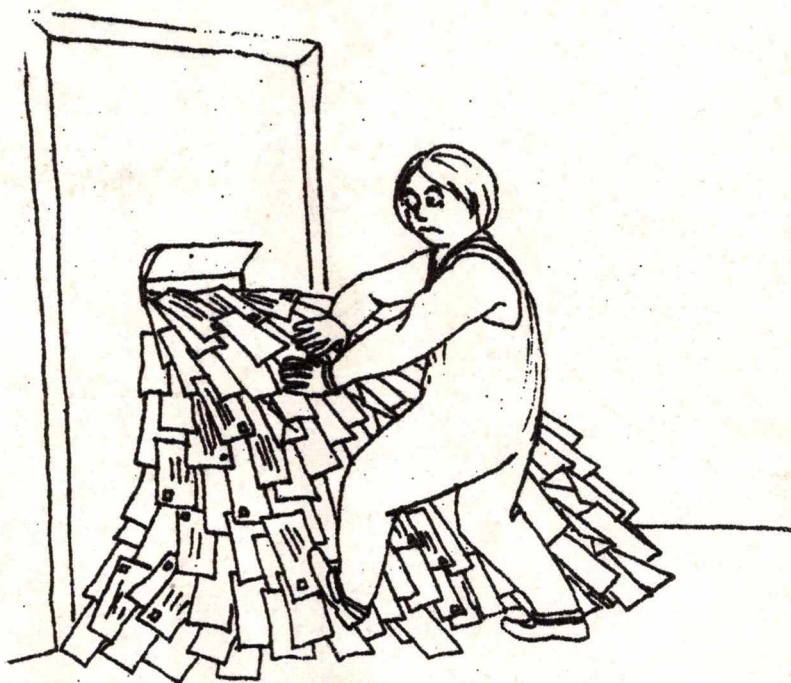


... Accompanied by



o o o SOME DAYS, THE BEAR EATS YOU

you want a teaspoon you have to hunt for it and spend ages scouring off the baked on stains (and then the spoon's damp and the tea and sugar stick to it). Mentally active and physically lazy people always park so they can get out if some idiot parks right up close behind them too. Funnily enough, all the people I know who are mentally lazy are physically industrious. Maybe they have to be.

Joy Hibbert's view...\*\*\*

#### JOY HIBBERT

The reason people lived without washing machines is that they didn't change their clothes as often. A man would put on a clean shirt on Monday to go to work, wear it all week, put on a clean one for Sunday for church, and leave them for his wife to wash on Monday while he wore either another shirt, or the Sunday one. Now we put on various sorts of clean clothes practically every day, making washing machines more useful.

\*\*\*Hang on a minute. I thought we wore clean clothes because we had washing machines - not invented washing machines because we decided we wanted clean clothes. But then I'm always getting things back to front...

Last but not least, my fellow enthusiasts, Cas and Skel.\*\*\*

#### SKEL

When I first moved in with Cas, smitten with the joys of sex and the knowledge that I was no longer a 23 year-old virgin, it was very much on a 'suck it and see' basis (perhaps I could have phrased that better). I was very much aware that my blitzed emotions could simply be a case of immature infatuation. It took about a year before I was finally confident enough to overcome my own concerns (concerns based upon and stemming from my own lack of experience) and to accept that it was \*The Real Stuff\*. Intellectually at any rate.

Emotionally I think I accepted it soon after it started. In retrospect I place this emotional acceptance at the time we made our first 'major' purchase. It was my first 'commitment' you see - an automatic washing machine. I showed your zine to Cas and her immediate reaction was the same as mine:- "You'll have to tell her about the time we bought our first automatic washing machine."

Before this she'd had an old-fashioned single-tub wringer machine and she fully intended replacing it (after it had broken down) with something similar. Bugger that for a caper! I pointed out the advantages of having a machine that did nearly everything by itself and I don't recall having to twist her arm all that much. We proudly signed the agreement. My first financial responsibility. I felt ten feet tall and scared shitless. What if I lost my job and couldn't keep up the payments? What if the flats collapsed and I had to keep paying for a crushed machine? What if... (I always have been a worry-wart).

Of course, as soon as it was delivered we simply had to wash something - but we didn't have anything to wash, having just been to the laundromat. So we took down some curtains and bunged them in. Then we sat in front of it, on the kitchen floor, arms around each other, and we watched it. It filled up, it pre-washed, it emptied, it filled again, it washed properly, it emptied, it slow spun, it fast spun (and near shook the kitchen apart), and then it stopped. We were transfixed. We took out the staggeringly clean curtain and put in the other one of the pair. Then we sat through it all again. The very first night, and we were watching repeats! I tell you, they don't get programs like that on American washing machines.

\*\*\*You know what? We just bought a vacuum cleaner, and I just found out Jimmy is a doolally about vacuum cleaners as I am about washing machines! He wouldn't LET me have a go with it until he'd cleaned everything properly himself. Surely this must be a 'marriage made in heaven'.

Well, I think that's enough said about washing machines. Well, actually I don't; but I think that you will think that that is enough said about washing machines.

So then, why not,

### HEYY, BABEE! IT'S ROLE REVERSAL TIME!!!

Last time around (actually in the first Blue Reprint, but what the hell) I mentioned team roles, or types of behaviour which people commonly adopt in groups.

To remind you on the team roles, they were :

**SHAPER** The pushy, energetic, dominating (and sometimes paranoid) leader

**CHAIRMAN** The group coordinator

**COMPANY WORKER** The implementer, providing structure and hard work

**TEAM WORKER** The social 'oil' in the machine

**RESOURCE INVESTIGATOR** The person who knows what is going on

**PLANT** The ideas person

**MONITOR EVALUATOR** The critical logician

**COMPLETER/FINISHER** The compulsive, detail minded perfectionist

This quiz seemed to have caught several people's attention, but since most of their comments tended to run along the lines of speculating on their team roles or, alternatively mine (COMPLETER? Dave Rowley must have been joking), I figure the comments wouldn't be rivetting presented en masse. However, ONE person (or rather 2 people, Steve and Caroline Knight) kindly expanded the list of team roles to include some that they have observed over the years of office life, but which I omitted...

#### STEVE & CAROLINE KNIGHT

After I had finished reading the 8 stereotypes article to Caroline, we identified a number of team roles that you had missed. They are outlined below.

The Duffer, likes looking busy but is quite obviously doing nothing. He covers up his inadequacies by stalling and, when pressed, blames it on delayed post. He has nothing to offer the group but usually succeeds in not annoying the Shaper. Frequently found in middle management.

If you are 35 - 50 years old, in charge of several subordinate managers, in perpetual fear of The Boss, you are probably a bit of a Duffer. If you like writing reports too, you are a right duffer.

The Assassin, likes to sabotage the group members one by one. He gets weird kicks from feeling the group confidence ebb another notch. The Assassin often feels the other group members are like ants or bugs.

If you like stepping on people's egos, and sadistically watching their self-image sag; if you think people are incompetent blind fools; if you like ripping them off for all they are worth, then you're probably the f\*\*king M.D.s nephew.

The Panicker tries to steer the group away from obvious disasters. He is the only one with a sane view of the mess they are already in; and the overview of the awful mess they are heading for. The Panicker is often over-ruled by the Duffers in the group and the butt for the Assassin's cruel jokes.

So if you're chickenshit, a bit of a wimp, and live in cringing fear of what is going to happen, then you're probably perfectly normal.

The Social Gossip is somewhat like the Resource Investigator, but only interested in the internal machinations of the group. Always ready to stir it, the Gossip is paradoxically liked by the others in the group, and usually beds at least half of the members. Likes to get people drunk.

So if you have come to terms with the fact that you aren't going to find out if Julie/Julian has got a mole on his/her left buttock (but you know about everyone else's), if you love to keep an ear to the ground and one hand in, know exactly who's been with whom, and like to welch on bets, you're undoubtedly a Social Gossip too.

Being Part II of

SOME DAYS YOU EAT THE BEAR

SOME DAYS THE BEAR EATS YOU

No. 2

July 1985

which is produced and available from Anne Hamill Warren at :

62 North End Road  
Golders Green  
London NW11 7SY

at least for awhile, while I try to sell a house in Cambridge, and anyway I'll arrange to get things forwarded for after that in case anyone wants to EMPLOY ME. Not you, you dopes, OTHER people writing to me here.

AND SOME DAYS, THE BEAR EATS YOU...

When I wrote in Bear 1 that it was available for 2-page locs, I thought I was joking. While this may have put a few people off trying to respond (and you needn't worry, I'll probably keep sending them to you), I was delighted by the letters I did get. In fact, the only problem now is that most of them have so much to say that I want to type them all out, and that's going to take a Very Long Time.

All of the following came about in response to articles in Bear 1 or Blue Reprint. I have included here a four page letter from Malcolm Edwards on an alternative view of fandom, much as I would have liked to publish it as an article (only Malcolm wouldn't let me).

This, then, is your bit of the bear.  
Thank you for making it so entertaining.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT FORMAT

These : \*\*\* denote the Editorial Presence. Anything within asterisks is by me.

If there's one thing I hate in other people's letter columns, it's letters (particularly ones disagreeing with the editor) which are broken up by the editor putting comments in every other line, so I'm going to printed any sections entire and without interruption (THEN I'll get you, nothing like the last word, got to have some privileges IT IS MY ZINE YOU KNOW). If there's another thing I hate, it's not knowing who's speaking, so names are printed at the top of each contribution and addresses of contributors are printed at the end. Finally, I've grouped comments about one subject together under headings. I'm afraid that this means that some letters are broken up into three or four sections - but you all said so much worth publishing I couldn't help it.

Tough eh.

AM GOT DEM OLE NO WASHER NO SPINDRIER NO WARM TUMBLE  
WASHDAY BLUES...

\*\*\*i was right, I am odd. Out of all the people who wrote to me here at Bear headquarters, only two people came close to true enthusiasm for the humble automatic washing machine. Some people even thought I liked top loaders. TOP LOADERS. (But thank you for the photo anyway, Jeanne.)

But hey, the good news is I now have a washine machine of my very own! AND a tumble drier! No more washday blues for me. I could tell you about how difficult it is to move a 26" square washing machine into the house when your front door is 24" wide, your side passage (and those of your neighbours) are 24" wide, and the accessible windows are all tiny casements...but I won't. We got them IN, now wh have to worry about getting all those SPACERS back inside the machines so we don't destroy them on the way out...

Chris Bailey has something interesting to say on this subject.\*\*\*

CHRIS BAILEY

The piece on washing machines was OK, so far as it went - I think you eventually came up crunch against the fact that, wonderful though they are, washing-machines are not really very interesting. I'm ever so fond of ours, but it has only ever done one thing of note, which was to destroy the kitchen the day we got it. We bought the biggest and heaviest and most expensive one we could, a German model, a Panzer or something, one that would also dry your clothes when it had washed them. The men delivered it and Martin the punk plumber came and installed an intricate network of pipes to link it to the water supply. He left and we put some clothes in and switched it on and we watched it for a bit, chumbling away happily to itself, and eventually we went out and sat on the front step in the evening sun and started drinking. It must have been when it reached 'spin' that the trouble started - suddenly there was an incredible cacophony of crashings and smashings coming from the kitchen. I rushed in and our new pride and joy was literally jumping around and heading purposefully for the door. I caught a brief glimpse through the window of the people from the flat downstairs, semaphoring furiously in the garden; apparently their welsh dresser had started to hop in sympathy. I attempted to grapple the machine and got flung into the corner, and then it turned on me and pinned me there, bounding up and down on the spot, trying to pull its new pipes free of the wall so it could get at me. Just in time, Leigh ambled in and pulled the plug on it. Later we realised that the transit bolts, the things that hold the drum firm while the machine is travelling, had been left in, and it had been attempting to gyrate itself free of its own insides. Afterwards, clearing up - putting the skirting boards back and wondering if the shards of the teapot could be reassembled - I found a piece of paper with ACHTUNG! printed at the top. Apparently, the German for transit bolts is 'Transportsicherungen', so there.

\*\*\*Write that down, that's a useful tip.

Margaret Hall has another tip about washing machines, for lazy people.\*\*\*

MARGARET HALL

If you fasten up your duvet covers before laundering, other clothes can't take refuge in them. If you think that's too much bother then you are not a truly lazy person, dedicated to the pursuit of laziness; it only takes a few seconds to fasten the duvet cover, it could take several minutes to untangle the contents.

\*\*\*And the contents are WET! From observation, it seems to me that there are two types of lazy person, the physically lazy and the mentally lazy. I'm physically lazy, so I'm always devising systems like having a special cup to put teaspoons to drain in, so they're dry and handy when you make the next pot of tea. Other people I know are mentally lazy, so they can't be bothered to rinse off the spoon and put it in the cup, just leave the tea to dry on, so next time

The Lecher could be a Social Gossip but is usually far less effective in his aims. This sweating beast sits next to his target at conference meetings, makes heavy-handed compliments to them, and squeezes their leg under the table. Always has a copy of 'Mayfair' in the desk drawer.

If you wink at fourteen year old girls, give job offers to the ones "with the nicest legs", fart a lot in public and blush when you talk about getting laid... Jeeze... grow up.

\*\*\*Steve went on to comment about nude calendars.\*\*\*

Ahem.

Funny you should write about nude calendars. If there's something that truly affects me at work, each and every day, it's the nudie calendars. It's not the display of photo'd flesh I object to - oh hardly, I have to stop myself ogling them openly, to be honest. It's the simultaneous assertion of several attitudes in violent contradiction to my own that I hate. I would feel the same if someone put a political sticker (come on Nigel, be a smartie, this time vote the Labour Party) up in the office.

Firstly, it is a violent mental shout about the chap's attitude. I don't like people tossing their egos all over the workplace - perhaps this is a wrong attitude but there it is. Next, given that it is well-known to be a fairly controversial social issue it says, "I don't care if it offends you, I only care about people it doesn't offend". This is a very in-group attitude which I find unacceptably rude in a work situation. Finally, it 'makes' a statement about the cultural role of women in the workplace that brings my blood to boiling point. Add to this the fact that a number of my female colleagues find it distasteful, then you can appreciate that phlegmatic-old-me finds it hard to take.

Anyone who puts up a nudie calendar in my department finds it missing next day. And I don't mean that I take it home to read.

\*\*\*Avedon didn't think much of the cultural stereotype or piano-wire hypotheses on why there are no male nude calendars.\*\*\*

#### AVEDON CAROL

As to the theories you and Jimmy have developed about male pin-ups - rubbish. Apply the cultural male stereotype you describe to the men you've actually been attracted to and see what I mean. Huge shoulders, right? Lots of muscles? Over six feet tall, of course. No? So much for your theory. Oh? You say you're not a good standard? Don't be too sure. I know lots of men who believe that women lust after big shouldered, macho jock types, but most of the women I know seem to pursue another kind of man. Why, people have actually done studies on it! They found that the two parts of the body that women looked at were NOT the parts of the body that men assumed we looked at. For years male researchers showed women pictures of men who MEN thought were attractive, and got the idea that women didn't pay attention to physical appearance. Then they finally got wise when they started to actually TALK to the women. Women are in fact highly influenced by appearance - the appearance of, first of all, the face (particularly the eyes) and of our favourite chunk of meat - the ass.

Which is also the problem with Jimmy's theory. Just aside from the fact that these two parts of the body are difficult to display properly in one photograph - the direct, unbent, untwisted view is the most effective, as the portrait shot is best for the face - is the fact that it's far easier for a man to look erotic to a woman than anything as complicated as ice cubes on nipples. All he has to do is SMILE right. The eyes are the FIRST place a woman looks for interest. That's why 'Sixteen' magazine outsells 'Playgirl'. There are more barely-pubescent girls looking for pretty smiles than there are women and faggots who want to stare at cock. Do YOU run around staring at cock? How long has this been going on?



While we're on the subject, where DID these men get the idea that there was such a strong relationship between erect nipples and arousal, anyway? Almost any discomfort, irritation, or cold can cause nipples to harden, but that's certainly no guarantee that arousal will have the same effect. Plenty of women get all fired up without causing any change in the nipples. In fact, some women's nipples actually become soft and flat when they are aroused, precisely because they are WARM. In view of the fact that cold seems to be one of the strongest stimuli to hardening nipples, it seems particularly perverse of men (if not perverted) to get the idea that this is a sign the woman has become HOT.

\*\*\*Joy has some interesting reflections on nude calendars which if nothing else show that feminism has not yet overcome some very traditional attitudes.\*\*\*

#### JOY HIBBERT

On the whole I agree with your comments on nude calendars. Because the man should take the lead in sexual matters, and he can't be taking the lead if he's lying on a piece of paper, then he isn't attractive. But there are other things: women do tend to be attracted to men as people or fictional characters rather than bodies. This might be cultural: women are supposed to look after their bodies in order to sell themselves to a man who is a success in the real world. You see this in contact ads too, a man is often a successful business man, self-employed or whatever, a woman is often attractive, or even 38C (or whatever). That's in ads by people looking for a partner of the opposite sex. In gay adverts, men mention their age, degree of physical fitness or, er, endowment. Women don't seem to mention appearance at all, concentrating on age and whether or not they're otherwise attached. There is the question of arousal. It is illegal to print a photograph of an erect penis, and even if it is, how exciting is a man whose body seems to be saying "come and get it". The other thing is something I haven't discussed before. It seems to me that the female body looks very complete and coordinated while a male nude looks as if certain bits were tacked on afterwards. This may be why men look better with their shorts on (most of the time). I'd be interested to know if other people think like this. Many women find nude calendars upsetting for a similar reason to you: because such calendars and 'girlie' magazines are there to help men, in their imagination, reduce all women to sex objects. Your wife upset you? A woman taken your job? Threatened by a female Prime Minister? Never mind look at the calendar and see that they're all just cunt. That sort of thing.

\*\*\*Phil Palmer wrote me a 4 page letter disagreeing with me about fandom, which would've gone very nicely in the section on fandom, then on the last page added: "P.S. Very sorry to DNQ this loc but I disagree with it!". It must be nice knowing where your Head is. He also had something to say about why male nudes are unerotic, and I'm getting back at him by quoting it, DNQ or no DNQ. Ha! Think you can mess me around like that eh, Palmer?\*\*\*

#### PHIL PALMER

The attention-grabbing pictures of men tend to be of young ones in the act of taking off a dark sweater in half-darkness with a sullen expression, etc. For a picture of a man to be fascinating there has to be much play of shadow, or use of clothes. I think this was implied in what you were saying, but you couldn't see why.

Well, it's easy. The nude male looks HILARIOUS. For a start, there's the thingie, which if we're drunk, or half-aroused, or just lucky, is all big and dangly and FLAPS from side to side if you try any of the twice-round-Mt. Olympus athletic stuff. Or if the weather is cold it goes small and nubby and QUIVERS. Then there are droopy buttocks robbed of their supporting lift-and-separate Lee Coopers, flacid biceps (unless you are cheating), spindly arms and legs, knobbly knees, sticky-out elbows, unaccountably hairy patches, warts, moles, carbuncles, big toes, fartleberries, nipples, holes in chests, scars from my operation and road accident and the tide-mark produced by drinking beer in tight trousers. The whole lot can be coloured a tasteful puce with a Boots sun-ray lamp.

\*\*\*Oh, RIGHT! I KNEW there must be a reason why male nude calendars didn't sell! (Sometime I am just going to HAVE to look up what a 'fartleberry' is...)

Margaret Hall adds another idea to the debate.\*\*\*

#### MARGARET HALL

I don't quite agree with either you or Jimmy on why there aren't male equivalents to the nude female pinups. I think it's to do with the act of sexual intercourse. A man - if he wants an erotic fantasy or solitary sex - can gaze at a picture of a submitting woman until he feels aroused and he can imagine himself doing sexy things with/to her. Now unless a woman IS actually aroused, a naked, erect male is threatening rather than erotic. The woman in the picture is passive, safe; not so an aroused male (as I'm sure it would be perfectly possible to photograph aroused males - without resort to such drastic tactics as you suggest!) My personal ideal for male sexiness is well proportioned, slim hiped and hard muscled to the point of leanness. I'm not too fussy about height, 5' 10" to 6', no taller. I think this is not so much cultural conditioning as a primitive survival, as that was the type of male who would be a successful hunter and good warrior to provide meat and protect the family. If you look at successful and powerful men in the business world or politics they are however, as likely as not, small, balding, chubby or paunchy. So there's also a mix up as to what society regards as a dominant - and by your definition therefore sexy - man. Personally I'm all for more male nudity - though I've never seen anything in the way of magazines or photos that appeals to me. No one is producing the sort of thing I want. Mind you, I'm not completely sure I could describe what I want, but I would recognise it if I saw it. One thing that I do find erotic - or what can be erotic - is dance. Some pictures of male dancers come the closest to the sort of thing I might like to hang on my office wall.

\*\*\*Power, of course is its own aphrodisiac... Several women made the point that gay porn is much more erotic to women than 'Playgirl'. Is this because gays are more upfront about what they want from a relationship, whereas the female market has been conditioned into thinking only certain relationships are acceptable? Gays HAVE no 'acceptable' roles, so might be freer to express their instinct - which might be closer to the female instinct than suspected.\*\*\*

#### IAN BAMBRO

My theory is, blokes put nude pictures up in the workshops etc, in a sense for other blokes, ie in order to be one of the lads. It's the done thing and establishes that you are OK in that sub-culture, having a 'proper' interest in a suitable subject for 'real men'. It's like drinking and swearing. I worked in a shipyard for a while and if you didn't sprinkle your sentences liberally with (totally non-functional) 'cunts' and 'fuckings' you'd be taken for a milk-sop and treated accordingly.

Why no female equivalent? - I think there is : I think it is called Mills & Boon - not an exact equivalent perhaps but I suspect that women starved of romance take to that kind of fantasy in the same way that sex-starved men take to the soft porn magazines.

\*\*\*I think you're right about Mills & Boon. Interestingly, the rudeness index of M & B has risen drastically recently, with nipples becoming mentionable, along with exploration below the waist, and even oblique references to the heroine actually touching the hero's dick!!! The most successful and repeated sexual scenario seems to be where the heroine is resisting, but the hero overwhelms her defenses by a combination of magnetism and expertise, only to turn aside with a sneer (without actually committing The Act) (they do do The Act in M & B but not in this bit). What this says about female urges to be dominated, to abrogate responsibility while enjoying the fun, and to be humiliated, don't bear thinking about.\*\*\*



## OF SHOES - AND SHIPS - AND SEALING WAX - AND CABBAGES - AND KINGS

This is the section for all the little interesting bits people raised, that don't fall into any neat categories.

### DIANA LEE

One question that interests me is that of your privacy and self-revelation. You seem to be prepared to reveal more about yourself on paper than you do in conversation, although the writing reaches a far wider audience and some of them will be people you hardly know. Why?

\*\*\*Chris Bailey added to this.\*\*\*

### CHRIS BAILEY

I thought your reporting in 'Pink Reprint' of a remark that people seem to have an urge to talk about intimate things in fanzines. But what I want to know is - HOW intimate, and not in any prurient sense. Can one discuss bereavement, for example? A few months back we had a stillborn child. This was a shattering experience, and in retrospect it coloured my life deeply, and I learned a lot and the lessons are communicable, but I don't feel that I would want to pass them on in a fanzine article. To go back to 'Being Different', I think there comes a point where fandom's invulnerability to the real world also cuts it off.

\*\*\*To answer both questions with regard to myself. I find it helps to write things out, but only AFTER the event. At any time at which I am seriously hurt, I am likely to turn to one person alone for comfort, and hide like the devil from everyone else, so that they shouldn't realise that anything is wrong until I have come to terms with it enough to be able to keep my cool.

After a decent interval has elapsed, I'm prepared to talk or write about almost anything. Like Chris, I feel that some things you learn painfully are communicable, and I want to communicate them.

Recently two people told me that they were scared of me, and another summed it up as "people are scared of Anne because she doesn't reveal her vulnerabilities". This amazes me. It causes me to wonder if people REALLY think that other people are invulnerable because they don't show uncontrollable emotions. Surely it's a basic truth that EVERYBODY is vulnerable. Even the people who seem the toughest show pain. The signs are slight sometimes, but they are always there. Don't people really SEE them? Can't they tell when I hurt or am embarrassed? I always assumed it was painfully obvious. I really am confused on this one. The evidence seems to be that some people don't look at other people to infer what they are really feeling. Maybe ordinary people ARE that unobservant, they really are fooled. They must live in a completely different world to me, if what I'm seeing isn't what they're seeing.

I've also noticed that people who have uncontrollable outbursts, without being able to help themselves can resent people who do control themselves, thinking the controlled people are managing to leap a hurdle they can't. IT ISN'T LIKE THAT AT ALL. It would be as impossible for me to overcome my inhibitions and let go, showing raw emotions in public as it is for others not to do so. I literally couldn't - even if it was appropriate. I'm not showing discipline or courage in overcoming anything, I'm taking the line of least resistance too.

We're just tuned to different wavebands.\*\*\*

### AVEDON CAROL

If you're really interested in psychology, perhaps you'd like to hear one of my Top Ten Unanswered Psych Questions : why do parents and teachers believe children when they are lying more often than they believe the same children when they are telling the truth?

I thought of 2 reasons for this...send me your answers, and we'll get a consensus...

O.K., let's get on to the main subject now, which is of course

## THE GREAT FANDOM DEBATE

Featuring the response to 'Being Different', the article about which it has been said...

"How long have you been having this feeling that you have a theory about fandom? Aha. I see; very interesting."

...Phil Palmer

"Your article sums up the position so well I reckon we should persuade the BSFA to print up copies to give away to neos at cons"

...Steve Green

"Are you trying to set up in competition to Famous Dave, or what?"

...Darroll Pardoe

"'Being Different' told me nothing new, I've read this sort of thing before."

...Dave Rowley

"(I) was tremendously impressed by the Anne Warren article, I think it's the most perceptive piece on fandom I ever read."

...Walt Willis

"A classic on the nature of fandom"

...Somebody who has been talking to Helen Starkey and Ian Bambro

"She got it all from me!"

...D. West

"I DID like your staple placement"

...Sue Thomason

Enough titbits! On to the meat of what was said - let's hear what YOU thought about my argumentative, non-small-talking, people hating fan...

## AVEDON CAROL

I like fandom because fans tend to like to sit around and bullshit. But fans also don't mind being surprised. I don't mean surprised like opening a can of peanuts and having a spring snake jump out at you - I mean, fans like to be verbally surprised by hearing people say weird things, off-the-wall ideas, screwy puns. Your average fan laughs at the JOKE in a dirty joke, while your average mundane will laugh at the dirty, even if there ain't no joke. The 'girls at the office' complain when I use 'big words' like meritocracy, and say 'weird things' like "It was a sperm of the moment decision".

I don't think I argue with people in fandom with the hope of changing anyone's mind so much as I argue largely because it's so neat to be able to SAY the educated-but-outrageous things I say without having to listen to a lot of pseudo-Freudian ignorant ball-grabbing garbage all the time. Mind you, I do hear it **SOMETIMES** in fandom - I never want to discuss evolution or the social sciences with either of those twin nitwit Benfords again - but I'm more likely to encounter people who **KNOW BETTER** in fandom. In the mundane world I have to be talking to a professional sociologist to discuss the things on my mind without being met by responses like, "That can't be true", or "You're crazy". In fandom I can say these things to people who aren't social scientists at all and get responses like, "Yeah, I read a study that proved that", or "Yes, I've been wondering about that myself". And if they disagree, they cite other studies, or quote people - I mean, they don't just stop at "I don't believe that".

"If you're naturally fannish, you don't expect much from other people anyway." My god, that's a **WONDERFUL** quote, Anne.

\*\*\*Gee thanks, Avedon. Jeanne Bowman also had something to say about fannish communication. Jeanne wrote me one of my favourite letters, which I reproduce here with all its original eccentricities. Jeanne also sent me a photograph of her washing machine, wasn't that kind.\*\*\*

#### JEANNE BOWMAN

yes indeed, i too am odd. i thought when i grew up it would be different. maybe then people would understand my jokes, outside of my family. everyone thought and made no bones about telling me, my family is weird. but at least they understand my humour. and puns - they could be complex, not chewing gum wrapper easy to the point of not being able to guess what they were about. it is not so much the exchange of ideas that continues to draw me to fanning, but the sort of questing, as you say, and bright people who can play intelligently and with a great variety of humour. indeed, the need for communication, at last, a room full of people who get the joke. myself i did not become cynical. i became a happy hopeful hippy and went back to the land in the ozark mountains and lived in a commune and began to wonder why people had so much trouble communicating, and why i did so much of it and was so resented for it. well, remaining in character, i became a parent and continue to do so.

at the time i became active in fandom, after having read the entire run of pong by raiding robert lichtmans desk in odd moments of quiet through the year it happened, i had it in mind that this would be a wonderful opportunity to go and be around an intelligent (it seemed) group of adults and thereby hone up my, i felt, based on the evidence at hand, lacking social skills. anyone who would write about some of the trivia that came out of fanzines surely would be easy to socialise with. i was wrong and i was right. one of the first things i noticed when i mentioned my idea of practising social graces was that people either looked totally balk, or glanced under my eyelashes to check whether i was going to launch into hysterics over my own joke (again) or said something unintelligible which came out to be "Jeanne, you're a neat person" or an invitation to go dancing - right then, anywhere - or other non responses to my concern about being socially accepted. They said, all, "but i like you" so basically what else matters???? and wouldn't discuss it. so that's not new to you, but at last i have an understanding that i hadn't before, and it had puzzled me. thank you and well done on that point.

now to argue, maybe. us wimpy oldstyle california pacifist libertarian anarchist hippies discuss or have meaningful conversations or engage in purposeful dialogue or shoot the breeze or talk or s h a r e . glen ellen fandom has a lot to do with peculiarly twined and convoluted series of friendships and incestuous relationships in variations of friendships. we all read science fiction - pkdick at least, and anything else really good gets passed around, pretty quickly at that. but you know, thats been one book since christmas and one issue of a fanzine since last fall, the second one gathering dust until we get the rest of the two hundred issues printed

up, the world of cash catching up to our good intentions. Much of our conversations are not about ideas, new or old, fresh or stretched, foreign or domestic ... but sort of social catching up on the oneness and community of fans. "you must read this" "bergeron is going to print my article, with your name in it" "did you talk to Lucy Saturday night and where's my copy of the bear???" one could say faanish gossip, for me, it has that flavour. but i am new and people and how they interrelate and create this community is of interest to me.

i think people absolutely get into the elite through their connections - and whether they stay there is entirely up to them.

my experience of that laissez faire part of come as you wish, no one pushes you, is yes and no. People have told me about events in such a way as to convince me to come short or signing in blood that i would, but yes the choice is always, and obviously unilaterally returned to me. but people really do want to know if i will be there. again, i come from a distance and have responsibilities - as do we all.

I don't know about all that shallow end/apa stuff. i have held apa mailings in my hand but have yet to read one or as must be done a series. what i do know is that fandom isn't hard to get into if you're a fan, indeed, and that maybe leaving it alone is not necessary, but leaving your fanzines lying around when you know one of your wierdo acquaintances is coming by works.

\*\*\*Well, that's how i got into fandom, it was all Lillian Edward's fault. Margaret Hall has also had the experience of feeling somehow more acceptable in fandom, despite limited exposure to fandom at the time she wrote to me.\*\*\*

#### MARGARET HALL

I'm still reserving judgment on your piece about fandom. That's merely because a flying one day visit to Novacon and a postal knowledge of fans doesn't really qualify me to comment. However, that one day visit lead me to believe that in fandom I can reveal most - possibly all - of the facets of my personality, whereas in many other social situations I find myself doing a kind of fan dance; here I can reveal such and such a thing, there I must keep quiet about that, but let them know that I do so and so instead.

\*\*\*Maureen Porter, however, is confused...\*\*\*

#### MAUREEN PORTER

Reading 'Being Different' leaves me with the sneaking suspicion that I'm not really very fannish. I sometimes feel left out though I can never quite work out whether this is merely a hangover from my past paranoia which hasn't quite gone yet or whether it is a new feeling, likely to continue. I worry about how I come across, especially whether I'm doing things like dragging conversations back to the shallow end, and disrupting groups, but I don't do it all the time, only when I've got to that point which I occasionally reach when I somehow find myself on my own and can't seem to find anyone else. Logical reasoning tells me that things are all right really, people come and talk to me, they don't sigh and look put out when I turn up etc etc, but I can never quite dispose of the feeling, and it sometimes rises to the surface a little like that ghost at the feast. Oddly enough it helps to see it spelled out in black and white, and in my heart I know that I'm merely fishing for reassurance like I inadvertantly fish for reassurance about what I write, so I presumably will kick the habit eventually and then stand firmly on my fannish feet instead of relying on crutches.

I found so much of what you had to say about fandom extremely interesting and kept nodding in agreement, or saying to myself "I know what you mean". ...Fandom IS the only place where I really feel like me. The public face is generally maintained with some caution, because it isn't always wise to let my real self run free. I upset too many people that way, saying things in a way they don't understand and using concepts that literally are alien to them.

I like the concept of get-outs. I often tie myself to doing things and then have to start looking for the let-out clause. Visiting relations when I don't want to, having people set up a routine for coming to see me every week and not being strong enough to resist it, and so on - they all look at me accusingly, these arrangements and I spend hours deciding how best to wriggle politely out of them whereas if I decide not to go to the Tun for three months no-one gets upset about it, or threatens never to speak to me again.

Strengely, this never quite worked with OUSFG as, being local, they all came in droves to see if I was ill, and gafiating temporarily was almost impossible. Neither did they understand the idea of convention bolt-holes, and couldn't comprehend when I got so irritated with countless demands to sleep on my floor. My room at a con is somewhere I go to to snut everything out for half an hour or so, have a shower, listen to the radio, just get away from the seething mass of sociability outside. Most people understand perfectly. I've always found it one of the saving graces of three days concentrated seeing people. I like my sociability in bursts and then I like to go away and be solitary for awhile. Someone I know was quite shocked that Len never takes me out. You like going out, you've said so. But, I countered, it's my choice not to go out right now. At present what I want to do is stay at home and write, listen to the radio, read. I like my monthly trip to London - it's all the socialising I need right now. Sometime I'll start wanting to go to the theatre or something and then I'll start going, on my own because Len doesn't want to, and maybe we'll go to the odd film together. Now this is perfectly normal behaviour to fans. In essence I've gafiated not from fandom but from socialising in real-life. I'm going through a phase of mostly staying home, doing my own thing, and I'm happy with it, until clowns come along and try to spoil it because I don't fit into their definition. I love being able to come and go as I want to, without having to compromise with other people's ideas of what I ought to be doing. Hell, I've solved my own dilemma - I'm a fan. I just don't fit in any other way, do I?

\*\*\*It sounds as though you suffer from the same thing as I do, Maureen. Because I throw myself into socialising when I do it, lots of people think that I'm highly extravert and social, and don't understand it when I draw back from invitations. They think it must be them, when really it is this strong dislike of committing myself to be social when I might not be feeling like it. My normal reaction to invitations is therefore usually a sinking feeling. The social occasions when I can relax and drift are rare; usually if I'm socialising I'm putting my all into it. I don't know how to idle, it's top speed or reverse with me. And top speed when you want to crawl into a hole is VERY wearing.

One way I've discovered of getting round this is to take some patchwork or something to do while visiting; this gets round my urgent desire to be DOING something (not 'wasting time socialising!'), so that I can be somewhat more relaxed in my conversation. However, if not handled tactfully, this can give an even WORSE impression. So if anybody out there gets offended because I never come to see them unless I combine it with an errand, be aware that it's only a way of defusing this fear of social commitments that I have!

Incidentally, I was thinking about uneven relationships some time ago, that is, where one person does most of the visiting, keeping in touch etc, and came to the conclusion that most of them aren't as one-sided as they look. If A wants to see B 9 times a month on average, and B wants to see A 10 times a month, who does all the visiting? B. Because every time A is thinking "it's a long time since I saw B, I must go and visit him/her", B comes knocking on the door. A never reaches the point at which he or she would make the move of their own initiative. But it doesn't mean (as B always tends to think) that A doesn't want to see B, or that B is a hanger on. It's actually hard to tell the situation above from one where A doesn't want to see B at all. So if you always do the visiting, but are very welcome when you go, you just have to try to keep your paranoia under control.

However, not everybody agreed with my description of fandom.\*\*\*

### JOY HIBBERT

A few holes in your argument. On the whole I agree with your definition of this sort of fan (though I would call it holistic rather than fannish, the latter suggesting a certain narrowness of approach) so why do we write fanzines that seem almost designed to drive thinking people away? Our con reports are full of things that the average person who likes intelligent conversation won't like. When did you last read a con report which said something like "last night I sat around with Anne, Linda and Pam (for example) and we discussed the relevance of doorknob incompetence to the existence of fandom, what books we like now that we've run out of interesting sf, and why casual abuse is acceptable in fandom and not anywhere else. And other things, but I've forgotten them now" rather than "after playing dominoes with D West till 3am, I felt ill. After throwing up, I went to bed". Similarly, while I can see why we don't bother with the niceties of mundane life, that's no excuse for frightening neos away by continually insulting each other. They don't know that we don't necessarily mean it.

We do need a shallow end of fandom, if only to get people used to the idea that just because someone insults you it doesn't mean you should go away. For example, I've been in touch with a neo called Joan over the past nearly-a-year, and she happened to disagree with something a better-known fan said. She disagreed quite politely, and he replied with abuse. She has now decided not to go to a con, because other fans will be as obnoxious as him. And don't say if she were a true fan she would go to a con, because not everyone wants to waste that sort of money going somewhere to be got at. It seems that your idea of the ideal fan is an inconsiderate, opinionated boor whose main hobby is stomping on people who haven't learned to fight back yet. Is that what you really want to be? Does anyone want to be like that apart from KTF merchants?

Well, I don't think I want to be your sort of fan. I'd prefer to stay anarchic but friendly, happy talking to friends but equally willing to help neos, enjoying fanzine publishing but wanting to write letters as well, and so on.

\*\*\*Ideal fan? Did I say ideal fan? Surely not.

I have a theory that some people find it difficult to be rude in public even when they want to be (and I am certainly one of them). The only way I can express the more acid or hard-edged side of my personality is in writing, where I can think out precisely what I want to say, and say it, and send it out without the fear and submissiveness syndrome getting in the way. That's why people who haven't met me expect me to look and behave different than I do; they don't realise that in normal interaction I am INCAPABLE of overcoming my inhibitions against rudeness and conflict. If someone insults me, I smile and smooth it over. I think I've tracked it back to problems in my childhood, due to the fact that my family could never handle conflict healthily. Sarcastic digs were ignored, then when steam built up, a dig would result in an uncontrolled explosion. So it seemed all or nothing to me - and the 'All' response was frightening, out of control, and destructive. So I learned to repress response, and weep out the frustration later. Fandom offers two constructive solutions; you can let your anger seep out stylishly in throwaway asides, but even better, you can tackle the real problem frontally and angrily in print, which allows you to get around the repressions and confront the person who has angered you, and say what you want to say without interruption. After this intellectual confrontation, the urge to hit back personally, to hurt, mostly goes away.

What this has to do with Joy's letter is that I think you must have an element of this in your nature too, Joy. I wouldn't say you were the mildest of writers; indeed you are often confrontational and even arrogant in expressing your point of view. Yet you also come over much milder in person. People are complex truly; and don't feel there are many of 'my kind of fan' as you describe it above. It is an ASPECT of the way in which a large number of disparate types of people communicate.



It also seems to me that you have a different approach to neos than to established or apparently 'tough' individuals in fandom. One needs to be protected, the other is fair game. There's nothing wrong with that, but if prolonged, the relationship becomes a bit patronising; a group of proteges who do not turn the sharp edges of their tongues against you. I like healthy confrontation, it often leads to communication and a change of attitudes. There's nothing I like better than to be forced to change my attitudes (though I'll fight a rearguard battle all the way), because it means new grist to the mill, a better (it defeated my old arguments) way of trying to understand the world. And then there's all the fascinating turning over and reconsideration of other, linked concepts that you've been relying on for years. If you don't keep changing your mind about things, you've started to ossify. That's why I WANT people to challenge me. I can put up with a bit of bluntness from fans if they're willing to argue; and many are, if you handle them right.

Jean Weber finds it otherwise, though...

### JEAN WEBER

My experience in Australia is that fans will typically talk about anything BUT serious topics. Or if they do discuss them, they don't do it seriously. They argue, but it seems more for the sake of arguing than to defend or challenge a legitimate opinion. No different from tea-time at work in that respect!

There are exceptions, both individuals and the occasional panel, but they are conspicuously exceptions. I don't have any explanations why this might be so. And I've found quite a few people that I can have a sensible and serious discussion with - once I get them away from other people, for whom they're 'showing off' or trying to preserve some sort of an image. I keep hearing about people whose approach is different, but I don't seem to meet them. Maybe they turn up in the smoking room or come out of the woodwork after midnight (after I've gone to sleep, bizarre fan that I am).

That's my view of my segment of Australian fandom. Wonder how others see it?

\*\*\*The ability to build a fantasy personality based on some real aspect of your personality is a real attraction about fandom. Through expressing myself on paper in a different way than I am able to in conversation, I can create expectations in others who haven't met me, which makes it easier for me to express this side of me when I DO meet them. Also, people have to integrate the paper me with the in-the-flesh me, which gives them more of an appreciation of who I really am, and how complex the structure is. You occasionally get people decrying the 'paper personality' as if it were some kind of a fake, rather than another window onto who a person really is. By now you will be able to guess my reaction to this!

\*\*\*Ian Bambro joins Joy in feeling rudeness can go too far.\*\*\*

### IAN BAMBRO

I first read your Being Different in the Mexican Programme Book and it was recommended to me by several people as a classic on the nature of fandom. I think you've identified a central truth about fandom (though one I'm not entirely happy with) when you speak of the rudeness, the lack of small talk, the stream-lined communication, the mutually challenging bluntness. You make out a good case for directness and the avoidance of cosy sterility but for me this sometimes goes too far. It's a question of degree. I think the point you pre-assume is that fans are always acting in good faith, as it were, in a spirit of honest enquiry. I'm not at all sure this is given, in fandom any more than in any other group, and I wonder if there is not more rudeness than is strictly necessary in the interests of frank and free discussion. It could also be argued that a proportion of fans find it a golden opportunity to let themselves go without much care for real interchange so that the more vociferous and forceful simply have a freer hand to assert themselves.

Personally, I think that small talk is not to be despised. No-one would want a diet of nothing else but it has its uses as I'm sure you know from work. There's lots of communication and mutual sniffing-out goes on in those trivial exchanges about the weather when you first meet someone, and the day to day chit-chat with people at work and in shops keeps the lines of communication open and lubricated for when the time is ripe to get on to something more substantial.

\*\*\*One of the problems that seems to occur is that the fannish vein of entertaining rudeness depends for its effectiveness on having at least two participants who know what game they are playing, and how to combine wit with venom, how to overstate or cleverly make themselves out to be foolishly extreme while allowing a serious message to show through for the observant. The really successful insulting interchange balances harsh words with sardonic intonation or a cynical appraisal of the insulter's own weaknesses, or relies on mutual understanding of each other's admitted weaknesses (eg "Bloody Perfectionists" said to me is not so much an insult as a way of saying "Ah but that's because you always take things to perfectionist extremes"; thus I am likely to reply "Bloody Shapers!" really meaning "OH, you just always want to push through your OWN course of action"). Thus the intonation or real meaning is acting at cross purposes to the actual wording, which is why it can be a difficult, subtle and complex conversational form - and hence intellectually rewarding. Problems occur when people get too involved or too drunk to control themselves, and a real element of dislike creeps in. The same thing happens when someone gets involved who DOESN'T know the unwritten rules, and reacts inappropriately. Since it is part of the game to avoid any mention of the fact that it is a game, the conversation will continue down a perverted and often hurtful route. And when people are angry or drunk, it offers an ideal opportunity to hurt while pretending to play, so they will jump deliberately off the tightrope of wit, and truly insult from behind cover.

Interestingly, the separation of meaning from the actual words used, by parents to children, has been identified as one of the background factors associated with autism, or child schizophrenia (and what you make of that is your own affair!).

Ian's points on the usefulness of small talk at work only makes me think that small talk is to find out what other people think without committing yourself, so that you can do the kind of 'fan dance' that Margaret Hall mentions, to make yourself acceptable. Which is a way of getting on in a narrow-minded society, if you feel you have things you ought to 'hide'.

When I manage to do a successful few minutes of pure small talking, in a lift or shop, my main reaction is one of pride that I have been able to turn in a polished performance of this social requirement. It took me thirty years to build up a repertoire and learn how to vary it convincingly, and I'm quite pleased to daringly show off my 2 minute violin solo without error. But that is ALL I get from it. That and maybe a hope that this will start some conversation that will allow me not to have to do it with that person at some time in the future. I suppose it does allow you to exchange some words (however empty) with a person who you may have little in common with; and that in turn opens the possibility of finding out that you do have something in common, and that can't be all bad, I suppose. Small talk does tend to paper over the cracks in a non-communicating society, though.

Steve Knight disagreed with the idea that Ians argue differently from other people.\*\*\*

#### STEVE KNIGHT

I would take issue with you on several things. Perhaps the most significant of the conflicts I will raise is the role of ideas in fandom and science fiction. Indeed I will claim that my explanation accounts for the SF-connection to fandom.

Science fiction is not the literature of ideas (I know you avoided saying it was! I saw that.). Rather it is the literature of an idea. The SF-idea, and there is only this one important one, is that there are piddling ideas and planet-busting ones. Not much of an idea, you might feel, but it is funny how often it keeps turning up.

The last place I bumped into this idea was about a week ago. From 'Mindstorms' by Papert :

p. 76 "One learns to enjoy and respect the power of powerful ideas. One learns the most powerful idea of all is the idea of powerful ideas."

See? It sounds looney at first, but it's quite a common way of saying that ideas can be manipulated like other mental objects.

Similarly, fans seem to be fascinated with ideas at first, but it quickly turns out they are one level removed. They are fascinated with the idea of ideas, of the idea-as-symbol. This superficiality (the 'hurrah' word is 'abstraction') is the tie between SF and fandom.

One can say, "Rubbish!" only because the idea is a counter, a simple material unit in a game of social intercourse. It isn't tied into the world-view of the proponent (necessarily). On the other hand, it is only a few fans that regularly change their stance or approach.

My second disagreement is that fans are strong communicators. I find the communication INTENSE but often unsatisfyingly woolly. Indeed the culture you portray reminds me of the sub-culture of young northerners at my first place of work.

"Y'southerners are shifty bastards. Always scheming. Never speak y'mind." Direct. Honest. What is being said is what matters. Great, I can understand that. Try being honest and direct back and what happens? They either have the screaming ab-dabs or crumple up like paper bags. Is it me or is it that it is a rather oblique honesty? I think the latter.

As to your (preposterous) notion of fans being "only swayed by good arguments or ideas", I can only say I have found them to be ordinary human beings on the whole. That is to say, totally unaffected by the merit of the ideas being bandied around.

Lastly, I cannot agree at all with the proposition that fans don't waste time with small talk. It's just a slightly disguised small talk, sometimes dressed with a few 'wacky' notions. Like all cultures, the socially acceptable stroking and gossip is merely distorted, not absent. It just eats me up with impatience if I get caught by some old bugger who wants to rap about 'novel' sex techniques or space-time configurations, or brain organisation. If the ideas are going to get talked about, FINE, but mere counter pushing leaves me cold.

\*\*\*Anyone who's been involved in a CUSFS silly ideas session will recognise the wacky ideas counter pushing bit. I'm not sure though that this applies so strongly across the board in fandom though. At least the climate exists for putting forward wacky ideas (though if they aren't seriously discussed, is this any better than the fan dance?). You tell me.

Several people reacted to the fact that I dismissed SF as of secondary importance to fandom.\*\*\*

#### DARROLL PARDOE

I don't think you give quite enough importance to the role of SF in fandom. My own experience of SF must have been quite similar to yours; at a certain point in my life I read a great deal of it, but as I got older my reading habits spread out into all kinds of non-SF fields and the amount of science fiction I read declined. Nowadays I read only a small amount of SF, in fact, though I still read SOME, and I certainly don't regret the vast amounts I've got through over my lifetime, mediocre though much of it was.

There must be a lot of us fans who don't read too much skiffy anymore, but look back with faint nostalgia to the time when we WERE more heavily involved. But SF is the cement that binds fandom together. We may not be more heavily involved with it as individuals, but it's the excuse that hangs the amorphous culture of fandom together, and I suspect that without it at the centre fandom couldn't stay in one piece, for all that we enjoy the clashing of people and ideas that goes on. Fandom needs a reason for existence.

Compare for instance, the life of the undergraduate at university. Now I (and I was like most other students in this) used to spend a lot of time sitting around with a group of congenial friends talking about all sorts of things, and ARGUING about them, very much in the same way as we do in fandom. Most of the topics discussed had nothing to do with the subjects we were studying. The university brought us together and provided the excuse for the intellectual socialising. Fandom is just the same. SF provides a reason for us to get together and do what we enjoy doing - but we do need a reason, even if only a threadbare one. When my three years at Cambridge was up I went away and lost touch with most of the people I used to argue so animatedly with - the excuse that brought us together no longer applied. I suspect the same applies to fandom.

Over the 20-odd years I've been in fandom, there have been changes, of course, but I don't think the fundamental nature of the animal has altered all that much. The big difference is the size of fandom - but fandom in the sense you defined it HASN'T expanded all that much. In the early sixties there were perhaps 100-150 people in Britain in 'core' fandom - are there more today? The big enlargement has come at the periphery, which accounts for the large numbers of unfamiliar people at Eastercons and for the beleaguered feeling we sometimes get. It's worse in the States, I think. Here, at least, 'our' fandom is still a recognisable focus at conventions, not just one more special interest group among many others.

\*\*\*Lisa Tuttle has a small piece of corroborating evidence for me, however.\*\*\*

#### LISA TUTTLE

'Being Different' is one of the most absorbing and best-argued pieces I've read in quite awhile. Partly because this question of What is Fandom? and What are Fans? has been occupying me a lot recently. Usually I accept it as a given: Fandom is. But then there are times, usually when the subject comes up in the outside world, with someone who isn't a fan, that it suddenly strikes me as peculiar, and when I realise that it doesn't have to do with science fiction - or at least not only or primarily with science fiction. But until I read 'Being Different' I'd always come back to the idea that science fiction was somehow at the core of it all, if only because I couldn't think of any other one thing that all fans had in common. Sure, I thought, fans don't spend all, or even very much, time talking or writing about SF, but they must all have been drawn to fandom because of an initial interest (usually during adolescence) in the stuff. That led me to the vexed question of what it was about SF that made its readers so eager to gather together with other SF readers and talk (not necessarily about SF) - why didn't the readers of mysteries feel this urge? Or addicts of historical novels? My parents were both great readers (my father even included some SF in his diet) but they weren't desperate to get together with other readers and seemed rather bemused by my sudden interest in writing letters to people with whom I apparently shared only an addiction to reading SF.

So what's so great about SF? Is it really the connection? It wasn't until I was reading 'Being Different' that I realised something I already knew from my experience, but which hadn't registered, and that was that not all fans come to fandom through SF. When I started up the Houston Science Fiction Society (the urge to congregate with other fans was so strong that since I couldn't find a local convention or group I was determined to start one myself!) I managed to contact other isolated fans in the Houston through fanzines, SF magazines, local newspaper...but also I spread the word around my high school. Some of the students



who came along to the meetings actually read SF but didn't stick with the group after one or two meetings. The peculiar thing is that there were several people, friends of mine, who did NOT read SF but who came along to provide moral support for me, or out of curiosity, and those people - tho they may not be terribly active as fans - are still, nearly 15 years later, to be found showing up at conventions in Texas. They were fannish types and found a niche. They even read SF for awhile - perhaps thinking they had to, in order to qualify as fans - but obviously it wasn't science fiction which drew them to the NSFS in the first place, and it wasn't science fiction which made them part of fandom.

So it makes more sense to do as you have done and look for what character traits fans have in common. I'm not sure all fans are as argumentative as you say, but an interest in ideas, in talk and in writing, is certainly there.

\*\*\*Now for two views of meeting and getting into fandom, from David Elworthy and Phil Collins.\*\*\*

#### DAVID ELWORTHY

Since most of your readers won't know me, I should explain that I have been involved to a large degree in those forms of CUSFS and Jomsborg which exist in Cambridge for about four years, and through them become peripherally involved in fandom. By this I mean I talked to people like Nick Lowe and Colin Fine who were very much 'in fandom', and therefore learned what it was about and some of the things that were going on in it, and I similarly read a few odd fanzines which were lying around in friends (why do I make so many tpliny ristrales?) friends' rooms. I went to Unicon 2, enjoyed it a bit, and went to Faircon '82 almost a year later. This I enjoyed enormously - I came away feeling that the inside of my head had just been entirely restructured. I also came away feeling that I didn't want to go to more cons or fannish events.

The reason for this was that there was a general feeling amongst all the fans that you couldn't get involved without getting TOTALLY involved - go to all the big conventions, visit the Tun, write LOCs. I am not concerned whether this attitude is the true one; the fact that people behaved in a way which implied it is the problem. You talk about gafiating and how it is acceptable; but it carries with it the implication that there is a 'somewhere' you must be to get away from.

This is not to say I am devoid of those attitudes which you identify as fannish - being willing to state, defend, adapt opinions - it is just that the parochiality destroys the willingness to do this.

Another thing you talked about at length was fanzines. Although I enjoy writing a great deal, and am involved in the 'Quinquereme' writers' apa in Cambridge (yes, I know you know all this, but I'm trying to imagine all your readers who don't), I have never felt particularly motivated to write for any. This is because most of what I've seen has been too introspective - there's just too much commentary on other fanzines, previous issues, obscure and minimal fannish events which have happened recently; they don't provide a hook to get me interested. OK, this is the producer's prerogative; however, it is not the way to bring in new blood. An extreme example of this is what I know of various apas, Frank's in particular (which I have seen one issue of, and heard about from various sources). What is implicitly being said here is: "Here's this wonderful magazine (which you can't read, because you're not one of us), but which you've got to admire. See, it's that one there, in the glass case... What...? You think we're being parochial...? Well, sod you, after all we didn't ASK you to comment on it...". This seems to be entirely against the open and honest approach, the willingness to argue, etc. that you talked about elsewhere. It's perfectly reasonable to have an in-Group; flaunting it isn't.

In summary, what I'm saying is:

- fandom stops being fun when any 'conventionalism' is implied;
- too many fanzines start either 'Dear Diary' or "I'm sorry, sir, you're not wearing a tie".

\*\*\*I can see that the enthusiastic use of jargon and in-references used by recent converts could be very off-putting. But I don't know whose apa you've been borrowing. At the time of writing, Frank's has 25 members out of a possible 35; new entrants are welcome. I won't lend my apa to anyone until I've written mailing comments to that issue, but that's because my prime responsibility is to my fellow apans. Once I'm onto my next issue, I'm happy to lend it to anyone who cares to read it, and I think most people are the same. Most apa issues get read by at least one or two people other than the member who gets it. If you want to comment, join the conversation - join the apa. But I don't think it is fair to want to criticise if you aren't prepared to join the group and put in some effort yourself. It's only like a writers' workshop - the rules are there to protect the members from the occasional oddball who wants to sit safely on the sidelines and sneer.\*\*\*

PHIL COLLINS

You seem to have missed a glaringly large self-contradiction in your piece on fandom.

- 1) You say fans hate organisation, regimentation, systems, stereotypes etc. Fair enough. BUT -
- 2) You also say fans erect barriers and only allow certain types of people into their hallowed troupe. You even give in your article a list of things a fan should/should not do to become one of the elite.

I have attended a con and have only very rarely attended the BSFA meetings at the King of Diamonds. This is not because I dislike/think I dislike the people attending - I don't go to parties or, as far as possible, ANY social gatherings. I don't like all the noise and hustle and bustle of people around me. I'm a loner. Thus by your logic, I can never be a core-member of fandom. Fair enough. But don't you DARE try to stop me writing to/for fanzines because I really enjoy doing so (in fact I'm soon to be producing my own zine but that's another story...).

I see and enjoy fandom as a way of reading interesting pieces of writing (such as your own). What's wrong with that?

'Shallow End' was thus initially useful to me as for once I saw a fanzine that actually encouraged nay demanded an article from me. When my first article appeared in 'Shallow End 2', it was a great boost to my writing confidence and I felt a lot happier about submitting stuff to other people because I had found out that :-

- 1) Neos aren't necessarily always rejected
- 2) There's no need for articles to be type-written
- 3) Odd subjects, such as in my case pantomimes, aren't necessarily anathema to fanzines

Now quite probably I would have found all these things out eventually by myself, but the help on simple presentation given by 'Shallow End' speeded things up greatly.

In fact, if you can bear to tear your eyes away from my article in 'Shallow End' you will see published a letter from a certain Anne Warren (an assumed name if ever I heard one), asking advice about the format for submitting artwork. Would you have got advice as quickly from another fanzine? I think not.

I realise that I am being different (unique?) in wanting to use fandom for writing and not socialising, but what's wrong with that?

Like you, I'm now in an apa, and the last few issues of 'Shallow End' have only appeared as a normal sort of genzine. But it did help me initially, and I'm grateful for that.

\*\*\*Sorry, Phil, but I think that the error in logic is yours. The main mistake you make is confusing my descriptive essay on fandom with a prescriptive one. I never gave a list of what fans SHOULD do to become part of the elite, I talked about the things that core-members of fandom DID do, and tried to draw some conclusions from my observations.



Second logic error; precisely BECAUSE fans are anarchic, they'd never get sufficiently organised to test people for membership to the 'elite' in the way you suggest. Starve em out, maybe. After all, you don't have to actually DO anything to starve people out...

One point which I want to clarify is that I never said that core-members of fandom are the only people who matter. By core-member I meant the 10% or fewer members of fandom that to some extent define the whole. The best word for this was Jimmy's suggestion - icons. The core-members of fandom are the icons who - as people, or largely through their performance or image - provide some sort of image or flavour that we all associate and identify with. Everybody in fandom probably contributes to this clan image at some time, by their actions and arguments (in person or in writing - D West and Judith Hanna both spring to mind a people who influence more through what they write than how they interact. So being a loner doesn't cut you out, Phil). The icons are simply the group of people who fairly consistently give a strong congruent flavour to the mix. That's one reason why the flavour of fandom over the years changes; because the individuals who are performing as the icons for fandom change over a space of time, as older members drop out and new ones come along. To become a fannish icon, I would guess you have to have some elements of similarity to the old regime plus some unique quality of style that attracts people in the wider community. All of which has nothing to do with the fact that fandom exists and is used and enjoyed by the 90% plus who are not icons, and who are just as important in a wider context, if not as important in the single issue of carrying forward the clan totem.

As for getting advice from Shallow End, that indeed was what it could, and should have provided - again, a DESCRIPTION of how to get effects, rather than a prescription of how you should write to be fannish. I rather liked the articles on duplicaters, and the advantages and disadvantages of Gestetners and Roneos. It would be nice to see a technical manual like that, which gives you the means to do what you want. But a workshop in print? Some of the criticism made me cringe; only Judith Hanna was the exception in honestly describing her reaction to the way the article struck her, and why, and she got slammed for her honest criticism. Subjects like Eve Harvey on how you shouldn't use "I" too much in an article struck me as actually FALSE - if the subject matter is enthralling, you don't notice stylistic stuff like that - it only strikes you if you're bored by the subject. At least one person I know was made self-conscious by that prescription, which could actually have made her style worse, because less natural. And she was one of the EDITORS of Shallow End! Frankly, for the outsider, the Shallow End criticism made less than fascinating reading. I also disliked the emphasis on style over content, how you said something rather than what you said. I tend to think that the urge to write and communicate will out, and it doesn't need Shallow End to set its standards.

\* \* \* \* \*

The line of stars above is a compromise. When Malcolm Edwards read 'Being Different', he told me I had it all wrong. Stung, I immediately demanded that he prove it in writing. In due course, a letter arrived, four pages of it, setting out a highly structured counter-argument to my hypothesis, which was very interesting. When I jokingly threatened to print it as an article, he jokingly threatened to do unpleasant things to me, which it would be indelicate in a lady to mention... So, we've had the psychologist's eye view; here's Malcolm's anthropological perspective. It is reproduced complete; I have missed out only the address, "Dear Anne," and "See you at Newcastle" (which shows how long it is since it was written. Sorry about that, Malcolm.).

MALCOLM EDWARDS

OK. Your article is proliferating throughout most of the universe. Time for some sort of a response.

Given that there is a good deal of incidental observation in the piece which is accurate and acute, I think the central argument is based on a false syllogism, which goes as follows :

This is the kind of person I am  
I have met other persons of this kind in fandom  
Therefore this is a kind of person a fan is

What this kind of person is, is described in some detail. They "felt themselves to be misfits in normal society". They "don't like wasting time with people". They "have in common an interest in ideas". They "don't like wasting time on small talk". They "like deep conversations...slide rapidly into discussions of some importance". And so on.

Well, this may describe you perfectly, I don't know, anymore than I know what characterises a discussion of 'some importance' in anything other than relative terms. I do know that it doesn't describe me, and I refuse to be legislated out of being a fan, after 14 years, by your theory.

Let me be more precise. When I say that it doesn't describe me, what I really mean is that it doesn't describe the way in which I interact with fandom in any way that is fundamentally different from the way in which I interact with friends/acquaintances outside fandom. Fandom seems to me to contain all kinds of people. Some of them are misfits in the outside world. Some aren't. (I was once; am not now; was and still am a fan.) Some are interested in sf; some aren't. Some think sf is a literature of ideas; some don't. Some have no small talk; some do. Some don't like wasting their time with people; some like nothing better. And so on. To say that the particular grouping of people/personality types which you find agreeable is the one which is characteristically fannish is simply to attempt to mould the culture in your own image.

Nevertheless, many or most of us would agree that there is something unique about fandom, even if few of us are too certain as to what it is. I have my own ideas, and I may as well say what they are, since they formed in response to thinking about your article.

One of the central things fandom provides - perhaps the central thing - is the opportunity for continuity of interaction in a way which society at large tends not to allow. Let's take an example, from the couple of hundred people in British fandom I know well enough to have some sort of conversation with when we meet. Okay - some of the Newcastle fans, Harry Bell say, or Kevin Williams. Good people. People I'm always glad to see at a convention. Not people I have any day to day contact with away from conventions. I've known Harry for ten years or more. Fine. Now, ten years ago there were people - former college friends, work mates - who were far closer friends than Harry and I have ever been. Do I see them now? Do I hell. We exchange Christmas cards, and that's it. I still see Harry three or four times a year in a hotel bar somewhere in Britain. Great. Fandom provides a context in which it's possible to have a whole network of continuing friendships or friendly acquaintanceships, which in the outside world it is simply too much trouble to maintain. It would be really nice to see such-and-such again, but he lives in Norwich, and I live in London, and somehow we never get around to visiting, and there's another year gone.

What does this mean fandom is? Simple. It means it's a kind of village, very much like the isolated communities that existed in pre-industrial Britain, except that with fast communications available, its nature no longer depends on the day to day geographical proximity of its members (a boring old McLuhanite global village, in fact). Many of us have lived there all our lives, it seems (all my adult life, certainly) - and we know most of the people by sight, at least. Many of them become our close friends. Every now and then we have a big social down at the village hall, where we all get together and get pissed for the weekend (or whatever it is that we do).

Of course, people come in from outside. Some of them find the villagers a bit suspicious and unfriendly, as villagers are wont to be. Others, who like the look of the village, settle down, and are soon legless down at the village hall with everybody else.

People move out, too. But wherever they go, they always know where the village is, and they are usually on at least Christmas card terms with one or two old timers who have stayed around. So sometimes they will come along to one of the socials, for old times' sake. Sometimes they enjoy it so much they decide to move back. The villagers know that there's a big, demanding world out there, and they don't resent it if, having moved away, people sometimes stay out of contact for quite a long time.

One of the advantages of this analogy is that, like all the best analogies, it can be extended to explain things that weren't in your mind when you first formulated it. Like the relationship between fandom and sf, and the difference between British and American fandom.

If fandom is a village, then science fiction is the local industry, the only one in the neighbourhood. Not everybody works there, of course, but the smoke from the sci-fi factory chimneys lies heavy across the place, and everybody is aware of it. All the villagers know somebody who works up at the factory; some of them - most of them - consume the produce to some degree, though others find it unpalatable. The village socials are organised under the factory's auspices, but you don't have to work there, or even consume the product, to go along. You just need to be a villager. There's a certain romance attached to the factory, and some villagers really want to work there; others come in from outside, in the search for jobs. Others still commute from outside to work at the factory, and don't live in the village at all. Some of these will occasionally turn up to the bigger socials, but generally speaking they don't quite fit in; such events are not quite as relaxed as those for villagers only.

America is bigger, of course, and what has happened there is that the village has grown so big that it is no longer a village. It has become a city. It's too big for people all to know each other. The sci-fi industry has diversified into a lot of ancillary products which many of the old-time villagers (and their friends) find vulgar and distasteful. It has become necessary to form villages within the city, in an attempt to recapture that old community spirit. But somehow it isn't the same as when the village was surrounded by miles of green fields. Also, a lot of the newcomers, who depend on those ancillary industries and who carry the most votes for the the local councils, find the old timers snotty and unfriendly. Sometimes they are quite right.

Many people think that things are going the same way in Britain; but it doesn't quite seem to have happened yet. The village is throwing out suburbs, but still retains a fair amount of its original character. Some would say that it is more cosmopolitan and alive.

Ah, but what about fanzines? Fanzines are a bit harder, but if they are anything, they must be the street network, I suppose (the only means of communication in the fandom village being on foot). In the American city they are no longer adequate, with the exception of one or two which have been turned into freeways (eg the Locus turnpike), and what has happened is that some groups have turned their localities into private estates, with private roads (called apas). There is some move to introduce such things in Britain.

Enough of this. In one way this is all obvious and superficial. On the other hand, it does differ fundamentally from your analysis, in that it attempts to define a territory, while you attempt to define a race. OK, the village tends to attract certain types in an unusually high ratio, probably on account of the nature of its industry. But all kinds live there, from jetsetters to the village idiot (who I will not be tempted to name!).

This is not to say, either, that there are not other villages around which share some of these characteristics (while having a different ambience). For example, I recently read David Lodge's novel *SMALL WORLD*, which is about the world of jetsetting academics, meeting at conferences all over the globe. The scale was different, and the pay was better, but it would be hard, I think, for any fan to read the book without thinking that a not dissimilar kind of book might be written about fandom.

My lunchbreak is coming to an end, and there are a couple of things I wanted to add to this. Let me drop out of the analogy before it suffocates me. Right.

You talk about coming into fandom and having "an almost tribal feeling of being one of a group who all have something in common". Fair enough. When I first went to my first convention, however, back in 1970, the feeling I had was that all these people did indeed have something in common - they were all mongs. (As we used to say.) (Excuse accidental intrusion of downside language.) The village (oh god, I slipped back in) was semi-derelict in those days, but having arrived there at roughly the same time (attracted in the main by an advertising campaign in one of the factory's more attractive products - *NEW WORLDS* - which, incidentally, most of the existing villagers refused to sample, finding it newfangled and threatening) ... anyway, having got there, a number of people decided to stay anyway, and make the best they could of it. The best way to have fun seemed to be to throw stones at the old villagers, who after a while either adapted or moved away.

It seemed for a while that the wheel had come full circle in 1979, but when the stones started to fly the class-of-1970 remembered what they had been, returned the fire, and soon enough everybody was under the table together in the village hall. And when they learned how things had changed, quite a few people who seemed to have moved away for good came back. We are not necessarily doomed to repeat history, as farce or anything else. In those days - going back to 1970 - fandom was no place to bring up a family, so people tended to move away. Nowadays many more of them stay, and in consequence it is a much more attractive and generally balanced community.

Enough. Enough.

\* \* \* \* \*



\*\*\*Interestingly enough, I see little conflict between Malcolm's theory and my own; I don't see why they can't both be true. Malcolm seems tacitly to accept this with phrases such as :

"Some of them find the villagers a bit suspicious and unfriendly...Others, who like the look of the village, settle down, and are soon legless down at the village hall with everybody else."

"Others still commute from outside to work at the factory, and don't live in the village at all. Some of these will occasionally turn up to the bigger socials, but generally speaking they don't quite fit in..."

"...the village tends to attract certain types in an unusually high ratio, probably on account of the nature of its industry..."

There does have to be something to attract us to this village. Also, Lisa's point is relevant - why aren't there other villages like ours? Jetsetting academics are hardly a fair comparison; they are getting paid and furthering their careers by going to conferences - whereas fans are prepared to pay for their pleasure, and give up their holiday time to socialise in this way. The academic world exists as a by-product; the fannish world is the product itself. We don't ALL work at the factory like Malcolm.

As a point of emphasis, I was not trying to define a RACE in my article (ie if you're not like this, you're not a fan), but a CULTURE (this is the way in which fans-as-a-whole react differently from the outside world-as-a whole). 90% of what is done by both groups may be the same; what I did was try to highlight what seemed to me to be the areas of difference.

Nonetheless, it may be interesting to conclude with some comments from Colin Greenland, another factory worker...\*\*\*

#### COLIN GREENLAND

I'm really glad you pointed out the importance of the word 'gafiate'. I think that's interesting: to me it goes with the bit about the fan gathering being a place where you can come if you want but nobody's expecting you. For me, that was a very necessary phase of socialisation - not with fandom, but with hippies. For the first time I'd found a group that wasn't motivated by competition, and who preferred fantasising out loud to formal conversation. Nobody would object to you dropping by, but you didn't have to touch all the bases all the time. That's where I took my first steps towards self-confidence. That's why I find fandom more congenial than not, without actually counting myself as a member of it. I know fandom probably considers me a member, insofar as it thinks of me at all (which is exactly the sort of supportive thing we're talking about); but I don't consider myself one. It's not snobbery or any such thing; fandom is the capital of the world of my work. It's useful and entertaining to me, and very instructive, AND convenient; I visit it, I pass through it, but I don't live there. It's not my primary orientation. My friends and associates don't comprise a group. It's strange to me that anyone SHOULD think of their friends and associates as comprising a group, which can have a name, let alone a private language, however small. Fandom doesn't exist. It's a collective delusion. It amuses and fascinates me, but I couldn't truthfully say I consider myself as BELONGING to it, in the sense of being a member, acolyte or participant in it.

\*\*\*Interesting that Colin and Malcolm both came up with the same analogy, and both of them working in the SF field. I'm sure I could draw some generalisations from that ("Never generalise from a sample of less than two" my father always told me), only it is 5.06 a.m. and I'm going to bed. No, I didn't stay up late to do this...one of the little advantages of having hayfever is sometimes it helpfully wakes you at 2.45 a.m. with a streaming nose, and you have to get up and do something while blowing the aforementioned streaming nose and waiting for the Piriton to work...

## THE END BIT

I hope you've enjoyed reading these letters as much as I did. A contentious bunch fans, and interesting to read. Thanks to everybody who wrote; my apologies for late publishing and severe pruning of the letters received. I also had interesting letters from :

Robert Lichtman, Dave Rowley, Sue Thomason, Mary Gentle, Judith Hanna, Joseph Nicholas, Vinc Clarke, Steve Green, Paul Kincaid, John Styles, Lucy Huntzinger (thanks for the xeroxing, Lucy!), Eric Lindsay, Joyce Scrivener, Steve Davies, Eunice Pearson, Peter Colley, for which many thanks.

And it only remains to list the addresses of contributors...

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That's all for now, folks.  
Thank you for listening.



Many thanks to Jimmy for all the cups of tea and printing.



Malcolm Edwards