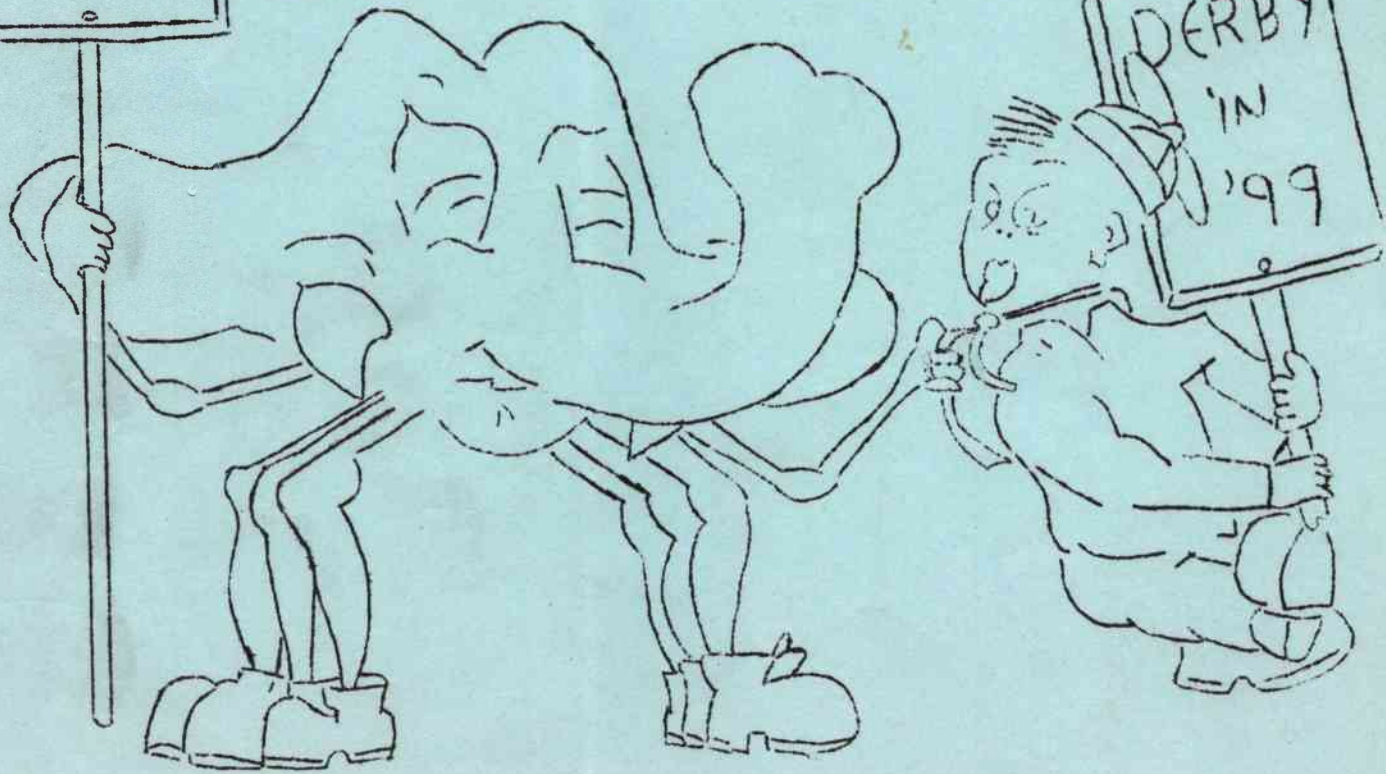


# WORK

STOCK  
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IN '99

- 1. Ta for makeover.
- 2. Mc Caffrey & Weston / too soon
- ① x word first they in the market for me
- (P11) Liked your reviews
- (P14)



LURK is edited, produced and partially written by Mike and Pat Meara, 61 Borrowash Road, Spondon, Derby, DE2 7QH, England. This is issue number three, dated October 1972, and is intended for the 67th. mailing of the Offtrail Magazine Publishers' Association. It is available outside OMPA for contribution, letter of comment, trade or 50p (sample copy free). South African agent:- Nick Shears, 52 Garden Way, Northcliff 4, Johannesburg, S.A.

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Back Cover: ERG 40th issue commemoration - Original art by Jeeves, Arranged by Pat.

All uncontributed written material in this issue is by Mike.

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Print run this issue: 75

If a cross appears here ..... this is your last issue unless you respond.

IT'S OMPACON FOR ME IN SEVENTYTHREE IT'S OMPACON FOR ME IN SEVENTYTHREE



# JUST FOR A LURK...

A rather hurried editorial.

GET LURK, THE ZINE WITH ADDED STARKOTHIN! This issue has a rather plain and hurried look for several reasons, the chief one being house-moving, which took place during the August bank holiday weekend - but more of that later. Fifteen of a proposed thirty-four stencils had been completed when zine-work had to give way to moving preparation. These were completely devoid of artwork, both because of the time-saving factor (moving put us three weeks behind schedule) and because of various criticisms of that aspect of the first two issues. After the move it soon became obvious that further economies would be necessary if we were to stand a chance of making the OMPA deadline; out of the window, therefore, have gone the proposed photo-cover and record reviews (which might appear nextish); genzine reviews have shrunk to mere shadows of their former selves, likewise the OMPA comments. Only the lettercol remains at anything like its proposed original length. Standard headings, occupying the minimum possible amount of space, have also been used throughout.

Apart from all the problems associated with house-moving, there have been other demands on our time: the excellent T.V. coverage of the olympics, for instance, has meant many a late night and befuddled, square-eyed morning. Also there's the fact that we need a holiday. Do-it-yourself house-moving is fun at the time, but more tiring than one realises, even with helpers. As you read this in early October, therefore, we'll be getting away from it all for a week or so.

OUR LITTLE GREY HOME IN THE WEST MIDLANDS Okay, so Derby isn't in the West Midlands....don't be so pedantic. We were dreading the thought of moving; all those S.F. books and mags, all those records.....but as it turned out, they were relatively easy; it was the more normal miscellany of junk which took so damned long to gather together. Hertz may not be the cheapest van-rental firm in the business, but at least they're convenient, I reasoned....too bloomin' convenient. There I was, at 6pm on a Friday, at the wheel of a far-larger-than-I'd-expected 30-cwt van, with no way of getting it to the flat without going through town (you try not going through town when you're in the middle of it - it's difficult), and me never having driven anything bigger than a Ford Consul. However, I made it, and by Saturday night I'd got quite used to it, so much so that we took it over to Hull to pick up some stuff from my mother. A couple of days ago, Pat saw the van again, moving under its own power, but with the words "ON TOW" written on the back; looks like the Meara motoring jinx is still semi-active!

LURK 2 CROSSWORD SOLUTION Across: 1 Christopher Youd/6&7 Tau Zero/8 Fander  
10 Elidor/11 Robbie/12 Erekoze/15 Amulet/ 16 Arisia/17 Innelda/22 Tongue/  
23 Seated/24 Eisner/26 Shem/27 Kie/28 The Death of Grass. (continued p25)

# ANNE MCCAFFREY

Guest of Honour Speech - Eastercon 1971.

I was very honoured to get the invitation, no substitute nonsense. I enjoy it, after all I'm an exhibitionist, like some of the rest of us. But there is this ambivalence about being a guest of honour, because although I've had a lot of stage experience, it was someone else's words I was using, and it was their fault if it didn't come over. Now I've got to use my own and that's something else again. However, I keep telling people I'm only a story-teller and that is, I think, basically true; so I will not try and write a speech, because I tried that once and it didn't work. I lost my place constantly and had to find it, and this is no good; so I thought I would just tell a story. Lester del Rey suggested this to me; he said "Why Anne, it's really very simple, you just get up and talk." If you know Lester del Rey, he has an opinion on anything in five seconds and he's usually right and that's the horrible part about it. But I don't have Lester's background, I don't have his scientific acumen, I haven't gotten his experience, I haven't had all the chances he has, starting off in science fiction. As Jim Blish said in the programme notes, I kind of skipped in through the side door and here I am and somebody's wondering who's that and how did she get in?

You know, this is where we have the questions I get asked, why are you writing science fiction? The implication is that women shouldn't be writing science fiction. But I'm not writing science fiction, I'm telling a story. Do you know the Bob Kennedy quote; "Some people see things the way they are and ask why. I dream things that have never happened and ask why not." Well, this is about what I do. It is not incomprehensible to me that I can think of fire-breathing dragons and come up with a scientific explanation. That was simple. I mean there must be a reason why there were fire-breathing dragons; O.K., so you find one. It goes into the warp and woof of telling a story. I think this is a talent some people are born with or without and I was lucky to be born with it, so I'm a teller of stories. The stories I tell happen to be science fiction, why I do not know.

Maybe someday people will pass through what I have said in my stories and say; "Ah-hah! She was really talking about the influences of her environment at that time...." As a matter of fact, sometimes when I read the blurbs for my stories, I think; was that what I was writing about? And then I look at it from that aspect and I say, "yes, that was what I was writing about, only I didn't know it. At the time I was telling a story." So I took a look at some of my stories and I read the reviews that people were kind enough to write and unkind enough to write, and I realised that I was telling more of a story than I realised. It was all the feed in, the input, and then the feed back. But, because I am essentially a story-teller, I was not consciously using the material that keeps coming in to me. For

instance, in RESTOREE I was mad, I was bored with being a housewife and diapers and scrubbing floors and all that kind of jazz and the glories had worn all off of this little bit and the mind was not sufficiently occupied with listening for babies' cries and feeding the husband.

I had been reading science fiction then for about eight or nine years. I'd published two stories and I suddenly realised that what annoyed me about a lot of the stories was the fact that there were heroes and there was scientific information coming in, but they weren't people. They were cardboard characters saying what was necessary to forward the plot or to elucidate on details, so that the scientific gimmick would be plain to the reader at the end of the story. They weren't people and I still felt that no matter how much technology we have there would still be people left around us and I was interested in the people. I was interested in all kinds of people, the male, the female, the whatever-they-are in the middle, and the aliens. And the females in science fiction at that time, the fifties, were abominable, I've never met any female like that at all. Most of the time they were there as decoration, because somebody realised that well, there are women in the world as well and we've got to mention them as they're going to be there in the future too, but it was all a kind of et-cetera. So I sat down and wrote a story with a heroine instead of a hero, and I had a lot of fun doing it. And she was always there at the right time and the right places instead of the hero. Remember in RESTOREE the hero doesn't know how to sail the damn boat, she does. She's the one who gets into the pentagon palace type thing. She's there at the right time, she has the answers, only she doesn't know it. And this was kind of satisfying to me because I had all the elements of a science fiction story, except reversed. I was having fun and everybody took it very seriously. And then of course Richard Guys (Geis?) came out and took me to task for using the phrase "Oh Harlan, that this should happen to you." Well I got that name out of the phone book. I didn't know Harlan Ellison, though of course he'll never believe that.

This was where, that's the genesis of it. Even then I was reacting to pressures and influences that were unconscious. My menace there was extra-terrestrial, it was not something from that planet. I realise now that I do this often. In DRAGONFLIGHT you have an extra-terrestrial menace. I don't like people at war. I'm not basically a pacifist 'cause I'm a colonel's daughter and my conditioning was different - after all, I went through the second world war - but I don't like nations on one planet fighting, and it comes out. It came out in RESTOREE, it has come out in DRAGONFLIGHT, it actually comes out in DECISION AT DOONA too. I want wars to stop, I don't like 'em and as this upcoming generation, as you realise, has discovered, if there are wars being fought they don't want to go - very good, very good. I'm getting off the point.

In DECISION AT DOONA, which was chronologically the second novel I wrote, I was concerned with overpopulation. I was also concerned with what happens to the person who is out of step, the rebel, the anachronistic person, what happens to them in an overpopulated world; they're either killed off or crushed or they commit suicide. The other thing that I was fighting to

express was a suddenly realised conviction that the only truly civilised people are those who can accept someone else's values without trying to impose theirs on them. I've never read deeply in philosophy except when I was in university, but my philosophy has developed from my contact and my love of people, and if you have been exposed to my children here, you will realise that I forced many values, my values, on them, they are a different generation. Todd (McCaffrey) is Todd Reeve in DECISION AT DOONA. He was very much the "I'm going my way and if you want to follow, fine, but I'm going my way anyhow", which typified the type of person who can accept someone else's values without imposing theirs on them. And this, I think, has come out in other science fiction stories too but this is what I was expressing in DECISION AT DOONA, not knowing it.

In SHIP WHO SANG, which was kind of in between everything else, the first story was actually my way of working over my grief at my father's death. I was almost in tears at the Baycon when Ray Bradbury told why he had written THE KILIMANJARO MACHINE, which was because he could not take Ernest Hemingway's suicide. This was not the way for that man to die, so in order to work out his grief over Hemingway's suicide, he wrote what he felt was a proper demise for Ernest Hemingway; which I think is a perfectly beautiful reason to write a story and it was a fine story. I had tried to work out my grief, my mourning for my father, by writing this particular story; I still can't hear taps without bursting into tears, it's one of the panic buttons I have. But I suddenly realised that grief is one of the constants we are always going to have with us, there is no way of assuaging that instantly, there is no pill to get over grief, time is the only thing; you get distance between yourself and grief. O.K., how are technologies going to work with this? For instance, nowadays if you are hurt you immediately go for a little pill and get over the hurt, you no longer have to endure pain. We've got to the point where we can't endure pain when there's no pill around, we're screaming for the doctor, for the instant medicine. That's grand you know, that's what it's for but you can carry anything good to an extreme. But the content of grief is always going to be with us. How do you work it out, particularly if you are a machine and you can't cry, which is a marvellous relief? So actually THE SHIP WHO SANG is also an exercise in how you get over sorrow, in how you absorb it, in how you dissipate it through your system and grow out of it and also, how you turn what is a tragedy into a personal triumph. You've often seen people who are bogged down with self-pity; "Oh, he died and I wasn't able to tell him this" and "He's left me and how will I ever..." Well, this sort of thing is going to happen too, but the ship had to figure it out her way, it made her more human. Helga is actually more human than some of the mobile partners, she's there because of this grief. I'm told I was trying to define humanity too. Well, I wasn't aware of that but I guess it's in there as well.

Actually, all my stories are love stories. I know this will offend some people who think science fiction has to be science and it has to be a certain thing. It doesn't have to be a certain thing at all. It can have many many facets, in fact it does, it should, because we're still, whether we're dealing with technology or anarchy or whatever, we're still dealing with people essentially and this is what I write about, these are the stories I

tell about people. RESTOREE is gothic, space gothic; boy meets girl, they fall in love and we have happily ever after. DECISION AT DOONA is the love of a man for his son and his wanting more for him than he himself had, and his determination to get it, somehow or another, even if he has to violate principles that he has always believed in. THE SHIP WHO SANG is an exercise in transcendent love, because the love that Helga eventually has for Paralin transcends both the physical disabilities and handicaps that they both have. DRAGONFLIGHT is somebody else's love. I was more conscious of what I was trying to do in DRAGONFLIGHT, although I didn't realize it at the time, which sounds like a contradiction but it isn't. What happened was I had a very interesting talk with Dick Adams, a young film maker who had come to Poland to film American teachers of English trying to elucidate the points of English to Polish students. One particular session was where they were trying to explain the degrees of drunkenness, like you are stoned, plastered, bombed; they got some new ones from the Irish language like stotious and fluttered, which are marvellous, I mean half of us here are stotious today and we don't know it. Fluttered is the process of getting stotious. Dick was saying that he wanted to do another film, to explain the loneliness of man and I said, for God's sake, we got thousands of films about that, why don't you do one that shows the times when people are united, when they are not just individuals but they are all caught up in one mass feeling. Now this of course was after Kennedy's funeral. I had this in mind because grief is perhaps one of the greatest uniters that we have. I mean old feuds are forgotten or wars started come to think of it, but all feuds sometimes go to rest until after the old man is buried or the woman is buried and you've had a chance to calm down and then they start fighting over what they've left behind but that's something else again.

People being united in one mass of sentiment, they have crowds which are angry and horrible people will do things in a mob or crowd situation they'd never do individually because this is one of the horrible things about a crowd. But we have had recently not only the grief, the mass sharing of grief, over the men they've been killing in my country, but we've had man stepping out onto the moon. Now the astronauts tried very hard to make it an international thing rather than it was the Americans who had more money to put them up there. To the astronauts this was incidental, it wasn't so to Nixon and we won't go into him. Here we had anyone who could get to a microphone, who could get to a T.V. set was watching that and everyone was. Most people I'm sure were pleased at this accomplishment that man had done. I think it's the one single time that we have all been united in a happy thought and you know that's a pretty sad commentary on the human race right there. I would hope there will be more of these and perhaps there will be, where you are united over a good thing instead of a sad thing. I said (to Dick Adams) why don't we have something where people are not alone in a movie, in a funny thing everybody is caught up with, where you have a really funny situation that everyone in the audience can enjoy. Why don't you do something on this? And I realized that this aloneness has been a thing for many people -- what if we had something where we weren't alone? Well I'd put that thought aside and then one day I was literally sitting in my living room saying, O.K., what do I write about now, and I'd

read a very charming story in F & SF about dragons, dragonflies, and three dragons came out of the forest at night to play in the meadows and one of them really wanted to stay out in the big world and be a dragon, and at dawn only two dragonflies went back into the forest and one became a real dragon. Now really, you know, dragons are a rather nice creature, they've had a bad press.

Now if you're a good writer, you can make people feel queer for skunks. More about dragons, well, what kind of dragons, cause John is always saying you've got to have a reason for dragons and I decided that well, if you're going to have dragons, think really big, you know, 25 feet, that's a nice size, fit most garages in America, that's the size that the car is. Now, should they have wings, should they breathe fire? Well, I figured it all out and I got really fascinated by the whole concept. But the big thing was, if you've got 25 feet of dragon flying around they've got to have some kind of control. Well, dragons will obviously not have the kind of tongue that will permit them speech. Empathy? Telepathy, so you got telepathic dragons. Hey that's a good idea, then you had to decide how they were going to choose their owners or their riders or what. Well, like the ducklings, who are imprinted on the first thing that moves past them when they come out of the shell for an idea, so that the rider, the man, the symbiosis was there; there was a mutual affection and esteem, a complete empathy, dragonrider was never alone. Of course the other side of the sword is that the dragon dies and he can't, he's half a man, which is really poignant. So I had this symbiosis of a total love between two intelligent creatures to express the loneliness factor or the togetherness factor. We've all had moments of rapport, of empathy, of a split second perhaps, even, of total understanding with another individual. It's a magnificent feeling, we all want it again and we can't find it, maybe because we're working too hard. We have to relax and just permit this to happen, it is in a way a violation, the ultimate violation, of privacy, to get in someone else's mind and spirit and know exactly what they're feeling or thinking at the same time but it is what we're all striving for in finding love, so DRAGONFLIGHT perhaps, is the most loving of my stories but it is essentially a love story, a different type of love, but it is a love story.

I don't know what DRAGONQUEST is yet, because I haven't stepped far enough away from it. I'm sure someone will tell me when they've read it, in fact I'm scared, when you've written a successful first novel, boy are you up against it to follow the act; it's tough I tell you. I'll see, but it too is a love story, I can't tell at this closeness what else I put in it from what has been happening, God knows, in the last three or four years a lot has been happening, to mankind in general and me in particular, so I'll be very interested to know what I was expressing else, in telling that particular story. I am writing another story on telepathy, called TO RIDE PEGASUS, in which A WOMANLY TALENT is the first story and APPLE, which appeared in Walker and company's thirtieth century crime prevention type thing is the second story, dealing with people who possess a talent and are set apart. It's the ambivalence of someone who both hates and loves the talent he possesses, because there are two sides to every story.



I was asked today, during the conference, what did I think were the chances of the human race surviving. Well, in all my stories is the notion that to every problem there is a solution. Of course the solution may develop three or four more problems you didn't need, at the same time, but there is a solution to everything and if you keep looking for a solution, no matter whether it's a compromise or it's not a compromise, you will find that solution. The fact that you have decided there isn't one immediately prejudices your chances of ever finding it, so I'm basically an optimist in all my work. We may well blast ourselves out of existence in the next few years; THE BIG FLASH of Norman Spinrad, a terrifying story, may happen; I prefer to think that we will find another solution. I haven't a clue what it is, I haven't a clue to the fact of whether I will be able to accept it either, but I'm sure there is a solution if we look for one. If we decide that the human race is now doomed, as I have heard very often, you will never find a solution to it and we've already got one solution kind of bubbling up, as I mentioned earlier, that the young people in my country are saying we don't want to fight this war and we're not. It's the first time I think, in history, when a solid group of people have said no, we won't do it and have not done it. Perhaps this is the beginning to the solution to our problem, I'd rather like to think it was because I think the young people of today are really rather fantastic. I know adults shy off and have fits but I've been very interested. Well, I've got an eighteen year old too, who is not here, he's busy not fighting the war his own way. But this whole new generation is fantastic, I just hope they will, in their own way find a solution, I think they can and I'm hoping they can but then I'm an optimist. But this business that there is a solution is very strong in all my writing too, I realise that now. I admit to being naive and unscientific but I also do like people and I tell stories about people and I enjoy it, whether it's science fiction or not. Thank you. I also know a lot more about dragons than I've ever put in a book if anyone wants to ask me some dragonising questions...?

Jack Cohen: I've just had a thought. You talk about symbiosis, you know there's something very near to DRAGONRIDER that's really happening. People are playing with dolphins and killer whales now and the symbiosis there is very close. I got very friendly with a couple of dolphins in Florida and I'm sure other people in this audience have got to know whales and dolphins. You really do get the love feeling between two species, so much more than with a dog. You have a friend who says to his dog, "grovel", that isn't a relationship. But with a whale the thing is deep.

Anne McCaffrey: That's very true Jack, because what I wanted was not a grovelling, a subservience. I wanted an equality; dragons are equal in importance and status to their riders, and this is essential. You don't have real love where you have one member of the team, how many is on the team is immaterial, who is subservient to the other. It has to be between equals, it has to be a sharing, a giving and a receiving or it is not love and this is very hard for people to learn sometimes. The kind of love that I like to talk about between people is ideal, yes, and it's romantic and all this but it is an equality, a giving and a taking.

# LETTER FROM AMERICA

PHIL PAYNE relates how he spent his vacation.

Boys' Kitchen,  
Cejwin Camps,  
Port Jervis,  
N.Y. 12771.

Dear Mike and Pat,

I hope you are both well and enjoying the English Summer. As you will see from the address, I am working in a children's camp in upstate New York. It's the largest Jewish children's camp in America, usually holding about 2,000 children. The idea of the camp is to give the children more of an insight into Jewish religion, custom and tradition, as well as providing a vacation for them (and their parents). It costs about \$900 per child for the season from June 30th. to August 25th. The campers are aged from 10 to 17, and then there are older people, 18 upwards, who act as counsellors. The camp is composed of seven subcamps; three for boys, Hadar, Carmel and Aviv, in order of increasing age, and three corresponding ones for girls, Hadas, Carmela and Aviva, plus a co-ed one called L.T.C. (leadership training camp). The boys' camps and girls' camps are divided by about half a mile, which is occupied by a lake and a steep hill! L.T.C. is separated from both, and except for special occasions, no-one is allowed from one camp to another. Whilst the two kitchen staffs (boys' and girls' kitchens) are of all religions and nationalities, all the waiters and waitresses are also Jewish children of about 17. The entire camp is rigidly run, and everyone except us is bound by a rigid set of rules, including a curfew at night. All the people are very friendly, once you break through a cold, hostile exterior, but en masse, especially in group songs and so on, they radiate greatly a belief in the superiority of the Jewish race over everyone else.

I am theoretically storeman in the boys' kitchen; I work one shift, 6am to 2pm, and take care of all the provisions - quite a few for 1,000 kids. I originally accepted the job because it meant I had every afternoon off, and because my day off would be Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath, and hence no deliveries). Unfortunately that was not such a good move, as there is nothing to do every day. Until very recently it was too hot to stay in in the afternoon, and Port Jervis is far too sleepy a town to do anything in. And being America where everyone has a car (except us) there is little way of getting anywhere. Recently I have been hitching around on my days off, but have found little worth seeing anywhere. The whole area consists of the typical 'New England country town' with its hick stores. Hitching has so far been easier than in England, and the drivers friendlier. Also the bartenders usually stop for a chat, and I've had innumerable free drinks



# ZINES WE'VE SEEN

Short-short reviews of zines received since our last issue went to press.

aFRICAN 1 (58pp/A4/mimeo) - nick shears, 52 Garden Way, Northcliff 4, Johannesburg, S.A. U.K. agent Lisa Conesa (address below). 20p. Special Ray Bradbury issue, with material varying from abominable to a superb poem by Ray himself. Also worthwhile is a regular feature on international fandom. \*\*\*\*

CYPHER 7 (68pp/A4/mimeo) - James Goddard, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants., U.K. 15p.

This leads off with an in-article on the in-book, SOLARIS, followed by a further instalment of a badly-designed cartoon strip. Jeeves on Astounding (what, again??) and the conclusions of Pringle's and Bertin's articles did little for me, but Phil Harbottle's piece on Ted Carnell was interesting and informative. Also more Aldiss, book reviews and lettercol. \*\*\*

EGG 6 (34pp/4to/mimeo) - Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol BS4 5DZ U.K. For trade, contribution, LoC or 15p.

A not quite up to standard issue of Britain's best fanzine. Best item here is the lettercol, one of the best I've seen recently. Also there's gossip from John Brosnan, boring Ian Williams, poetic Sam Long, Gray Boak's column and an editorial which proves that Peter should write more himself. \*\*\*\*

ISEULT 2 (52pp/A4/mimeo) - lisa conesa, 54 Manley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HP, U.K. For LoC, trade, contribution or 15p o.n.o.

The zine with already a character of its own, which you either love or hate, and I'm afraid I tend towards the latter view. Here's the usual mixture of pseudofiction, too much poetry for all but the fanatical, remarkably good hand-cut artwork and not-very-interesting letters from the regulars. Only rarely does something drag itself out of the swamp, one such being Ian Butterworth's "Love Story". \*\*

MACROCOSM 2 and 3 (48 and 42pp/A4/mimeo) - Robert P. Holdstock, 15 Highbury Grange, London N5, U.K. 15p or w.h.y?

Both issues maintain the high standard set by the first, and each is led off by a superb editorial. Artwork is the best in quality and reproduction that you'll find in any British fanzine, but whether you'll like MACROCOSM will depend on whether you like the type of pro/fan-fiction it prints. Personally I find the stories mostly very refreshing to read. Both \*\*\*\*

MADCAP 1 (24pp/4to/mimeo) - Peter E. Presford, 10 Dalkeith Road, South Reddish, Stockport SK5 7EY, Cheshire, U.K. Free?

Yet another Madgroup zine (this area must now be the key centre of British fandom), but this one is not up to the standard, technically or otherwise, of the first issues of HELL, ZIMRI or ISEULT. It lacks coherence and personality, and has the feel of having been thrown together, but I sense a vague promise of better things to come. I hope I'm right. \*\* $\frac{1}{2}$

*I was  
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was too  
often*

MALFUNCTION 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  (6pp/4to/mimeo) - Pete Presford (address above) and Pete Colley, 2 Bristol Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 3NU, U.K. Free.

Published to promote MADCAP and the Newcastle Con, it makes interesting reading, but is one of the most shoddily-produced zines I've seen recently. \*\*\* $\frac{1}{2}$

MOEBIUS TRIP 13 and 14 (54 and 56pp/U.S. 4to/mimeo) - Ed Connor, 1805 N. Gale, Peoria, Ill. 61604, U.S.A. For trades or 50c.

Having received some four or five issues of MT, I realise that this is a very predictable fanzine; predictable in layout, which is neat but uninspired, and predictable in content; there's always a lengthy, good to very good lettercol, a pro-author interview (James Blish in MT13, Joanna Russ in MT14), plus a mixture of fannish and S.F.-orientated items of average quality, plus a sprinkling of rather poor artwork. The main fault is the lack of any editorial "presence" - a pity, as Ed seems to be quite a good writer, judging by the few fragments which do appear. Both \*\*\*

1220 (10pp/4to/mimeo) - Brian Robinson & Paul Skelton, 9 Linwood Grove, Manchester M12 4QH. Free.

A one-shot put out by the aforementioned plus Cas and ourselves, to commemorate a gathering in Stockport in July (I think). The dearth of one-shots is bemoaned, and the proceedings chronicled in excruciating detail. Modesty forbids me to say more. \*\*\* $\frac{1}{2}$

RICHARD E. GEIS 1 (44pp/U.S. 4to/mimeo) - Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 11408, Portland, Ore. 97211, U.S.A. (New Address). For \$1 or agreed trades.

This is the ultimate in personalzines, the almost uncensored diary of Dick Geis - solid print, no artwork, no contributors. I found it nearly all fascinating and only occasionally nauseating. Nothing at all like S.F.R., but don't be put off - it's a unique experience, well worth a try. \*\*\*\*

SPECULATION 30 (72pp/4to/mimeo) - Peter Weston, 31 Pinewall Avenue, Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, U.K. For 20p, trades or contribution.

It takes me a great deal of effort to get started on SPECULATION - mind you, I nearly always enjoy it once I get going, but I haven't managed it yet, so there's not much I can say. There's a fine editorial, once again demonstrating how much talent can be buried under the pressures of editorship. Luckily there are signs that Pete is coming out of his shell a little more, in recent weeks. Also here are the photopages which you may have already seen in LURK. Otherwise, the mixture seems very much as before. \*\*\*

S.F. ARENA 2 (GANNET S.F. REVIEW) (5pp/4to/mimeo) - Ian R. Williams, 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Road, Sunderland SR4 7RD, Co. Durham. Free?

This consists entirely of book reviews. Readable and competent though they certainly are, it seems to me that they would have more impact incorporated in a zine. \*\*\*

THE TURNING WORM 2 (38pp/A4/mimeo) - John Piggott, 17 Monmouth Road, Oxford OX1 4TD, U.K. For LoC, trade, contribution or 40p.

The second, and much bigger, issue of Britain's most promising new fanzine. It is successful because it discusses important fannish topics in a literate fashion, because of its excellent, lengthy fanzine reviews, and not least because John seems to be in contact with everyfan, from the London Loonies Pickersgill and Kettle to the Gannets in the frozen wastes of the far north, and everyone in between. He has also developed into a genuinely funny writer, witness his Chessmanconrep herein. As you might expect, the lettercol is superb. Who needs artwork or good layout? \*\*\*\*\*<sub>2</sub>

THE W.S.F.A. JOURNAL 78 and 79 (48 and 52pp/U.S. 4to/mimeo) - Don Miller, 12315 Judson Road, Wheaton, Maryland 20906, U.S.A. U.K. agent Brian Robinson (address above).

This, the official organ of the Washington S.F. Association, is rather MOEBIUS TRIP-like in its layout and artwork. The material is far more varied than that of SPECULATION, and the zine is easier to read for that reason. The main attraction for me is the bibliographical work of Mark Owings, regrettably absent from these particular issues. The contents are too extensive for me to pick anything out, but it's all at least competent. Contact Brian and give it a try. \*\*\*\*\*<sub>2</sub>

ZIMRI 3 (80pp/A4/mimeo) - Lisa I Conesa & Andrew Stephenson, available from the former (address above) for trade, contribution, LoC and/or 10p. This is the biggest fanzine I've seen for some time. Unfortunately quantity isn't matched by quality, and as with ISEULT there's too much poor quality material which could profitably have been left out. I see the co-opted co-editor AMES becoming the dominant partner, which might be a good thing, but you'll have to wait for number 4 to find out. Worth trying though - it's so huge that there must be something somewhere in here to suit you. AMES and Holdstock are always worth reading anyway. \*\*\*

And two which somehow got left out.....

FOULER 7 (30pp/4to/mimeo) - Greg Pickersgill and Leroy Kettle, Flat 1, 62 Elsham Road, London W14, U.K. For trade, LoC, contribution or 10p. This is my first encounter with FOULER, and I'm impressed by the apparent honesty of it all. Obscenity doesn't shock me, so I can look beyond it, to see writing that's often funny, sometimes unintentionally so. What you've got to remember about FOULER, I think, is that the editors have inferiority complexes which stick out like sore pricks, to coin a phrase, and they don't seem to mind who knows it. Contributors Penman, Dean, Maule, Piggott and Brosnan enter rather revealingly into the spirit of the thing, and the lettercol, though a year old, is still surprisingly readable. \*\*\*\*

MAYA 4 (32pp/4to/mimeo) - Ian Maule, 59 Windsor Terrace, South Gosforth, Newcastle-on-Tyne NE3 1YL, U.K. For the usual fannish reasons or 20p. A zine of stark but effective layout. What little art there is is excellent, especially the two covers. Contributors are Ian Williams, Darrell Schweitzer and John N. Hall, all different and good but not outstanding, plus more of John Piggott's fine fanzine reviews. The lettercol is good. MAYA is impressive and has the potential to become a major force both here and in the U.S. Get it. \*\*\*\*

# VULCAN'S HAMMER

A critical look at the 66th OMPA mailing.

## EGOBOOster 66

Best continued OMPazine . . . ERG Best cartoonist . . . Dave Rowe  
Best single issue . . . ERG 39 Best article writer . Fred Hemmings  
Most attractive zine . . . HELL 5 Best mailing comments . Hemmings  
Entertainingest edichat . B-Ro & Skel Best artist . . . . Skel  
Best fiction writer . . . . Edward Allen and Lisa Conesa (tie)  
Best poet . . . . Dennis Ault Best raconteur . . . . Jeeves  
Other egoboo . . . HELL 5 (photopages); FHTV 7 (hand-coloured covers)

And now, the mailing; comments are rather short this time - sorry.

OFF-TRAILS 66 (The noble AE) Looking much more presentable than heretofore. On the amendments, we vote as follows:

- a) and Aa): For. b): For.  
c): Against - if members don't want to vote on something which isn't crucial to the running of the APA, then it's pointless to try to force them to do so.  
d): For. e): For.  
f): For. g): Nil vote - we couldn't agree.  
h): For.

ARCANUM 0 (Jim Goddard) Something new - a pre-con report! This was interesting and neatly produced, but I'd expected something a little more ambitious from the editor of CYPHER. Still, at least you were honest with us. If you can manage this much natter plus mailing comments, every mailing, I'll quite look forward to it.

BESTAVARAPUPETA CUMBUM 1 (Michel Feron) Marvellous title! Pity the contents don't live up to it, though really the same comments apply as to ARCANUM. You're in an ideal position to perform a valuable service for OMPA, simply by reporting on the fannish activity in your own country.

ERG 39 (Terry Jeeves) Like the idea behind the cover - these things fascinate me - but something was lacking...a bit of colour perhaps? The editorial was good'n'meaty, and the mailing comments were better this time too. What made you think one of us was left-handed? Neither of us is, or even ambidextrous. I hope you can dig more items of similar quality from your "slushpile" - we've seen a few things of yours that we wouldn't mind reprinting. "Three for Me" was too similar in content to your own "Down Memory-Bank Lane", and suffered through being not as well written.

FANZINE FANATIQUE (Keith Walker) Looks like the improvement was short-lived, since here you are back with the used blotting-paper look. So FHTV makes even your crudzines look good, eh? You gotta be joking!

THE FRENCH CONNECTION and FHTV 7 (John & Jane) TFC was very informative, but why couldn't you have included it in FHTV? Your home brew sounds...er...interesting. Who's Rintoul Booth? His/her/its piece was very enjoyable, with good style and humour. Yes, today's zines differ quite a bit from those of the "Golden Age", but it would take too long to explain it all here - some other time? All the rest enjoyable, adding up to the best FHTV so far.

HELL 5 (B-Ro and Skel) Sorry Joan, don't like the cover. Rather a Kentish gentleman, isn't he? Bacover was good and could have been superb with a bit more drawing effort. Still too many boxes, but at least they look a bit neater than last time. Plenty of good fannish stuff here, and good fannish artwork to go with it. My own piece looks rather odd in the middle of it all. Pity about the photopages - hope it won't discourage you from trying again. The Gerb bit is almost incomprehensible to someone who, like me, wasn't there - a fact that I gather you've realised. A nice issue, hope you can find more fannish material with which to keep up the good work.

OSTEEN UNIVERSITY REVIEW 6 (Sam Long) All good stuff, but I can't find much to comment on. Liked the fan-fable thingy; you seem to have a talent for this sort of thing. Agree with you about crematorium burial services, but would include all such services. The soul, if such there be, has long gone by the time the service takes place, so if you must have some sort of service, why include a lump of rotting flesh? Far better to dispose of it as quickly as possible, by burning, then, if you wish, have a service unencumbered by coffins, hearses and carefully hidden machinery.

'OT ON THE TRAILS 10 (Gherab) What with odd page numbering and peculiar stapling, this was damned difficult to read, yer blighter! I laughed myself silly at "...a bit of cross-hatching to give the tit a bit of body." You ought to watch these abbreviations! All enjoyable, as usual. 'Twas good to meet you for the first decent length of time, at Kench's.

SPACEFREAK! (David Grigg) Enjoyable and neatly produced, but lacking any discernible connection of this 'ere organisation wot we're all members of.

VIEWPOINT 8 and supplement (Fred Hemmings) The only thing that spoils this zine for me is the paper size - damned unwieldy. I'm sick to death of reading about the Irish and their Problem. It's yet another case of religion-gone-wrong given the right conditions to flourish. Tony Rogers' solution might work in a million years, but not before, I fancy. BBU was entertaining - brilliant cartoons. Ta for the kind words about LURK; your fine m/c's deserve more detailed comment, but I don't have the space.



THE BIGGER & BETTER SYNDROME - AND HOW TO AVOID IT

OR

SOME OF MY MISTAKES IN FAN-PUBLISHING.

by

PETER WESTON.

This is a transcript of the talk which Pete gave to the 1971 Novacon under the title "The Role of Fanzines". It has been specially revised and extended by Pete for publication here. In this 3rd and final part Pete discusses some of the great fanzines from that hotly-debated "Golden Age".

Now, has anyone here today at Novacon ever heard of a fanzine called HYPHEN? Hands up.....is that all? Shame on you!

((Ken Bulmer: Anybody who's never heard of HYPHEN is a fake-fan!))

Yes I know, chuck 'em out Ken. Seriously, has anyone here actually read HYPHEN?.....same people, I see, and not enough.

I can't talk about HYPHEN as one who was around to enjoy it issue-by-issue, as a fanzine should be enjoyed. It was more or less dead when I entered fandom, and I think I saw two issues - the last in 1965. As it says on this copy here, "you remember, that green thing". To you this is probably a quaint relic from a distant fannish past; to me it still remains as a sort of pinnacle of achievement, showing just what can be done by taking fandom on its own terms and creating something alive in its own right and not in any way a shadow of the professional S.F. field.

Walt Willis seems to have stopped writing through the dual reasons of alienation with current fandom and exhaustion after so many years, and the pressures of his job in the Northern Ireland civil service. He did continue with one or two columns, until about 1968-9.

It may seem odd to remember a time when the main claim to fame by people like James White and Bob Shaw was that they were members of Northern Irish fandom - they and Walt Willis were the "Belfast Triangle", the "Wheels of If". But Jim and Bob began as fans, fan writers, although even earlier than that, Jim started as a fanzine illustrator. Ask him about the spaceship which looked like a ball-point pen, in SLANT, circa 1950.

SLANT? That was a Willis fanzine too. The true measure of Walt Willis was that he produced a superlative imitation prozine between 1948 and 1951, before realising that fans didn't have to copy the commercial field - they could create something unique of their own. And so the energies of Shaw, White and Willis, which had been expended on setting letterpress type by hand, letter-by-letter, in Walt's attic, were switched toward the writing of skilful, witty dialogue and reporting of fannish events. I doubt if ei-

ther Bob Shaw or Jim White will mind my saying that I consider Walt Willis a better writer than either of them - and yet he has never shown an interest in the writing of professional science fiction. And that is also our loss.

Vernon Brown said to me recently, "Who was this guy Willis anyway?" After I finished hitting him I realised that this was a fair question, because Walt hasn't done anything much for so many years now. Our fandom is a peculiar institution characterised by rapid turnover of inmates; if you don't keep doing things, you're forgotten remarkably quickly.

I did much the same thing as Vernon in 1965 when I asked Ted White at the London Worldcon, "What was VOID?" Now I realise the magnitude of my ignorance (and I had been publishing for two years already then) because Ted edited VOID, the leading fanzine up to 1961 on the East Coast of the USA. Only four years later I had never heard of it - a sin I'm happy to say that I managed to rectify at an auction where I bought most issues up to the last one, number 28. (Number 29 was supposed to have been stencilled in 1961, but was never published. Rumours of its existence in Ted White's cellar hung around fandom like a phantom until Arnie Katz ran off some copies in 1970. I never managed to get one, I'm afraid.)

I think I've answered Vernon's question here, but there remains no way in which modern fans can themselves enjoy the work of Willis and other fans of similar talent from the 1950's. I managed to read the complete file of HYPHEN by borrowing them from Archie Mercer's collection of fanzines, as did Peter Roberts a little later, but for some odd reason Archie put the set up for sale at a convention auction in 1970 (I think).

There are some other publications by Willis which are worth reading if you should ever get the chance. There is THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, a wonderful parable about the newcomer's conversion to a trufan, which quite by accident resembles Bunyan's PILGRIM'S PROGRESS in construction, although it's a lot funnier! Then there are the two volumes WILLIS DISCOVERS AMERICA and THE HARP STATESIDE, these being connected with the two trips Willis made to the USA in 1952 and 1962. One was written as a serialised gimmick item for fanzines which were running a fund to bring Walt over the Atlantic - at a time when no-one thought they could succeed. It was this historic trip which made TAFF possible, and I believe I'm correct in saying that Walt was largely responsible for creating and administering TAFF in much the form that we have it today.

The second trip - "The Second Coming" as it was called - was organised in 1962 and enabled both Walt and his wife Madeleine to visit the Chicago Convention. It was on this trip that the Greyhound bus company lost the Willis luggage somewhere in the U.S. mid-west, and legend has it that Irish fans still pop into Belfast bus garages to see whether it might be in some corner. THE HARP STATESIDE is a mammoth and very warm account of Willis' travels in the U.S.

Recently I have produced some photostat copies of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR for circulation among the Birmingham Group. Alternatively I believe you can still get copies of a third edition from Arnie Katz in New York, at 1 dollar each. There is a sad little story to that, insofar as I had intended to publish a new edition of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR back in 1965. Arthur Thomson (Atom) had agreed to illustrate the book, Doreen Parker painstakingly typed about forty stencils for me, and gave them to me on the last day of the Birmingham Easter Convention. Unfortunately I left them in a room-party, and when I went back an hour or so later they had disappeared, never to be seen again. Since then I have heard that a certain London fan was involved in the incident: those who know their fan-history of 1965 will know who I mean.

But back to Willis. The most hopeful news for would-be connoisseurs of the best of fan writing is that Richard Bergeron, editor of the U.S. fanzine WARHOON, has decided to make Willis available again to fandom. Just now he has gaffiated because of the magnitude of the problem, but he'll return one day. When he does I'm hopeful that he'll have completed a special volume containing every Willis column ("The Harp That Once or Twice") that he had published over ten years. The 200-odd pages will contain items that simply must be read, and when it becomes available I most strongly advise you to get copies.

I only met Walt Willis once briefly, but I imagine that he began like I did, wanting to talk and write about science fiction. He did so, far better than I ever can, for a few years, and then realised that fandom was a hobby which ideally should aim to bring the most pleasure to himself and to others.

HYPHEN was the antithesis of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, available on subscription although the editor would rather not sell it to you because he didn't make very much money out of it, and didn't expect to. So why kill yourself producing something to sell at cost to someone you've never heard from? Silly isn't it, really? Walt produced HYPHEN inexpensively, not too thick, not too many copies, just enough so that he could manage things. He filled it with his own writing, and that of Bob Shaw, Jim White, and a few others such as George Charters, Ian McAulay, Chuck Harris, the first John Berry, and others you won't have heard of. He was publishing a vehicle of communication if you like, very intimate, witty, sophisticated in its way. He would send the fanzine to people who might respond in the same sort of way. If you wrote him a letter he could use I'm sure Walt would be tremendously pleased and would send you the next half-dozen issues thereafter. Perhaps it seems strange for me to say this, but this is in many ways more attractive an idea than pretending to run as a miniature business. If anyone sends money you can even go so far as to send it back with a note: "Sorry, no subs. Here is a free issue, now write me a letter instead."

Or maybe you would trade. But trades are apt to be a bit difficult - you have to be somewhat selective and yet people feel slighted, naturally so, if you won't trade with them. But do I trade SPECULATION for VIRIDIANA? Will Charlie Brown trade a twice-monthly newszine, like LOCUS, with some-

thing published at intervals of eight months? You have to strike a balance, try and encourage newcomers, try and balance, roughly, in cash terms, try and get what you want and attempt to get out of trading with things you feel are just not worth having. Otherwise you would send out your entire print-run for things you didn't want, which seems a bit pointless to me.

Once upon a time you might encounter people who would only trade on a one-for-one basis, or who would refuse to trade at all. Joe Gibson, of an indifferent fanzine called G2 was one of the latter; I think the former anti-social habit is just about extinct, thank goodness.

So there we have the other extreme to S.F.R., and I really do wish more of you had read HYPHEN, because we can all learn a lot from it. This is a key point - every new fan-editor seems to start afresh and learn the hard way. He doesn't see what has happened before, because he can't. Fandom is too small, too scattered over time and space. Sometimes the hard way is too hard, the mistakes too painful, so that the neofan cannot persevere with something so unrewarding. That is why the average age of a fanzine is measured in months over here, and why so few ever get beyond their sixth issue.

There is also an unrelated phenomenon which seems to bite the new faned, which I'll call the "over-exuberance factor". Briefly, it means that the faned tries to do too much at once, and instead of concentrating his/her efforts on the one fanzine which is really going to get somewhere, he/she squanders their energies on all sorts of "promising" ventures. The most common thing is to publish a multiplicity of different fanzines, none of which builds up any momentum. Thus we have my own case, where I began ZENITH and almost immediately afterwards also started NEXUS (for OMPA) and LOCUS (for PaDs). It is a startling reflection on the effort I must have been able to make in those days that I published 50-page issues of ZENITH every two months, and 40-page issues of NEXUS every quarter. In ZENITH-6, where I cut down, I complained that I only had sixteen hours per week to spend on my fanzine - now I would be lucky to get sixteen hours per month!

We also have Graham Boak with BADINAGE, TRANSPLANT, INTERIM and CYNIC; or Peter Roberts with MOR-FARCH, CHECKPOINT and EGG; Mike Ashley with XERON and PLINTH; Lisa Conesa with ZIMRI and ISEULT; and Keith Walker, who seemingly never publishes the same title twice running!

My best advice is to harden your heart, resist temptations and distractions, no matter how inviting, and be pig-headed enough to stick at one thing until you get it moving the way you want. Actually I'm being unfair to Graham and probably to Peter, at least, above. As distinct from the "over-exuberance factor" there is a perfectly legitimate reason to switch around, and that is when you begin with one thing only to realise that you would be happier doing something else. Then it is just as well to smartly move over into a new driving seat. Those who have read my editorial in SPECULATION 30 will see that possibly I'm still grappling with this problem of conflicting desires and the metamorphosis of editorial interest.

This same characteristic does of course occasionally show up among much more established fans, and a very good example would be the various publications emanating from Arnie and Joyce Katz in New York. Both have published, or helped to publish, large genzines over a period of a few years, and Arnie's most notable achievement was probably his part in editing FOCAL POINT as a newsletter from (roughly) the beginning of 1970 until mid-1971.

Yet from the Katz household now issues FOCAL POINT (Arnie) as an irregular fannish fanzine, not as a news-zine; Joyce's own highly successful POTLATCH, Arnie's APA-zine LOG, and now a new fannish newszine, FIAWOL. All of these are good - that is the trouble. My point is that their nett energy will be diluted that much the faster by so much effort.

I could probably even rationalise the Katz Kase to fit in with my Theory, if such be necessary. I'd say that while both Joyce and Arnie are not new to fandom, their partnership is new, and as a sort of gestalt-fan they are exhibiting this one symptom of the neo.

A final symptom of the neophyte is delusions of grandeur, associated with the tendency to Plan Ahead. In the editorial of his final issue of OOPSLA, a famous 1950's-60's fanzine editor Gregg Calkins recounted how he had drawn up a shedule for thirty-three issues, complete with planned dates of appearance. As the story goes I think he felt honour-bound to continue until that number was reached (although at progressively less and less frequent intervals) before he packed it all up.

Half-jokingly, Roger Peyton and I discussed my centenary issue, way back in 1964 with the very first issues of ZENITH. At the present rate of progress I estimate this point will be reached sometime in 1992. I shall probably keep on publishing until then, if I can!

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\* A STATEMENT FROM PETER WESTON..... \*  
\* "In reply to vague suggestions which have apparently been made, I'd \*  
\* like to make it quite clear that at no time was the BSFA Fanzine Foun- \*  
\* dation in my custody; all I ever did was to collect the pile from Liv- \*  
\* erpool, with Charlie Winstone in 1965. I then looked through the coll- \*  
\* ection before Charlie put it away in his own house, but certainly did \*  
\* not abstract any items for my own use. The Foundation contained a num- \*  
\* ber of fanzines which I would very much have liked to own; I still \*  
\* don't have most of them and at the same time I had a certain sense of \*  
\* duty, or honour if you like, which kept me from stealing them. Looking \*  
\* back on the situation I wonder if perhaps I shouldn't have helped my- \*  
\* self after all". \*  
\* \*\*\*\*\* \*  
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# PAYGES OF PAYNE

Book reviews by PHIL PAYNE.

THE SECRET PEOPLE by John Wyndham writing as John Benyon: Coronet 1972: 30p

STOWAWAY TO MARS by John Wyndham writing as John Benyon: Coronet 1972: 30p

Coronet bills these two books as his (John Wyndham's) first, and second respectively, full-length novels, and that they are now both 'published in paperback for the first time'. It is unfortunate that they did not do their research more carefully before making such sweeping statements. THE SECRET PEOPLE was the first novel and was published in hardback by George Newnes in 1935 and then in paperback by Lancer in 1964. The latter edition was published as by 'John Benyon Harris' (the author's real name) and contained a brief introduction by 'John Wyndham' which has been omitted from the Coronet edition. His second novel to appear was FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED, by 'John Benyon', a detective story also published by George Newnes in 1935. Then came STOWAWAY TO MARS which was titled PLANET PLANE when it was published by George Newnes in 1936. The late Ted Carnell then republished it under its present title in the Nova S.F. paperback series. Unfortunately that edition was heavily edited, and several of the descriptive passages shortened. Fortunately Coronet have used the original hardback text.

THE SECRET PEOPLE tells the story of Mark Sunnet and his girlfriend Margaret. The two go out for a flight in Mark's new rocket plane over the New Sea, a project for flooding the Sahara. When the rocket motors fail they crash, and get carried by a whirlpool into a large series of interconnected caverns. These caves are lit by weird luminous mushrooms and peopled by a very ancient pygmy race. Mark and Margaret are captured, and then conditions are surprisingly improved by the intervention of their cat, Bast.

The story itself reads like the usual 'lost-race' novel, but some of the skill of the author, who was to become world-famous sixteen years later, shows in his characterisations. John Wyndham has always used science fiction primarily as a vehicle, to get across what he wants to say. He sets the stage and then creates his characters lifelike enough that we will listen to their comments. So too here, he uses some of the speeches, particularly during the hero's captivity, to convey ideas which he was later to develop more fully in THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS and other novels. Overall the book, though certainly not up to the standard of many of his later books, is far above the majority of its genre, and carefully avoids the 'hero rescues heroine from clutches of evil pygmies' theme.

STOWAWAY TO MARS is a very different matter, being 'straight' science fiction, and better written. Dale Curtance, a rocket engineer, enters for the Keuntz prize, which offers a large sum of money to the first person to make a return journey to one of the planets. He and his crew lift off successfully, only to find, halfway to Mars, that they have a female stowaway. She

tells them the story of a visit paid her father and her by a machine from Mars (which Wyndham disciples will recognise as THE LOST MACHINE) and demonstrates her use to the mission as the only person who can write the strange Martian language. When the party reaches Mars the planet seems deserted except for hundreds of machines, until Joan meets Vaygan - the last remnant of a lost civilisation. Added complications arise when a Russian expedition appears on Mars.

The most unfortunate affair about this book is the omission Coronet have made: after PLANET PLANE was published, John Harris wrote a sequel, SLEEPERS OF MARS, which was published in 'Tales of Wonder'. The sequel went into more detail on the vanished Martian race, sleeping eternally on a doomed planet, and explained what happened to the Russians, whose end is uncertain in the original book. The sequel thus ties up several loose ends and Coronet could have improved the book considerably by including it in the same volume. Even on its own, though, the book has survived the trial of 36 years remarkably well. Despite a few scientific inaccuracies and outmoded designs, the story is still immensely readable. In fact it is believed by some experts, such as Walter Gillings, to be the best novel Mr. Harris ever wrote. Though I would beg to differ, it is certainly on a level above most of its contemporaries, and a fair number of the books published today. Again its strengths lie in characterisation, and in several places the 'Wyndham' touch is unmistakable. In particular Dale's wife, at the beginning, echoes several of the views later expressed in CONSIDER HER WAYS. The ending, too, is pure Wyndham, being neither dramatic nor 'happy-ever-after', but anti-climactic and open-ended, as life usually is. This is a book not to be missed by anyone who has enjoyed John Wyndham's later books or short stories.

When considering these reprints one automatically thinks of the 28 John Benyon Harris stories that have never been published in a 'Wyndham' collection. Many of these deserve to see the light of day and hopefully, if the Coronet books sell well enough, we may even soon see a new volume of 'Wyndham' shorts. Perhaps, even, the New English Library will reprint their JIZZLE collection.

THE DARK MAN & OTHERS by Robert E. Howard: Lancer, 95c.

Following the meteoric success of their CONAN series, Lancer have republished this collection of 15 lesser-known Howard stories, originally published by Arkham House in 1963. The majority of Howard's best fantasy stories have already been republished, except perhaps for SKULL-FACE, and so, by necessity, these stories are often not up to his own high standard. All the same, several have stood the test of time very well and the book is a 'must' for all Howard addicts. The overall bias is towards horror rather than sword-and-sorcery, as in the previous Lancer collection WOLFSHEAD.

One unfortunate thing about the book is the title: since 1963, only the title story has been republished in a Howard collection, hence people may get the impression that the book consists entirely of reprints. THE DARK MAN tells of an encounter between a Gael, Turlogh O'Brien, and the last

survivors of the Picts, a far more ancient race. The Dark Man itself is a statue worshipped by the Picts as it is said to contain the spirit of Bran Mak Morn, once the king of the race. Together with most of Howard's other stories about the Picts it was published in the collection BRAN MAK MORN (Dell, 1969). In fact there are two more stories about the Picts in THE DARK MAN, but as both are within the framework of a modern-day man being knocked out and reliving a former life, they were not included in the Dell collection. The first one, PEOPLE OF THE DARK, also stars a Gael - called Conan! - who meets in his earlier life the counterparts of two modern-day people he knows. It is a well-written little piece, with a clever finale when 'Conan' returns to the twentieth century. Conversely the second one, CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT, is very brief and unsatisfactory.

Possibly the best story in the collection is PIGEONS FROM HELL. It tells of the strange happenings in a house in New England, and what happens to two men who sleep there overnight. It is very gruesome, as the back cover of the book testifies, describing one of the men, with his head split wide open, walking downstairs with the hatchet to do the same to his friend. The style and narrative are very reminiscent of Lovecraft at his best, as also in THE THING ON THE ROOF later in the book, but moves more at a Howard pace. The only thing that puzzled me was the title, which had little to do with the story.

Another Howard classic included is THE GARDEN OF FEAR, about Hunwulf the Wanderer whose mate gets carried off by a winged man. A main feature of his brief 15-page adventure is his encounter with carnivorous plants. They may be old-hat now, but it was quite a novel idea in 1934 when the story was written, and I have yet to find a better method of overcoming the obstacle. Once again the framework is of a twentieth-century man recalling a previous life, a favourite theme with Howard who, at times, believed that Conan had once lived and was now telling him of real happenings.

One more story deserves special mention: THE VOICE OF EL-LIL. This was originally published in 'Oriental Stories' and uses the idea of a lost empire in the depths of Africa - shades of ERB! Only a few changes would be needed to make it into a full-fledged Conan story, and the invention of the fiendish giant gong is perhaps Howard at his best.

Only two of the stories are unsatisfactory: IN THE FOREST OF VILLEFERE and THE DEAD REMEMBER. The former is Howard's second published story, and he had still not found his feet. The latter was published in 'Argosy', and it is the different format and layout which betrays it, rather than the idea.

The rest are all from 'Weird Tales' and are: THE GODS OF BAL-SAGOTH, THE MAN ON THE GROUND, THE HYENA, DIG ME NO GRAVE, THE DREAM SNAKE and OLD GARFIELD'S HEART. Of these, only the first, another Turlogh O'Brien story is over 15 pages long but length, in this case, is not proportional to worth. Perhaps the saddest thing about the whole collection is unavoidable - the format. I first read most of these stories in the original publications, and somehow the forty-year old magazines, the superb illustrations and the surrounding stories combined to heighten the aura of mystery. So



much seems to be lost in printing them on crisp white pages in a book without a single illustration.

With this collection, most of Howard's weird fantasy has appeared in paperback. Hopefully though, if this manages to sell well, Lancer may be induced to publish ALWAYS COME EVENING, the Arkham House collection of Howard poetry, some of the best ever published in 'Weird Tales'.

DREAD COMPANION by Andre Norton: Gollancz 1972: £1.25

Once again Miss Norton has demonstrated her unquestionable ability to weave a spellbinding tale of mystery and yet, somehow, this book does not succeed as well as many of her earlier novels. The story tells of one Kilda c'Rhyn, effectively orphaned, her father being a survey scout unable to settle, and brought up in the creche for service children on Chalox. However, having her father's exploring instinct she dislikes the inactivity in the creche and so, at the age of seventeen, she accepts a position as governess to two young children, Bartare and Oomark, who are going to the planet Dylan. But there is something strange about the children, in particular Bartare who acts as if she had an invisible companion, referred to as She. Kilda is prepared to dismiss this as childish play-acting until, looking in her mirror one night, she is confronted by a wrinkled, aged version of her face looking back.

Matters come to a head when the two children start off into the desert together. Kilda, following, gets transported with them to a nightmare world where nothing is what it seems. At one moment the landscape might be normal, at the next a mass of flashing geometrical shapes. Kilda teams up with the half-human thing that was once Jorth Kosgro, interplanetary scout, and fights for the survival of all four against both the 'evil' and the 'good' races of the world, and in particular Melusa, Bartare's 'dread companion'.

As in several books by Andre Norton, the emphasis is very much on reality against illusion and enchantment, but rather than making it subservient to the story line as in a book like WITCH WORLD, it here becomes the dominant factor. Because of this, DREAD COMPANION falters occasionally through too weak a plot. Rather like Alan Garner in ELIDOR, Andre Norton creates a world of mystery and then virtually ignores its many potentials. We hear of the Dark Ones and the Folk, but see very few of either. We learn of Kosgro's familiarity with the enchantments of the world, but never learn how he acquired it. Perhaps the one thing that saves the book is the character of Kilda. She comes alive, as a lonely girl forced into a role she does not want. And rather than winning through the story by superhuman efforts, as in so many books, it is her very humanity that saves the day. Even then there are flaws in the victory.

It is perhaps interesting to note that this book, like so many before it, has been designated as a children's book by many library authorities, presumably because the main characters are children. Yet, quite apart from a child's probable inability to understand the story, I hesitate to think of the dreams an impressionable child might have after reading it.

# S.F. CROSSWORD # 3

Compiled by the editors.

## Clues Across

1. First town. (10)
8. Found in Heaven and Hollywood. (4)
9. ~~Nets rife this prolific writer.~~ (8)
10. A likely place to find 1 across. (6)
11. Kuttner's was two-handed. (6)
12. ~~"Iron Bars" (James Blish).~~ (3)
13. This "alien" is simply heavenly! (5)
15. Jack of Eagles was one. (5)
17. ~~This poor chap had a nervous breakdown on the way to Jupiter!~~ (3)
19. Harlan's brother? (6)
21. Brunner's tantalising Tantalum. (6)
23. Restrain this devilish cartographer! (4,4)
24. Philip's in a Klass by himself, pseudonimically speaking. (4)
25. ~~The Star-Trekker.~~ (10)

## Clues Down

2. He started out as an egg. (7)
3. Harry's barbarians - seems like they've got sore throats! (5)
4. Sarek's home planet. (6)
5. ~~Creator of Lankmar.~~ (6)
6. Flandry and De Ruyter both are. (7)
7. De Camp's roguish royalty. (5)
14. Fortunately a rare event on Lagash. (7) *ECLIPSE SUNDOWN*
16. One of Kuttner's many pseudonyms. (7)
17. ~~Theodore's is chromium.~~ (6)
18. Keats is undeniably greater than Milton! (6)
20. ~~There's one on Asconel.~~ (5)
22. Between Mesklin and Terra. (5)

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SOLUTION WILL BE PUBLISHED NEXT ISSUE

## SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD

(Continued from p2.) Down: 1. Cats-eye 2. Reunite 3. Proton 4. Odd 5. Darker 9. Nebulae 11. Roman 13. Klingon 14. Shire 18. Latakia 19. Andrews 20. Street 21. Chasch 25. She.

There were no correct entries to last issue's crossword, hence nobody won the prize. In order to encourage entries, therefore, the sender of the entry with the greatest number of correct answers received before 1st. December 1972 will receive a new copy of H. G. Wells' *THE TIME MACHINE* (Pan Books Edition).

The fannish crossword, promised for this issue, was squeezed out through lack of time to compile it, so we had to fall back on this S.F. one, originally intended for ZIMRI. It should appear in number 4, though, provided its compilation doesn't prove to be an impossible task!

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# BREAD ON THE WATERS

Your letters, and our comments.

BRIAN ROBINSON, I congratulate you on killing off the Fanzine Foundation.  
9 Linwood Grove, The basic idea is fine, but the apathy in fandom is bound  
Manchester, to kill it dead. I've had both sides of the balls-up over  
M12 4QH. the last effort, and frankly I don't know who's lying to  
whom. Certainly several people made a pile of money out  
of it. They also hived off every good and worthwhile item therein. Not that  
I blame them - I'd do the same in that position - but it's my nature to de-  
precate the deprecatable, as long as it's someone else who's doing it.

((There's an awful lot I disagree with there, Brian old son; firstly, I did not kill off the FF - that was done by John Muir et al. at Chester, and I certainly would not have agreed to it, had I been asked. There are several more sides than two to the affair; I can think of at least five people, all involved, all with their own point of view, no doubt. And anyone who doesn't consider a full run of HYPHEN to be a worthwhile item must be....but I don't want to offend you.))

The sort of education system I'd like to see is that which sends students out into the world for a year or so, and then finished their education. Give 'em a chance to broaden their minds, and keep the specialisation for later. Trouble with this sort of system is that you're learning well into your twenties, and as the amount of knowledge in a particular subject increases you go further towards ultra-specialisation and thirty-five year old undergraduates.

ROGER WADDINGTON, The continuation of the Pete Weston talk has been cau-  
4 Commercial St., sing me to think of just what I'd been getting away  
Norton, Malton, with in the way of return for the investment of a zine  
Yorkshire. in those pre-gafia days; and the latest issue of SPECU-  
LATION arriving in the same post is making me realise  
just what the term "labour of love" means, and that I'm not really sure  
that I'm giving out with something worthwhile even now... But I can always  
write in hope; it must be really depressing to know you've reached the lim-  
its of perfection, and can't do any more!

((I wish everybody had such perception and appreciation - I might get more LoC's! I realise you were half-joking when you talked about the limits of perfection; I doubt if anyone capable of approaching that point would recognise the barrier anyway - that's how barriers are broken.))

PETER WESTON, You could have called it "Second Great Issue" and left  
31 Pinewall Ave., things at that - because it was, you know. ((blush)) It  
Kings Norton, must be rare for a new fanzine to get off to such a good  
Birmingham 30. start; it's what I was hoping my Novacon talk might help  
to provoke, although I shouldn't imagine you needed very  
much advice from me or anyone else. There's some well put-together writing

in LURK, a sense of humour, and a certain quality of confidence - as shown by the way you firmly reject various bits of mis-placed advice in the letter-column.

Your comment about education struck a resonant note with me; exactly the same sort of situation happened in my own case, where some years ago I left school with 'A' levels in Chemistry, Physics and Maths, to take up a job in Industrial Chemistry but with a dawning realisation that I loathed Chemistry. Because the school system allowed nothing else to be taught to boys at sixth-form level, I had no idea of the possibilities of the Arts side of education, or of Business Studies, which can be very much more interesting than the sciences themselves. The job I went to demanded 'A' level qualifications, but amounted to little more than washing bottles and doing some very routine tests on samples of steel. In the same lab. there were a dozen other young men, equally fed up, some of whom had Degrees, and who were also bottle-washing. The company encouraged us to study, and I was enrolled for a Dip. Tech. course (as it then was), but finally my dislike of Chemistry triumphed over inertia and ignorance, and luckily for me I managed to get into the far more interesting world of business management. But along the way I missed out of a lot, as well as wasting a good few years of time.

Are there any other husband-and-wife teams, you ask? ((Well, it was John Piggott actually, but...)) Shame; some of the finest fanzines have come from such collaborations. There are husband-and-wife teams actually involved in producing one fanzine, and many other cases where a wife, although not actually credited on the masthead, has given a lot of support and assistance in producing a fanzine. In Britain we have couples like the Mercers and the Pardoes in this category. There was also the case of ASFR, where John Bangsund was aided by his wife Diane; ODD (Ray & Joyce Fisher); CRY (Buz & Elinor Busby); OUTWORLDS (Bill & Joan Bowers). Currently we have YANDRO, the grandad of them all with well over 200 issues from Buck & Juanita Coulson; also POTLATCH from Arnie & Joyce Katz, and ENERGUMEN from Mike & Susan Glicksohn. Now I don't want to frighten you, but of the above, most of which have either won, or been nominated for Hugo's, the editorial teams disintegrated in the cases of ASFR, ODD and OUTWORLDS, and so did the marriages!

On a similar note, it seems to me that LURK could become a sort of British equivalent of YANDRO, if you can keep it going. It seems to strike the same sort of balance of contents, fill the same sort of place in fandom.

ROB HOLDSTOCK,  
15 Highbury Grange,  
London N5.

This LURK has been watching me one hour too long. I shall LoC it now, albeit briefly, and banish it to my fanzine shelf where it can make faces at me all it wants. I can only compliment one magazine for so long, and this one, as I have sat here trying to keep it quiet, has been complimented enough for seven or eight zines. Despite its horrible name, LURK I find refreshing, interesting, and eminently readable. ((Another satisfied customer, yet.))

THE WIND FROM NOWHERE was the best part of the letter columns. How astute, how biting, how true. A summary of much that goes into LoC's....delicate, double-edged, memorable. I shall forever remember LURK as the zine that in-

sinuates LoC's are burps. Beautiful.

((Shucks, I wish we hadn't changed the lettercol title after that!))

IAN MAULE,  
59 Windsor Tce.,  
South Gosforth,  
Newcastle-on-Tyne,  
NE3 1YL.

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I presume Pete Weston is talking about a sercon fanzine when he says 150-250 copies for British fandom and a few key people in the U.S.A. Certainly if it's a fannish zine you're producing, 40-50 copies for the British Isles is more than adequate; any number above that is sheer lunacy without a subscription policy, which I'm loath to do. You can expect about twenty fanzines in trade plus another twenty or so LoCs. Quite respectable, but don't forget this is because you send your zine to the people that matter, and who regularly write for fanzines. When it comes to overseas copies I send roughly half my print run, get less LoC's and trades but on the whole the quality of these far surpasses that which can be expected from here.

((Many thanks for the information, Ian. By comparison, we have a print run of 70 at the moment, 35 of which goes into OMPA, and another half-dozen or so overseas. That leaves about 30 copies for British non-OMPANS, which means that a substantial part of the "market" is as yet untapped. However, these people will have to wait for the dubious pleasure of receiving LURK until we obtain a duper which is less back-breaking and time-consuming than our present Emgee semi-rotary.))

NICK SHEARS, "The whole world was exploring the moon by proxy..."? Great, 52 Garden Way, cool, far out and right on etc. ad nauseam. If it was true. Northcliff 4, Not bothering to rap about other countries, it was only Johannesburg. that lucky handful of Sarf Efricans overseas at the time who got to see anything - the rest of us had to wait for the photos in the papers. T.V. will be installed here in '75 only - maybe a televised worldcon?! Seriously tho, the lack of tv hasn't been a drag very often (I've only been here six years; I'm British, believe it or nuts) and when we are eventually "blessed" it won't be worth watching for quite a while. And by the time that it is reality I sure as hell won't still be living here.

Your OMPA comments on pp20-21 are quite valid, but surely they should apply to any APA? And there are many other successful APA's. I only belong to one other (ANZAPA) but I receive zines from a few others and they all seem to thrive. Perhaps because they care about the APA, and what they put into it? I don't think the money factor you mention is an important one - just care put into the fanzine would be enough. And of course comment - in detail. I only ever put one zine through OMPA, so far anyway, ENTROPION 4. The feedback? Two LoC's from OMPA (one from Terry, who'd been receiving ENT from the start anyway) and a couple of brief one-para acknowledgements in two sets of m/c's. My percentage on LoC's, reviews etc. on outside comments was damn good. So? So aFRICAN I didn't go thro OMPA, because I'm not willing to put out 35 copies without feedback. If members were simply willing to comment intelligently on the zines then more for would be encouraged to put better stuff thro. An m/c should be the equivalent of a LoC - long and meaty. If it isn't, it isn't worth printing.

((I sympathise with your feedback problem, especially as you have to send the zines overseas, but you can't in all fairness expect LoC's from APA members - one of the reasons for the existence of APAs, in my opinion, is to avoid the necessity of writing LoC's by means of mailing comments, which should be a sort of communal letter-substitute. As it happens, I do LoC quite a few of the zines I get, including your own aFRICAN, but that's only because I'm still a keen young neo. When time gets tight, them LoCs'll have to go. I partially agree with your comments on m/c's, but the purpose of the short, even mildly insulting comments we give to minac are designed to lift the perpetrators to greater (and bigger) things.))

ARCHIE MERCER,  
21 Trenethick Parc,  
Helston,  
Cornwall.

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If Pat really isn't interesting, why doesn't she write about Mike? Make the editorials slightly less one-sided. (Mike could no doubt return the compliment by writing about Pat. If she isn't interesting, he could damn soon make her so!)

((The trouble is that Pat is interesting - dammit, I married the girl - but she doesn't seem to think so, or else doesn't seem to think she can write interestingly enough. Hence I have a tough time persuading her to do her share. But I'll keep trying.))

Personally, I find in general that electrically-amplified instruments are an abhorrence. The bloke what invented electrical amplification for instruments has even more to answer for, in my musical book, than Mijneer Sax, whose work is redeemed by its extremes - soprano and bass!

((Agree with you about the bass-sax - superb! - but not about amplification. Every new technical development in the field of music has something to offer, in the right hands, and that includes the Varitone attachment for amplification and manipulation of brass instrument sounds - I shudder to think what its poor inventor would suffer at your hands!))

CY CHAUVIN,  
17829 Peters,  
Roseville,  
Michigan, U.S.A.

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From a general overview, I'd say that your zine would be improved if it used a lot less artwork. Unless artwork is outrageously funny, or superbly reproduced, I don't think it adds anything to a fanzine; I don't even like the cover, and I did the drawing on it! Also, this would help to save space.

((As it happens we've followed your advice this issue, though not deliberately; because of the house-moving I realised we'd be pushed for time on this issue, hence typed the material without leaving any spaces for art, and everything fitted almost perfectly. I've got nothing against artwork in fanzines, even if it's indifferent, though of course the written stuff comes first with us, not being artists ourselves.))

I enjoyed the con-report and especially the con-photo-pages. Fantastic! You know, that's one feature I've never seen in a U.S. fanzine - I now know the looks of more British fans than U.S. fans! I think the reason why U.S. fanzines don't publish photos like this might be that U.S. fandom is so much bigger than British fandom that no-one can recognise all the faces at (say) a Worldcon. It's thus harder to sort out the notables from the unknowns.

Yes, I think we agree re FAHRENHEIT 451; I enjoy soft SF, as well as pure fantasy, as much as I do SF - they both give me the same sort of pleasurable feeling. That's not to say I don't enjoy other types of fiction, but I don't enjoy them in the same sort of way I enjoy SF. That's why I've been rather disturbed by the increasing amounts of stories like SLOW SCULPTURE, THE ASIAN SHORE or the new Silverberg novel in GALAXY, DYING INSIDE. Each has only one marginally SF idea in it, and the whole aura the story projects is not one of science fiction, but of realism - present day realism. My complaint has nothing to do with the written quality of the story, only with what it portrays. Alexei and Cory Panshin explained in a F&SF review that they thought people read SF because it portrayed "new alternatives" - experiences that were different from those encountered in present day reality, and the more different they were, the better.

DAVE ROWE, I like LURK, mainly 'cos I like the eds, I think. ((You  
8 Park Drive, mean you think you like the eds, or you think you like  
Wickford, LURK? On second thoughts, better not answer that!)) I  
Essex. often wonder if I'd be jumping up and down yelling some-  
thing about lack of content if I didn't. On second thou-  
ghts I wouldn't (although conreps should be more than just a list of  
names, even if it does boost the egoboo to get all those mentions.

((We only did it that way to distract peoples' attention from the quality of the writing.))

Nasty cover, heck! If this is to become the standard format then you'd better get some better side-fillers. Inside's basic layout is neat and orderly (i.e. I like it) apart from slopping ((sic)) type edges, and large illo titles without borders (you'd be surprised the difference that makes). I hope Dave Piper's artwork progresses as I love his sense of humour, ghodd fantoonist coming up there. ((Agreed)).

I'll mention 1220 in my HELL-LoC, but I doubt if it'll get printed, unless the eds can think up some catty reply, as they seem to have a habit of forgetting info and LoC's that might squash something they've decreed. Like in HELL 3, "Show me just one Protestant fighting alongside the Catholics, one Papist pledged to the Orange cause. Damn right you can't!!!" Unfortunately for Skel, I pointed to several; that half of the LoC wasn't printed. Also they seem to have spent an unfair amount of space in HELL 5 attacking Gray, failing (of course) to report that Skel had originally sent a 'make-peace' LoC to Gray. Hell indeed. Stand by for fan-feud.

((Hope so. Why d'you think we printed this bit? Nothing like a good feud, is there? Over to you, Skel.))

FRED HEMMINGS, I must give partial support to your comments on the cur-  
20 Beech Road, rent education system but you finish by showing signs of  
Slough SL3 7DQ, tumbling into the same fault you are decrying, namely  
Bucks. specialisation, for the study of literature is this,  
just as much as the varying branches of Chemistry. How-  
ever, your comments were on specialisation and a desire to have been  
taught literature, in that order, so let me tackle them in the same way.

First a general agreement: the stage has now been reached where some people obtain degrees just to be able to say they have got one. In some parts of the world there is even prestige in being able to put B.A. (or B.Sc.) failed after one's name; the thought of doing work in the field where they have made a study, especially in those of many arts graduates, is totally impracticable. You say specialisation comes too early and here I must disagree; the alternative is a course of general study, most of which cannot possibly be of any use (which should provoke some argument). What I would suggest is that a greater degree of guidance should be given over the choice of subject; each student should be made to realise that the decision made could well affect the rest of his life.

The second half of your piece covered your regret at not having been taught about literature, which I take to mean the normal system of being forcibly exposed to a number of works by 'good' authors; the idea that anyone should be I find repulsive. Books are written, in the main, for enjoyment, be they stories or treatises on Egyptian tomb inscriptions, they are one person's thoughts or discoveries which he wishes to share with others. The fact that I prefer Dickens, in the main, to Dick or Disch, and practically any other writer to Dickens worries me not in the least. As I grow older (creak), my tastes in literature, as in everything else, change; words once marvellous are now banal - this is sad, but it is not a fading sensation, for it also means I am constantly finding books I would once have discarded as pointless but now enjoy. I think it would be a great pity to reach the stage where only something like James Joyce's books appealed to one; how much worse then to short-circuit such a development.

Does all this sound like a plea for ignorance? Not so. I merely say that just as you would not expect many adults to enjoy Enid Blyton, so the inexperienced should not be fed on a diet of Einstein. However, this brings me back to the other side of the coin: whilst art and literature can be learned and appreciated at leisure, science and technology must be taught, and quickly, or society will collapse. Perhaps this is a criticism of society, but it is a fact we must live with. Literature is available for those who wish to learn; by all means sow the seeds, but remember that while artificial fertiliser may help in the short run it can do permanent damage, which is perhaps my main reason for disliking specialisation.

((Some good points here, Fred; but I didn't say I wanted to be taught about literature, merely that I would have liked to have been given a better opportunity and more encouragement to find out about it. In the latter case the initiative lies with the individual, as it must do. Also, what you say about science and technology having to be taught is all very well, but that doesn't mean that every schoolchild should have its own preferences walked over for the sake of the Great God Technology. This is where the general studies which you decry could be used to advantage. Many thanks for a fine letter.))

GRAY BOAK,  
6 Hawks Road,  
Kingston Upon Thames,  
Surrey, LKT 3EG.

I'm very bad at writing LoC's to fanzines. It usually requires close personal friendship - or a personal attack, as in HELL. From what I recall I found it quite pleasant if a little insipid - it seemed



to have little mood or distinction of its own. Standard British Fanzine - and that could be taken as an insult! Quite well produced though, unlike many, and seemed to possess a glimmering of an idea how to improve itself - unlike HELL, which has no idea, but does possess a certain enthusiastic vitality that LURK lacks at present.

I feel that one of the main flaws with British fanzines is a lack of an appropriate critical attitude to contents and appearance. Only a small handful of faneds seem to care - and others seem proud to proclaim that they don't! I find the latter attitude totally abhorrent. British fanzines have an appalling reputation abroad - and justifiably so. I would add that it is very difficult to approach LURK in the appropriate fresh state that all fanzines really deserve, because it arrives in the middle of a pile of OMPA zines, few of any great worth - or any worth at all. After the next mailing I'll perhaps be able to approach it with a less jaundiced eye. The stale miasma pervading OMPA is sufficient to damage even the best of fanzines.

((Can't agree with you on that last point, Gray; perhaps you've become an o-o-o-old fan and ti-i-ired already?))

JOHN PIGGOTT,           Your piece about education contains a great deal of truth, but really, how can you say you have had no chance to find out anything about literature? At university, you weren't studying chemistry every second of every day, I'm quite sure. One of the great things about living today (rather than at just about any other period of history) is that information about any subject is made readily available to those who want it. Provided the inclination to learn is present, the necessary material can easily be found.

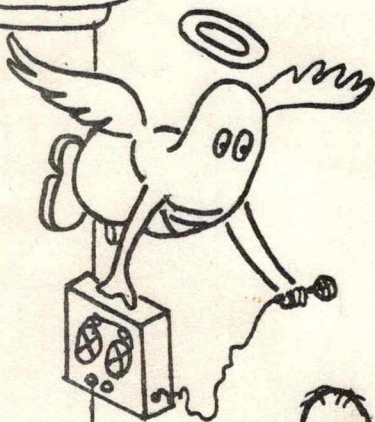
((It's my opinion that the redbrick universities, like Liverpool, work their students, if not harder, then at least for longer hours than does Oxbridge. What spare time Pat and I had, we spent mostly in each others' company, when the inclination to study great works of literature was not exactly uppermost in our minds! In a later part of your letter, which I haven't the space to print, you say that you consider it unlikely that a person's will to learn could be sapped by the educational processes he goes through; I would rather say that it is quite probable that a student at an early stage in his education could be conditioned into thinking certain fields not worthy of his attention, simply by the way in which they are or are not presented.))

...and that must be all for now. We also heard from

PETE COLLEY, who didn't like anything, and said so in no uncertain terms;  
DAVE SEALE, who wanted easy crossword clues for twits like him;  
MIKE BRAMLEY, whose computer-written poetry is a hell of a lot better than some of the human-written stuff we've seen;  
SUE SMITH, from Australia, who said nice but unquotable things;  
JOE PATRIZIO, who wants us to reveal our hidden selves, and           (tion.  
RICHARD COTTON, who was shocked at the smallness of SPECULATION's circula-

Thank you one and all; only space limitations prevented lengthier quotes.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ERG



40  
NOT OUT!

