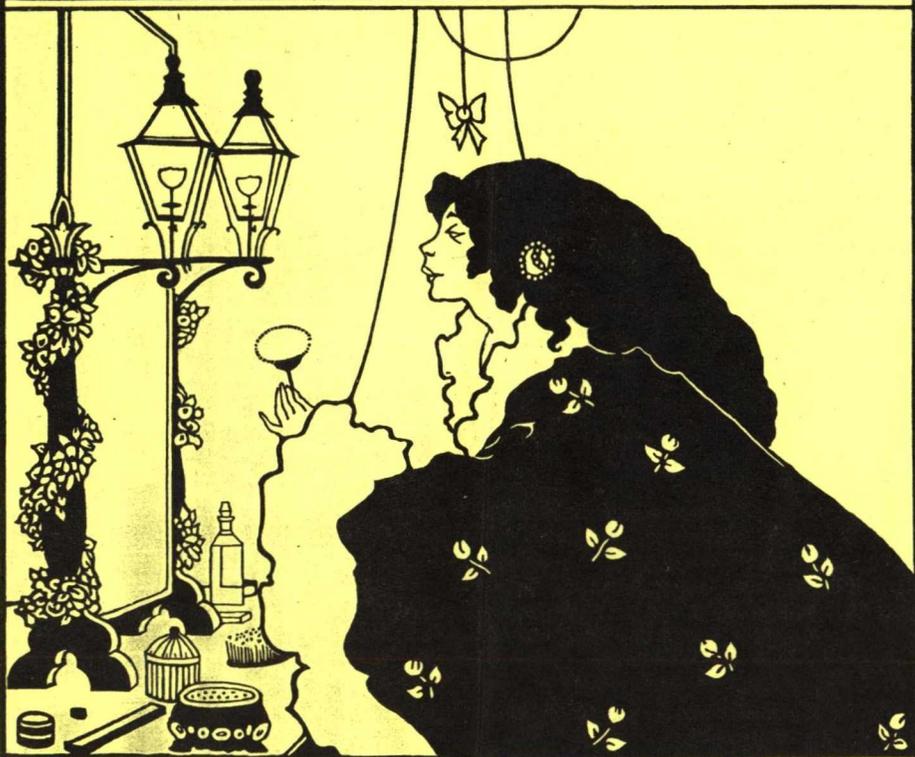


LES SPINDE



34

LES SPINCE

Last issue I made some remarks about how fans discovered fandom, and Ro was inspired to put down an account of her

own route into our microcosm. This is it. "I think I can safely say that my introduction to fandom was fairly unique. Most British people reading this will know of FILM REVIEW, the film magazine sold in the cinemas. If you've ever seen a copy you may have noticed a section in the back devoted to readers' sales and wants lists of movie material. In 1967 I was 16, still at school, and an avid collector of movie magazines. All movie magazines, but including FAMOUS MONSTERS (in fact that was about the intellectual peak of the material I collected). Via the readers' section in FILM REVIEW I took to selling the stuff I didn't want; in the process I got to know people like the granddaughter in law of J.R.R. Tolkien, who collected cuttings on Julie Andrews and Tony Curtis, and a woman in Perrins Lane, Stourbridge, who sold material on all the people I happened to have crushes on at the time. If Perrins Lane sounds familiar, it's because it's the road in which Darroll's parents live now (and did then) but of course I didn't know at the time. More to the point as far as fandom is concerned I saw a plug in FILM REVIEW for 'The Horror Film Club of Great Britain', a short-lived club run by Gary Parfitt (who is still around on the periphery of fantasy fandom: a sort of Alan Dodd figure).

I joined, and then the Club folded, and my very slight connection with fandom might have ended at that if it hadn't been for the fact that, at the same time, I got into contact with a certain Barbara Rawlins, who collected cuttings of Christopher Lee (again this was via FILM REVIEW). She was in fandom at the time because she was the girl friend of Dave Britten. She later dropped out when they broke up, but before that she sold me a couple of fanzines: GOTHIQUE and MONSTERS INCORPORATED. Via the former I got in contact with Bram Stokes (who was one of its co-editors at the time), and via Bram I contacted Mary Reed. Purists will say that until then I hadn't discovered fandom as such: I was just lurking on the borders of a fringe-fandom. But I didn't notice any difference at the time. I had also registered for the 1968 Thirdmancon, but didn't go as my parents dissuaded me.

I never really leapt upon fandom as if it was the answer to all my prayers. It wasn't until mid-1968 that I met my first fan - Julia Stone. Shortly after that I met Mary Reed and Chas Legg. Then my three month stay in hospital in London allowed me to meet a great many fans (also I went to my first Globe meeting just before that: I went with Julia Stone and Mike Kenward, then editor of VECTOR but later to go on to greater (?) things with NEW SCIENTIST). Then I really did get into fandom in a big way, and it wasn't too long before I'd edited an awful crudzine and been to my first con (the 1969 Oxford con: I was living in Oxford at the time). I've always felt that I've been balanced uneasily on the borders between fantasy fandom and SF fandom ever since, perhaps because I discovered the latter via the former. I also like SF fans better than fantasy fans, though I read mostly fantasy and little SF.

Mary Reed has been known to claim that she introduced me to fandom, but that isn't strictly true. If any fan would want to make that claim, Bram Stokes is the only one who'd legitimately be able to. Mary and I fell out in a passive sort of way in 1969, mainly because Mary doesn't really like Darroll and believed

(I think) that he was dominating me (ha!). I've never really felt at ease with her since, though I still appreciate the way she contacted so many people to get them to visit me in hospital: it made going back to boring old Oxford afterwards rather a let-down. It was also via Mary that I started writing to Darroll (he was in the States at the time) as she gave me a pile of fanzines including an old SPINGE which I liked enough to write to Darroll."

Ro's discovery of fandom was remarkably convoluted, but my own (this is me, Darroll, writing again now) was just as unlikely a collection of happy coincidences. In 1959 Ken Cheslin and a couple of his friends heard about the 1959 Eastercon, which was held at the old Imperial Hotel in Birmingham, and went along to see what it was like. They were hooked on fandom straight away, and founded the Stourbridge and District SF Group (SADO for short) which had an active life of a couple of years before fading away. A few months later the first issue of LES SPINGE appeared: in those early days it was meant to be the SADO clubzine. Ken, bless him, was keen enough on rounding up new members for SADO to put an ad in a prozine, NEW WORLDS.

Dave Hale and I had been friends for some years, and we were still at school and read a great deal of SF, though up to this point we had had no contact with fandom. Dave saw the ad in NEW WORLDS and we got in touch with Ken and were introduced to the microcosm. I'll be forever grateful to Ken for putting me in touch with fandom.

Initially Dave became a lot more active than I did. I had other things going, such as university (I went to Cambridge in 1961) and notching up some 12,000 miles of train travel a year. Dave took over SPINGE from Ken Cheslin and built it up to the climax of the Black Spinge in 1965, following which he gafiated completely and (so far) permanently. In fact I'd been in fandom six years before I published a fanzine of my own by buying Ken's duplicator and taking over LES SPINGE, largely at the urging of Peter Weston and others of the Ancient Brummies.

I like to date my entry into fandom from the first SADO meeting I attended, which was in July 1960. Dave had in fact gone to the previous meeting but for some reason I'd been unable to, so I suppose he has some slight fannish seniority over me. But I seem to have lasted longer.

My first convention was the 1961 Eastercon at Gloucester. It seemed big at the time, but I think there were less than a hundred people there. British fandom was then still only just beginning the climb out of the very depressed state of the late 50s. I believe that one of the Kettering cons attracted less than 40 people. Fortunately the drastic measures taken to combat the decline (ie founding the BSFA) were successful.

If Ken hadn't gone to the 1959 Eastercon; if he and the other initial Stourbridge fans hadn't decided to form SADO; and if Ken hadn't put that ad in NEW WORLDS (or, I suppose, if Ted Carnell hadn't run small ads), I would never have been drawn into fandom. I wouldn't have met Ro either, and that doesn't bear thinking about.

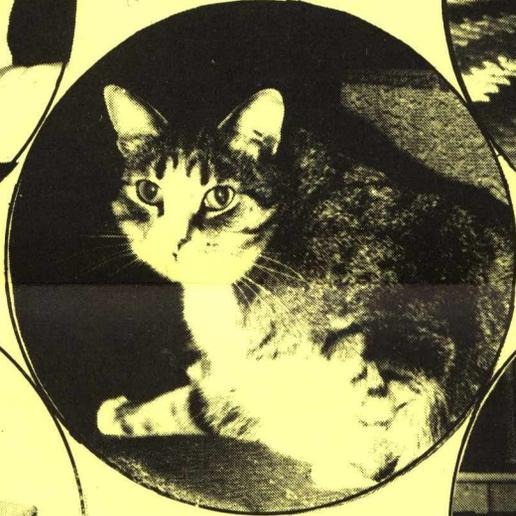
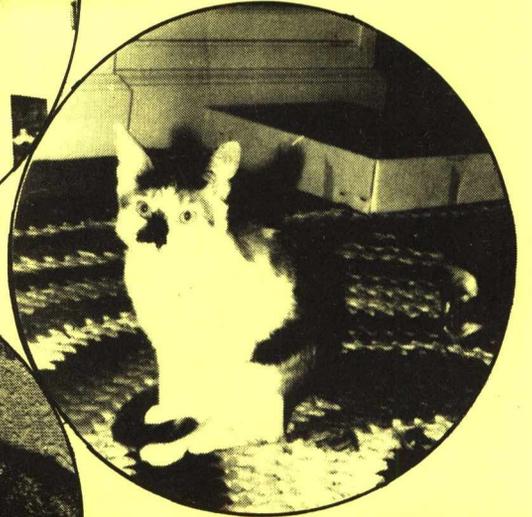
But here I am, and here old Leslie still is too. This autumn LES SPINGE will be twenty years old: not many fanzines, especially British fanzines, are around that long. It does seem rather a long time.

CRY OF THE WILD GALS

Jean Frost: 113 Abbey Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7QQ

Feminism first. I am not militant; if I come across instances of inequality or chauvinism then I will raise my voice in protest at the time, but I do not spend time campaigning because I believe at this time there are more important causes to worry about, like the mismanagement of this world. I sincerely believe that if something isn't done soon, to bring home to people what we are doing to this planet there won't be much for women to be equal in. Because of these beliefs we (me and Kevin) joined Friends of the Earth (Sutton Coldfield) and I'm beginning to think that this was a mistake. (And these next remarks are going to sound chauvinistic, but as I'm talking about unliberated women I don't think they are). There are three men in the group and the balance is composed of about four enlightened women and ten or so middle-class, middle-aged unliberated women who are far too comfortable with their life-style (central heating, large house, car each, meat every day etc) to want to change anything. They are far too worried about saving sweet, cuddly furry animals from extinction to be concerned with more pressing issues. And in case you think I'm being bitchy, they're not at all worried about insect species being wiped out by insecticides. I'm sure their only reason for coming to FoE meetings is because they can go away feeling that they have done some good and now they won't go to hell when they die. They actually do nothing! Sutton FoE are having an exhibition in Sutton library. Who's organising it? The three blokes and the younger women. Who went to demonstrate at Torness? The younger members. Who tries to change their life-styles? The younger members again. Those women would be better off (for us) in the W.I. or similar institution; we had one meeting where the subject of making one's own jams and pickles came up.

Kevin dislikes one in particular because the first time they met she said "Ah yes, I know you, don't I?" "No" said Kevin. Someone else interjected and said to her "No, M.G. (her name) you two have never met before." "Oh" said M.G. "How many of the long-haired types have we got in this group, anyway?" She was obviously guilty of some



sort of chauvinism that I remember from my childhood, when people said they couldn't tell blacks apart, because they all looked the same.

One of the things I am worried about is diet, especially food additives. This has been a niggling worry to me since I was at school and I half-heartedly tried a macrobiotic diet. I didn't know enough so it failed, but since then I have tried to avoid highly processed food and stick to brands which have less additives (eg Heinz). But recently, culminating in last week's Man Alive report on antibiotics as growth promoters, I've decided to eat less meat. I haven't thought it out properly yet but it wouldn't mean a vast alteration in diet because we can't afford to eat meat very often. I still have to find out a few more things, like whether eggs are antibiotic laden.

Really I'm concerned about farming in general. I've always been against factory farming - I think Kevin has mentioned we only eat 'free range' meat when possible, but this doesn't guarantee antibiotic-free meat, does it? It's not just meat farming I'm worried about. Casual references in TV programmes that 'there are fewer ponds because fertilisers have leached into them and they have become choked with weeds and algae' are pretty alarming to me. If traditional farming were practised, only small amounts of artificial fertiliser would be needed. The traditional farming (rotation) is not much more inefficient either. In the UK agriculture requires 0.02 man-hours/unit of food energy produced; Chinese peasant farming requires 0.03.

Regarding animal exploitation, I see nothing wrong with meat production provided the animal has had a comfortable, distress-free life. As regards milk, I didn't realise that cows had to be kept almost permanently pregnant to produce it. Luckily I don't use much milk because it's fattening and also it's bad for adults because it can't be digested and can cause kidney stones. I tried goat's milk but it must be an acquired taste. Incidentally, although I don't know the full principles of veganism I can't see any objection to goat's milk because goats lactate naturally and do not need to produce a kid to produce milk, and no animal deaths are therefore involved.

Oh, yes: entry into fandom. Well, I heard about conventions from - cringe - sf monthly! My first convention was Season 75 where I met lots of nice people who were fun to be with. So now you know.

(++ In Jean's letter 'sf monthly' was written in very tiny letters ++ Environmental things worry me too, and Ro and I found the local branch of the Conservation Society, which we joined when we lived in Huntingdon, exactly the way you describe for the FoE. But feminism and the state of the earth are not unconnected: many of the unpleasant things we're doing to our planet are caused by the curious hierarchical, competitive, struggling society (in a word, patriarchal) we live in. A society which was not composed of people trying to dominate one another would not use nearly so much energy, for instance. ++)

Pamela Boal: 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage OX12 7EW

What a welcome return. Is it really five years since Les went into storage? Much as I enjoyed MOTL I missed the delightful covers. Just to add to the Richard Cowper/John Middleton Murry Jr confusion I understand from

his fascinating autobiography that his family call him Collin. He is an excellent reminder of the fact that many fans seem to forget about: like many of the best in the genre he is not an SF writer, he is a Novelist. I wonder how many fans know for instance that Anne McCaffrey was an established and popular writer of Gothic novels before *The Ship That Sang* brought her SF fame.

My own entry into fandom was somewhat involved. I wrote some very unpolished stories for a Mensa special interest group in SF. When a fan (Fred Hemmings) took over editorship of the group's mag and mentioned conventions I wrote to the only other fan I had heard of and asked if he could give me a lift to the next Eastercon. Of course, that fan was living in Florida at the time but he was the only one I knew of. He said of course he would give me a lift and was as good as his word. Sam Long is like that bless him. Andrew Stephenson was a fellow passenger; he and Sam were kindness and courtesy personified, and soon after we arrived Dave Rowe spotted me and introduced himself, and other fans. So I effected a swift and painless entry into fanland. Though I like to think I helped myself by volunteering to help out at the reception desk where I was made welcome by Pat and Mike Meara and got to know at least the faces (names came later) of several people.

(++ I'm not clear why you draw a distinction between SF writers and Novelists (with a capital 'N'). Are you suggesting SF writers are in some way a lower form of life? ++)

Paul Kincaid: 20 Sherbourne Road, Middleton, Manchester M24 3EH

I can't agree with Ro's inclusion of that extract from Milt Stevens' letter to WILD FENNEL 15 in her list of 'sexist' quotes. For a start he's only suggesting that 'it is possible that feminism will have been talked out of fandom by 1980'; there's nothing sexist about that, since he doesn't say whether it should or not.

Secondly, I can't agree that it would be sexist to say that feminism should have been talked out of fandom by 1980. Maybe I'm an MCP but I'm sick and tired of all forms of extremism and feminism seems to have provoked particularly strident extremists. Women have as much right to equality as any other human being - but I sometimes get the impression that feminists believe women should be, in some Animal Farm-ish way, more equal. Certainly some of the legislation that is desired seems to push the pendulum too far the other way. Moreover there does seem to be some feeling, among the more extreme feminists, that we should legislate for absolute equality; which is both absurd and undesirable. No two human beings are equal in all things; I freely admit that there are many men and women who are stronger, cleverer, more intelligent than I am. There are moreover differences between the sexes (inevitably so: if there were no differences then there would not be two sexes but one, and we wouldn't be having this debate) and I can't see why these differences cannot be accepted.

No, the whole subject of feminism is something that has provoked ludicrous excess at both extremes. The sooner that we can accept the equality and the differences the happier I'll be. And the sooner we can drop the subject, with its bitter cries of sexist at even the mildest suggestion that men and women are not identical, as a matter

for fannish debate, the happier I'll be. Thank God things haven't got as bad in British fandom as it appears to be in America.

Mike Glicksohn: 141, High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3

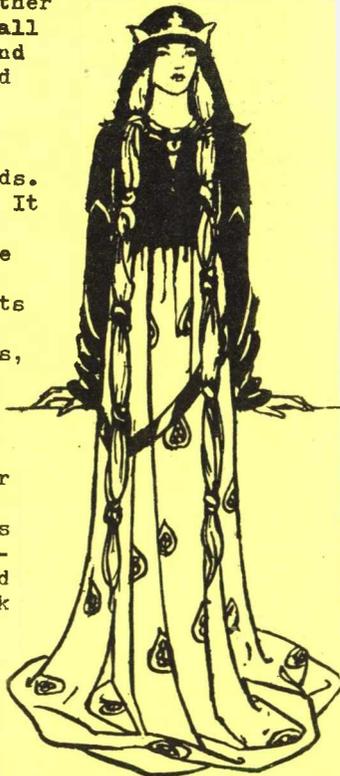
What you say about the supposed elitism of fandom is precise and correct. It must be, I've been saying it for years! Everyone goes through that initial period of making friends and getting to know whole circles of already-established friends but most of us survive. It's true that it's always best to develop your own circle of friends as well, but at the same time most of the more interesting new fans gradually get to know the older generations also. It's having a range of fannish friendships that cover the spectrum from Bob Tucker and Harry Warner through Greg Pickersgill and Terry Hughes up to Lee Pelton and other relative newcomers that makes fandom so much fun for me.

I don't think you quite got the proper point across about the difference between British and North American fandom. You say you all see each other three or four times a year whereas we don't but last year I saw pretty well all my good friends at least that many times; in some cases I saw people who live five hundred miles from me a dozen or more times over the year. I guess what you meant was that North Americans tend to be forced to limit themselves to fans in a given area somewhat. This is a generalisation of course, since with the mobility of fans one always has friends scattered across the country but often one's closer friends are drawn from one region of fandom rather than from all over the country while you lot, all cramped and cluttered in that tiny little island of yours, can have friends all over England and still meet regularly. Still, all things considered, I'll take my eighteen cons last year with most of my dearest friends over your five with perhaps a larger percentage of your friends.

It

struck me that my good friend Mr Roberts might well have had a decisive effect on his favorite battle were he transported there. Surely the average group of superstitious Vikings and Celts would, when faced with an orange-clad beanpole in purple boots and reeking of Brussels sprouts, turn tail and flee in terror, thereby ending the battle altogether and changing the course of history? A carrot affects history...and you are there!

My discovery of fandom was rather pedestrian really. I read in a sophisticated journal devoted to fantastic literature (Famous Monsters of Filmland, actually) that the world-con was to be in Cleveland in 1966, so I packed a suit and tie into my suitcase (I didn't think I'd be let in without them) and took my motor-bike down to Ohio. I soon discovered that a SF convention wasn't exactly a series of lectures and speeches, never unpacked my suit, and have been to over a hundred of them in four different countries in the



subsequent thirteen years. Just think, Forry was not only to blame for "sci-fi" but for Glicksohn as well!

Jessica Amanda Salmonson: Box 5688, University Station, Seattle, WA 98105

Ned Brooks reminded me of my own time spent in a factory. Made two fine friends, one a very old Austrian with a number tattooed along his arm, quite a horny gentleman but very kind. He was educated in Europe and South America, and was a professor at Berkeley ages ago...but in those days Professors were paid so badly he had to quit and go to work for a factory. He'd been there twenty years when I met him, and of course he remembered when No Women worked there at all. In those days there were no restraints upon the men. They whipped out their pricks during lunch breaks and laid them out on the table, comparing lengths (my Austrian friend swore his was the longest); and if someone wanted, for a prank, to drop his pants and piss off the catwalk on friends working below, they just went ahead and did it. Sounds real cool. But things changed when women were employed. For instance, when I was there, a woman was fired for having sex in the first aid room. The guy she had sex with is still working there to my knowledge.

Peter Roberts' letter is more than mildly amusing. A brilliant satirist and comedian in fandom! How quaint! How unusual! Yet he often has serious undertones to his humour, and I take his wish to fight for the Cornish nation seriously: perhaps because I have peculiar notions of my own. I would like to have been a foreign devil in 13th century Japan, and learn fighting skills from Tomoe, a woman samurai. We'd have fought arm-to-arm and been quite a couple! I'd also have used present-day knowledge to ensure my own status (gotta make up for not being oriental). It is my belief that if the Japanese had learned about nutrition in the time of Tomoe rather than the time of MacArthur, and this was privileged knowledge among the warrior aristocracy, history would have been written differently because Japan would have had a warrior class of giants. China would have become a suburb of Japan, and the U.S. a protectorate. By then the Mick-Yid blood of my descendents would be pretty much forgotten, and my Japanese great-great-great-etc. grandchildren would vacation in that Japanese paradise we know as the Philippines. Even here in Seattle, the public school system would gleefully point out that Amerika was the first aggressor in the war with Japan (we sank a ship out of basic meanness in international waters, well before Pearl Harbor). And instead of Japan turning into a cheap plastic imitation of Amerika, Amerikans would be walking about in kimonos and spewing flowery praise on each other (and tourists would visit the anachronistic Anglo corner of San Francisco, called 'Honkytown').

THE PHOTOPAGE: part 2 of our American pictures from last October (for the first part see WARK 14). Top: Allyn Cadogan, who we stayed with in San Francisco. The cat on the right is Allyn's Jenny. The other two cats live with John Berry and are huge: (left) Marilyn (middle) Theodore. The bottom left is Eli Cohen; bottom right Grant Canfield; bottom middle Gil Gaier.

COVER ILLO: by Aubrey Beardsley. Incidentally, I've compiled an index to LES SPINGE 1-33; if you want one just ask.

Darroll Pardoe, 38 Sandown Lane, Liverpool L15 4HU, England. June 1979.