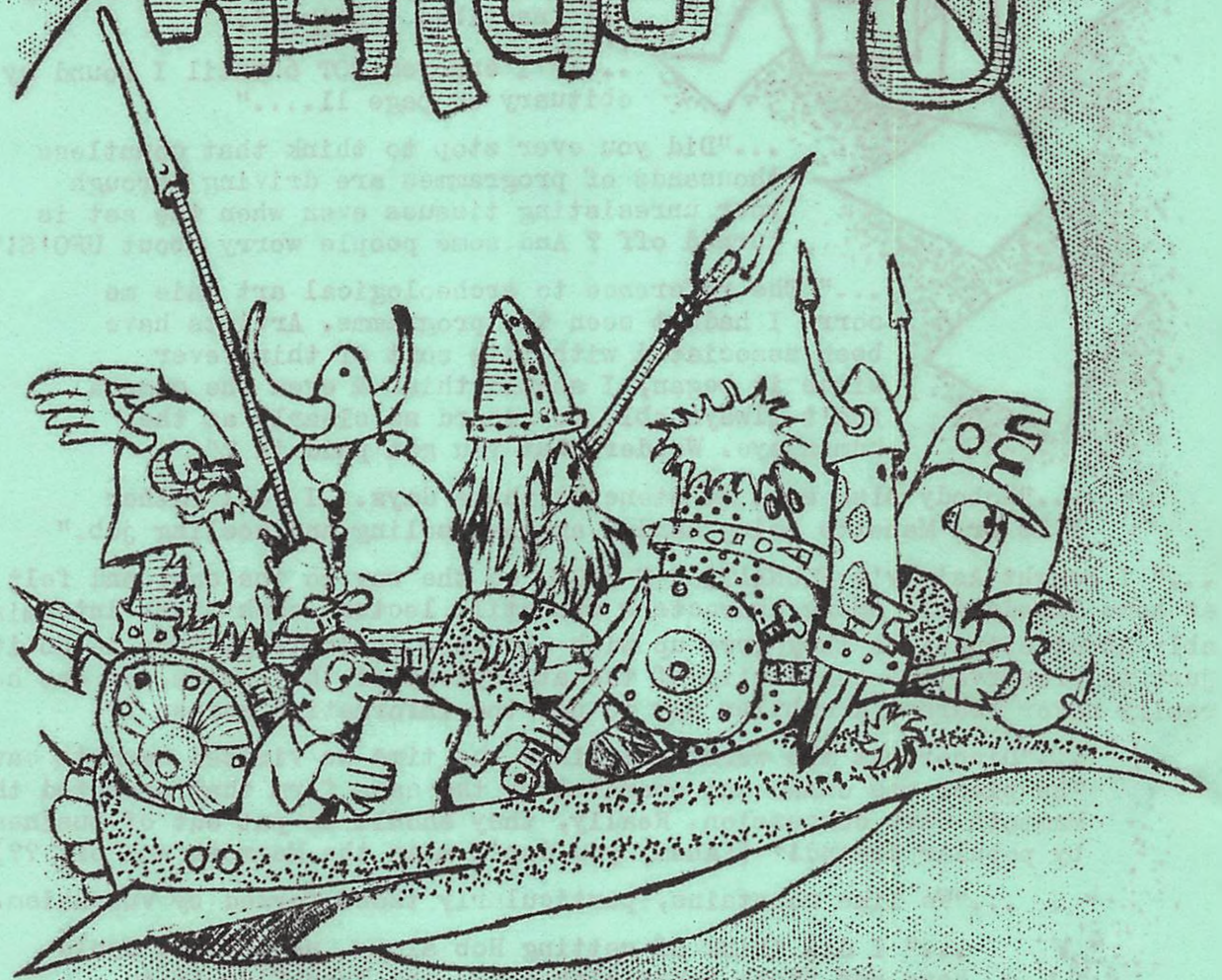


Waldo 8



preTEXT

...."At first he seemed very withdrawn and distant but after we'd been talking awhile the clouds parted and a scowl broke through".

..."I identified myself to Chuck by proffering my Certified Sex Fiend Card (certified by C.R. Harris circa 1954)...upon which he immediately inscribed 'Retired'."

...." I enjoyed ROT 6 until I found my obituary on page 11...."

..."Did you ever stop to think that countless thousands of programmes are driving through your unresisting tissues even when the set is turned off ? And some people worry about UFO'S!"

..." The reference to archeological art made me sorry I hadn't seen the programme. Artists have been associated with this sort of thing ever since it began, I should think & even the camera isn't always able to record so clearly as the human eye. Wonder what you get paid in ?"

..."Nobody else send me stencils, these days. I feel rather like Dr. Manette being handed another soling and heeling job."

..." I bought Asimov's FOUNDATION'S EDGE, on the way to the con, and felt at home immediately among characters who still lecture each other interminably about situations they grew up with and know intimately. Does he do it just to preserve the continuity of the atmosphere of the series, or has he really never learned a subtler way to put the information across ?"

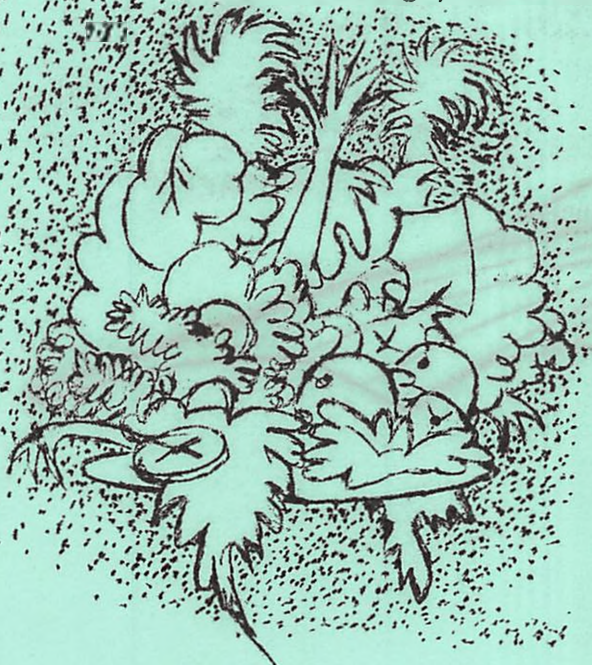
..."Dinner was the worst one since the time we visited mammoth cave. The place was owned and operated by the same firm that operated the Mammoth Cave concession. Really, they should be put out of business by popular demand!" ((Ahem, you don't mean the Mammoth wuz off ??))

..."We like mountains, particularly those formed by vulcanism."

..." I did think of getting Rob along so that we could have our photo taken with her...and then flog it to LOCUS as "High, Wide & Hansen"...."

..." Ashwife, more streetwise than me, and having sussed out the free salad, had the quiche...which looked nice enough except for the minute slices. Still, she made up for it with a Mountain Greenery; if you can imagine Kew Gardens on a plate you'll have some idea. (This was mainly for Mal who's now three stone lighter than those terrible Tun tum pictures that made you wonder if he'd swallowed the fermenting bin as well as the Real Ale inside it.) I had the Goulash... ..it was more of a backlash than a goulash..."

preTEXT consists of Eviel Editorial thoughts, and quotes from Jim Cawthorn, Joni Stopa, and Chuck Harris.





BOOK REVIEW SECTION - combined with the colophon this issue since I can recall only one genre novel that I've read in the past twelve months worthy of being promoted to WALDO's discerning readership. Namely Tim Powers THE ANUBIS GATES for which I say Hip, Hip, Sirrah, Sirrah! As to the rest.....their penchant for describing wonderful alien worlds and exotic races in a most pedestrian and boring way earns no plaudits in this periodical - you all know the m.o. I'm sure, the cast of the quest scale vast inclement mountain ranges fighting off strange and savage hongs their spirits buoyed only by the exciting alien city that they are about to reach - and which the author is unable to describe wondrously when they do!

THEY CALL ME ESOTERIC

.....Eric Bentcliffe...4

ALL MY SINS REMAINDERED

.....Mal Ashworth.....7

THE SECRET LIFE OF SOCKS

.....Eric Mayer.....12

SEACON EXPOSED

.....Vinç Clarke.....15

RED GROCKLES IN THE SUNSET

.....Hazel Ashworth...20

TABU OR NOT TABU

.....Arthur Thomson...23

FANGOT

.....!ocs.....25

All illustrations finely hand-carved by ATom.

Words put on stencil by the Digital Method - ie, one-finger, by eb.

Duplicated on Skel's new-fangled electric-powered machine.

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WALDO EIGHT- WINTER 1984/85 comes to you from... ERIC BENTCLIFFE,

17, RIVERSIDE CRESCENT,
HOLMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE,
ENGLAND. CW4 7NR.

Mainly because you've done something which pleases said EB and stimulated His whim....on the other hand, you may have done something He doesn't like in which case you may consider WALDO 8 as some form of retribution.

% % % % % % % % % % % %

SUGGESTED SEQUEL

to 'Canticle for Liebowitz'...

|| TIME TRAPPIST ||

% % % % % % % % % % % %

They Gave Es: of Eric



Somehow I feel I should apologise for the earliness of this issue.... I mean, it isn't that it's happened real-soon-now after the last one or anything, but it is earlier than I expected it to be; I gave the Ashworths their usual twelve-month deadline thinking I could then use them as an excuse for not pubbing my ish for the next eighteen months or so and then the dang fools came in with magnum opii within twelve months. Some of these BAFF's have no constraint. Mind you that which Mal (in particular) has to say, has needed saying for some time and I can only hope it will have the desired effect of putting an end to a most boring trend.

Apart from certain of my contributors getting ahead of their deadlines this issue's earliness may also be in part due to the current pyrotechnic exhibitions of fiery fuggheadedness permeating the atmosphere and causing everyone to get stirred up...I don't intend to get involved in who is right, wrong, or just plain evil but I do find it somewhat indicative that two of the main protagonists - Richard Bergeron and Ted White - are virtually full-time fans and once anyone gets involved in anything to that extent they do tend to lose objectivity. However, it's all got the ether crackling (like a Doc' Smith space-battle with ravaging beams flaring into the ultra-violet) and some of the energy seems to have penetrated my fastness. And having quite recently returned from Disneyland helps me understand that some Americans will do anything for entertainment!

Mind you, in the case of Disneyland, I'm highly delighted they will..... Beryl and I had a superb vacation in the land of Disney and Macdonald made all the more piquant by being able to help celebrate Donald Duck's 50TH Birthday to the strains of the Ray McKinley Orchestra. Next issue, I suspect, I'll tell you all about it, by then memories will have distanced themselves sufficiently that I'll be able to get everything in perspective - I think this is probably another way of saying I'll have forgotten enough of the minutiae for the writing to be easier!

One thing I would like to do now though, is to dedicate this issue to John Trimble and Bob Bloch for helping make our stay around Los Angeles so much fun; and to also thank those present at the August 26th LaSFaS meeting for *** their hospitality. I remember talking with Bill Rotsler, Bruce Pelz, Marty and Robbie Cantor, The Moffats, Elt Weinstein, Don Franson, Mike Glycer and Jerry Pournelle; but there were others, too, I'm sure. Thanks, guys... 5

....Run, woman? you forget I'm older than Donald Duck!

Meanwhile, talking of trips Stateside.... Being a somewhat old and retiring fan I do my utmost to project a noble mien and not become involved in fannish holocausts (Hmmm, I think that should be 'unfannish holocausts') and general kerfuffles. However, just every decade or so some topic of the day causes me to mutter into my beard quietly THAT IS NOT FERSHLUGGINER RIGHT! NO WAY!! As of now the TAFF Controversy - as its been labelled in letters of neon in recent missives received - isn't looking too serious and I hope it won't become a matter for Major Concern and Considerable Debate...etc...if you'll forgive a couple or so polite euphemisms - that isn't what TAFF is about. And if you'll forgive me I'd like to pontificate on the subject a little; I do seem to have the right to do so since I was in at the birth of the fund, later became a highly delighted winner, had a superb adventure to Pittsburg and back, published an account thereof of some 90+ pages within just a few months of my return, and did my stint as administrator (with, first, Don Ford, then Ron Ellick as my opposite 'number') successfully in that I raised funds and interest for TAFF. And...perhaps more importantly...I still feel very grateful to TAFF for awarding me the honour of the trip and would not want other fans to be deprived of a similar honour in the future.

Over the years TAFF has had problems - with a few inadequate administrators, and un-generous winners who have not felt obliged to carry out the inherent obligations after making their trip - but the fact that TAFF is still operating, still bringing Stateside fans to the U.K. and European fans to the States is fair evidence that the original concept is still valid. Surely...from time to time the wrong person wins (depending on where you are looking from) but in the long view this is a reminder that a TAFF Campaign is just that, and that if the candidates don't bother to make any effort to get elected (or their sponsors don't carry out their obligations similarly), ie, show evidence that they are interested in winning/making the trip and will make a good delegate well, then, perhaps they shouldn't expect to win. Fanzine fandom is all about communication and if its candidates can't, don't, or won't....Ergo! Usually, the campaign after one such has good active Candidates..

So what was the original concept? Basically that TAFF would exist to honour worthy fans by allowing them funds to visit what was then thought of as 'the other half of fandom over the water'....naturally fandom was different then, it was smaller and most fen knew of other fen and what they did and what their interests and accomplishments (in fandom) were and it was assumed that this would always be so. Just because we were science-fiction fans didn't mean we knew what was going to happen in the future! It was assumed that anyone who was likely to win TAFF would do so because he/she was well-known and well-liked and was continuously active in fanzine publishing and con-attending - and probably con-organising as well, most everyone was involved in all aspects of fandom then - and by virtue of such be a worthy candidate, one who would make the trip if chosen and make a good delegate to that 'other half of fandom', one who would regale fandom of his/her adventures afterwards (most early winners wrote an account of their journeyings, others fulfilled the obligation by slide-show and convention-talk) and who would also make an able and willing administrator. There was no division in the original concept between fanzine-fans and convention-fans because the division itself did not exist to any great extent at that time - and it's interesting

(***Hmph...for August read JULY, already memory fails me!)

to note in view of current events that one of the original movers and fund raisers (the late Don Ford) would be classed as the latter today.

And what did the administrator have to do? Basically, perpetuate TAFF by raising funds for the next winner to make his/her trip...and, be a Benevolent Dictator. It was assumed - back then - that Fanarchy would continue to prevail and that this was the only system likely to prevail during fandoms occasional changes of direction. Rightly, I think, TAFF is still in operation and what better proof of an argument is there. Naturally it isn't easy to be all the things required rolled into one as well as a Benevolent Dictator, but enough delegates have succeeded in this for the fund to be perpetuated. A persuasive argument for preserving the status quo, I think.

This was the original concept....some of it was written down, some of it wasn't and all that I've writ is in my phraseology and not that which may exist in some hoary old manuscript somewhere which I don't know about...it was assumed that yet another attribute of a TAFF Administrator would be Low Cunning!

I've tried to be as objective as possible in the foregoing - I don't know those currently involved in argument well enough to assess motives and I suspect I don't know all the facts either. Obviously, there are things I'd like to see done in regard to TAFF - a minimum of three Candidates in each election for instance (entirely feasible in today's vast fandom); every Tenth Year to be set aside for a previous-winners-contest (I'd like the chance to go again!) and, possibly, the public submission to an Astral Pole Rite of all those delegates I opine to have failed in their obligation to TAFF...but those are personal foibles and not necessarily intended to clarify the issue as is the rest of the foregoing.

" He's very good at cryptic utterances."

Inevitably, new 'facts' come to light, thrusting themselves through your letter-box as soon as you've committed thoughts to stencil. It says here that TAFF administrators rejected the Martha Beck nomination on the grounds that one nominee hadn't come through on time; which pre-supposes that four other nominators had - in which case whilst the TAFF Administrators are technically correct in rejecting the candidacy, they could well have considered that since four of the nominees had done their stuff the fifth couldn't be far behind - and quite possibly have saved everyone a lot of hassle. On the other hand...the TAFF Candidacy of Martha Beck having been rejected - her backers should have followed previous precedent and set up a separate fund to send her to U.K. rather than attempt to (presumably) get back at the TAFF Administrators - they certainly haven't done their own case any good by so doing.

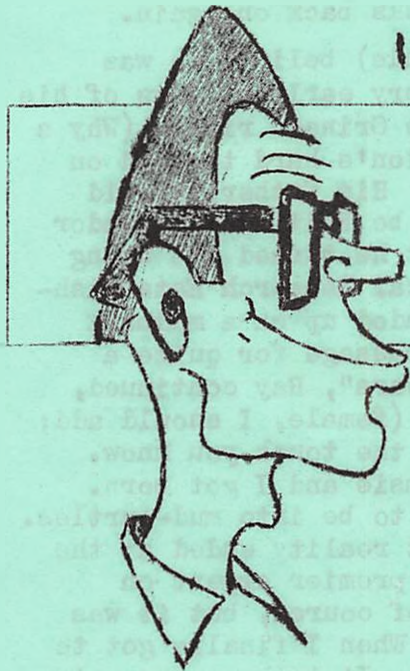
- I'm not sure I like the thought of 'A Naked Plea for Support' on the part of Jackie Causgrove, either! Hardly the weather, I'd have thought. -

I'd exhort you all to vote pretty-please for one of the official TAFF Candidates - that way you support the Administrators who do have a vested interest in the continuation of the Fund in its present shape and form - but, by the time this occasional fanzine hits fandom it will all have been decided. Hopefully, without bloodshed and in a way that will allow TAFF its broad general support from fanzine fans and convention fans...it does need both to survive, I think.

Hmmmmmm, well what else is wrong with fandom this month - mainly, in my opinion, too many fans hitting too many other fans instead of spending their time on more creative pursuits...at one time 'fans' looked down on 'mundanes' because this was their forte. I'm not sure if this was what I fought WW1 for, but if it was I'm sorry I made the effort!! Mind you, NOVACON was nice (the programme was reminiscent of a poor disaster movie, but the people were great. I may even go to a convention next year, as well. Watch this space, like.

Eric.





"All my Sins Remaindered"

Mal Ashworth

interviews

well-known science-fiction author

R. A. BITTON

There can be few science-fiction readers who are not familiar with the exciting and much-lauded works of R.A. Bitton. The enthusiastic press reception which is certain to greet a new Bitton novel is some indication of how richly-deserved were the 17 Hugo and 23 Nebula awards won by this daringly different writer. His seminal s-f novel, FLOW MY PAY-CHEQUES, THE WRITER SAID, for instance, was acclaimed by The Oxford Mail as "Staggeringly Good. Probably the best novel of the decade. Outstanding. A real tour de force. Bound to be compared with Tolkien and Eando Binder. Mind-wrenching in its cosmic significance". Bitton's second novel, and still one of his most highly-regarded, was I HAVE NO STORY-IDEAS AND I COULD SCREAM, and of this The Oxford Mail reviewer wrote: "A real tour de force. Mind-wrenching in its cosmic significance. Bound to be compared with Tolkien and Eando Binder. Outstanding. Probably the best novel of the decade. Staggeringly good." Confounding those who believed that later works were bound to show some falling-off from these impressive summits of the science-fiction writers art, R. A. Bitton now produced THE BURNED, DROWNED, STONED, BLOWN-UP, POISONED WORLD, a work of haunting surrealist imagery of which The Oxford Mail said: "Outstanding. Bound to be compared with Tolkien and Eando Binder. Staggeringly good. Mind-wrenching in its cosmic significance. A real tour de force. Probably the best novel of the decade." Bitton's latest novel, and probably his most experimental so far, proves that he has lost none of his mastery and power. JOURNEY TO THE END OF TETHER is a dark, apocalyptic novel in which the author parts the veil of time to peer into the far future and catch a misty glimpse of the final Armageddon and the ensuing holocaust which will mean the end of all royalties. In an unusually enthusiastic review The Oxford Mail hailed this work as "Probably the best novel of the decade since Tolkien and Eando Binder. Staggering in its cosmic significance. Outstandingly mind-wrenching. Bound to be compared with a real tour de force."

With all this in mind I was expecting this interview to be different, and I was not disappointed. Our interview, which took place in the comfortably-converted, chartreuse-painted coal-shed of the author's 48-room Gothic mansion in the quiet backwater of central Basingstoke, was interrupted several times as Bitton walked across the room on his hands and adjusted one of the pictures on the walls (all enchanting studies of large turtles in differing moods) with his toes. "It's the only exercise I get",

he explained, disarmingly, putting his shoes and socks back on again.

Ray Bitton ('Popsicle' only to his closest friends) believes he was fated to become a science-fiction writer from the very earliest days of his childhood in a large cooking-pot on the banks of the Orinoco river. (Why a cooking-pot, was my first question. Good accomodation's hard to find on the banks of the Orinoco, Ray explained patiently.) His father, an old Etonian with an interest in Swedish massage, was to be British ambassador to Ventnor but on the fateful day of his appointment he turned the wrong way outside Gloria's Massage Parlour and Philosophical Research Establishment in Wapping, which was how, with his wife, he ended up on a mudbank 1200 miles up the Orinoco. "Which put paid to his massage for quite a while as there wasn't a boat back for the next 48 years", Ray continued, "He did try to teach the art to a ring-tailed lemur (female, I should add; Pops was as straight as a die) but they haven't got the touch you know. I suppose that was how he finally came to notice Mumsie and I got born. There wasn't much else to notice, unless you happen to be into mud-turtles. So for the first 47 years of my life I believed that reality ended at the edge of the mangrove swamp and I became the world's premier expert on turtle-droppings. I couldn't know it at the time, of course, but it was the perfect training for a science-fiction author. When I finally got to London I just could not believe it was all for real. It took me years to shake off the feeling that I'd just moved to a bigger cooking-pot." How did his father react to the sudden re-emergence into civilisation, I asked? "He remarked rather wistfully, as he left for Wapping, that he supposed some other blighter had been sent to Ventnor in his place by now", Ray answered. And what about your first contact with science-fiction, I asked?

Bitton: That was rather odd, as a matter of fact. Fortuitous, too, in a way, I suppose. The second day I was in London I went out to get a newspaper. Not knowing what was what I looked them over rather carefully. Most of them seemed a bit far-fetched to me and I ended up buying one called New Worlds which I thought seemed the most down-to-earth of the lot. I read it through twice and for the first time really regretted having missed out on 47 years of newspaper reading. It was about three weeks later that my cleaning-lady, a retired knife-thrower from Clifton Hampden, noticed it lying around and asked me conversationally what I thought of Darko Suvin's presentation of the function of the fictional 'novum' as introduced in the narrative and validated by cognitive logic. We had the most absorbing discussion lasting about three hours and I don't believe the Ormolu pepper-pot got dusted at all that morning. By the end of it I'd realised, of course, that what I had been reading was not the news at all, but science-fiction. And, needless to say, I was hooked.

Interviewer: What was the next developement in your involvement with science-fiction?

Bitton: I started to look out avidly for anything similar. After a few false starts, such as buying the Daily Telegraph (although the style was much inferior to New Worlds I was dazzled by its plotting and characterisation until my cleaning-lady put me right), after a few mistakes like that I ended up subscribing to all the foremost magazines in the field - Isaac Asimov's Magazine of Science Fiction, StarTrek Monthly, Interzone.

Interviewer: You obviously immersed yourself in the genre with great enthusiasm. What made you try your hand at writing it yourself?

Bitton: It wasn't so much a conscious decision as something that just well-ed up from inside me. I just felt I had to do it. I've always felt that it was very fortunate that I sent my very first piece to New Worlds. The help and encouragement that Michael Moorcock gave me were absolutely invaluable to a new author.

Interviewer: What was the piece ?

Bitton: Well, actually, it was a 'Wanted' ad for a Superman comic, but this was just what was so very exciting about the whole New Wave phenomenon - we got right away from that stultifying old distinction between fiction and other forms of writing. After that I became fired with enthusiasm and only two weeks later I sent something off to The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. It was subsequently rejected, but that only made me more determined.

Interviewer: And what was the theme of that story ?

Bitton: Well - er - it was a request for a couple of back issues, but a lot of work went into the syntax of the thing to get just the right nuances and subtleties. I suppose you could regard it as more of a semi-autobiographical story hook than a completed oeuvre aimed at precluding the reader from any imaginative participation.

Interviewer: What came after that ?

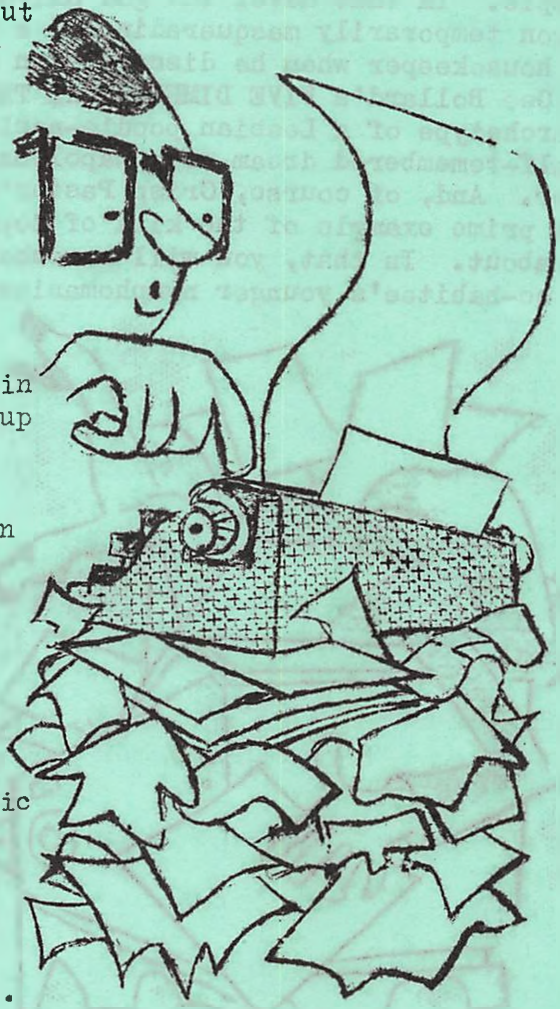
Bitton: Well, I became quite prolific for a while then, but these early beginnings seemed to have set my style and I was writing nothing but shorts. Oh, they were successful enough after a while but even when I really stretched myself and produced a three page piece for New Worlds (which included four illustrations, a hole cut out of one page and a boiled sweet stuck on as part of the title) I realised that I wasn't acheiving total satisfaction in my writing. I wanted to do something more ambitious, something more enveloping, something in which 'I' as writer would be totally merged with the transcendent reality of the literary artifact. Something, in short, which would bring in more money. And so I embarked on my first novel.

Interviewer: Which, as we know, turned out to be the highly successful FLOW MY PAY-CHEQUES, THE WRITER SAID. And yet some readers expressed reservations about the book, I understand, maintaining that it wasn't really science-fiction. Why was that ?

Bitton: I have no idea. Everything I write is science-fiction. And there is a very clear reference on page 187 to a warp in reality brought about by one of the characters swallowing too much aspirin on top of a double brandy and a strong cup of Blue Mountain coffee.

Interviewer: What are the main elements which you build into your science-fiction novels ? In other words, I suppose what I am asking is - what is it that you see as being essential to any good science-fiction novel ?

Bitton: I think conflict is undoubtedly the most important. And this is just what the older science-fiction lacked. Oh, I know there were grand-scale galactic space-battles and titanic struggles between vastly powerful super-minds and all that kind of thing, but that was just kid's stuff, satisfying enough while the genre was in its infancy but laughable today. Let's take some specific examples.

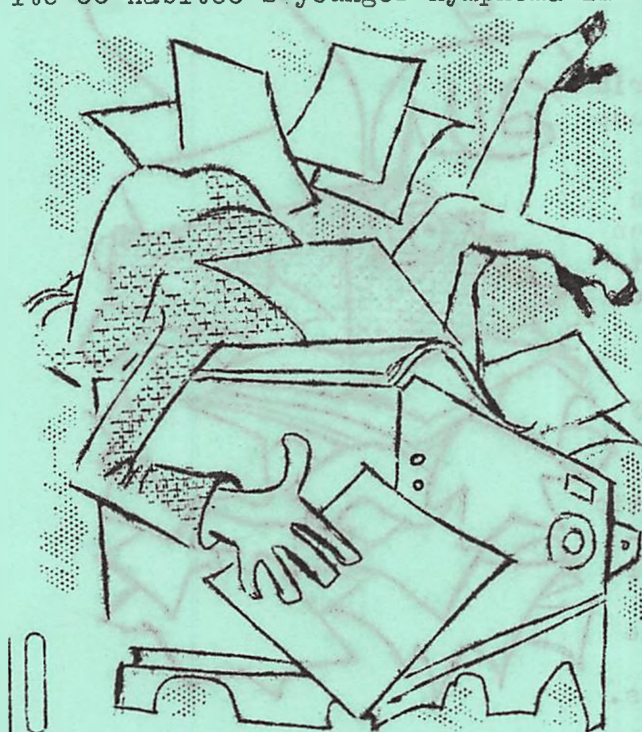


Why is it, do you think, that Ray Bradbury's SILVER LOCUSTS was such a dismal failure ?

Interviewer: Well - er - apart from some very imaginative depiction of the ancient Martian civilisation and some rather fine short episodes - it does seem to have quite a lot of conflict. I mean there is conflict between individual characters and conflict between different nations on earth which results in the destruction of the planet, not to mention the conflict between the materialistic earthmen and the nearly invisible remnants of the Martian race. Isn't there ?

BITTON: Window-dressing. Mere superficial effects. All completely stylised. Not the least bit convincing. Where is the real life conflict that the reader can identify with, eh ? How many broken marriages does it have ? You see ? You can't get away with that level of laivete in serious science-fiction. Take another example. Look at Theodore Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN. Oh I know that on the face of it there's a certain amount of argy-bargy going on during the various stages of the evolution of the gestalt intelligence, but nowhere in the whole book do you find a single inter-office rivalry. Why, there aren't even any hassles with committees responsible for allocating research funding! You can't really take something like that seriously as science-fiction, can you ? Now contrast that with the work of some of the top science-fiction writers of the present day. Look at Ewan Plotsunk's THE VENUSIAN AZTEC, for instance, with that quite marvellous row between two of the main characters over who has more paper-clips in his tray. This is so furious that it takes up ten intensely-gripping chapters, and the climax is almost unbearable when the Senior Retouéher steps on the Grade III Visualizer's toe for walking through the door in front of him on the way to a crucial office meeting about the next month's tea-making rota. Take Roger B. Snazzy's ROADWORKS as another example. In that novel the god Shiva, who later turns out to be a Chinese dragon temporarily masquerading as a traffic cop throws a boiled egg at his housekeeper when he discovers an unwashed pan in the sink. Or look at Gee Gee Bollard's FIVE DIMENSIONAL TERMINAL DISASTER AREA in which a jungian archetype of a Lesbian poodle-parlour owner had a furious argument with a half-remembered dream of a Napoleonic chest-wig maker about a torn newspaper. And, of course, Crisp Pastor's Cornish novel A DREAM OF SEWERSEX, is a prime example of the kind of topnotch modern science-fiction I'm talking about. In that, you will remember, the protagonist and his transvestite co-habitce's younger nymphomaniac sister are both projected into an

alternative future reality when they get their heads stuck in a photocopying machine while trying to hide from the Office Manager who is looking for a volunteer to tell the receptionist she will no longer be paid time-and-a-half for working Saturday mornings. There they encounter serried phalanxes of ex-wives and former paramors and only after a slanging-match of truly epic proportions do they win through to an acceptance of their true inner desires - his for the Office Manager and hers for the receptionist. But in order to return to a world where they might make these desires known, they still have to get their heads out of the photo-copier and the almost electric tension of their desperate struggle to do this keeps the reader on the edge of his seat through the final chapters.



Let me give you just one more example before returning to my own writing, this one being Heirloom Allison's THE BEAST THAT SHOUTED 'YUK' AT THE ART OF THE WORLD, in which the sensation experienced by ever New York wino while scratching his armpits comes together as a palpable force in the shape of a gigantic supernatural bunny-rabbit with buck teeth which hovers over the city and drops huge portions of Chicken Chow Mein on top of art gallery attendants whenever they step outdoors.

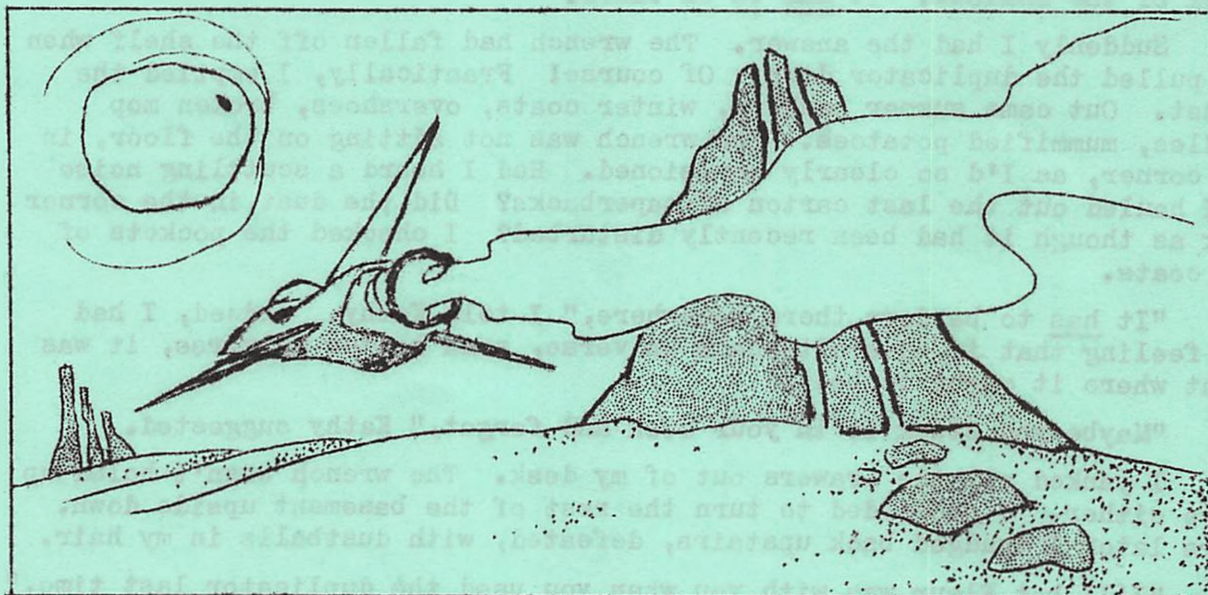
Another instance I could point to is my own novel, I HAVE NO STORY IDEAS AND I COULD SCREAM. You are probably familiar with the central episode in which the protagonist (we don't talk about 'heroes' any longer, I need hardly add), in a passionate fit of jealousy over the suspicion that his wife is having an affair with the gardener, goes out and deliberately shortchanges an old newspaper-seller on the street corner. This incident, to me, embodies the real essence of true science-fiction for, if you recall, the whole of the time he is doing this he is thinking about Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon and wondering whether he had the same trouble with his wife and the gardener.

You see, the real point I'm trying to make in all this is that a serious writer is not just someone sitting at a typewriter writing down things out of his head. If his rhetoric is to be truly convincing to the reader it must arise out of the very fabric of his own life. He is, so to speak, only the translator between the reality of his own experience and the vicarious literary experience which the reader absorbs from the printed page. What he writes must be truthful, realistic, founded in his own close involvement with the minutiae of everyday existence. Now....

Interviewer: (Opening his eyes and peering out the window) By the way, is that your wife disappearing into the potting shed with the gardener ?

Bitton:I can give you a further example of what I mean. What ? WHAM ? WHAT ? (Snatching a heavily framed picture of a large turtle from the wall he lunges for the door.) I'll kill the sonofabitch...I'll KILL him....(Just outside the door Bitton turns back with an abstracted look in his eyes. He returns to his desk and picks up a pen.) Er.... excuse me now, will you ?... I've just had an idea for my next novel and I want to get it down at once. Now then....I HAVE NO TURTLE AND I MUST....No, no. THE BEAST THAT SHOUTED 'TURTLE' AT THE HEART OF THE POTTING SHED...? Hmmm. Ah - THE TERMINAL POTTING SHED! Possibilities there, definite possibilities....

End of Interview



12

The Secret Life of Socks

Eric
Mayer

The universe is full of mysteries and scientists seem determined to solve all the wrong ones. They can tell me what the life expectancy of a muon is, how much energy a quasar radiated two billion years ago and how tall I'd be a second after dipping my toe into an event horizon. What I'd really like to know is where the TV Guide has got to.

The perpetually indeterminate location of the TV Guide is part of the larger question of where things are when you've searched for them in every place they could possibly be and they aren't there, usually when you need them the most. Its a mystery that has bedevilled mankind ever since Homo Erectus grunted, "I know I saw that stone chopping tool next to the bone pile just yesterday."

This past winter I spent most of one weekend playing hide and seek with a hexagon key wrench. I'm no handyman. In a pinch I can screw in a lightbulb. Consequently, the Mayer hex key wrench leads an indolent life, only being called upon to tighten a couple of set screws when the handle of the duplicator falls off. To be on the safe side, I keep the wrench with the duplicator, on the shelf in the basement closet. But the day the handle hit the floor, the wrench was gone.

Aside from a few wisps of cobwebs and a box of mothballs, the shelf was eerily deserted. The wrench was not hidden behind the box of mothballs. It was not in the box. I tore the box open to make sure. I groped around on the shelf. Perhaps the wretched tool was being rendered invisible by a trick of the shadows. It had to be there.

Suddenly I had the answer. The wrench had fallen off the shelf when I'd pulled the duplicator down. Of course! Frantically, I emptied the closet. Out came summer jackets, winter coats, overshoes, broken mop handles, mummified potatoes. The wrench was not sitting on the floor, in the corner, as I'd so clearly envisioned. Had I heard a scuttling noise as I hauled out the last carton of paperbacks? Did the dust in the corner look as though it had been recently disturbed? I checked the pockets of the coats.

"It has to be down there somewhere," I told Kathy. Indeed, I had the feeling that in some alternate universe, some better universe, it was right where it ought to be.

"Maybe you stuck it in your desk and forgot," Kathy suggested.

I yanked all the drawers out of my desk. The wrench wasn't holed up there either. I proceeded to turn the rest of the basement upside down. Hours later I trudged back upstairs, defeated, with dustballs in my hair.

"I'll bet Fleur was with you when you used the duplicator last time,"

Kathy said. "I'll bet she got her little hands on your wrench." 13

The "Little Hands Theory", which blames our three year old daughter, was merely the latest attempt, by Kathy and me, to explain the disappearances of inanimate objects which have always plagued the human race. During the Middle Ages it was widely assumed that lost things ended up on the moon. The "Moon Theory" was not supported by the findings of the Apollo Missions which failed to discover craters full of hex key wrenches and stone chopping tools. Its still conceivable that NASA missed out on a good thing by failing to investigate whether underneath those vast quantities of Lunar dust lie vast quantities of the kind of junk that gathers dust in basements, attics and garages, before vanishing. If the "Moon Theory" had been true the Space Agency could have junked its Saturn rockets, secured its Lunar landers to batches of cuff-links and rolls of scotch-tape and waited.

For years I subscribed to the "Paperclip Theory" which assumes that matter naturally tends to take the form of paperclips. After all, the scissors are never in the drawer you put them in but there are always some paperclips there. This theory accords with the conservation of matter and neatly explains why paperclips are routinely discovered in drawers miles from the nearest business office. However I have since concluded that we don't have to worry about the universe ending as a tenuous cloud of paperclips floating in the void. Paperclips are far more likely to be the form in which matter first appears in the Steady State Model of the universe. They cannot represent the degenerate form of lost things, because lost things usually show up again - when you no longer need them.

Consider the puzzling incident of the Specials' EP. Fleur started to pogo to "Ghost Town" as soon as she could walk. She loved the song because it began with the wail of a distant siren. "Play fire truck record," she'd demand.

One day the record went south, or in some more obscure direction. "Did you take it Fleur," I asked ?

She pleaded innocent so I started to search our record cabinet, this consists of three shelves holding a few hundred records. It isn't the size, say, of the British Isles and I figured if the record was there my finding it wasn't beyond the realms of possibility. So I examined all the spines. Then I pulled each album out. "Ghost Town" had dematerialised. I went through all the records again, figuring I might actually have seen "Ghost Town" and developed instant amnesia. I hadn't entirely dismissed the "Mesmer Theory" which postulates that supposedly missing objects are not missing at all but have the power to cloud mens minds.

That search and subsequent ones ended in failure but a year later the record popped up again, in full view, where it should have been all along. I wiped off the thick coat of dust it was covered with and put it on the turntable immediately, while I still had the chance. The minute Fleur heard the familiar siren she'd begged for so many times during the record's absence she said, "Take that off. That p.u."

Things don't disappear for no reason. They do it to get our goat. Socks are among the worst offenders. You purchase them in pairs but they never stay that way. If you stick six perfectly respectable pairs of socks in a dresser, within a few weeks they will have vamoosed, leaving you instead with twelve or thirteen different socks. Three will be bizarre, unmatched shades of puce and screaming orange. The rest will be nondescript variations of brown or charcoal, virtually indistinguishable from one another in the dim incandescent light of your bedroom but glaringly individualistic under the office flourescents.

If any of the socks reappear to form a matched pair, one is sure to be exceedingly dusty and have a hole in the toe big enough to fit a stone chopping tool through.

Obviously, the "Little Hands Theory" would have to be stretched to account for the behavior of socks. It does not account for the peregrinations of the TV Guide at all. No doubt, little hands have a natural attraction for that magazine, but it was missing long before Fleur showed up. As far as I can remember, its always been missing.

The TV Guide is the butterfly of the magazine world, beginning its life at the grocery store checkout counter and ending it a week later in the trash can. Science has no idea where it spends most of its ephemeral existence. One thing is certain - wherever it goes, it goes there just when you have a suspicion that something's coming on the tube that you don't want to miss.

I always check the "usual place" first. The "usual place" has varied from the top of the television, to the coffee table, to the magazine rack beside the couch. Its the place the TV Guide never is.

As soon as I confirm this well known fact the familiar cry rings out. "Have you seen the TV Guide?" Kathy and I then attempt to reconstruct its movements.

"I thought I saw it on the kitchen counter this morning."

"But weren't you looking at it this afternoon?"

"I could swear it was on the chair in the dining room an hour ago."

Its remarkable how mobile a collection of printed pages can be. Just once I'd like to catch the miserable thing skulking along the baseboard and shake the record club ads out of it. But despite numerous sightings, it remains as elusive as the Yeti.

Sometimes, as Kathy and I wander the house, opening cupboards and checking under the cat litter box, I experience a sense of unreality. Maybe there is no such thing as a TV Guide. Maybe its just something we dreamed, along with hex key wrenches and stone chopping tools. Maybe in the real world inanimate objects aren't out to lunch whenever you need them and the well dressed man wears one sock of orange and one of puce.

In my imagination I am wading hip deep in dust across a Lunar mare. Paperclips are popping into existence with bright *pinging* noises in the vacuum overhead. Homo Erectus comes by in the socks Kathy bought me last Christmas. "You missed 'The Truth About UFOs' at 8PM," he tells me. "Have you seen my stone chopping tool?"

The last time I got into this state I accosted Fleur in the dining room. "Did you take the TV Guide," I asked, still clinging to the "little hands theory".

"No," she told me. "Clown took it."

"What do you mean 'Clown took it'? What Clown?"

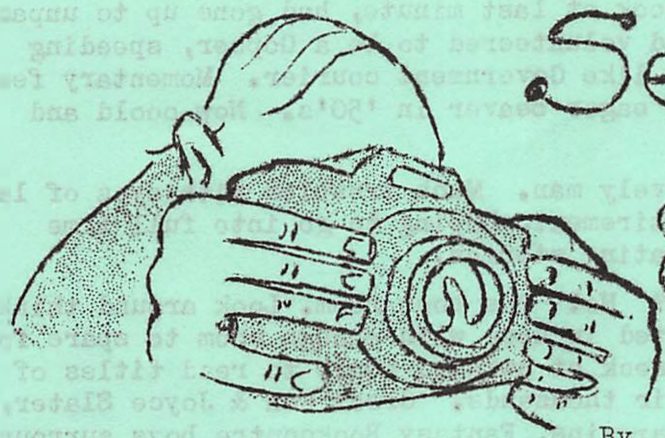
"Clown in my room. Him take TB Guide on rockin' horse. Him ride." She looked awfully certain.

"There's no clown in your room," I said uneasily.

"Yeahh... Him is," she said. There was a faraway look in her eyes. "Him live in my room. Him sit on my potty with you w'ench."

Rod Serling stepped around the corner. He turned into Kathy. Kathy didn't feel the hairs on the back of my kneck prickling. "Does anyone know where the TV Guide has got to?" she asked.

"Never mind," I said. "Some things man was not meant to know."



Seacon Exposed

By
Ving Clarke.

I've just bought an Olympus XA1. More classic, scientific and buzz-word than my first-ever camera (Kodak Hawkeye Box, 2/6d.) but ergonomically speaking identical. A moron-proof, point-it-and-shoot snapshotter. Not all that moron-proof - I'd not intended to take a half-width of finger on the lens - but near enough. And tough! Its already taken Greg Pickersgill smiling and Mal Ashworth's stomach. But its great advantage over my other cameras is its sheer convenience. It slips easily into a pocket and has a teeny flash attached. Now I can go to fan gatherings in comfort and shoot all the native rites.

I wish I'd bought it earlier. For the Brighton Con at Easter, for instance. Dreamily I stroke its sleek black flanks, lovingly wipe a speck of dust from its gleaming lens. What might I have taken.....?

TAKE ONE: A bulging suitcase. I packed some winter woolies. Well I thought it was going to be a normal Bank Holiday freeze-up, didn't I, with ice floes on the beach. They tell me the temperature reached 70F outside the Metropole at times. Inside it was warmer.

TAKE TWO: Interior of a restaurant. Propellers slowly revolving on the ceiling, potted palms at intervals round the walls, Bombay decor. Very with-it Anglo-Indian. "Browns" at Brighton. Dear daughter and son-in-law had volunteered (!) to drive me and bulging suitcase down to con. I promised them a lunch. Bit above my usual caff class. DD, unabashed tucks into spaghetti and something. Trying to keep up family standards, order Trout. First time ever. Shall I be ordering trout-and-chips-and-cuppa at my local U-Needa-Cafein future? No. Trout has more bones than two herrings and not so tasty. On way back to hotel buy vulgar postcard, write "I've arrived.... what do I do now?", send to Chuck Harris.

TAKE THREE: Reception hall at Metropole. Indistinguishable from jampot near ants nest. Fight way to desk, book in. "I'm sharing a twin-room with Mr. D. Wood. Has he arrived?" Technical manipulation of computer. "No, sir, not yet." Struggle up to room 216 with help of family. Say farewell and open door.

TAKE FOUR: Close-up of messages blue-tacked to wall. "Ving if I have missed you downstairs Welcome I am armed with a radiophone. If you want to contact me ask anyone you see with a radiophone to contact SeaCon 9 - that's me!" Also another message, frivolous in tone, about the D. West anthology being in the room and something about a Govt. Health warning. Descend to reception, thinking that if radiophone works with same efficiency as reception computer will probably find myself talking to Cape Canaveral in near future.

TAKE FIVE: Bearded figure slumped on seat outside lift. Eternal posture of male waiting for female. Terry Hill had made last minute decision to attend complete Con., consequently no room and dossing down on floor of 216. Waiting

for Elda Wheeler, who'd managed to book at last minute, had gone up to unpack. Learned from Terry that Dave Wood had volunteered to be a Gopher, speeding back and forth on mysterious errands like Government courier. Momentary feeling I have been here before; 'I' was eager beaver in '50's. Now cool and tired.

TAKE SIX: James White, beaming. Lovely man, Much troubled with eyes of late due to diabetes. Is taking early retirement, hoping to go into full time writing for first time in life, dictating stories.

TAKE SEVEN: Is it an airship hangar? No! The book room. Look around think-complete Con of '50's would have fitted in here with enough room to spare for dance floor. Drift around, craning neck at awkward angle to read titles of sideways-stacked pocket books in their thousands. Great Ken & Joyce Slater, Malcolm Edwards selling marvellous bargains, Fantasy Bookcentre boys surrounded by goodies, loud laughter at one stall attracts me: Ron Bennett, once hectic fanzine ed. of late fifties, now making attempts to be shark-like dealer, betrayed by sense of humour.

TAKE EIGHT: Ron Bennett, spectacles flashing with glee, talking to small American female, mostly wisecracks. Join in. Eventually, AF turns to go, catch sight of badge - Marion Zimmer Bradley. Nice lady; must try reading some of her books sometime.

TAKE NINE: Antiquarian book dealers stall, ex-Oxford. Pick up J.J. Astor's JOURNEY IN OTHER WORLDS, late Victorian s-f mentioned in all better-class histories of field. Nice to have. "How much, please?" "Seventeen pounds fifty, sir," looking round for paper bag. "Ugh...later perhaps." How many stencils does that represent? Drift away, disappointment and looking at thousands of titles hurting eyes.

TAKE TEN: Reception hall again...solitary figure walking. D. West. Terry Hill swerves over, Elda and I follow to mop up blood. Big Confrontation. West had thought Terry had accused him of possible mis-management of funds if former won TAFF. Terry says he's mistaken, wasn't meant that way. West, nearly showing emotion, says it read that way. This goes on for ten minutes, Elda raising eyes to heaven at these boys quarreling.

TAKE ELEVEN: Back view of D. West, striding away. The word "Nonesense" drifts on the air. Terry breathes deeply, heads for bar to cool down, there gets into heated discussion with Dave Rowley on What One Should Do To Get A Rowley/Hibbert fanzine....all good clean fun.

TAKE TWELVE: Dave Langford talking, mouth a blurr, shutter not fast enough. Drop programme, find later missed 500 words whilst picking it up. Due to scoop by Dave Wood who secured publication for KYSTER, didn't matter. Marvellous speech, even for those who don't understand Welsh. Feel stirring of envy; self on platform would be red-faced nit.

TAKE THIRTEEN: Another shot of Book Room, usual 200 fans wandering about. Fans? Have returned there with vague desire to see Hubbard hit-man who was reputedly guarding stocks of BATTLESHIP EARTH, according to Dave L. Distracted to stall, tho., where I came across ATom Art Portfolio, published a few months after I went gafia the First Time Around. Con. now definitely a hit with me.

TAKE FOURTEEN: The Fan Room...need a wide-angle lens. As big as Book Room ...almost. Bar in one corner, couple of trestle tables bearing fanzines only trace of Fandom As We Know It. Fan talk going on for hours; Birmingham fans, Aberdeen fans, wee Ethel Lindsay (first time we'd met since '60), Joe Siclari and wife from the US...it went on, only slightly deterred by some idiot who'd turned on disco type music at multiple decibels until a public benefactor name of Terry fought his way against the wall of sound and turned it down. Saw from programme that Brum Group was supposed to be having a free-for-all party in room, other groups being announced as doing the same

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other nights of the con. I understand this came as a surprise...especially to the named groups. However, at some time in evening Paul and Martin started rolling barrels into room, and conversational noise increased considerably.

TAKE FIFTEEN: Red-headed blue-eyed Allison, boy-friend William, mutual friend, all from deepest Scotland; William a possessor of the Willis Ish. of WARHOON which immediately put him in my good book. Alison possessor of extremely infectious giggle - later in Con. people - well, males - were provoking it in a fiendish attempt to watch her break up...They were at Fan Room enjoying themselves Friday evening. Dave Langford brought around handful of badges just run off on newly aquired badge-making machine I believe - one got the impression that Alan Dorey's proof-reading of programme hadn't gained approval. Mine read:

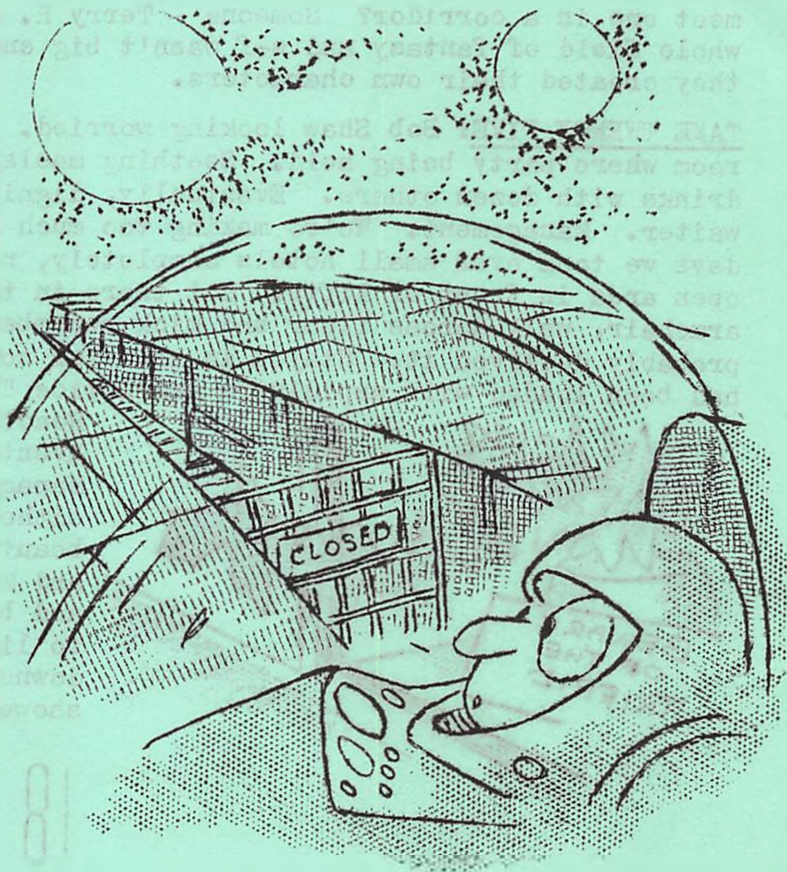
TAKE SIXTEEN: Close-up: HELP! I AM ANAL DOREY'S PROOFREADER AND LEFT MY WHITE STICK AT HOME.

TAKE SEVENTEEN: Flash of room 216. Inviting bed. Time 2.30am. Self, bemused by numerous cider-halves, talk and age, crawls into bed. Later: open eye, look at clock. 3.30. Mutttered voices. High pitched giggles. Should I wake up....?

TAKE EIGHTEEN: Bedroom by daylight. The clock shows 7.30. Rise on elbows. Bearded form sleeping on floor between my bed and Dave's. Terry. Why is he in such a cramped position? Sit up. On other side of Dave's bed another form on floor. At foot of beds, two more bodies, one red-headed. No 216 is doing well for a twin-bedded room. Terry told me later that they'd thought of introducing her into my bed and taking a photo. They didn't go through with it. Not like the old days, sez he, shaking his head regretfully.

TAKE NINETEEN: Bob Shaw on Platform, Saturday. Terrific speech, destined for reprinting, very funny on STAR WARS, where to destroy baddies Death World hero and chums hurtle through long artificial canyon, guns mounted either side, fighters pursuing, target for their bomb a tiny ventilator shaft at end. If he'd been there, said Bob, he'd have sneaked around pretending to be interested in something else, then suddenly dived in at the very end of the ravine and done the job, not the beginning of a 100mile endurance course. He paused and shook his head. The defense wasn't cost-effective, anyway. All those guns, and the fighters...one little grill across the opening would have been enough.....

TAKE TWENTY: George Locke, in Book Room. Knew him when youngster as fanatic collector of books, now bibliophile and owner of antiquarian bookshop. Bookroom so big had missed him previously. Still soul of collector - asks me (a) "How am I", (b) "How is daughter" (c) "Have I still got copy of Wodehouse's THE SWOOP?" Cheerfully assured him book still OK, pretended not to notice gleam in eyes, went away giggling inside. Drifted into Art Exhibition. Gazed in helpless admiration at.....



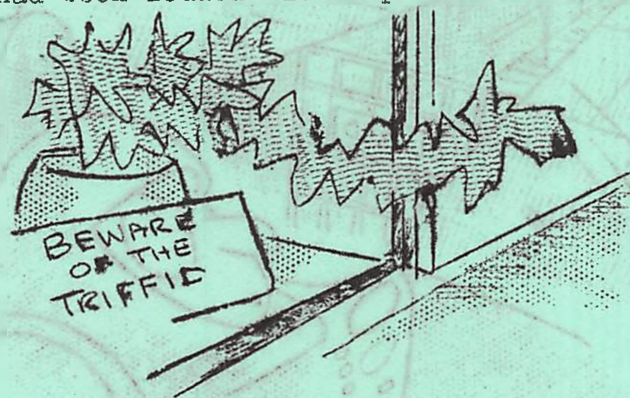
TAKE TWENTY ONE: Large canvas - green seascape...boat on right with carefully delineated human and alien/animal faces aboard, looking at middle ground of green dinosaur creatures disporting in sea, alien vessel all gold coming up left centre. Kept on looking at price tag "£800" and wondering how they could do this to me. Most beautiful (to me) picture in place and most expensive. Must drown sorrows.

TAKE TWENTY TWO: Glass of cider in foreground, general view of refreshment room in background. Some good people around; Bill & Mary Burns of US, Hazel, Mal Ashworth, Ken Bulmer....suddenly spot Forry Ackerman in corner of bar, surrounded by small crowd...FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND fans? Sci-Fi fans? Professors of English forming lynch party? Feel warm spot in pocket where last postcard to Harris resides, awaiting signatures...reads simply 'wish you were here', effort to get him along to a Con. sometime...must get 4SJ's signature before end of con. Look at programme again, find I've missed more items, including some brought forward...US fan says feelingly kiss of death to bring items forward...Discuss Con. Committees I Have Known with him at length. Find tears diluting cider, so leave in dignified fashion for 216 but on way...

TAKE TWENTY THREE: Figure and vaguely familiar face mounting staircase. Mutual glances of horrified recognition. Twenty-five plus years since I saw Pete Taylor, then a 'Junior Fanatic' at the London Circle. JF's were youngsters under eighteen, included at one time John Brunner and Dave Wood. Another ex-active '50's fan! When will they stop crawling out of the wood-work? Pete decides to stay the night.

TAKE TWENTY FOUR: FLASH: The Masquerade. Several hundred people sitting and standing in darkened hall. Series of costumed and uncostumed figures parading in spotlights, sometimes acting out little dramas. With your back to them you could tell when a more figure-revealing costume appeared - more flashlights. Some stuff pretty gruesome, like character dressed as Athenian poet (?) declaiming in what sounded like an artificial language - could have been Esperanto. This went on for some hours - it seemed. Through rest of evening and night costumed figures wandered. Most effective cowed Star Wars figures with red glowing dots for eyes. What's the right etiquette when you meet one in a corridor? Someone - Terry H. or James White murmured that the whole field of fantasy and s-f wasn't big enough for some imaginations - they created their own characters.

TAKE TWENTY FIVE: Bob Shaw looking worried. Terry and I had gone up to his room where party being held. Seething maelstrom. We sit in corridor with drinks with dozen others. Eventually, dignified gent in black arrives. Not waiter. Management. We're making too much noise. Reflecting that in old days we took over small hotels completely, no nonsense, trailed group to open area in front of lifts. Got there in time to see Elda rise up from armchair, walk across floor and kick recumbent fan. Don't know why. He probably deserved it. Stayed in area for some time, watching lifts; one had been loaded with aspidistra and notice "Beware of the Triffid."



Reaction of passengers interesting. Eventually, Security Guard intimated Management didn't like us there either. Wondering if this end of beautiful friendship between fandom and Metropole slouched back to 216 and bed. Terry, grimly determined to live every minute of Con, headed downstairs again. Alarm clock showed 2.30am again. Sunday already.

TAKE TWENTY SIX:

Terry, bright and breezy, waking occupants of 216 with "Church, anyone?" Nearly exact rendering of ATom HYPHEN cover many years back. Sleepy-eyed quintet then regaled with latest scandal - two fans had been found copulating in public place and had been moved on and had been found Doing It Again elsewhere and this time expelled from hotel. Terry had been with one of radio-armed Security Guards when the story of Romeo & Juliet (as they were codenamed) was breaking.

TAKE TWENTY SEVEN:

Bobbie Gray, once Bobbie Wild. Fighting feminist of fifties, ex-OMPA official, ex-BSFA official, ex-fanzine editor, ex-Worldcon Secretary. Now much milder and - I look doubtfully at glass in hand - believes in astrology. I thought I'd lost my Sense of Wonder years back, but now find myself as popeyed as ever. Change the subject.

TAKE TWENTY EIGHT:

Rows of empty seats. Terry and I constituted audience, three bewildered fans on dais. Programme had said it would be a discussion on fanzines. Turned out to be a misprint; should have read prozines ...or something. We make our excuses and leave.

TAKE TWENTY NINE:

Face beaming up at me in corridor. Waldemar Kunning, published of 136 yes 136 issues of MUNICH ROUNDUP. Was I the Vincent with the stroke through the 'c'? Yes? Marvellous. Pleasant conversation plus a copy of his fanzine. Feel head swelling, totter away to try same ploy on Forry Ackerman. Feel absurd sense of deference which always overtakes me when talking to fans who were active before me - Giants Of Past Syndrome - but 4E marvellously amiable, signs card for Chuck. Looks slightly surprised when I gulp that I liked VOM - last issue was in '47. Totter away to bar, where pounced on by two Swedish fans wanting to know about mythical '50's...what was Mercer's Day, what was Operation Armageddon, etc. Expound at length, feeling like Boyhood of Raleigh (ancient salt pointing out distant horizon to two youths) and feel head swelling again, then dashed by John Brunner asking if I can take place of Bob Shaw in Panel on Punning. Plead oldness, slowness, inability to be a Bob. John moves off frowning. beat retreat from Swedish fans, offering to get them copies of THEME from suitcase in 216.

TAKE THIRTY:

Half-consumed chicken salad. Terry suggested we get supper outside hotel, left Metropole in Westerly direction, made huge circle through warm and deserted streets of Brighton, eventually found small Italian restaurant East of Metropole where portions so big couldn't finish them. On trudge back to hotel bethought I hadn't done anything about arranging for consumption of bottle of Moscato Spumante (or Mosquito Spit as known in Kent TruFandom) brought all the way in bulging suitcase as basis for drinking/talking session. Raided hotel bar for further supplies and passed out invitations to kindred spirits to join us in Room 216 later.

TAKE THIRTY ONE:

Room 216 with Ken Bulmer, James and Peggy White, Ethel Lomdsay and others yattering on about Good Old and Bad Old Days. Room clears about midnight; look longingly at bed, but Terry squeezing remnants of pleasure from remains of Con marches out again. Barely have time to yawn...



TAKE THIRTY TWO:

Terry marching into 216 with 7 fans he'd found heading our way. Hardly found seats on beds and floor when...

TAKE THIRTY THREE:

Another nine fans enter 216. Find self on bed asking Bob Shaw why he was still looking worried. Can't remember answer but was probably the drink situation which was chronic. Luckily, mostly talking going on. Dreamily wished bulging suitcase had contained tape recorder. About 2am a band of Swedish fans came in searching for copies of THEME....

TAKE THIRTY FOUR:

Reception hall at Metropole, giving well-known impersonation of jam-pot again. Fans booking out. Less mournful partings than in old days when fans met once a year at annual Con. Vast improvement now. Thought regretfully that Cons. like this really too big, though, and now name-badge: machine owned by fandom seems nothing will stop the semi-anonymity conferred by those screwed-up 6mm. letters, where the name of the Con. is often more prominent than the owner of the badge. I mean - don't they know what Con they're at ?

Posted last postcard to Chuck, rolled up film and sent it to Eric for developing.

Vin~~g~~ Clarke.

(second-stage lensman.)

red grockles in the sunset

By

HAZEL ASHWORTH.

"There is only one mor day and I cannot wate" writes a small girl on the eve of her summer holidays. I know just how you feel, kiddo! And here we are, magically transported from a northern market to a southern one in the space of a mere three days! I breathe deeply, intent on getting some of that beautiful Devon air into my lungs after months of the inferior stuff.

Ahh, onions. Oh well; we must be to windward of the hot-dog stand. I start using these piratical swashbuckling-type phrases now I'm back by the sea: "Let's get nautical" I suggest as we go past the Sou'wester stand. "What, here ?" comes the incredulous reply. "Don't you know the Bouncy Castle is only for children ?" Indeed it is; cunningly tucked away - all 25 square



metres of it - between the hot-dog stand and the Sou'wester stand is the Bouncy Castle, a delicate shade of bright red. And if you don't know what a Bouncy Castle is...it's a castle, and it bounces. It's made of rubber, you see. Didn't you see one when you were on holiday ?

We pick our way through the grandmas in shorts to see what this new and exciting Deep-South type market has to offer, accompanied by the screams and howls of the children bouncing in the castle, and holidaymakers being ripped off. "I'm not gonna arsk yer fer ten pahnd" sniffs a faintly sweating market-stall holder in the graceful accents of Shepherd's Bush (wouldn't trust this sort of hype to the locals, they'd get it all wrong). A crowd of amazed shoppers immediately stand around him, mouths open, purses open. This is what they've been waiting for! "I'm not gonna arsk yer fer EIGHT pahnds", he whines, and holds up a plastic thing that looks like a cross between a cheese grater and a rather poorly coffee spoon. Slightly nauseated, (to be fair, I think the onions are partly to blame) I turn away to see a chubby child sitting alone in the midst of this outdoor market, ignored by a lank lad of 15 or so who is standing a few feet away from him, swigging coke and regarding the scene with a know-it-all-look of contempt. The little one reaches out and clutches as much of the grass cutting as he can in both fists and sprinkles them over his head, then pats himself furiously to get rid of them again. It's a good game. He plays for ages, oblivious to the dogs, dog-ends and pushchairs that surround him. Grass cuttings seemed to keep cropping up as we wandered around in the August heat, but I didn't see them provide such entertainment again....

"Would you do something for me ?" John Brunner asked rather urgently one summer day, in his most English of gardens. "Er...yes", I replied, banking on the fact that the request would not be too outre in such a crush of respectable matrons and their equally respectable retrivers. "Would you mind dusting this man off before he comes into the house ?" I looked at Dave Wood (for it was he) "Turn round" I demanded. Covered from head to foot in grass cuttings, he was, after a strenuous afternoon lying down listening to J.B. et al spouting pomes. Dave stood with that stoic and unmoving passivity which we generally master at three, and lose at eight. After a brief flurry of bits, a de-herbed, streamlined version of Wod was returned to the cultural fold, and admitted within to sample the goodies of the Brunner household: namely, food, Kelly Freas posters, drink, music, stuffed giraffe, talk, more drink, etcetra.

"GaVIN! GaVIN!" screeched a lady in a blue swimsuit of brontosaurian proportions as we lay stretched out on the pebbles on another, less literarily-charged, afternoon. I propped myself up on one elbow and squinted towards the towering seas to see Gavin, all two feet of him, being pounded into the sand and engulfed at precisely regular intervals as the waves swept towards the shore. "Just a gurgle minute" the infant piped, as another tsunami-sized wave eclipsed him in boiling froth. Further along, a bent, white-haired old lady hobbled seawards and fell forward into the torrent, frail arms waving from the deep as though she held Excalibur in her hand. CARE NEEDED WITH DINGHIES AN OFFSHORE WIND COULD BLOW YOUR CHILD OUT TO SEA said an ambiguous notice. The waters were crammed with grockle-offspring, mostly under eleven, bouncing on the surf in inflatable rafts, rings and washing-up bowls. The red flags were flying, and a banner announced 'BATHING IS DANGEROUS TODAY' in white letters two feet high (like Gavin). A lone lifeguard, in big chest and dazzling tee-shirt, charged up and down the strand as though in marathon training, clutching his loud-hailer and an important looking orange rescue-thing that looked like a hot water bottle, bellowing at the most foolhardy of the thrashing juveniles who would insist on drifting towards the river estuary, where a monster whirlpool and satellite undercurrents lay in wait. Some of the full-grown onlookers were obviously disappointed at this Spoiling of Fun, and subsided mumbling into their sunloungers. Those who had been sent off the sea's playing field by

this most splendid-looking of referees also muttered dejectedly amongst themselves before moodily burying one of their number in the sand. "Pity they can't do that with the lot of 'em", muttered a toilet-lady who had just come out of her workplace for a breather and was regarding the group with a jaundiced eye.

The Devon coast was troubled, as usual, with vast swarms of people, known officially as 'Summer Visitors who Bring Money into the Area', but more generally referred to as 'Grockles', and much disliked by the supposedly sociable and easy-going locals, who would much rather they all stayed at home, or at least arrived in decently small dribs and drabs as they once had done, before the Hoteliers realised the midas-touch of extensive advertising. They had invited everyone from the Gorbals to Gormenghast, from Clacton to Carlisle, to come and sample the 'The Delights of the English Riviera - with-everything-thrown-in'. (Adverts did become more sophisticated as time went on, of course: 'Come and sample the delights of the English Riviera - with-nearly-everything-thrown-in' "Sorry, sir, breakfast is extra") The ensuing crush of bodies is all jolly fine if you're on a 'compare and contrast' exercise on the human form: imagine the diary of some likely lad from Cleckheaton after his first day on the beach. "Today I saw three-hundred and forty-two lasses, All Lying Down. Out of this lot I reckon one hundred and eighty are Right Out because 1) they are too big, or 2) their husbands are too big. That leaves one hundred and sixty-two what are All Right. Some of these were topless but I got muddled up counting. Will sort them out tomorrow".

Whether a Lemming-like mentality had arisen out of all this overpopulation, or whether it was plain exhaustion resulting from over-stimulation of the Cleckheaton variety, the news was full of bizarre and absent-minded suicides: a seventeen year old had been digging a hole in the sand (this was a different hole from the one mentioned earlier, and - I presume - a different youth.) The lot had caved in and suffocated him before anyone could summon help! Another death, in grand Tom and Jerry style, was so arbitrary it was almost funny: a fisherman flung his line into the hectic holiday seas one bright morning; a speedboat towing a water-skier came zooming around the headland at this inopportune - not to say disastrous moment, and they got their lines crossed. Between them they managed to decapitate the skier! One wonders how long the driver of the speedboat remained oblivious to the ghastly outcome... Meanwhile, a little further out to sea, a local fishing boat caught rather more than it bargained for as it trawled the coastal waters - no, not the head of the unfortunate holidaymaker - but a certain Large Something that pulled it steadily backwards for several hours, keeping well down in the depths (had even the Loch Ness inhabitant come down for its holidays?) The Naval powers-that-be advised cutting the nets. "We'll recompense you if its one of ours" they soothed the crew. It turned out, surprise, surprise, that the unidentified object was not one of ours, after all! But I daresay they were frightfully good about it.

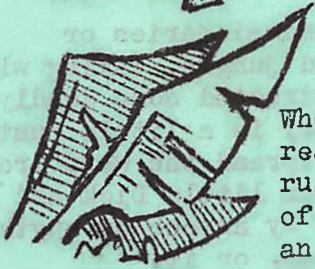
So it was all go, down at the sea this year. We watched and heard it going on around us as we cleared a little space free of dog-ends and lay down on the rocks to watch the tide going out, leaving the bladderwrack to form a dry crust in the hot sun. "It looks solid enough to walk on" remarked the ever-restless Malcolm to me. "Go on, it'll be alright" I advised, confident with all those years of beachcombing behind me. "We always used to walk over the seaweed at low tide when I was little". "You go first". "No, you". "No, no, you".

Stalemate. We stayed where we were. Perhaps next year I can get him to tread on that deceptively safe-looking surface only to find it gives way to a green soup-like morass, containing countless small and uncomfortably pointed and knobbly sea-creatures in their warm and steamy habitat. There is always something to look forward to, isn't there?

Hazel Ashworth.

TABU or not TABU

By
Art Thomson.



When Vince Clarke remarked to me of something he'd read in an old 'BOYS OWN' paper, the name brought rushing out of my subconscious a host of memories of the days just before and during WWII when I was an avid reader of the paper, and all the other boys adventure magazines.

They had titles like the 'Wizard', 'Adventure', and 'Hotspur'. Each zine had its own particular day for appearing on sale in the newsagents, which in those days was usually a small street-corner shop selling sweets, tobacco and papers. If my memory serves, the 'Adventure' was a Monday magazine, Tuesday was 'Hotspur' day, Wednesday the 'Wizard' appeared (Wednesday was always a good day), Thursday and Friday were reserved for the 'Rover' and 'Champion'. I think that Saturday had been staked by the 'Boys Own' which had been one of the first of the boys papers, because someone had worked out that most boys got their weeks pocket-money on a Friday night.

No comics, these boys papers. Strip cartoons, Beano's and Dandy's were for kids. These boys mags featured real stories - written. Each mag would run to around thirty pages and cost about three old pennies. The only colour print was the cover and bacover. The cover usually featuring an illustration from one of the stories inside. On the bacover they ran series about the latest football or cricket heroes. Sometimes they featured small giveaway gifts; bird-warblers that didn't, cardboard cut-out aircraft that wouldn't and voice-throwing instructions that couldn't. I once even got some invisible-ink that wasn't. The stories inside the magazines were pretty standard. A school-tale, a war or spy story and an adventure or space story. Throughout the year, depending on the season they usually also managed a topical sports tale. Each magazine though had its own particular bent. The 'Rover' always went in for good football stories, the 'Champion' for school stuff and the 'Adventure' was just that, chock full of heroic deeds of daring do. The 'Wizard' was the blood and thunder zine; war, cops and robbers, pirates and the like. One thing that all the mags had in common was that they all produced their own H*E*R*O and he was always featured in the lead story.

The 'Adventure' (one of my favourites) had 'Strang the Terrible' as its hero, a figure in the Conan mould, who, by some disaster had been marooned in a lost valley full of dinosaurs and other pre-historic creatures. Strang seemed to spend most of his time helping the friendly but incompetent natives who also lived in the valley stay out from under the feet and hooves of the various oversized animals that seemed to come trampling up and down the valley in endless hordes.

The 'Wizard' (another favourite) featured at one time a character called 'Clicky Ba as its hero. Clicky Ba - alright you can laugh but he was flesh and guts to us - was a tall blue-eyed Pathan from north of the Khyber Pass who, with the aid of an ancient willow cricket bat wreaked havoc among the enemies of the British Raj. He was superseded when the war started in 1939 by 'Rockfist Rogan' a two-fisted fighter. He went into the British Forces and single handedly took on the whole of the German Wermacht.

I could never understand why we kept losing for those first few years.

But for me, the best of the bunch was 'TABU DICK'.....and here I most shamefully confess that after a period of several years I just cannot remember which magazine 'Dick' appeared in. I have a hazy recollection that it was a Friday or Saturday he appeared. Which would pin it down to the 'Champion' or 'Boys Own'. There's a genuine hand-cut ATomillo for anyone who can come up with the name of the zine he appeared in.

Dick's story is simply told. His parents were missionaries or scientists who's work took them to live in an un-named jungle, taking with them their infant son. After a while the parents contracted some deadly disease, or were stabbed to death by natives (my memory is a little rusty) but die they did. However, before they expired they spread the word around the local jungle that they had put a powerful 'Tabu' on little Dick and as part of this tabu he must never be touched in any way by anyone or anything that wished to harm him or great evil would befall them, or it.

So Dick grew up with this tabu round his neck. He developed, because of it, an amazing dexterity, being able to twist and sway this way and that thus avoiding anything that tried to bump into him, or even touch him. It was sheer poetry to see (read of) Dick travelling through the jungle easily and deftly avoiding all body contact with leaves, creepers, bushes and the occasional maddened Buffalo. In almost every weekly tale evil native hordes flung handfuls of spears at him at every conceivable opportunity. Dick avoided them all week after week, with a lithe twist or turn of the hips or head and sped on his merry way through the jungle untouched as you might say, by human hands.

On the day that Dick's latest story appeared London would be filled with ten or eleven year old boys twisting and weaving their untouchable paths from school to home, avoiding with ease the London pedestrians and occasional maddened Buffalo. My speciality was being able to board a double-deck London bus without using my hands, and by sheer dexterity avoiding touching the centre pillar of the entrance and ascending the stairs to the top-deck without touching any part of the bus.

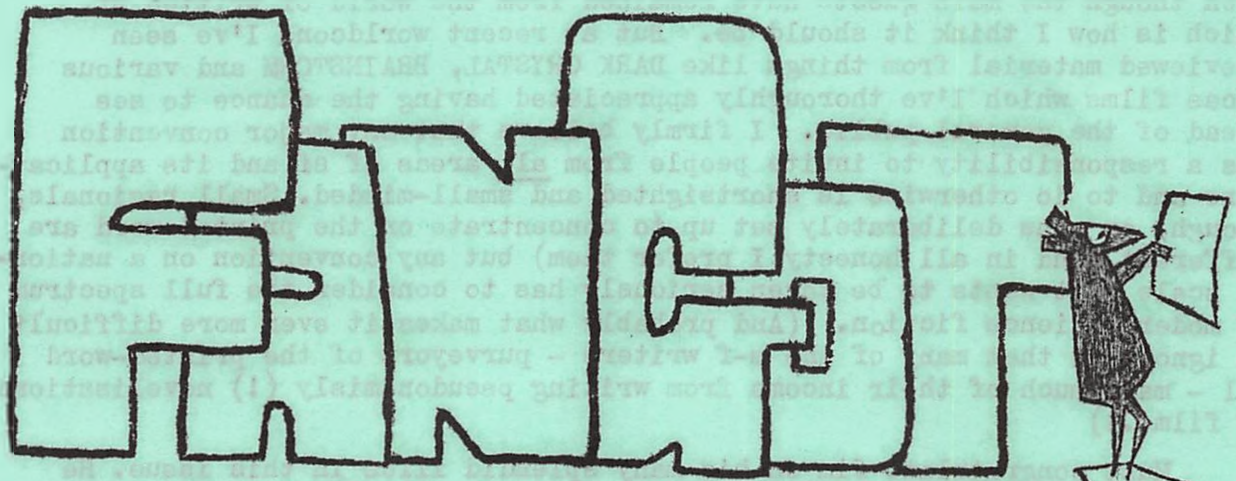
Ah yes, TABU DICK. Even now after all these years when I neatly avoid someone in a doorway or sidestep a collision in a crowded street I mentally notch up another win for TABU Thomson the boy who could not be touched.

* * * * *
* * * * *
SOMEWHERE IN SPACE I STAND CORRECTED

Yes, as old age and the fannish twilight descends on the bowed head of Art Thomson boy fanartist and struggling fanzine writer, his memory is revealed for what it is.... defunct! Even before this article had been committed to stencil, a certain fount of all knowledge who's editorial can be found not a million miles from this paragraph had thrown my precious writing back in my face. "You're up the creek, Bwah" said the editorial voice. "You are wrong about 'Clicky Ba' "

"Wrong?" I said clutching my writing to my breast.

"Yes, your actual Hero for that series of stories was called the 'Wolf of Kabul', Clicky Ba' was his illiterate sidekick who just couldn't speak English." Even as the words struck downwards into my heart I realised that it was so, of course it had been the Wolf of Kabul who had been the story's hero, but then, it had been good ol' Clicky Ba' who had been mine.



((The charm of a WALDO Lettercol is due in no small part to the discreet interval observed between issues - ie, because of the delay you've forgotten that which went before and all is fresh and new to you. However, since some of you might be confused by all this, Here is a letter which provides a reminder of the quintessential essence of WALDO 7.))

Jim Meadows, III, 1605 W. Main, Apt.4, Peoria, Illinois. 61606.

Well, WALDO, the autumn issue thereof, is just a couple or three dozen fanzines that have been piling up over the last year. Fanzines that I have not locced. Fanzines that I have not even read. But answered they must be. Must keep up appearances of the mighty letterhacking behemoth. So I skimmed this issue and got the giest out of it.

"They Call Me Esoteric" was clearly the star piece of the ish. Your account of the impact your paper on Stanton A. Coblentz made at Magdalen College was truly inspiring. It was almost equaled by Ashworth's "I Came, I Saw, I Conked Out". His nightmarish description of his long hellish journey to the N3F and back echoed the grand sweep of Homer, spiked with the biting prose style of News of the World. Like Hubbard in his better days. "A Final Genuflexion" was inspirational writing at its finest. I shall never think about Jim Jones again in quite the same way. Chuck Harris' piece on Trilling was truly an eye-opener. I never knew Lionel Trilling was active in fandom. Perhaps you can reprint some of his writing in future issues.

All in all a fine little publication you have here, son. I agree with Dr. Wertham...these fanzine things are certainly harmless, and may indeed serve some useful purpose for you youngsters who are still sharpening your writing skills. But make sure not to neglect your school paper as well. They, too, have something to impart. ((Yes, go with Giest, by all means, Jim!))

Mike Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Ave, Toronto, Ontario. M6S 3L6.

It seems that of late I've been getting fewer fanzines than ever and enjoying even fewer of them but WALDO was a delight to read from one inimitable ATom cover to the other and the fact that the material itself is the sort that generally fails to provoke me to lengthy comment shouldn't prevent me from letting you know how much I enjoyed the issue.

I fully agree with your point that today's sf is too broadly based for conventions to restrict themselves entirely to a small number of literary sf figures in selecting guests and guest speakers. Over here,

the larger cons have featured media people over the last several years, even though the main guests have remained from the world of written sf, which is how I think it should be. But at recent worldcons I've seen previewed material from things like DARK CRYSTAL, BRAINSTORM and various Lucas films which I've thoroughly appreciated having the chance to see ahead of the general public. I firmly believe that any major convention has a responsibility to invite people from all areas of sf and its applications and to do otherwise is shortsighted and small-minded. Small regionals, though, or cons deliberately set up to concentrate on the printed word are different (and in all honesty I prefer them) but any convention on a national scale that wants to be taken seriously has to consider the full spectrum of modern science fiction. ((And probably what makes it even more difficult to ignore is that many of the s-f writers - purveyors of the printed-word all - make much of their income from writing pseudonomisly (!) novelisations of films.))

Must congratulate Jim on his many splendid illos in this issue. He may well be the greatest practitioner of the art of hand-stencilling fandom has ever seen. People like Stu Shiffman, Ross Chamberlin, ATom Himself, etc have kept the standards high but there's a depth and solidity to Jim's artwork that the others generally lack. Keep him active and let the rest of us revel in the results.

Mal Ashworth, 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, N. Yorks.

It's funny but when I started taking an interest in fandom and cons again, it struck me as entirely natural that there should be video Space Games, TV-derived material, etc., etc., included as a part of it all. I think I was quite surprised when I learned that us Old Originals were supposed to wrinkle up our noses (I mean - wrinkle them up even more) at this corruption of our sacrosanct book-and-magazine purity. It seems to me that nowadays there is all the opportunity in the Universe to run all the specialist cons that may be needed throughout the year (Mexicon is a good example of one such). Let's have the Eastercon as a bloody great science-fictional and fannish carnival, full of colour, variety and richness. For myself, I'd love to play video games (but being a dumbo I need a guide) - hell, I even have one or two small ones and I look wistfully at computers on which I could play lots more; Dungeons and Dragons, too, I'd like to learn to play - and while there isn't much 'Startrek' I'd cross the room to watch, there are a few episodes of 'Blakes 7' I'd like to catch up on, and I'd goggle at 'The Hitchhikers Restaurant' again any day. (Which is a lie, actually, because I never even manage to watch films successfully at a con; I said in My First Real Convention, an account of the Supermancon in '54, of the film 'The Shape of Things to Come': "It was a good film; I think if I had been anywhere else but a convention I would have enjoyed it very much, but sitting still for a long time watching a film doesn't see to be quite the right thing to do at a convention". I haven't changed in that respect; but that is my problem. Plenty of other fans don't feel like that and it seems good sense to have all the goodies there anyway to be sampled as the whim strikes.) Which all goes somewhat beyond what you were saying, maybe, Eric, but was inspired by it and is meant to be in the same spirit. ((Yeah, its not an easy one...we have to keep out the more rabid media fans, but not the best of its product. One could suggest (with care) that what one needs is a happy-medium if that didn't mean we'd have to include spiritualism in the programming!))

And your editorial follow-on got me nodding even more excitedly: "Science-fiction isn't where it was anymore, people outside the s-f 'establishment' are having visions and bringing them to fruition - Oh, there is some good s-f about, but much is lacking in new ideas and new treatments"

Yes, but yes, oh, yes. As I've said elsewhere, I am currently attempting to fill in gaps in my s-f reading covering the last 20 years or so.

Several much-lauded books by enthusiastically-celebrated authors at the top of the s-f tree I have put down (one on page 2, more about half-way through) with the question "Why am I wasting my time? I know the rest of the story; there is just so much more exciting stuff, grown out of real imagination, which I could be reading." (When will we see Calvino as an Eastercon GofH, I wonder?) Maybe it was always so - I suspect this is true - and the pearls of the genre were always rare and grew on a bed on mediocre popular adventure literature concerned with rocketships and aliens. ((Yes, but never before was it pushed and promoted so with hype and hyperbole both; it once was a minority minnow now its just part of mass media and the few half-way decent yarns don't get promoted because they can't (by definition) be classified as such.)) And so - as you say - we adopt a wider vision if we really hope to net the pearls (or even mix our metaphors).

John Berry's rhetoric rather slipped a bit assbone-over-Titicaca, as us academics say in the trade, when he tried to get us to believe trumpet bells could look like rifle barrels (now muskets, maybe) but apart from that it was one vasty-crazy of an issue.

Terry Carr, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California.94611.

I was especially struck by the fact that even the newer fans recognised, in your YNGVI anthology, the twin binding forces of 6th Fandom, love and pure fun. We did indeed do our earlier fanning in a simpler, less cynical time, when the positive emotions came through on paper without any need for pretensions of sophistication as such. Besides, we were all then a lot younger than we are now...or than the typical current-day fan is, for that matter: have you noticed whereas in the 50's fans tended to start their fanac in their teens, these days they usually don't appear until their twenties? I'm not sure why that should be, but it does seem to have had its effect, if only in the fact that there's far less idealism in most of today's fanzines. ((The T*I*M*E*S has a lot to do with it, too, I think, and the fact that the media had not become quite as crass and mass as it is now...our attitudes were more individually formed and not molded for us to the extent evidenced in many of todays fans.))

But I keep wondering about people seeing so much "love" in the 6th Fandom productions. Sure, it was there and it was an important element in the gestalt, but let's try to remember that the 50's were also the hayday of George Wetzel, G.M. Carr, and the Crusade To Clean Up Fandom, among others, none of them contributing much to fannish love and frivolity. The productions of the latter don't get reprinted these days, though, which no doubt explains the not-completely-true picture of 6th Fandom that a lot of current fans seem to have.

I was forcibly reminded of this during the recent convention Corflu, which was specifically designed as a con for fanzine fans and which produced a fannish feeling of togetherness that I haven't noticed in fandom for many years. And there was an almost palpable air of excitement...a feeling that by God somethin' was happening, man. What was happening was a hundred people, all fanzine fans of one stripe or another, getting together and having fun. It was a lot like 50's fandom at times, but I wouldn't characterize the feeling as love exactly - not love for each other, anyhow. More like love for fandom itself, for the whole gestalt.



John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks.

As a package the whole zine hangs together, with no jarring, out-of-character pieces. It's very much like a modern version of WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE, really - it has a similar kind of ambience to it, one that I am becoming rather fond of the more I see of it (other zines like MICROWAVE and Vinç THEME, have a similar feel to them). I guess it's down to the much more relaxed nature of the writing - there isn't any sense of strain about the writing - it's matured (probably in oaken casks, I'll bet), with no sense of fear about it. That's a feeling I sometimes get from some of the major zines nowadays, a sense that the editor/author is a wee bit frightened of peer pressure, afraid that he might actually commit an error that would bring down the wrath of the BNF network on his/her head. Not in WALDO, though. ((Yer, it's this carefully controlled aging-process that's in part responsible for my schedule....in particular, I have trouble getting Mal Ashworth out of his oaken cask!))

Mmmm - the leading edge of SF in the hands of the movie makers, eh? The thought shrivels me brain a bit, to tell the truth, since I have very little regard for 99.9% of that breed, who's main object is the Big Buck rather than any form of genuine communication, art, call it what you will. Good SF is almost being made - the ideas are somewhat thin, the plotting is always dumb, and the mental age of the target audience is always between seven and eight. And yet, with films like the Star Wars trilogy, BLADERUNNER, even ALIEN, the technology of SF movies has advanced to the point where it should be able to tackle original material as challenging as anything in written SF. I guess that we'll get some damned good SF in the movies over the next decade, but it won't be the ones that bring in the money. ((Oh, I dunno....there's all kinds of sf and nothing particularly wrong with that which is intended as entertainment...the Star Wars trilogy was and that made a lot of money; and I suspect DUNE (shortly to be released as I write) could also be financially successful and, quite possibly, acceptable to the sf fan as well.)) It's the guys like the BLADFRUNNER and ALIEN director (damn it, I've forgotten the blokes name for the moment...I hate my brain at times!) who's attention to detail is so marvelous, that will be coming up with the goodies. ((I think where we are at with sf films is about where we were at with magazine sf in the 50's....if you'll forgive an aged editorial analogy...Star Wars, E.T., Star Trek, etc, are comparable with STARTLING STORIES and TWS;BLADERUNNER, with aSF/ANALOG. It was quite a good period,if not quite the Golden Age that some would have it.))

Brad W. Foster, 4109 Pleasant Run, Irving, Texas 75038.

Holy spit!! I was truly amazed to read your editorial and find an SF fanzine publisher who had some good things to say about movies and media fans. My exposure to British fandom has been small, but if it's anything like here in the U.S., I imagine you've stirred up quite a hornets nest! The popular thing among SF fans here seems to be a game called "dump-on-the-media-fans". I try to stay out of it as much as I can though. Although sometimes I think some media fans get a little over-zealous and narrow-minded in their pursuit of a single thing, I think there is also a hell of a lot of energy there, and creativity, so I try not to alienate either side by taking sides. Feel that both have something to offer if they'd get out of the "them-or-us-" frame of mind. ((I'm not in favour of encouraging hordes of trekkies and the like to attend 'our' conventions, just some of the creative people involved in using imaginative sf throughout the media. The Poo Is Mightier Than The Light-Saber !))

...I'd like to see Simak's CITY filmed starring Rin Tin Tin!

Glen Warminger, 72 Linacre Ave, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk.

You talk of sixth fandom (or should that be Sixth Fandom), when was that then and what do you call fandom now? I never have been able to understand what constitutes a (n) fandom. ((Like 'Golden Ages' a lot tends to be in the eyetracks of the beholder.)) There seems to be quite a lot being said about fanhistory and the resurrection of past glories, and there seems to be some people who are worried by the prospect of an upsurge in interest in fandom of the fifties and sixties. This seems to be based on the false assumption that if past actifans produce fanzines in the manner to which they are accustomed and present day fans reprint articles from the past, this will stifle present day fanwriting. I can't see it myself, personally I believe in the old adage, the more the merrier. Printing fan pieces from the past is not going to effect the encouragement of new writers anymore than my liking for Mahler effects my enjoyment of modern music such as New Order. To believe that the occasional fanthology will stop the course of fandom in its tracks is the result of muddled thinking.

Your comment on Pressure groups reminds me of what the loonies otherwise known as the Animal Liberation Front did recently. They let loose a large number of mink from a local mink farm. This act of protest against the cruel breeding of animals for their fur resulted in a premature death for all of these animals. About a third of their number ended up squashed on the roads and the rest were put down because the different breeding stocks were mixed and therefore of no further use to the breeders. It also happened that several peoples pet cats and dogs were attacked by the loose mink. A case of not thinking out your actions. The results were in no-ones favour. ((The scenario that frightens me is the possible release by these idiots of animals suffering from rabies (or some such) and the resultant consequences to the animal and human inhabitants of these isles - it seems to have escaped the notice of Noble Protesters that animals are also experimented on to cure disease in animals!))

Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland St, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs.

Us vegetarians don't have any problems with Novacon breakfast sausages. although Central Hotel Glasgow's breakfast eggs are a different matter.

Well, to be serious for a paragraph, what would happen is that animals would be able to breed themselves at a normal rate (a cow doesn't want to breed every year anymore than a woman does) and perhaps a little scientific help to make them look as they should instead of the way they've been bred for abnormalities (sheep aren't supposed to have such little legs - whether they were made to have short legs for the benefit of the meat production or the benefit of lonely shepherds is another matter). ((Er..but Joy, if they were given some scientific assistance to lengthen their legs or whatever, wouldn't this come under the heading of 'animal experimentation for cosmetic purposes' ?))

Vegetarians have generally thought out the results of a civilised diet for everyone, and since I suspect you're not to stupid to realise this, am I right in thinking you sent me this fanzine as a bit of controversy mongering ? ((No, I just thought you might enjoy it.))

Harry Warner, Jr, 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, Maryland.21740.

1984...I confess that the change in year means to me something dramatic: the arrival of yet another of those years in which at least a few sf stories were set when published in the 1930s and 1940s, while I was a boy and a youth and found it impossible to conceive clearly the fact that such a far distant future would eventually occur after an eternity of time. I don't remember reading in Amazing or Wonder or Astounding about a D. West.

On the other hand, I cling just now to a faint hope that something more sensational may be occurring in secret today than any prozine hack thought up. Is it possible that the mysterious disappearance of Andropov results from the fact that he's speeding aboard a Russian spaceship to Mars, soon to step onto its surface with less celebrated cosmonaut in order to claim the entire planet as the property of the U.S.S.R. ((And that D. West is one of the crew ?))

But all this isn't getting comments created on the new WALDO, the sole begetting cause of this letter. ((Oh, I dunno, Harry, the thought of sending D. West to Mars with Andropov was worth the postage you paid, I think!)) It was a pleasure to read throughout: nothing so formidabl~~E~~ intellectual that I was made aware of my brain's outer limits, nothing so belligerent that I fear to refer to it lest I get ensnared in an enormous fued, hardly any in-group references that I can't grasp at least dimly. The wonderful illustrations don't create an unhealthy stimulation of my dregs of primitive urges and desires.

Mal's conreport impressed me both for what it does and what it does not do. On the latter topic, there must have been an enormous temptation to him to compare everything at the con to what he remembered from the cons of long ago. Well, maybe he did make those comparisons, but he did not do so in print and I think the article is stronger for it. As for the former half of his accomplishment, this conreport could serve as textbook model for how to create this literary artform. The reader gets a vivid sense of the personality and habits of the narrator, the same reader is provided with ample quantities of visualization materials about the environment in which the con was held, both immediate and surrounding, there's a lot of name-dropping and in every case the full name is available instead of those ambiguous references to the Jims and Joans that intrude on some United States conreports, and almost every sentence is phrased in something better than a Hemingwayesque collection of the shortest possible words and simplest imaginable sentence structure.

The artificial expletive hasn't received much publicity in the mundane world, but I'm sure it exists here and there. The most famous of them in the U.S. must be W.C. Fields' "Mother of Pearl!" One of the announcers for radio broadcasts of the Baltimore baseball team has attained some renown for resorting in his most frustrated moments to a fervent "Dirty ratcherfrachet!" I suppose it would be possible to include the one that Mad Magazine once made famous, but I'm not sure if I remember its correct spelling: "Potrzebie" or something of the sort. Someone once identified this as a real word, a Polish verb in the infinitive form. ((And I'm sure there must be some in POGO, but if I go looking I'll never get this fanzine out!))

Eric Mayer, 1771 Ridge Rd, E., Rochester, N.Y. 14622.

If Mal Ashworth's con report isn't the best article of 1982 its one of them. I know it isn't a tour de force, or about some weighty subject but it is so consistently enjoyable and humorous and maintains a fannish tone throughout, without stooping to the cliched fannishness that most of us fall back on occasionally. Kind of fannishness without blatant beanies.



Amazing how enjoyable it is when "old time" fans get together to do what they've always done rather than to talk about things they used to do and obviously do no longer. ((Its getting your wheelchair into the right position that I find does cause some problems, but other than that.....))

I was also amused by Hazel Ashworth's article. Kathy and I have a habit of taking words out of each other's mouths, and I think I sometimes run into difficulty talking to people when I accidentally adopt our usual "shorthand" mode of communicating. 31

John Berry has, it seems, begun to pop up all over again and his stuff seems uniformly excellent. Whether its a personal reminescence (or perhaps anecdote would be a better term especially as its one I know how to spell) or faan fiction? ((How about 'personal ruminescence' then?)) John has a knack of carrying the reader along from beginning to middle to an end that's perfectly logical, in retrospect, with no wasted motion or sidetrips in highly entertaining style.

Chuck Harris, 32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants.

WALDO; isn't that a sort of mechanical bargepole for not touching things with? ((Ah, yes, I seem to recall that was this zine's origin, but several Stateside fans having informed me it was a character in Mr. Magoo I had become more tentative in extending me pseudopod. Thanks for reminding me!)) Don't for one minute imagine that I'm criticising your contents though - much as I'd like to spill them out over your feet sometimes. ((I see, you still think entrails make the best reading...))

That was a superb piece by Ashworth. Bright, chatty and fun to read - I really enjoyed it. A pity she didn't give Mal a hand with his conreport.... No, seriously, I enjoyed Mal's report - he always makes me laugh - but I'm incredulous about the amount of beer he puts away. I can drink a pint of white wine, or 3½ pints of lager and I'm through - I'm anybody's. Sneer if you wish...but if you want a cheap night out, madame, Chuch is the name.

Shirley Maclaine on the box, telling how she remembers her previous life in Atlantis. I thought she said Atlanta at first and wondered what had happened to her Georgie accent, but it was a reincarnation thing she was on about. Its all very scientific and there's all sorts of signs and portents about your past lives if you only know how to look and where to interpretate...((Aha, so that's why you're interested in my entrails - but who told you to look there, that's what I want to know? Incidentally, Poul Anderson wrote a novel entitled "The Dancer from Atlantis" and I offer this as evidence that you should check his entrails first, please.))

Take, for instance, my fondness for referring to our Gentle Reader as "squire". You use "Sirrah" in the same context. This is not just eccentricity, fawning adulation, or palindromic worship. "Sirrah" of course is Harris spelt arsey-versey. Shirley says this sort of thing is Very Significant Indeed and not something that just happens casually or by coincidence. Look at some other examples. Take "Ashworth" from the rear - please, this is a serious discussion, and you're spoiling it by messing about, HTROWHSAjust incomprehensible rubbish from that view too. And "Bentcliffe" - EFFILCTNEB....illiterate crud as always.. Ditto SILLIW and EKRALC and ETIHW...ALL HOPELESS COBBLEDEGOOK EVERYONE ON THEM. And don't say "Pish!" like that or shout "Bob Shaw" at me. Shirley says Bob is a sort of Divine Injunction....cleanliness coming next to Godliness in the Irish dictionary ...and nothing to do with Atlantis or sirrahs. ((Or LOGIC!!))

Honestly, - SIRRAH - it sounds noble and kind of knightly. It conjurs up visions of a young Galahad using his lance to preserve damsels, virgins, Lady of Shalott and suchlike. I think it's Significant; another little clue, another indication, that knightly blood runs in the Harris veins. It is a HISTORICAL FACT that King Arthur too had Group A Rh positive. At Novacon I shall claim my Heritage, save a virgin and blot my escutcheon. Shall I save you a virgin too? ((Ah yes, DESTINY...and wasn't it ARTHUR Schwartz who penned that immortal song "Hey, Sirrah, Sirrah, whatever will be, will be...."))

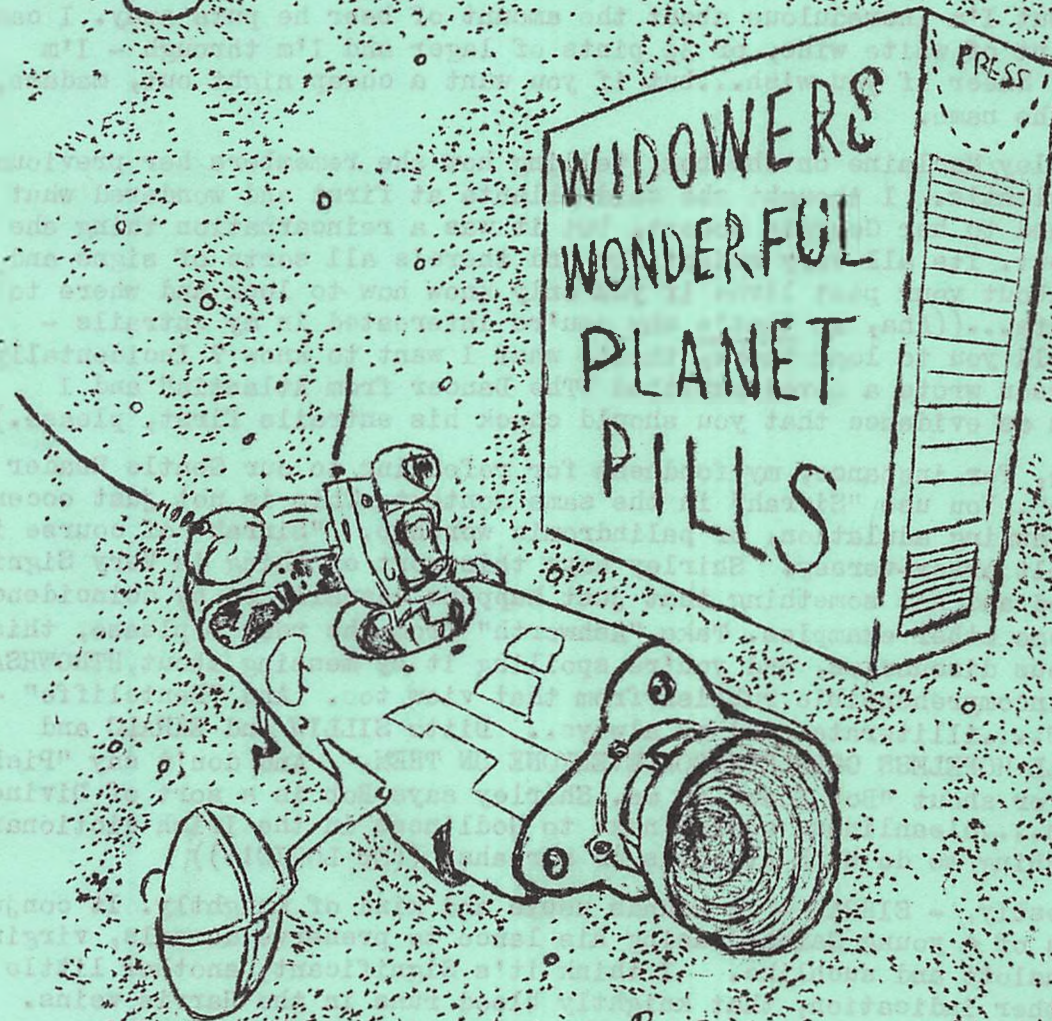
I loved the WIDOWER verses scattered through the pages
and wondered just how many of them ever did see print. My
favourite (author unknown) was:

The sexy song the sirens sang
Left Ulysees aghast as
He calmed his fears and plugged his ears
With WIDOWERS MUSTARD PLASTERS.

And my own....

Icarus flew too near the sun
And never gave a hoot.
"Drop dead," they said, but he used instead
His WIDOWERS PARACHUTE.

When Zeus plays follow-the-Leda,
It isn't lust, but greed.
To hell with passion, he needs his ration,
Of WIDOWERS BEST BIRD SEED.



ATOM