

RIP



RLP





VINCE
CLARKE

I sometimes get asked about the differences between *Then* and *Now*, tho' not twice by the same person. Of course, often they're evident - I remember how struck I was by the sight of about 15 female fans sitting on the floor at an early '80s NovaCon, because this was about as many as existed in the whole of British fandom in the '50s. And virtually nothing is *Now* thought of fans taking over a whole hotel for a weekend's convention - *Then* it was an evening in a room over a pub., etc, etc, etc.

But one change seems to have passed almost unnoticed. Before the War - and after it - a fan's burning ambition was to Break Into Print. Young Arthur Clarke, young Bill Temple, young Sam Youd...Burke, McIllwain, Arnold, Gillings, Carnell and others - they were all involved in fandom to some degree, and they all wanted to Write.

After the War, there was Bulmer, Brunner, Tubb, Morgan, Shaw, White, Moorcock, to name a few - and that's only in Great Britain. Over in the States there was Damon Knight, Pohl, Benford, Hoffman, White, Carr...an endless list.

But over here the last few years have been lacking in Names. There's Holdstock, Stableford, Langford and ...and...well, others will probably come to mind before I finish writing this, but once upon a time if you scratched a fan you'd find a bleeding hopeful pro. Nowadays - almost zilch.

I wonder why this is? Is it lack of ambition? Is it having a harder look at reality? Is it lack of markets? Is it that sf has taken off so strongly in the States, with hordes of would-be writers hunched over their word processors, inspired by that oft-told story of Ray Bradbury, the young fan in the corner of the Los Angeles clubroom who burnt a million words of un-saleable material and then went on to fame and fortune, that they've swamped the market?

Of course, a good agent can help. I asked Sam Youd about his start as an author: I had a hazy memory of being told that Sam - who writes under the name of 'John Christopher' - had an agent who submitted a story twice to the same magazine. Sam was a prominent fan at the beginning of the War. He had his own fanzines (FANTAST, FANTASY WAR BULLETIN, etc.) and his first published story - war, not sf - won a competition in LILLIPUT, a Man's Magazine of those days, which means that it had one artistic female nude study in each issue.....and some good writing.

"As far as John Burke and I were concerned" says Sam, "I do know that our main ambition was in the field of the general novel. We were both given awards by the Rockefeller Foundation (Atlantic Awards, so called), designed to aid young writers whose careers (?) had been interrupted by war, and we published our first novels within months of each other in 1949 (THE WINTER SWAN and SWIFT SUMMER).

"Additionally, and basically for the bread, we had a go at the SF magazines. My own first sale was to Wally Gillings, and I sold a bit to the American market. Later I was approached by someone at the small firm of Grayson & Grayson to put a collection of shorts together, resulting in THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY in 1954. (I believe this was the first SF collection by a British writer, excluding such as Wells, of course).

"It came out at a time when Michael Joseph was venturing into the field with *Novels Of Tomorrow*, and his series editor, Clemence Dane (she who pre-war had dismissed SF as "the American fairy tale") asked me to contribute. I enlarged and finalized some stories I'd been writing into THE YEAR OF THE COMET, which helped to start the series.

"My second attempt, THE PRINCE IN WAITING, was turned down - fortunately, because many years later I re-wrote it as the first part of my second children's trilogy; these are my own favourites and I'm happy that they're still in print and are being reissued next year by Collier books. But as a substitute for PRINCE I sent Clemence THE DEATH OF GRASS.

"GRASS did only moderately well over here. In the States literary agent Scott Meredith tried various magazines - I think including COLLIERS (who had serialised Wyndham's DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS) and certainly including the SATURDAY EVENING POST - without success. Meanwhile, he had a tentative offer from Ballantine, in those days fairly small-time and paperback only who wanted me to do an extensive rewrite to make it 'more orthodox science fiction'.

"In a mood combining principle, arrogance and bloody-mindedness, I refused. Not long after, Peter Schwed of Simon & Schuster visited Michael Joseph's office and asked if he had "any story tellers" on his new list. He was shown GRASS and bought it with just one change: the title went from DEATH OF GRASS (which he said reminded him of something out of a gardening department) to NO BLADE OF GRASS.

"Although he hadn't made the sale, Scott Meredith ran well with the ball. He tried it again on SATURDAY EVENING POST, where I think there had been a change of assistant editor, and they bought it. Ben Hibbs did a special editorial - THE BOOK THAT SHOCKED THE EDITORS, in bold type - and broke precedent by agreeing to run the first instalment coincidentally with the book's publication (normally they insisted on complete magazine publication in advance). I learned later that they had also been toying with Nevil Shute's ON THE BEACH, but the coin came down Christopher."

Thank you, Sam. DEATH OF GRASS sold hardcover, PB and film rights in the US and hard cover and PB (Penguin) in this country, and Sam did pretty well. And in this particular case it took talent, a little luck, and a good American agent.

Prospective authors, unhappily aware that 2 out of 3 will hardly do, can now attend a Writer's Workshop - if they can spare the time and the cash - and if you take the

view that story-telling is story-telling, whether it's sf, romance or detective, there are various writer's circles. And they can now get a crumb of comfort from a new book, HOW TO WRITE TALES OF HORROR, FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, edited by J.N.Williamson, published by Writer's Digest Books of Cincinnati, Ohio, ISBN 0-89879-270-3.(price £13.95 or shall we call it £14?)

HTWTOHFASF - no, that sounds too much like a Yugoslavian curse, let's make it HOW TO - is edited by a man who was at one time a "self-employed astrologer", who has written/edited 35 books and was secretary/treasurer of the Horror Writers Of America. You can therefore deduce that things that go "aaargh!" in the night will have some precedence over hints on how to explain Seyfert galaxies in two paragraphs. Bloch and Bradbury and Marion Zimmer Bradley have chapters, for instance, but so have Michael Banks and Sharon Baker.

Banks has some encouraging words in 'Science Fiction: Hard Science and Hard Conflict' - "The bulk of my scientific knowledge is self-taught. Nor do many of my science-fiction-novel-writing friends who routinely knock down five-figure advances have heavy scientific backgrounds." But he then goes on to explain how to do what research may be needed for a particular story.

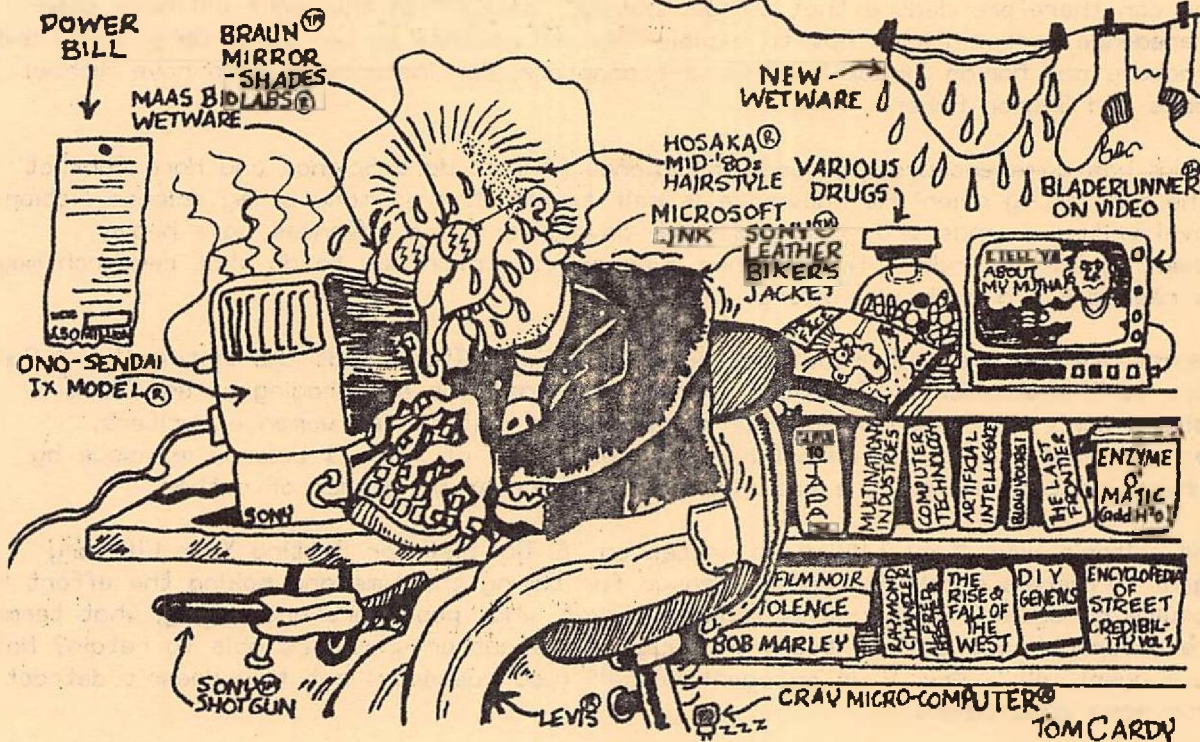
'Sexist Stereotypes and Archetypes: What to Do with Them/ What the Writing Woman Can Hope for', a chapter by Jeanette Hopper, also has some encouraging words: "Good editors don't see women as inferior writers: good editors see women as writers, period." And she quotes Ellen Datlow, fiction editor of *Omni*: "I balance my issue by subject matter, theme, tone and other criteria, never by gender of author."

The editor's wife, Mary T.Williamson, writes on "A 'Do' List for Getting Your Literary Agent": "There's another excellent reason for taking the time and making the effort to acquire an agent. Do *you* know today's market, what publishers are paying, what terms are acceptable for a first book, what rights the author should be able to retain? No? Your agent will." Mrs. W. is an agent herself (you guessed?) but this doesn't detract from some good advice.

HOW TO... is full of quotable pieces; "At the World Science Fiction Convention this year (1986), I looked around and realised that all the hot young writers were at least thirty-five years old": "Much of the output acclaimed in advertising as epics can be at merciful best described as a 'fast read' - a term, by the way, which I detest, along with its terminological twin, the 'easy read.'" (That was PULP reader Bob Bloch.) One contributor has three pages on 'Names' - "...suppose Dracula had been named Cuthbert Gooch....wouldn't "Gooch" set off knee-jerk reactions of repulsion and fright?"

This book is a fascinating read even if, like me, you could wish that the emphasis was on sf rather than horror. And there's some interesting lists including 'Best Remembered Novels/Short Fiction of SF' - the latter includes (1) Flowers for Algernon, (2) The Game of Rat & Dragon/The Star, (4) A Boy & His Dog / Nightfall / Who Goes There?/, and (7) The Cold Equations/Dear Devil/First Contact/ Houston, Houston, Do You Read?/ It's a Good Life/ Jefty is Five/ Repent, Harlequin/ Sandkings/ There Will Come Soft Rains. Three by Ellison in that list.

MAKE BECOME A: BIG CYBERPUNK MONEY! WRITER (IN YOUR HOME)



Many thanks to Tom Cardy for the above illu which goes nicely with the editorial. Tom, like his friend Nigel Rowe, is a visiting New Zealander; he's sold artwork. Thanks also to Alexis Gilliland & Arf Thomson for the front cover; Alexis supplied the framework, Arf covered it with little black buggers. Symbolism? Ask Alexis. And thanks to Dave and Chuch, in spite of their lack of freshness (*vide* the appalling Kincaid in *CRITICAL WAVE*) and to Bridget, whom shortage of space kept curtailed. Sorry, Bridget.

Another alteration between Then and Now is the length of fan writing. Some fans sound drunk with their own eloquence, confirmed wordaholics. This is partly due to better education, partly due to the increase in individual wealth. Amateur publishing costs. I used to write, edit it by reducing the length, then go through that reducing the length...all to save on stencils, paper and ink. I remembered this when searching for a few hundred words to preface Avedon Carol's piece, being prepared to waffle on about my being split-minded, trying to adhere to the principles of friendliness, politeness and tolerance in fandom, ignoring the small-minded yahoos who make it so difficult for new fans to make headway. And on the other hand wanting to smack a few snotty-nosed heads. It'd be a waste of space. Avedon, writing with honesty, integrity and sheer power, needs no preface of mine. Read on and enjoy. AVC

GOING

NOVA

AVEDON CAROL

It's like one of those dreams where you find yourself at a convention discussing the plight of the Cypriots with Ray Davies and Flo Kennedy - only in dreams it all seems perfectly normal and you don't realize until you wake up what an absurd situation it would have been. So maybe it's more like an acid trip where everything weird just seems to be happening to you and you keep having to check with other people and say, "Is it just the acid, or is this really strange?" And you know it's really happening, even though it doesn't make any sense. And every time you turn a corner or open a door, the entire world changes and a new weird scene comes up to replace completely the old weird scene you were goggling at only seconds ago. Even opening the door to the fridge is like entering a whole new planet, right?

So here I am, talking to D. West, or maybe he's talking to me. The thing is, I always seem to like D. West when we're talking, I think he's really a pretty nice guy, even if he seems a bit off the wall. He never actually talks like he's off the wall, it's just that when I try to put what he's saying together, it's like you've got pieces from seven different incomplete jigsaw puzzles all heaped in a box, and you can't figure out how to make all of these bits of impressionist art and medieval portrature and Karsh and what-have-you add up to a picture of Marilyn Monroe.

Anyway, it's the greenhouse effect in the Angus, I guess, sort of like looking at that big blue building in the middle of St. Mark's Place and wondering, "Can this really be here?" West has decided to explain the facts of life to me, I think. He is telling me that, here in Britain, people worry about what other people think.

Back in memory, my sister and I are giggling, shouting: "What will the neighbors think?!"

But I don't tell my helpful Uncle Don this - I know that somewhere in there, despite what he's saying, there is a kindred spirit, a guy who'd really be more in his element clutching his gut with Sally and me while falling over laughing and screaming about the neighbours, the bloody neighbours, because the neighbours always think all sorts of things, but they know fuck all (and they aren't even smart enough to ask). Look at Harries over there, he's got to be the loneliest guy in the world, but he thinks he knows what he'd do in my place - and the pathetic thing is, the poor guy will never be lucky enough to have the chance to find out how wrong he is. And Richardson and Ashley - it's really sad, y'know? I mean, these guys are so afraid that people won't

like them that they go out of their way to ensure it. If they could just bloody relax they might be okay, but they sit there looking like, well, like if he ever wakes up Ashley will break out into a chorus of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me", and Richardson can't tell the difference between being out of his coffin or in it. And these, my friend, are the neighbours. Hours go by during which only Warminger gives any evidence of life, and it really shows when he is sitting bracketed by these textbook cases of rigor mortis.

"I'm not saying it's right," West is saying, and what a relief it is to hear that. I try to explain. "If what you're doing is wrong, stop doing it. If it's not, then stop acting like it's shameful." He doesn't disagree, but reiterates that here, in Britain, people really do worry about what other people think. (It's 24 hours before I cop to the truth - all over America, people worry about nothing else but what the neighbours think. They also vote for people like Reagan and Bush, and they think that women who like to fuck are devils from hell.)

To make it all even weirder, West starts telling me that it's not nice to say mean things in print to people, and even more not nice to say rude things in print about things which people did other than in print. I stare at him to make sure it really is West talking to me. I think this is a scene from The Magus, maybe. It's got to be a put-on. He will go back to Leeds and say, "You'll never guess what she fell for."

And, as if I'd opened the refrigerator door, perspective shifts completely when Bloody Martin Smith from Croydon comes crawling up to us demanding to know why West scares him. "Why does this guy terrify me? That's what I want to know." I told him he was taking his life in his hands coming up to him and talking like that when West could do devastating things to him in print - "He can ridicule you brilliantly, that's why." "I could crush him in a fight! Why am I so afraid of him?" he continued. He has had too much of the real ale, you understand. "I know what it is!" he says (eureka). "It's because he doesn't give a shit. He just. Doesn't. Give a shit! He doesn't care what the rest of us think. West doesn't give a shit about me. He doesn't even notice!" I thought it was all deliciously ironic and stuff like that.

I have moved about six feet, and it's all completely different. Keith Mitchell had the hiccups. He kept trying to drink from the wrong side of his mug to cure them, but it didn't work. I fed him a spoonful of sugar, which seemed to be working until Hansen made a joke about it and had Keith nearly rolling on the floor again - and hiccupping once more. So finally I went over to D. and explained the situation. "What do you want me to do?" he asked eagerly, as if he knew just what I had in mind. "Kiss him." West obliged - at length. Keith didn't seem to mind, and it cured his hiccups. I decide once again that Keith is immensely cool and sexy. "Well," he said, "I figured if something like that was happening, the only thing I could do was enjoy it." Each gave the other a recommendation as a good kisser. This was more like it!

Well, maybe not. In another grand triumph of real ale over nearly everything, they are all too drunk, too far gone. Smith gets sick and disappears. Owen is bitchy about the heat being turned off (and I'm pretty worried, myself, about being so cold that I might start to look like Nigel Richardson soon). Pam says she voted for Ashley in the Novas because of his article in LIP 4.

Is this true? The same Pam Wells who said Polley should win it for VILE ANCHORS? Is this a sick joke? It's too much for Whiteoak, who takes this opportunity to call it a night. Morning. Whatever. I must confess, I am aghast. After all that crap Ashley wrote about Harry Bond, you'd think Pam, who takes offence herself at far less, would have considered it all a bit much. Oh, yeah, it's good stuff, just fine. "What's wrong with it?"

Oh, aside from the cruelty, insensitivity, and garden variety sexism, you mean? Well, hey, we are all sufficiently vain that we sometimes take a certain juvenile delight in our ability to be clever at the expense of other people, you know? It's the first kind of humour we learn as children, because it is so damned easy. Making fun of someone who is different or just blushes easily, laughing at cripples - we learn how to do it, and then, growing up, we learn not to do it in public. No wonder even Marty Cantor is bright enough to be surprised when Ashley makes rude remarks about his hair.

And I'm surprised at anyone who has such a pathetic love life that writing about it leads to thoughts of Harry Bond. Well, not being into water sports, it's just hard to relate to Ashley anyway, especially when I've always thought good sex is worth staying sober for and bad sex is to be avoided at all costs. But even his occasional references to something like a sex life don't alleviate the overriding impression of Ashley as an over-large eight-year-old boy who has never been anywhere or done anything. He's got an outstanding ability to make a dull and uninteresting life seem dull and uninteresting.

Even before Novacon, life was getting to be like a waking dream. For example, before I saw LIP 4, I had an exchange in the mail with Hazel Ashworth in which she berated me for being mean and cruel to Jimmy Robertson and Christina Lake in PULP #9, and in response to which I said something less than appreciative about young Michael's earlier performance. Hazel then warned that I might not like things in the up-coming LIP in which "dumb animals" were tortured. Under the circumstances, this turned out to be a frighteningly apt metaphor - Ashley clearly regards Harry Bond as no better than a dumb animal and set about to show us how he can pull the legs off frogs. This is a behaviour which we barely tolerate in eight-year-olds and expect them to outgrow by the time they reach 13. (All of which lends a particular note of irony to Hazel's response in the letter column when Marty Cantor, not unexpectedly, wrote in with a bleat of pain regarding Ashley's earlier remarks about Marty's hair: "...something that wouldn't be out of place if it had come from the mouth of a severely neurotic adolescent," says Hazel of Marty's letter. Funny, that's just the description a lot of us gave to Ashley himself.)

("Maybe," I think, "they actually don't know.")

As if to underline the point, Ashley carried on by making light of people who had been so crass, so uncool, as to treat him like a human being. Even Harry Bond tried to be friendly to Ashley, and got his legs pulled off for his pains. Oh, good show, Michael! I will resist the temptation to dissect the unassailable hip-ness of a guy who regards Nigel Richardson and Alun Harries as the coolest people at a Wellington meeting. I simply could not begin to detail the manifest sophistication, social grace and general sleekness of Messrs. Harries & Richardson for the benefit of the uninitiated.

"You really do have to grow up sooner or later and the later you leave it the harder it is," says Michael to Harry. Strange... he can recite the words, but he still doesn't know the tune.

I am informed, by someone who is usually smarter than this, that Michael's piece is the best bit of fanwriting all year and that it's all apparently okay because in real life people don't all like each other and we say nasty things about each other all the time. I am having a lot of trouble with this logic - after all, in real life there is also rape and murder, but that doesn't mean it would be great to have more of it in fandom. People form civilizations and communities in an attempt to improve cooperative effort and minimize the amount of damage they have to take from others; you don't build the wall and then invite the wolves in anyway. You sure as shit don't give them an award for coming in and eating the babies. But if Hazel Ashworth thought this demonstration of juvenile sadism* was worth publishing, I suppose it was inevitable that someone else would consider it worth praising.

But why? What in the world is so admirable about a sociopath displaying his sickness in a public forum? And if Ashley is such an exhibitionist that he has to do it in front of everyone, we would hope others would have the taste and sense not to put it in their fanzines. It's hard to fathom what must have possessed Hazel to decide we should all have to watch. What is the woman thinking?

The suggestion that Ashley's pathological whining and sneering could be the best piece of fanwriting to appear all year sits particularly badly in the context of so much fine work which has appeared from others in the course of these last 12 months. Simon Polley has produced three excellent issues of VILE ANCHORS, any one of which should stand out in memory as a solid example of what good personal writing really looks like. Christina Lake, Lilian Edwards, Jan Dawes, Sherry Coldsmith and no doubt numerous others who didn't just spring to mind (including Hazel Ashworth herself) have all written worthy pieces in and out of their various fanzines. Dave Langford and Chuck Harris both have provided us with laughs and the occasional food for thought. The last two issues of Martin Tudor's EMPTIES contain quite a number of entertaining contributions. Even Simon Ounsley has managed to inscribe the occasional amusing piece or thoughtful letter from his deathbed. And all done painlessly, without stomping all over people to do it.

If I had to choose any single piece of fanwriting which has stayed in my mind for months as a stellar performance, I'd have to say that Owen Whiteoak's tour-de-force in GOOD TASTE IS TIMELESS (OR GOOD TIMES ARE TASTELESS) 11 is one of the most creative and inventive works I've seen in a good long time. In a single narrative, Whiteoak reported a year of convention-going and encounters in London fandom, all skilfully injected into a clever framing device of fanfictional adventure. (Moreover, several succeeding issues of KAMERA OBSKURA have made Whiteoak one of the most reliable and engaging writers of the year.)

*The word is used in the sense of deliberate cruelty for fun, rather than in the sense of sexual sadism as practiced by leather & lace freaks.

I would not be quick to overlook writing of a more practical or serious nature, either, and I have a high regard for the kind of work Mike Christie & Sherry Coldsmith have been presenting in A FREE LUNCH. Sherry has always had a firm handle on the art of personal writing, but in recent years fandom has been malnourished when it comes to the meatier issues, and it was high time someone rushed in to put something into the pot that had vitamins and minerals (instead of just the empty calories we get from Ashley). And while Rob Hansen tends to few stylistic flourishes, his fanhistorical investigation of British Fandom in the '30s for THEN #1 is certainly a ground-breaking work in a field where no one else has ever tackled the task before. "What is past is prologue," as the saying goes, and anyway, it's pretty interesting reading.

All of which tells me that you've got to have both a bad memory and some pretty strange values to insult all of these people and all of their work by pretending someone like Ashley can hold a candle to them, let alone outshine them - especially with this tawdry load of rubbish he's got in LIP 4.

I mean, what's the scam, anyway? Is it that no one remembers that boys have been writing about their love lives since time immemorial, or what? Is this new? Have you read any books?

And this feeble excuse about how it's all just friendly taking the piss is pretty unconvincing when you notice that this "friendliness" always seems to be aimed in a direction other than those people you know Ashley is a friend to - if this stuff was written about Jimmy Robertson, or D. West, or the Ashworths, I'd say, well, I guess it's all just friendly joking, huh? But no, it's good sport to make fun of Harry Bond - it's unsporting to give Jimmy Robertson even the mildest ribbing. There's something grossly dishonest going on here. This isn't just ordinary cliqueishness, this is something else. To me, ribbing Jimmy Robertson is okay because Jimmy knows damn well I have nothing against him. But Michael Ashley always sounds like some sort of red-neck who can't resist making a few nigger jokes about the lone black kid in the crowd. This is not joking - it's bloodsport.

And me, I don't like being put in the position of having to give silent approval and nervous laughter to the oppressor pig bullshit or else be thought some kind of bad sport or kill-joy (or, you know, "girls are no fun"), just because I happen to find ugly repulsive behaviour ugly and repulsive. I don't guess you've heard of Stanley Milgrom, either, huh? (Have you at least heard of Kitty Genovese? How about New Bedford?)

Of course, I didn't say any of that to Pam. I didn't even ask what made Michael Ashley more worthy of the Nova than Polley or Whiteoak or the Twins or a half-dozen better people. Maybe I'd find some way to articulate it in a couple of sentences by morning.

(But Christ, doesn't she know?)

Well, it's not like there's much morning left by the time I get up, to be honest, and aside from Alan Sullivan turning out to be a pretty good dancer, and another chat with West, I don't really remember much before I sat down with Simon Polley and had a bang-up time carrying on with him about the outrages of the medical profession. I don't get to do this very often any-

more, and it's always been one of my favourite sports, so of course I enjoy every minute. He even has a brand new issue of VILE ANCHORS to give out, for which he'd lovingly calligraphed the name of the recipient on each copy. And Debbie Kerr is wearing a very nifty ~~BALE~~ dress over a pretty nifty body and smiling a lot and giving the whole thing a wonderful ambience, until Ray Thompson comes over in his wig and starts trying to lick people's thighs. Oh, well. And despite having a terrific time, I feel even worse on Sunday, which just proves you don't need alcohol to get a hangover (but I already knew that).

On Sunday, West decides to be helpful to Martin, too, and offers to take care of his virginity for him. Actually, I thought it was a good idea (much less likely to be ridiculed in print, that way), but Martin doesn't go for it.

Abi Frost has some big news, though. Harry Bond, of all people, is a good dancer, she says. I find this hard to imagine, but I rather like the idea of Harry Bond turning out to be a good dancer. It's almost as good as finding out that Robert Blake came out of the closet, you know? Unexpected and ironic, like. "But," says Abi, "Harry needs to lose weight, and that other chap - the one in the black clothes - is also a good dancer, so he gets to be toy boy of the month." The one in the black clothes is, of course, Alan Sullivan, and hearing this, I think maybe Abi is telling the truth about Harry after all and maybe he really is a good dancer. Fortunately, there are no means to test it.

I know when I get back to the world I will have to face the results of the first Tuesday in November, and I know Bush will win because he is running against the Republican record (even though he is calling it "Dukakis" or "Democrats"), and everyone hates everything the Republicans do, even though they don't realize it. "Furlough program!" says Bush, not bothering to mention that it was a Republican program. "Murder committed on furlough program!" he screams, knowing that none remember that the same happened twice in California when Reagan was Governor. "Gas lines!" he shrieks, as if the gas lines hadn't started in 1973, when Nixon was still president. And - my favourite - "Big spending liberals!" - like liberals, or Democrats, have ever found a way to spend as much money as this administration has.

It could be a neat parallel, with Leeds fandom wondering why all these strange people seem to say such rude things about Jimmy Robertson and Christina Lake, or even how anyone could possibly take offense at that nice polite Michael Ashley.

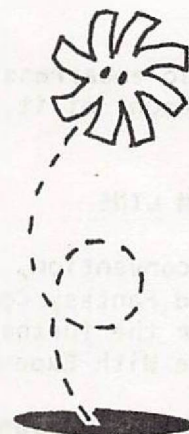
(I mean, you just have to come to the conclusion that they really don't fucking know, don't you?)

"It's all so boring!" Lilian wails, after Ashley & LIP & West sweep the awards. We are not exactly bored. We are struggling to avoid the dry heaves, actually. Langford leans over Whiteoak and asks, "What does this mean? Do we all have to gafiate?"

* * * * *

Jetbuff Ltd

Dave Langford



THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Very early in their productive lives, fans learn that convention reports can be infused with remarkable cool and street credibility by avoiding such mundane topics as the convention. Staying in the bar and overhearing gossip is merely the first twist of the focussing wheel which will eventually provide that totally original and unpredictable view of the proceedings. To dwell at length on Petri-dish breakfast food and Krakatoa bowel movements is always innovative and worthwhile; but true masters of the form will be careful to fill most of their report with minute descriptions of How I Got There and, if appropriate, How I Got Back Home. This is the approved formula for witty and individual reportage, as used by all the best practitioners. Six million fanwriters can't be wrong.

It's thus embarrassing to realize that virtually the only memories I brought back from Follycon last Easter involved the journey home. (Pause for standard excuse about total euphoria during the con itself, meant not so much to be believed as to avert destroying lightning bolts from Follycon committee folk too numerous to mention but largely called Alison.)

Ah, that endless Monday-afternoon rail journey. Geoff Ryman had a reserved seat but was too nice to kick out the dear little white-haired lady pretending with great thespian ineptitude to be asleep therein.

"No," Mr Ryman said nobly, "I'll slum with you lot in steerage."

We found seats, and Geoff leaned back in languorous anticipation of a long snooze after staying up all Sunday night, and the padded back of the seat fell irrevocably off. Behind was a lethal-looking cluster of edged metal brackets and mediaeval pointy bits. It was a bad train for tall fans, Geoff sitting sternly bolt-upright for the whole trip while Dermot Dobson, unable to do likewise because of injuries on the spinal frontier, groaningly paced the aisle and at set intervals rolled up his shirt to show off the surgical corset. This was on the whole less revolting than Martin Hoare's very similar gesture, repeated through the weekend, which allowed you to relish the interesting stigmata of his chicken-pox. A sickly lot, fandom.

Much later in 1988 I laid the groundwork for a heavily travel-oriented con report by attending the World Fantasy Convention in short bursts via commuter train -- a grave mistake, not least because it reminded me of the Follycon

incident so embarrassing and repercussive that I didn't want to sign my name to any account of it....

THE BOTTOM LINE

It was a convention, Jim, but not as we know it. I was braced for the fact that World Fantasy Convention really means World Horror Convention, but not wholly for the further translation to World Horror Professionals' Trade Fair For People With Expense Accounts.

Penetrating this event was an act more frustrating than it might sound, since the West London Ramada Hotel's front wall had this long row of glass doors, all offering delusive glimpses of Ian Watson drinking beer and all, as it eventually turned out, locked.... In the bar I found Bob Shaw, who piteously cried "A fan!" and babbled awhile of eldritch hotel prices beyond the grasp of sanity. In the book room, Greg Pickersgill was brewing blasphemous, unspeakable theories, which he then spoke, of convention profitability at fifty quid a head and whose pockets he thought were being lined. (I cannot believe his horrid insinuation that this high-turnover professional event doesn't publish accounts.) Terry Pratchett related with glee how he, Bob and Harry Harrison had requested beer to fuel them for a panel, only for the Gopher In Charge to explain it was soft drinks only because, "We're trying to make a profit, you know." It must have been the huge influx of famous American authors and publishers which made everyone go on, and on, about money.

Soon I saw the bright side of this, when famous American publisher Dave Hartwell lured me off for lunch. At last the gravy train had stopped at my station. Yes, he and Kathryn Cramer wanted to commission a major piece for... The New York Review of SF? Sure enough, Mr Hartwell was exercising his vestigial fan credentials, and even permitted me to pay for my own food.

Returning from this spree, I was nobbled by evil Harry Harrison, who lured me with beer from the straight and narrow path, sat me with spurious friendliness at his side, and conveyed via his usual genial mix of spittle and animal impressions the words, "I've always wanted to make this introduction, Dave!" From across the table came a slow voice saying, "I've read your reviews of me," and I gazed into the argute visage of Stephen R. Donaldson. It is merely to be recorded that my heart did before too long resume its beating.

Free wine kept appearing in an endless succession of sponsored parties, clearly a good thing were it not that I missed all the later and more debauched ones through having to run for my train exactly as London SF fandom moved in for large-scale gatecrashing. The first time I looked into the main programme, it was full of a mass autograph session hampered just slightly by the shortage of mere credulous fans to beg the autographs. (A scheduled reading by six Interzone stalwarts was later dropped at the discovery that the audience was outnumbered by, well, six to one.)

Next time I noticed the programme, an extraordinary mid-afternoon banquet plus awards ceremony was in progress -- allegedly the highlight of the convention. Its actual £20-a-head food was reputedly invested with all the bowel-churning terrors perfected by the Union of Hotel Caterers; the cruellest rumour

concerned a table mix-up which led to three mere fans, possibly the only persons present who'd actually paid for the meal themselves, being bumped from their places in mid-hors d'oeuvres. I believe the committee gave them some alcoholic compensation, but Charlie Brown and Andy Porter were later beset with suggestions for striking headlines based on the fact that one of these unfortunates was called Stephen King. Lots of people won awards; the Ramsey Campbell Award (as the British Fantasy trophy is affectionately known) went to Ramsey Campbell, and Karl Edward Wagner walked out in strong hysterics because -- if I interpreted him correctly -- David Hartwell had given too many awards to David Hartwell.

In some ways it was probably a good trade fair, replete with luxury, freebies, influential business contacts and smoke-filled rooms. A mere change of name might eliminate the bewilderment and recriminations arising from the fact that many fans understand something slightly different by the word "convention". On my final, empty-pocketed journey home (note the traditional demands of this classic literary form) I was saved from rail-borne dehydration only by the solicitude of Diana Wynne Jones, who will be getting another rave review shortly.

The Plain People of Fandom: Is that all? What about the ever so embarrassing bit you mentioned?

Myself: Rats. I was hoping you'd forgotten that.

THE STATE OF THE ART

Despite my age and dignity I'm still not immune from totally cretinous actions, and Follycon saw one of my regular lapses. Given three tons of grubby papers to sign for contributors' and editors' copies of the Steve Jones/Kim Newman 100 Best Horror Novels anthology of fave raves from the grave, I drunkenly allowed myself to be led astray by the wiles of Ramsey Campbell's daughter. The woman tempted me and I did sign, adding an extra L.Ron Hubbard on this sheet, a spurious H.P.Lovecraft on that.... Reader, be warned that such momentary follies can make life bad for a long, long time.

After a terrific wiggling from S.Jones, I managed to blot my crime from memory. (OK, I'm not wholly bad, I did offer to locate sufficient contributors to the book who had sufficient compassion and/or sense of humour to accept copies with signed endpapers "defaced" by the abominable Langford.) Guilt surged up all over again at the rumour -- gleefully passed on via the Malcolm Edwards transatlantic gossip line -- that Harlan Ellison himself was going to kill me for this. Guilt geysered from my ears at the news that the surplus multi-signed copies were to be sold to idiot collectors at one hundred bloody pounds. "Suddenly," as Steve wrote to me in an otherwise fairly forgiving letter, "it doesn't seem so funny any more, does it?" Er, no, squire.

The book was much in evidence at the Fantasycon, though with Grafton-like acumen the publishers had made actual copies hard to find -- limited to specimens of the amazing super special expensive edition which turned up at a late-night launch party while I was on a train, and faded again at the light of day. The party saw the great alleged Pickersgill/Pringle Purloining

Project, eagerly related by Steve and Kim to everyone who would listen: "They tried to nick books costing £100 each" is one story, and "You expect the books lying round at a launch party to be freebies" is the other.

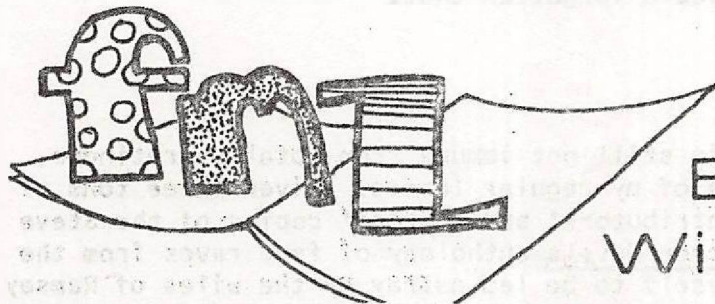
Next day I had a glimpse of Neil Gaiman's copy, and was furtively relieved to find that late authors like M.R.James and Robert E.Howard had also signed -- officially -- via astral rubber stamp; while my own acts of folly were as nothing to the inadvertence of those who'd signed too near the edge and run into trimming trouble (half a Brian Aldiss here, two outlying loops of an otherwise missing signature there, like dismembered relics of who knows what foul crime). And what was this rumour that Ramsey Campbell Himself had succumbed once or twice to the same loathsome temptation as me? Or that... but let's not be contentious, since the recriminations are now past.

Thus my embarrassing confession for this issue. I still cringe a little at the memory of those fraught months between Easter and Hallowe'en. Reader, know that promiscuous forgery leads to no good, and desist!

(Signed)

Claude Degler.

* * * * *



Bridget
Wilkinson

So, I agreed to do some fanzine reviews. This is odd. I thought I said I'd do a ten-page *magnum opus* on my trip to Poland, but my mind must be playing tricks! ((*Shhhh - trip reports can wait - you're at the sharp end of fanzines - the reviews. AVC*))

Magnum opuses....opi (what is the plural of *opus*?) is what I found myself reviewing. Who says (The Blatant Aggrocultural Review) that the fanzine is dead? When I went on a 'late September to November' fanzine hunt I came up with half-a-ton of paper -- and that was just issues of *Empties*. I rapidly realised that I could not possibly do justice to all those published....so I gave up the idea. Here's a selection.

A swallow heralded this summer, or at least a Bug. Finding this two-page leaflet in my hand, my initial reaction was to play hunt the editor. Address? Yes! Denbigh Street, SW1. It was opinionated, radical....but it was also from the wrong number, as Judith Hanna pointed out to me later. Fuck The Tories 5 arrived a short while afterwards. Much of it was great fun, eg. of course Richard Bergeron is a secret Trotskyist - is Ken Lake another? - but in some strange way I was disappointed. To me FTI is a legend. I have been told by many about its rabid left wing politics....er....what left wing politics? Apart from an intelligent 'what is the role of politics in fandom?' editorial, and the graphics, the contents were similar in span to many other fanzines. I may be blind to its real content, but is it the name that constitutes the red rag to the bull?

'Reading Matters', an article by Juliet Williams and Simon Inge in *Empties 10*, was quite as left wing in tone as anything in *FTT*, although the 'zine as a whole is more mixed. This article is about the potential and actual effects of Clause 28, including the chilling announcement by Dame Jill Knight that the law will be successful without any prosecutions. Shades of the Horror Comics Act.

Rescanning the rest of *Empties 10* I realise that was the only long article, the rest of this enjoyable fanzine consisted mainly of well-edited letters (and two sets of fanzine reviews.) One which caught my eye was the fragment from Richard Jasonski. That was not precisely the picture of Poland I had received while I was over there. Yes, I too heard of the arrested 'zine editors, but the fans I met seemed fairly optimistic, and the reason I gave *Critical Wave* no 'news' was because I had none. I guess this is probably a case of Szczecin and Katowice being as different from each other as, say, London and Leeds fandom, and knowing just as much about what is going on in the other place.

The piece by Martin Tudor which impressed me most was not in *Empties*, either 9 or 10, but in *Eyeballs in the Sky 5*, which my treacherous brain kept on misinterpreting as 'Turkeys in the Sky' on account of the striking artwork by Harry Bell on the cover (well, it looked like a turkey to me.) "I drink beer, me!" was an impressive account of Martin's realisation of, and fight against, alcoholism. There is really nothing I can say about it, or add to it, except - get hold of this zine for this article alone if necessary, although Pam Wells' account of her shoe fetishism is light weight and amusing. Lucy Huntzinger also writes about shoe fetishism - it's a bit of a sole searching zine.

Lucy Huntzinger and Pam Wells also starred in *Nutz 7*. Welcome back! I loved the loony front cover; Lucy's 'Legend of Saint Yo Mama' is the construction (literally) of a fannish saint, the patron saint of the cross-culturally confused. In a more serious vein was Mike Christie's 'Nobody Gets Out Of Here Awake'. This is on the poor conversational skills of fans. Some are plain bores, some confused, etc etc. Fine. One thing worries me, though, these faults are not confined to fans. Think about your companions at work or the car bore, every bit as dull as the computer bore. The clowns who will throw in bits about the TV programme they saw last night. So far as I know, 'conciseness, politeness and a willingness to listen as well as talk' are ideals that might profitably be followed by most of the human race, excepting those who settle quarrels with fists, thankfully lacking in fandom.

He suggests that we look for these faults in ourselves, and I would think that most of us have more than two, at least on occasion. Then what worries me? It's the suggestion that we should send in nominations for the worst fannish conversationalists in various categories. Why? What is to be gained except a little snide fun? I bet that those at the top of most people's lists will not be fanzine fans and will never see their name first hand.

I received several other zines that have not fitted into this chain - thanks, everyone.

Zines mentioned:

BLATANT 17, Avedon Carol, 144 Plashet Grove, E.Ham, London E6 1AB

NUTZ 7, Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA

EMPTIES 9 & 10, Martin Tudor, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Yarley, B66 4SH

THE BUG, Anon, Box Bug, 46 Denbigh Street, London, SW1

EYEBALLS IN THE SKY 5, Tony Berry, 7 Causeway Mews, Robin Hood Way, Nottingham, NG2 1PT

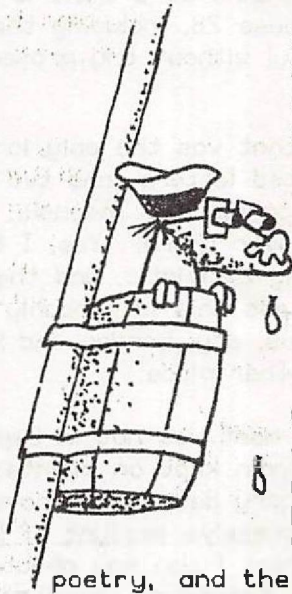
FUCK THE TORIES 5, 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER

BRIDGET WILKINSON

Creative Random History

Chuch
Harris RN

(As you're probably sick and tired of me telling you by this time, Chuch Harris doesn't fancy doing columns, so we're forced to disentangle these nuts of wisdom from the sickly nougat of his everyday correspondence. Has he always been like this, I hear you cry? Well, judge for yourselves - these pregnant paragraphs are from 1983, AVC)



Why don't I use the Post Code? For the very good reason, squire, that I can never remember the bloody thing. I read beautifully, I do joined-up Real Writing, and I can recite limericks, poetry, and the first chapter of The Enchanted Duplicator, but I've no head for heights or figures. (Now you know what to buy me for Xmas.)

Numbers, and especially combinations of numbers and figures, just don't seem to register on my fine mind. They just seem to blur through the memory... almost a sort of dyslexia, perhaps... and I can never remember them from one minute to another.

The only one that ever did get engraved on my cortex was 'C/Mx 762965 HARRIS'... and that's only there because of a sadistic Gunner's Mate at HMS Glendower (nee Butlin's Holiday Camp, Pwllhi, North Wales.) At sparrowfart each morning this navy blue fiend, honed, polished and shaved to the bone, would kick the chalet door open, bang on the locker with his baton (or truncheon, or whatever) and announce his presence at full roar.

"Wakey, wakey, rise and shine, you've had your time and I've had mine. *The sun will burn your bleeding eyes out!* HEAVE-HO, HEAVE-HO, HEAVE-HO - lash up and stow, cooks to the galley went long ago. Hands off cocks, Onnnnnnnnn Socks!"

This bullshit is Traditional, like "Aye Aye, Sir", "Splice the mainbrace" and "Londonderry Air." The recipient (young me) leaps from the sack to stand, eyes front, taut and quivering like a hound-dog by the bed, waiting to be prodded with the baton (or truncheon, or whatever) to provide the descant.

"C/Mx 762965 Harris, SAAAAH!"

Then, slaked but unsatisfied, the Gunner's Mate moves on to the next victim.

Except that I could never remember that password. Every morning, rain or shine --- no porridge, double-away-smartly, round and round the bloody quarterdeck as an *aide-memoire*.

And, Vincent, it worked. After three weeks I was word perfect --- especially after I'd crayoned the number on the wall opposite the bunk.

I suppose I should have asked for a quarterdeck along with my demob suit because I've been astray dozens of times since then. At the Harris nuptials the congregation were within an ace of chanting that one about "...weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning," instead of the "valley of the shadow of death" one, because I'd confused Ps XXXIIV with Ps XXXVII, which would have really upset my old Mum, sitting there in her new hat and crying her eyes out.

My Social Security number is a long forgotten mystery. The only phone number I could ever remember was the old Rainham 4444. Two weeks ago I tried to sell Sean's bike. He was a bit disheartened because he didn't get one reply to the advert in the local paper ...until he saw the 'phone number. We tried again this week with the correct phone number and sold it right away. (He wants the money towards new golf clubs...again.)

Once, before we came to Daventry, my Little Failing almost landed me Inside. I was driving back late at night to Shenfield. I had my lead shoe on and was zooming down the dual carriageway of the Mile End Road - up near the Anne Boleyn boazer - at a cautious 50. At that time of night there was little traffic and nothing to worry about except the odd drunk in the gutter.

And The Law. Up came the Sergeant, mounted on his thoroughbred, up came the troopers, one, two, three. First I knew was the blue flasher, astern, then whipping past and cutting in in front of me.

Pull in; stop; wind down window. Greet The Fuzz: "Sorry, can't understand you. Deaf as a post. Can lipread a bit if you go very slow."

"We clocked you at 65mph in a 30mph restricted zone."

Astonishment; Amazement; Indignation. "You never did; 32, maybe 35 on the straight bit, but never 65. I've got a very sick Dalmatian in the back and I'm trying to get her home."

Copper peers through window, seeking indisposed Balkan lady, just in time to get a wet tongueful of delighted dog, woofing and snuffling and licking everything in sight.

"Oh, a dog. Doesn't look very sick except that she's covered in black spots. Hahahahah-hahohoho, spots, see?"

I do so love to see a happy copper, so I make with the haha myself and offer driving licence.

Names...address...no problem. "What's the registration number, sir?"

And I'm buggered. I've had this car for a year and I can't even remember the first damn letter. In fact, the only car number I've ever been able to remember was PEN 15, which I'd once seen on a bloody great imported Buick which I would have rather liked myself. (Is this a case of penis envy?)

"Er, er.....can't seem to remember.....I've got this Thing about numbers."

"Have you had the car long, sir?"

"Oh yes," brightly, "about a year."

"And you can't remember the number at all?"

"Er....I know the last letter is 'D'."

"Yes, very good." Encouraging nod of head. "Any more?"

"And a '6'.....maybe a '5'....it's ridiculous ho ho but I can never remember these things ho ho."

He doesn't laugh. He doesn't even smile. "Can you remember any of the first group of letters....any of them?"

Strain the fine mind. "Er...I think there's a 'P'....perhaps."

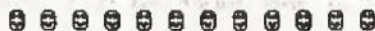
He gives me back the licence. "We seem to have remembered 4 of the 7 digits --more or less-- and I'm sure we'd remember the rest if we had a few days to spare, Sir. You can carry on now. Drive carefully, observing all restrictions at all times."

"Yes, I will.....sorry about that....thank you very much."

"Very good, Sir. You will be prosecuted in due course for exceeding the speed limit."

And it was so. £35....£1 a mile for the excess. Our policemen are wonderful, of course, but sometimes, being almost innumerate like this, I wonder if I did right to embark on accountancy as a career.

Anyway, after three pages, I have solved our latest little problem. I've found the corflu bottle and carefully lettered NN11 5EB across the front of the typer. In future, with luck, EVERYONE gets post codes.



(From an '83 letter on a method of child education called 'Total Environment').

The *Sunday Times* instanced Schopenhauer or Rilke or Somebody who said nary a word for his first six years until he fell over. On being picked up by his dotard doting Mum, he calmed her fears and untwisted her small-clothes by saying: "Fear not, dear lady. Do not discommode yourself. I am completely unhurt."

I feel that, in many respects, Schopenhauer (or possibly Rilke or Somebody) was a Prick. This estimation, however, is not shared by the adulatory *Sunday Times*. I did consider the Total Environment and Early Learning theories when the twins were small. On the 'Scientific Book Review' page of the *News Of The World* I found learned references to GIVE YOUR CHILD A SUPERIOR MIND and TEACH YOUR BABY TO READ. I was always a sucker

for this sort of thing, because with twins I always felt I was getting a bargain 50% on the course.

I bought the text books, an easel, enormous sheets of cartridge paper, Magic Markers, and *The Cat in the Hat*. The idea is that you start with prepared flashcards, expose them to the astonished infants for 20 seconds, and then repeat the word on the card. You have to wait until they are at least two years old because their little brains wouldn't be sufficiently developed before then.

Right! Great day arrives; rush through the cake and uncomprehended prezzie bit; whip them into their Baby Relax chairs before the easel, flash Card No.1. CAT. Twenty second exposure; enunciate very clearly, very slowly "C-A-T."

Awaken boy baby, dry girl baby, flash Card No.2, IN. Twenty seconds. Patience, mon brave, you are moulding geniuses here. "I-N." Awaken boy baby, remove beads from girl baby.

Flash Card No.3, THE. Twenty seconds. "T-H-E". Search faces for comprehension. Flash card No.4, HAT. "H-A-T." Hold up book showing funny cat in stetson. "CAT IN THE HAT". Write on blackboard CAT IN THE HAT. No response except bubbles.

The instructions promise Awareness after 4 weeks, but not to worry if it takes twice as long. All sorts of geniuses, really, virtually ALL geniuses ever since Leonardo onwards, have had their tiny stumbling feet helped along the Path To Knowledge by their patient loving parents in exactly this way. The authors knew personally of hundreds, maybe even thousands of successes, and here's a form at the back to send to headquarters in Idaho just as soon as baby is reading fairly fluently. Wow!

4 weeks...8 weeks...12 weeks...16 weeks...no progress. I've got the de-luxe 80-card set of flash cards, but only the first four have ever been out of the box. Obviously, Something is Wrong. No response, no painted chapel ceilings, no nuffink. Mention it to Doc on next regular visit. "...lot of old balls...but...the lad's head does seem a trifle large....probably nothing to worry about, but..." appointment with Mr. Chattapuchee, top man for big heads next week.

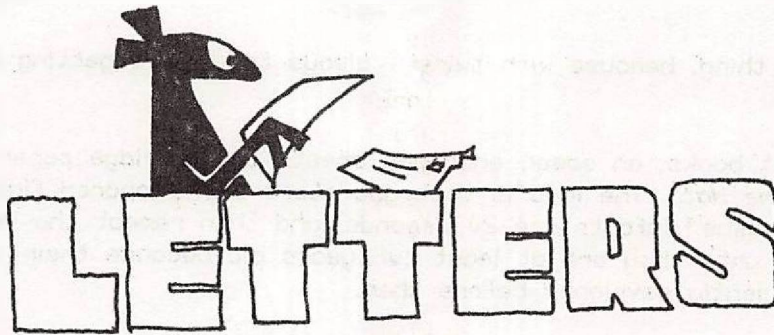
Quiet...inside SCREAM. Don't frighten Sue...hydrocephalus....Sweet Christ NO! Secret trips to library....Ency. Brit., Blake's Medical...no cure, palliatives, some dwarfism, low intelligence quotient....seven days stretched to eternity. Work, rush home to stare at Ragbag burping in his cot, bubbling and peeing on everything like a Bruges statue....secret half-ashamed, hate-yourself-afterwards prayers...audience with Mr. Chattapuchee.

Big man, green turban (Moslem who has visited Mecca?), so important you call him "Mr." instead of "Doctor"....reads case notes, takes Sean from his mother and looks carefully at his bonce.

"Rubbish," he says, "nothing wrong at all -- lovely head -- take your baby home and enjoy him, Mrs. Harris."

Outside, know-all wife. "I told you. I bet you were thinking daft things like hydrocephalus. You never asked him about your flash-cards either."

CHUCH HARRIS



((Due to the postal strike and other circumstances, some locs on PULP #9 were very late indeed.))

Mike Glicksohn
608 Windermere Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6S 3L6

I must go on record as heartily disapproving of this latest method of distributing PULP. I don't have a copy of PULP 9, with its warm friendly British-sized paper and its nice black mimeo ink. Instead, I have a weirdly sized cold unfriendly-looking photocopied fanzine that even comes with a YHOS 44 cover on it (I assume for mailing purposes, and yes, I detached it, but it's still not the same). I'd like a real PULP. A PULP that looks and feels and even smells like a real fanzine. I'd rather wait three months for a real PULP than get this seedless imitation a few weeks faster. Thank you for your support.

Excellent editorial by Avedon. Wide-ranging, passionate and thoughtful. (How many will get the Zappa quote, I wonder?) And it's entirely because egoboo is indeed the only meaningful fannish "currency" that I've always tried to walk gingerly when criticizing new fanzines. (When old-timers produce a lousy issue or when someone reaches their fifteenth fanzine and are still producing rubbish, I figure it's no-holds-barred time, but for neos I try to find something positive to say while pointing out the weaknesses. I probably would have failed the post-grad courses at the KTF Academy.)

A small casualty of the Ellison-Priest contretemps: I bought a copy of DEADLOSS 5 at Conspiracy and read it on the bus from Brighton to London. I thought it was a great piece of writing, and when I got home to Toronto I wrote Chris and told him so. Mine was the first loc he'd received. I thought this was such a significant fanzine that I wrote a one-page review of it and sent it to LAN'S LANTERN. The review was mostly pro-Priest, although not entirely so; mostly it was pro-DEADLOSS-as-fanzine. Out of courtesy and friendship I sent Harlan a copy of my review and a letter explaining where I stood on the matter. He left messages on my answering machine when I was at a con in Niagara Falls so I ended up calling him late one Sunday night. We spent some 85 minutes talking with Harlan trying to convince me that this review wasn't a good idea (among other things) while I argued that fans should know about DEADLOSS, read it and make up their own minds. To his credit, Harlan did suggest that I hang up and let him call me back so I wouldn't have to pay for the call but I declined the offer.

Eventually the review appeared, and some time thereafter I got another call

from Sherman Oaks. Harlan told me he was sorry I'd gone ahead and had the review published and that even though he'd considered me a friend for the past nineteen years he felt he could no longer trust me. So our friendship was over. Just like that. Nineteen years negated over the telephone. Goll-ee. I hate to think what he might have done if I'd actually agreed with everything Priest said. After all, it's a lot easier to get from Los Angeles to Toronto than it is to get from Los Angeles to Pewsey!

Nice column of fanzine criticism by Wilkinson. Some of the questions she tosses out are worthy of fanzine articles, and she would certainly seem to have both the interest and the ability to write such pieces. It's good to see literate thoughtful analysis like this.

Surely an editor would correct the Gould loc so it read "Pete Cox and I" and "none of us is"? I don't approve of editorial alteration of articles (asking for rewrites, though, is definitely The Way To Go) but surely the lowly loc isn't sacrosanct? Or are the Knew Mutants deliberately developing a reputation for illiteracy which you didn't want to subvert?

((AC: What do you mean, "lowly loc"? I consider all submissions liable for line-editing of that kind. In this case, I suppose I was just so stunned at receiving a loc that required no brutality that I fell asleep and forgot to edit altogether.

Much as I can sympathize about watching years of friendship go down the drain, I can't help but see the other side in this - if people are picking on you in public for real or imagined sins, it's a particularly tough blow when your friends take a disinterested* turn at kicking you when you're down, don't you think? (And anyway, I'm sure all Harlan really said to Michael Moorcock was, "Will no one rid me of this turbulent Priest?")

Could you tell me where this business about "When old-timers produce a lousy issue...I figure it's no-holds-barred time" starts? No doubt old-timers have no feelings, eh? Presumably you imagine that you will improve the quality of said old-timers' zines by telling them how much they stink - naturally, they are purposely putting out poor quality work under the impression that no one has noticed, and it's up to you to put them right, yes? Sorry, but to me "no holds barred" has to be reserved for people who are saying truly offensive things. And you'll thank me for that if you turn out to be the one who loses it first (instead of me).)

Jeanne Gomoll

Box 1443

Madison, WI 53701-1443

USA

It's my opinion that PULP works so well as a fanzine, in spite of the potentially splintering effect of multiple editors, because it has a unifying theme. Its editors and its contributors care deeply about certain questions. They're all concerned about what fan writers/publishers are doing, why they're doing it, how they're doing it, and when they started doing it, because the element of self-awareness is central to fannish publishing activity, one could even say it's the fuel of fandom...at least of written fandom. Terry Carr hinted at this in his last

*Note correct use of word.

letter to TRAP DOOR when he commented that he found himself continually fascinated by fans' stories about how and why they first got involved with the fannish community. To me, that's the continuing chorus of PULP and the reason I enjoy it so much. It pleases me so much that you include a thoughtful fanzine review column each issue.

And so I was really disappointed not to see a fanzine review article in #8, and mystified by Viné's remark that he disliked fanzine reviews, since he so clearly loves fanzines. It seems to me that your whole zine has been based on direct and indirect conversation about fanzines. I imagine you've been having an interesting time among yourselves lately, discussing the real purpose of fanzine reviews. I hope you keep them as a continuing, regular feature of PULP. In my opinion, lively discussion about fanzine standards keep our community awake and on their toes. I'm not interested in reviews that purposely carve up individual fans specifically for the entertainment value, but interesting reviews, thoughtful criticism, and lively discussion encourages fans to publish fanzines - at least that's how it works with me. The knowledge that the people I'm writing to/for are awake and thinking and will respond with locs or discussion in their own fanzines is what keeps me in the community and what keeps me writing and drawing.

And then, of course, there was that other paragraph of Viné's. Well, in this case I was glad I was two issues behind and able to immediately read Avedon's reply. Bravo, Avedon!

Avedon's reference to Frazetta nudes (perceived by some as the target for feminist anger, but really not the most threatening part of the sexist establishment at all) reminded me of some other book cover artwork. I refer to the artwork on Octavia Butler's Dawn. That book's main character is a strong-willed, tall, not especially beautiful, black woman. She's a credible, admirable, vital character. The cover, unfortunately, portrays her as a pale, young, cute, white woman. Book publishers keep telling us that blacks don't buy science fiction and I can imagine a publisher instructing the artist who did the cover for Dawn to portray Lilith Iyapo as a brunette*, white yuppie because someone like that will better appeal to the readers who tend to buy science fiction novels. But obviously, any blacks scanning the book shelves won't be alerted by the cover to the fact that Octavia Butler is writing about sexism and racism in this book and that there may be something in this book that is written for them and not thin young men wearing mirrorshade glasses.

What I'm trying to say is that this whole mess of sexism and racism that tangles our society is much too complicated for anyone to think that it is possible to snip once and escape it: voila, I'm no longer sexist! It's not a matter, either - as some very well-intentioned people seem to believe - of simply learning the new etiquette (say "women", not "girls"; don't print nudes on your fanzine cover; etc.). We all appreciate the new etiquette; it's less exhausting not to feel constantly besieged in daily conversation. But having won those changes doesn't mean we can ignore the structure of the society - including fandom - that is still defined by sexist assumptions. For many of

*Hey, at least she wasn't a blond - that's progress! - ed.

us, for me certainly, feminism is a central part of life. So is fandom. And I refuse to keep them separated.

After all, some of the best fannish articles are written using a fannish pen to describe everyday life.

I sat thinking for a long time about some comments Bridget Wilkinson made about Crystal Ship which she compares - in appearance - to a prozine rather than a fanzine, and wonders whether the editor puts a higher priority on art than text. My reaction was personal, since for a long time I also produced a zine - Janus/Aurora - about which such a question could also be asked. And as both a fanwriter and artist, I've always felt somewhat in the middle of arguments about whether fillos should be used in fanzines at all. I think I've come to believe more and more that art should be left to make its own statement (i.e., be included as a portfolio, or comic strip, or a piece included on its own and listed that way in the table of contents) or it should be included as an integral part of the text - i.e., art should be used as headings/logos as they are in Trap Door, or should illustrate the text. But illustrations and text should be balanced, too - art should not look more important than the text (whole page art with two page articles, for example). Whether one means it or not, the presentation of art and text makes a statement, and when the art seems larger, more dominating than the text, the editor seems to be trying to communicate that evaluation. This is the feeling I often get when looking at Crystal Ship. The artwork and fancy layout outshouts the written material. In a different way, an unintentional message can also be conveyed with the use of unconnected illos. It's a more diffuse, confused message, but - for instance: I like illos in a letter column. This is a "splinter" format anyway, and illos seem to fit that format, and in a way do illustrate the text. But I'm sometimes annoyed when I get the feeling that with no layout design and no desire to fit the illustrations/cartoons with the text, art has been simply "plunked" down onto a page. Editing is needed just as much and just as often with relation to fanzine artwork as it is needed in a fanzine's written material. The editor needs to think about what artwork is appropriate for their zine and how best to present it, in much the same way as these questions are considered for articles.

I don't like the new PULP format as much as the old one, but can understand the economics behind the change.

Has anyone else mentioned this to you? - I miss Walt. Have you thought of offering to double his fee for PULP columns?

And Langford's surrealistic dream response to Vin's editorial was neat. I am glad you've got him as a columnist.

((AC: Hmm. I dunno, I still enjoy seeing a good piece of fannish art now and then, even if it doesn't relate to anything in the text - like a neat little Shiffman caricature, or one of Alexis Gilliland's bits of whimsy - I would hate to have missed my chance to publish some of the ones I've used. I don't see what else you can do with them other than drop them into a convenient corner. I'm just not a portfolio kinda faned.

Actually, we haven't had any big argument around here over the value of

fanzine reviews - Vince looks mild-mannered and oh-so-innocent, but he's actually quite experienced at pulling hoaxes and mixing things up in fandom, and to a large extent he was just jerking everyone's chain in order to wake us up and make us feel moved to write something. I think we all know that what Vince was really talking about was KTF reviewing, and I think he's right about that, too - they may be entertaining for other people to read, if those people are so smug as to believe that they won't be the victims of such reviews (or simply sitting on the sidelines and able to treat it all as a spectator sport because they aren't out here taking the risks by publishing), but they don't really do much to improve the general quality of what is being published. They aren't even that difficult to write, if you are sure you don't care about the good opinion of the person you are writing about.

Buck Coulson also mentioned the cover of Dawn in a loc that arrived too late to be fully included in the last issue, and he too referred to the old excuse about how "people" don't buy books with blacks on covers. The thing is, I doubt there are any marketing studies that prove this assumption - it's probably just a bunch of prejudices being applied as a self-fulfilling prophecy. We've corresponded briefly on that subject, and here are his latest comments:))

R. Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, IN 47348
USA

Actually, I can't think that blacks on covers do hurt sales, because it's never been tested. I think there have been two or three science fiction novels with blacks on the cover, but offhand I can't name any. (Juanita mentioned Bester's GOLEM.) But the rumour about sales managers believing that they hurt sales came independently from a couple of professionals.

The weird thing about Butler's Dawn, though, is that she had a heroine who could have been as sexy as the artist liked, on the cover - but that was replaced by a white woman.

Jerry Kaufman
8738 1st Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98117
USA

PULP #9 is the best issue I've seen in a long time, and I'm happy. Maybe I liked it because of the spectacle of editors, contributors and letter-writers all disagreeing with another editor; maybe it was because it showed some spark and sparkle lacking in previous issues. Maybe I'm just nostalgic for THE INVISIBLE FAN.

"Splinters" hit me on a number of fronts. There's the "Willis: Ghod or Has-Been" front. The people who seem to dislike his writing think that those are the only two choices, and if he isn't the former (did I ever say he was a Ghod...no, I just said I thought his writing was great...or does that come to the same thing?) he must be the latter. So his writing now isn't the pinnacle of fannish wit - his postcards are better than most, and his older writings are still there. This incredible blind spot some fans have (D. West and Lilian Edwards, wonderful though they may be in other ways, share it) to anything written before they were weaned on fanac is incomprehensible to me (as is my ability to enjoy such to them).

There's the "reviews" front, which so many other people in PULP get into, so I won't, for the moment.

There's the "feminism" front. In a lot of ways, you're very refreshing on this; you've always maintained a firm grip on just what feminism entails and why it's important. "Feminists" here have gone in so many surprising directions, so many of them limiting and bourgeois, that I wish you would consider contributing to feminist debates outside fandom. The feminist anti-porn movement is based in accepting "feminine" as synonymous with "female", that women are soft, submissive, natural victims who need to be protected by nature, while men are all the opposites. Education, change in institutions, etc., won't change this, so women need to be protected by eliminating all sexual material that would lead men to attack, oppress, and maltreat them. (I read a book this summer called Caught Looking, which is a feminist anti-censorship book, and much more radical than the anti-pornography movement.)

But I disagree that all political analysis should be grounded in feminism. It feels to me (yes, just a feeling) that there should be something else it should be rooted in because oppression isn't all rooted in sexism (or all in racism, etc.). Just what it is rooted in (what is the root cause of oppression?), I don't know. The simple existence of difference, of which gender, race, economic class, national origin or taste in literature are just examples? (By the way, when I hear the word "humanism" used as an opposite to "feminism", I want to reach for my flyswatter.)

Langford is brilliant on the significance of litcrit and the silliness of the personal letter as a replacement. His use of example and irony is unequalled, and fun. His own reviews in White Dwarf (as represented in summary articles in the last two years) probably should be collected to go up on the shelf next to Woolf, Wilson, Knight, Blish, Delany and Clute. Maybe someday Serconia Press will have a few words with Mr. Langford of interest to both parties.

I wasn't sure I entirely grasped Bridget Wilkinson's point about CRYSTAL SHIP, speaking of reviews. I gather that she was highly appreciative of the art and design, but did she or did she not like the writing? I don't think she liked the lettercol, but when she criticized the articles in the first half, she said her comments were only nit-picks without saying what good qualities were there. That leaves her nitpicks standing alone.

Harry Warner's analogy between fanzines and school publications is good, but I've always liked to use Bob Shaw's analogy between yeast and sf and their related uses in fermenting beer and fandom.

James White, in the loccol, extrapolates a world powered by popcorn. Let me throw a negative extrap into his finely tuned machinery: huge portions of the world's surface would have to be transformed to corn farming. I'm not sure there's anything bad about growing corn, but any dependence on a single crop will have bad effects, including a possible reduction in food production. I leave it to James to work out the details.

((AC: Why, using other crops that have a symbiotic relationship with corn, either to grow alongside them or in rotation, is the answer. The best symbiote for corn I know of is marijuana, so it's merely a matter of re-distributing the rather massive corn and pot crops so that they work together. Popcorn is still reasonably nutritious, and in this case we would be able to eat the "waste" product of our energy, creating a "clean" energy source.

Actually, the true political analysis attacks the Vegetable Theory - the one that says that a plate full of tasteless horrible mush which all the flavour has been boiled out of is "good for you", even though the nutritional value was boiled out along with the flavour. The generalized version is that anything you don't like is good for you and anything you like is bad for you, and it breaks down in such ways that conservatives can insist that the economy cannot tolerate the strains of ethical and compassionate expenditure (i.e. "liberal" policies intended to educate people or clothe and feed them - which policies usually provide considerable long-term benefits on both the social and economic level), and therefore we will save lots of money by getting rid of social programs and just socking billions of bucks into spreading nuclear waste all over the place. Why else would people accept the canard that ruthless conservative policies are responsible for the recent decline in unemployment; when, in fact, this is the result of a demographic trend that started 20 years ago when women began delaying child-bearing - thanks to such nasty liberal movements as women's liberation, the birth control movement, and the repeal of anti-abortion laws? Since conservatives are more cruel than liberals, people tend to believe that they are better for the economy. This is utter nonsense, which people would know if they just realized that your average fresh vegetable still tastes better than your average lethal poison.

But I have to disagree that "difference" causes oppression. I've seen no evidence that people are innately prejudiced against those who are different - they are curious, sometimes surprised, certainly, but that doesn't automatically lead to discrimination and oppression.

And only marginally apropos of that, I have a letter here from Steve Stiles which isn't really a loc but contains News of Fandom and a COA:))

Steve Stiles
8631 Lucerne Road
Randallstown, MD 21133
USA

! WE SOLD THE HOUSE! Of course, this meant twice as intense a job of cleaning up the place. And, of course, as soon as the initial papers were signed the roof developed a leak, the washing machine died, and roaches from all over the city ran over to 3003

Ellerslie Avenue. But at least we're finished with a whole bunch of Mickey Mouse stuff we've had to put up with for the last four months.

New Orleans was fun. We didn't get to do much sightseeing, but the city seemed pretty, funky, sexy, avante garde, as well as plastic, businesslike, and like every city in the USA. We want to go again. But for the 4 1/2 days we were there, there were four days of torrential downpours alternating with brief periods of hellish heat and humidity. On the last half day the weather was magnificent... We spent a lot of time with Christina & Lilian, Lee Hoffman, and Jeanne & Spike. Lee seemed to be enjoying herself enormously, which is great; at her previous con she had felt out of it and shy, spending most of her time in her room. She's really getting back into things again, writing, reading, travelling, after the bad times she was having. We'll be visiting her for a few days in December.

One of the most amazing things that happened this weekend was Joe D. Siclari going into a memorabilia store that sold antiques, going back to a pile of old books and finding two copies of SLANT - 4 & 5 - for six bucks apiece! Wow, stranger than fiction! The only other fanzine there was going for \$25, because it had a Frazetta cover - RAUNCH, edited by...Gale Burnick. Had a

drunken woman falling all over me in an elevator, a complete stranger, telling me what a bitch Gale was. Parris threw a surprise 40th birthday party for George. In a happy, humorous state of bubbling over with boffo yucks, I found myself, with Spike, in a corner with Greg Pickersgill. Steve: "Yammeryam-meryammer." Greg: "Grunt." Steve: "Yatteryatter." Greg: "Grunt." Steve: "Babblebabble." Greg: "That's bulshit!" "What a stiff," I said to Spike after he had waiked off without a word. She thought he was too drunk to interact. Another triumph of marijuana over alcohol.

Ted & rich are starting up a new fanzine. We've only seem them twice this year. Neither made Nolacon.

((Just a little break there while we waited for the mail strike to be over. What a pain in the tail! I wrote a fanzine while the strike was going on, and it was run off around the time the strike was finishing. With no mail coming in, I had decided fandom had disappeared forever. Then when mail came in again, it was a deluge, and I felt completely different from what I'd said in the fanzine I was mailing out. The strike also, not surprisingly, interfered somewhat with production on PULP #10, and naturally, with getting it out. But it merely came out a month late, and the locs have begun to trickle in.))

James Steel
15 Maddon Close
LONDON SE5 8DD

Ta for PULP 10, a scintillating and fabulous jewel in the cut glass world of fanzines. A question for the better informed: Why is it that so many fanzines just ramble on and on about nothing in particular?

Is it an unwritten law that fanzines must have the special 'boring bits' inserted willy-nilly between the delicate chunks of worthwhile prose? Why are the fillos getting so boring? Why does PULP not suffer from these flaws (most of the time)? I think we should be told!

A brief debate with Dave Langford's first paragraph... From all the columns I have ever seen, "composite" actually does mean Irregular, Contrived, and Bitty. Ho hum.

CRH was fine and nice but seems a little paranoid. The bit in Pulpate featuring the Harris posterior worked anyway. Effect is all. I've never seen the 'Naked Maja' and the description worked well enough to give the impression of artistically arranged protection. It's all nit-picking and anyway whoever heard of fanzines being accurate!

I'm not going to comment on the letters. I have this terrible fear that constantly writing letters about letters about articles may lead to one disappearing up one's own fanzine. This has been a composite loc.

Steve Green
33 Scott Road
Olton
SOLI HULL B92 7LQ

Much intrigued by all the debate in recent PULPs on the subject of fanzine reviews. Personally, I'm in favour of both the reviews (hence their inclusion in CRITICAL WAVE) and the debate, since the former continually assists in my maintaining a loose worldview of fanzine fandom and the latter may prompt those indulging in such writing to think more carefully about the raison d'etre of their art (or, in Harry Bond's case, trade).

Incidentally, I'm not surprised that Avedon's encountered rampant sexism et al in the allegedly squeaky-clean halls of fandom. There's a lot of crap written about fans being abnormally socially aware, but that's just wishful thinking. Every nasty prejudice outside fandom is alive and kicking inside fandom, it's just that folks are a little more wary of letting the mask slip and use a few more polysyllables when they do. So much for the brave new world.

((AC: So we're "a little more wary of letting the mask slip," are we? You could have fooled me. I've been getting the impression that a stunning display of appalling sexism was necessary for acceptance in some circles.))

Ray Thompson I thought the "There's always a sexist asshole..."
6 Dene Terrace comment would have sparked off a lot more controversy
Winlaton in the letters pages of #10 than it did. When I read
TYNE & WEAR NE21 5QH that comment (and the perfectly fitting Zappa quote
 after it), I thought, "Fucking right on! You tell
'em!" and I even showed the piece to a couple of non-fan free-thinking women I
know, which led to some lively discussion on sexism and attitudes in general.
So what do I find in the letters pages? Whether "ass" or "arse" is preferred
when making such pronouncements and a vaguely supportive piece from Mr.
Harris. Oh dear. This can only mean one of two things: (a) Everyone supports
Avedon and knows they don't have to acknowledge their agreement with her
lifestyle/attitudes or (b) no one (except Chuck Harris) agrees with her stance
but they're not gonna get involved with any arguments about it, so no comment.

Maybe I'm a pessimist, but I really expected to see more letters from sexist
assholes than from supportive human beings. Or maybe I've just read too much
into the whole thing...

Why don't you roll together the 'reviewing' and 'sexism' issues for PULP 11
and have some reviews of sexists? Or sex with reviewers? Nahh, mebbe not...

 There was a young man of Devizes
 Who came in various sizes
 And colours, too,
 Black, White, Brown & Blue
 So you see, he had many disguises.

If I win the limerick competition, I'd like the money rather than the holiday
or car, please.

((AC: You get extra points for signing off with "Love & Rockets," Ray. But
while your choice (a) above would be nice, the truth is that the sexist
assholes by and large have no time for PULP. For obvious reasons. I mean,
Norman Mailer, god bless him, ran the PEN conference a couple of years ago,
and when asked why he had chosen no female speakers, he said that no women had
written anything important in the last decade or so. These guys are safe as
long as they don't pay attention, you see. On the other hand, here is Ken
Cheslin, who sent a photocopy of his loc because the original got lost in the
mail strike:))

Ken Cheslin
10 Coney Green
Stourbridge
WEST MIDLANDS DY8 1LA

I have obviously missed a lot of the hassle between female rightists and male chauvinist piggies in my years in the wilderness. I doubt if I could carry on a long conversation about the subject with you, as my part would mostly consist of nodding agreement and an occasional 'good for you'. Not having anything to argue about doesn't make for a long loc, though. I would speculate that the acceptance of women on a footing of equality with men is likely to be patchy and long drawn out. Even in the West the notion of equality of rights/opportunity is still in its infancy. What then could one give for the chances of making headway amongst cultures where women still have a much inferior role? One might point to the situation where at one extreme there is a technological culture, say in the US, for example, on the same planet where, in Borneo for instance, folk are still living in a stone age. I can envisage a situation where there could be a fully integrated male/female culture (with space travel et al), yet where nine tenths of the planet still practices sexual discrimination even to extremes of owning women as if they were cattle. It will not be through people like me that the situation will be rectified; it is ever the vociferous and active minority who push along reforms, not through passive sympathizers.

((AC: Nonsense, Ken. This idea that the only people who can effect change are those who are so militantly Politically Correct that their underwear (if it is still PC to wear such) squeaks is a good way to discourage people from doing their little bit, but the fact is that without a few "passive sympathizers" littering the place, even the most ardent activist will lose heart.))

Margaret Hall
5 Maes yr Odyn
Dolgellau
GWYNEDD LL40 1UT

Do Americans know 'raspberry' for the rude noise made with the lips? I thought they referred to it as a Bronx cheer - but perhaps that's only New Yorkers.

The Limerick about the young man from Devizes must go something like:

There was a young man from Devizes
Whose balls were two different sizes
One was so small, it was no use at all
But the other was so big it won prizes.

And that just demonstrates a mis-spent youth reading university rag mags...

While we're on the subject of Limericks and the discussion on whether 'arse' or 'ass' is the preferable spelling, you might like to ponder the following, slightly less vulgar poem...

There was a young girl of Madras
Who had a very fine ass
Not as you might think, firm, round and pink
But grey with long ears that ate grass.

((AC: Why do everyone's limericks have the wrong number of syllables per line?

Yes, Americans know the word "raspberry", although they also call it a "Bronx cheer". Saying the word "arse", in the US, however, would seem coy and

pretentious and not very strong language at all, rather like saying "merde" instead of "shit." And I'm glad to see we are getting back to the important issues, which we haven't had since the discussion of peanut butter & jelly. And now for a guy who really knows a hot political issue when he sees one:))

Ken Lake
115 Markhouse Avenue
LONDON E17 8AY

John's editorial was the fifth attack I've read in a fanzine on the postage rate hikes and their timing as the workers were on strike. Yes, it was psychologically damaging to the PO image, but may I have the courtesy of space in your loccol to put everyone straight? I think it needs to be said.

1. Postage rates are fixed by the DTI after approval by POUNC (the Post Office Users' National Council), both of whom have right of veto.
2. These hikes were applied for many months ago, but POUNC dragged its heels on a decision, so the PO couldn't make any firm announcements till one or two days before the change was authorized.
3. New stamps have to be prepared to cover new rates; the programme of commemorative stamps has to be finalized at least 18 months before issue to allow for designs, approval, printing, publicity etc. (I saw these six weeks before issue, and earlier artwork six months before that).
4. The forthcoming issues included four Edward Lear stamps (September 6) and a special miniature sheet for a forthcoming exhibition (September 27); there were organizational reasons for these dates, and the stamps had to be printed (With fingers crossed) long before the new rates were approved.
5. PO employees knew of this particular problem, and it may be that their choice of date for their strike - aimed at maximum disruption regardless of the public or the cost to everyone - was influenced by this. I know the PO people concerned, and I know they hated being placed in this position, but they had NO legal alternative but to announce the new rates when they did and sit there with egg on their faces.

PULP #10 has a lot of marvellous stuff in it, but I don't feel I can fairly beg space to comment on it in view of my request to see the above postal information in print. A pity, but doubtless others will pick up all the points I would have made, and perhaps you will receive another loc from me later on if anything stirs me up enough!

Kev P. McVeigh
37 Firs Road
Milnthorpe
CUMBRIA LA7 7QF

One thing about cons making a profit: We hear so often about fandom not having the money to sue hotels that mess us around. Would a profit of, say, 5% of turnover, be enough to do this? I think that it really is time people like the Metropole were made to honour their agreements, because they do take so much money off us every year. If it can be done, if a small profit at a con will help cons improve, then it is a very good idea, especially when the opposite could be so disastrous. As far as Conspiracy goes, apportioning blame is unhelpful, but we must find out exactly what went wrong if we are ever to host a worldcon again. Can there be, with the benefit of hindsight, some form of report detailing what

happened and what could have been done? I think it would be very useful, and it is also what the people bailing Conspiracy out deserve.

Only Dave Langford could make an article about what he hasn't written his article on. Surely, fanwriting is that aimed at amateur publication, but a case comes to mind of fan fiction which was pulled from a fanzine at the last moment because - wait for it - Interzone had bought it! What of that?

Having attacked Ken Lake's racism in my own fanzine, and seen it in EMPTIES as well, it isn't surprising to see his loc in PULP attempting a semantic defence of his sexism. he tried it in Vector, too. Well, Bullshit, Ken. If you say, "the Hansens", common usage assigns one very specific meaning: Mr. & Mrs. Hansen (possibly including offspring), and all that crap about role models and exemplars is irrelevant and erroneous. Yes, I am applying a preconceived idea to your words, because this is a necessary factor of language: it cannot work unless the recipient has some advance idea of what certain combinations of symbols mean; and thus, to criticize others for this is actually an admission of your own failure with language. Unless of course you really are sexist. Are you?

It may be true that publishing is largely concerned only with making money, but this is certainly not the only factor. If it were, then such incidents as the "censoring" of Samuel R. Delany, as detailed recently in Interzone, would not occur. There are stronger factors than money, it seems, such as the fear of ideas. It is most clear in TV and film; also in popular music, and now, it is growing in publishing. We are being pushed towards cultural sterility by the insistence from some directions that we should all be vegetable sheep in our leisure time, to stop us getting "silly ideas" like anti-sexism, anti-racism, equality, and freedom. By subscribing to this philosophy, you are enforcing injustice and strengthening the systemic oppression we face. As I said, it is common usage which assigns these preconceived meanings, which in turn encourage further misuse of free thought. Those of us who are trying to be non-sexist, non-racist, etc., are attempting to avoid the misleading common usage, and thus to develop a new, more worthwhile usage which doesn't assign priority or seniority to any category, but encourages individuality, and hence creativity and freedom.

Rob Jackson
Chinthal
Nightingale Lane
Hambrook
Chichester
W. SUSSEX PO18 8UH

To my surprise, as I've usually considered John Harvey to be a chap who keeps his ear pretty close to the ground (a stupid phrase, that - either that or a stupid posture - you finish up like the Lunchpack of Notre Dame), I am having to write to fill small gaps in John harvey's knowledge in a few areas.

Firstly, the young man of Devizes that Harry Bond alludes to. I'm really surprised John hasn't come across something like this:

There was a young man/girl from Devizes
With tits/balls that were different sizes
Though the left one was small
And was no good at all
The right one won several prizes.

Oh, I'm not sure if I've got that the right way round. Never mind, I'm sure that with the Null-A brains we're all supposed to have, people will be able to work out which appendages go with which gender (in this universe, at least).

The second area where I want to correct John's ignorance is his editorial about Conspiracy's finances. Rare though it is for a member of the committee to stick his/her head above the parapet these days, I'd like to put John right slightly.

The Conspiracy committee did aim to try to make a small profit. True, the fact that we haven't succeeded (yet! - see below) might reflect on our competence, either in certain areas, or as a whole. Part of the problem that we have had with our cash flow, though, is that part of our surplus has been expected - and budgeted - to be obtained from sales of surplus Souvenir Books, of which we had 1,000 extra printed at an extra cost of only £1,500 or so but from which we expected/budgeted at least £5,000 income (sales of 500 @ £10 each), or at maximum £10,000. However, we have not been able to start selling these in public - vide the absolute lack of promotion of them in the Conspiracy rescue publicity to date - until all the non-attending con members have at least received the books they are entitled to as members. Which has become a catch-22 - we didn't have the surplus cash to pay for the postage to get the books out to members until we could start selling the surplus books!

So you see, Conspiracy still has a decent amount of disposable assets, but things became too urgent for us to gently wait until all the books were slowly but steadily selling, as a result of the Metropole group getting legal about the money they were owed.

Finally, I was struck by John's typo - at least I assume it was a typo - "the race's aren't as frequent". I'm sure that John is aware that the appalling apostrophic plural i's wrong, but people around u's are more and more commonly making the same mi'stake, so perhap's the eye is becoming immune to the error. The wor'st example I have seen recently had its apo'strophe in subscript, as a commatic plural: "CAR RESPRAY,S HERE".

Illiteracy has been around ever since woad, but either I'm better at spotting it as I become a more experienced proofreader or it really is commoner. Thank god for fanzines. The general level of literacy in, say, PULP, is as high as in most publications you can pay money for. Which seems to have brought me round neatly to Dave Langford - he is too modest in his piece to say so directly, but he's so bloody literate that of course he could sell much of his stuff.

Perhaps there should be more Chuch Harris and Harry Bond in New Scientist and Amstrad 8000, too.

((AC: You did mean to write "more common" rather than "commoner", didn't you, you grammar snob? Watch that.

"Rare though it is for a member of the committee to stick his/her head above the parapet these days..." This, unfortunately, has a lot to do with why Conspiracy is in the financial trouble it is in. Where did this bloody siege

mentality come from, anyway? Why haven't you guys been talking to the rest of fandom early and often from the very start? It would have saved no end of bother.))

C. Randolph Harris
32 Lake Crescent
Daventry
NORTHANTS NN11 5EB

Actually, I am fascinated by argot, slang and idiom, and have vague ideas about writing a piece called "The Alternative Linguist". I don't just mean rhyming slang, because Australia has far outstripped the rest of the world for that and Judith is probably more an expert than I am. Like: "Strewth, a bag of coke comes into the Sydney Harbour for a dig in the grave and finds the pitch and toss has gone down the field of wheat..." Now, I suppose this is vaguely interesting as a sort of oddity, but doesn't really compare with idiomatic Oztalk like "Dickless Tracy" for policewomen or "Rare as rockinghorse shit" for extremely scarce, or Chuchy's Current Curse: "May all your chooks turn to emus and kick your dunny down. So there."

(And even there you can't be certain of origins. For example, I suspect "Dickless Tracy", even though The Book attributes it to Oz, is far more likely to have originated in the US, and almost everything else is adapted to whichever is its current locality... "Leave before the Gospel" say the Irish Americans... becomes "Get off at Redfern" (the stop before Sydney Central) in Oz, or "Getting out at Gateshead" for our Geordies of Newcastle, but they are all the same euphemism for coitus interruptus.)

Trouble is, we both know that instead of a scholarly article it will all turn out to be vulgar filth liable to cause cardiac arrests amongst the ladies in that Leeds pub again, and that I'm so lazy and lethargic nowadays I shall probably never get around to writing it. And if I do I won't be able to resist including the shock-horror of the poor French girl driving off the Dover ferry and spotting the first road sign which says SOFT VERGES. That in itself is sufficient to get me ex-communicated and barred from Corflu for all eternity.

((AC: WHAT??!! Now you have to explain all this stuff to me, Pop. And anyway, I sure never heard the "Dickless Tracy" one in the US. Still, you can never tell.))

WAHF: Alexis Gilliland (who thought the US edition of PULP#9 was "in drag" as a Fapazine); Terry Broome (with a loc that looked interesting but I could only decipher every other word of his handwriting); Pamela Boal ("I enjoyed the whole of PULP 10, most particularly Dave Langford's Jutbuff Ltd., to my mind a most smile-worthy conclusion to the current debate on what is or is not fannish writing"); Jan Dawes ("What I liked: The Editorial, Chuck Harris' truly amusing tale of his holiday, and Harry Bond's fanzine reviews").

And I must tell you, Pam Wells, that I absolutely agree with you about it being long past time the TAFF Junta made a decision about adjusting the schedule to allow for Holland. By god, it would simply be cruel to send a European TAFF delegate to the Nasfic! And they'd have to miss the worldcon to do it. No, there's got to be another way.

This has been the lettercol.

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Harvey. Correspondence on this
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should be sent to R & A at

144 Plashet Grove,
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PULP is available for The Usual;
trade fanzines would be appreciated
by all three households (the
Harveys are now at 8, The Orchard,
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This issue dated December 1988.
DEADLINE for the next issue is Feb.
1st. Late LoCs are squeezed into the
the following issue, so don't be shy
of writing from overseas.

⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙
Happy Xmas and 1989 to all
⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙ ⊙

From/ 16 Venderover Way,
Velling, Kent,
DA16 2BN, ENGLAND