



Patrick Nielsen Hayden. Special gung-ho Corflu issue. 75 Fairview #2D, NYC NY 10040.

"Why should the pleasures of folly be reserved for fools?"

LETTER COLUMN: FLASH POINT 7 provoked much more response than this allegedly small fanzine can hope to print. Since a great deal of that response concerned my remarks on Corflu, Mexican, and "intellectualism," I'm going to consolidate my further thoughts on those topics into one bit following the letters. What rude interpolations I do make will be set in larger type, and bracketed, [like this]. The very first letter of comment received came from:

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Many thanks for FLASH POINT, the all too rare kind of fanzine that makes me think about throwing off my lethargy and doing another zine myself. Or at least writing a letter. Like most of the stuff emanating from the NH typer the past few years FP's superb writing awes me, and makes me mutter and grumble wishes of being able to write something only half as good as "Life With the Loonies, Part III." I like Teresa's approach to bug eradication. Whenever I see a column of ants trudging through our apartment I always like to give them a little speech on matters theological, the nature of God, His relationship with humanity and ants, why evil exists and whether cruel death comes only to the unrighteous or if it is random and unprovoked, before zapping the little fuckers with Raid.

You raise some interesting points about Corflu. As far as I'm concerned the programming at the first two was piss-poor. I am at least in part to blame since I could easily have volunteered to serve on the committee but couldn't be bothered to. Sheer laziness won out despite the fact that I'd heard some programming ideas and disagreed with them from the outset. But though I admit I was too lethargic to do anything before, I do feel I've got a right to make some criticisms if only to help get a discussion going on the type of convention we want to have.

I don't think we should casually dismiss the idea of Corflu being a convention for fanzine fans, despite your well-put objections to the whole concept of "fanzine fandom." Fans with an interest in good books are a rare breed, it's true, but not of any readily identifiable bloc while "fanzine fans" are. I don't see advertising Corflu as "the convention for fanzine fans" as excluding con fans, Dr. Who fans, or whatever, any more than the intensity of media programming bars us from the Worldcon. If Corflu is a good con, one at which all the participants get to have desperate fun, word will certainly get out to anyone we might want there. But I still think we should keep that little tagline around to, with a bit of luck, attract some new people to the dubious merits of fanzine publishing. Despite a lot of rather dull and earnest panels and discussion groups at the first two Corflus a few people actually did produce fanzines either for the con or at the con (the latter is sheer lunacy to my mind but all God's chilluns got to have their fun). And a good tradition or two did get started. In the good tradition corner we have Art Widner's fanzine room. Although it wasn't heavily patronized I, for one, found it delightful to be able to look through so many zines of past eras. I like to see what's come before, to see if there are ideas worth stealing, traditions worth following, writing worth emulating. Another good thing was the mimeo room; some people do feel compelled to write a lot of stoned gibberish at conventions and publish it--why should we deny them the right to their own folly?

One tradition I think should be scrapped immediately is the drawing for the Guest of Honor. It's all well and nice to believe in some ideal of fannish egalitarianism but it just ain't so. I think the GoH should either be scrapped or used in a way to honor those who justifiably deserve it.

Well, now, if only Ted and Bill Bowers can come up with some good fun programming maybe we can establish a tradition of desperate fun. Going to cons to see friends is all right but, somehow, it just ain't enough, ya know. I want to feel that the several hundred dollars spent going to a far-off con is well spent; after all, I could use a compact disc player. With the way most cons have been lately I just can't see blowing \$500 in a weekend, when with that I could take an actual week's vacation and visit people without the distraction of dull programming.

Good stuff on PKD. Paradoxically, I believe that the very screwiness of his metaphysics is part of his power. Dick never did come up with any kind of definitive system of belief but, like most of us who are sure deep inside that something big is definitely wrong with the world, he tried to find ways to concretize those inchoate feelings and make at least temporary sense of life. As for the solipsism of

Americans, there is a wonderful panel in the latest LOVE & ROCKETS: the American Artist, true to his Tormented Soul, is wandering through a Mexican town feeling sorry for the Mexicans, thinking how life like this would impoverish anyone's soul, while in the foreground we see a group of children playing ball, a couple sitting holding hands, and a woman reading Les Miserables, a tear rolling down her cheek. [26 October 1985]

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[Anne started by responding to a letter of comment I'd sent her on SOME DAYS YOU EAT THE BEAR:] Yes, on the whole I agree with your view; there is a reason behind the "my name in print" fascination-- it tends to get glossed over as egoboo, but it can't be just that because it applies equally to people-I-know. If I read a con report by Pam Wells, part of the fascination lies in that rare opportunity to see a scene I've participated in from another person's viewpoint. Or see other people's cons from another angle. You go through a con impinging briefly on other people, yet you have no idea what brought them to the point where you stood chatting in the hallway, or where they went between that time and when you met them sniffing small bottles and making an exhibition of themselves on the dance floor. A con is an orange shot through with needles, and each person's experience is a needle's eye view. The thing about fannish writing is that it gives you more information from which to try to reconstruct the nature of the orange. More slices, more angles. One thing it seems to me is that there is a section of fandom which goes through life examining it as social scientists. Avedon said something about it in her letter: "In any other company, I'd have to be talking to a social scientist to talk seriously about some of the things I'm interested in"--or something like that. Only, staggeringly few social scientists actually see themselves as fodder for their theories, whereas fans do (being only rank amateurs who have failed to realize that this is Not Really What It Is About At All). That's why I like personal construct theory, the brainchild of George Kelly, who said that any theory had to explain why people became psychologists and scientists or it wasn't any good. He also said, "If you can't figure out what's wrong with the patient, ask him. He may tell you!"--one of my all-time favorite lines.

I liked the fanzine by the way, particularly the bookends on the mouse. Again, like two needles in an orange, but by two terrific writers. The description of the "poised" state of mouse-catching was great. And I agree with your comments about the Mexican; there are too many status implications attached to both intellectual activities and soap-watching. When you have to be diplomatic about saying what you enjoy so as not to hurt other people's feelings in case they think you're implying that it's better than what they enjoy, things have gone too far. Damn this word "intelligent." How about "intellectual" or "analytical" as non-evaluative alternatives? When I was over in America for an exchange visit, I attended school for a bit, and it seemed to me on the basis of that (very) small sample that American school was far more oriented towards social adjustment than our schools, which are more oriented towards achievement. Britain seems more accepting of eccentricity attached to high achievement. I suspect we produce more twisted geniuses--more uncomfortable, but more exciting? Jimmy [Robertson] disagrees with me here, pointing out the American icon of the redneck hermit/eccentric, but I think this is a quite different idea, based more on "character" and "independence" than on ability being directly linked to character disorder. I tend to feel that the highest achievers must always be twisted in some sense; this provides the power and obsessive drive needed to succeed at the highest levels. I think about half the living Nobel prize winners live in Cambridge; is this evidence for my case? [Until you can provide a definition of "normal" character that anchors to some norm other than the consensus perception of "normal," I'm going to think your notion amounts to a tautology.]

On the other hand, the monetary achievers are probably more likely to come out of America. And the social adjustment bit has its advantages; the lower 50% of academic achievers get a raw deal in Britain (it used to be the lower 90% until they abolished grammar schools and brought in comprehensives). It sometimes seems to me that status in Britain is more diverse than in America; if you define status as stemming from money, power, or respect for activity, money seems less important to the British than to Americans. I sometimes get the impression from Americans I've met that if you don't earn much, you can't be very important. Is there room for the absent-minded professor (as opposed to the smart one who charges massive consultancy fees), or the poorly-paid politician, in the United States? Maybe the emphasis on community activities rather than individual ones promotes achievement in terms of commerce. I could go on at this point to speculate on how climate affects culture, but that's really Jimmy's area, and I'm conscious of skating on very thin ice. Greg Pickersgill feels that the one defining factor about fans is their ability to argue on any subject regardless of how little information or real knowledge they have, and I feel he may be right, so I shall shut up. [5 November 1985] [One of the paradoxes of our supposedly "free" market system is that it encourages passive conformity. In the British welfare state, even since Thatcher, one can shrug off a lot of society's expectations secure

in the knowledge that, whatever happens, you won't starve and if you get sick someone will treat you. You won't be fed nouvelle cuisine and the medical care won't be the very best available, but you'll survive, with a little dignity even. Here, if you defy convention, you may wind up inventing a new computer and making \$9000000000, or on the other hand you may end up as one of New York's 30,000 homeless, sleeping on the sidewalk gratings that ventilate steam heat from the pipes underground. This tends to encourage us all to play it safe, and has a subliminal, society-wide, pervasive and corrosive effect.

[Of course I'm talking about overall trends here; exceptions abound. I fully expect umpty-ump people to write in explaining the British Class System and how lucky we are to be free of such things over here, you betcha. I also expect yet another earful of earnest disquisitions on how Silicon Valley, et al., prove that the American system still encourages initiative, rewards eccentric creativity, etc. Sure, and it's an impressive reward those thousands of Malaysians and Filipinos get for their "initiative" assembling the hardware crucial to Steve Wozniak's bottom line. 50¢ a day and up.]

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Bob [Doyle] brought home the November ASIMOV'S, which contains Spinrad on "Books Into Movies," in which he contrasts 2010 and Dune (bad examples) with Blade Runner (good example). In his examination of the latter, he mentions the penultimate sequence, in which Decker and the android battle, and the android saves Decker at the last moment. (Did that happen?) He claims this makes the movie consistent with the book (and Dick's philosophy) by showing that "humanness" is spiritual and not determined by flesh or the lack of it, and that it can be gained by androids/replicants. I was struck by this assertion, because it's the opposite of yours . . . and I agree with your interpretation. Machines don't become human, in Dick's world.

At least at the moment, "fanzine fan" works as a label or indicator, better than "science fiction fan." It seems (in the form of Corflu) to select better for the sort of person I want to spend time with. I think if Mexican were a literary convention that only attracted readers, FOUNDATION critics, and marginal parafiction writers, I wouldn't be going. Knowing that the committee and large numbers of attendees are also people I think of as fanzine fans, I've selected it as the one convention in Britain I am willing to go into debt for. (Somehow, "literary science fiction fan" is too cumbersome and confusing. "Fanzine fan" isn't perfect as a filter or focus, but it has a better chance of including intelligence and interest of the type I find congenial, than otherwise.) [16 November 1985]

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A zine that begins with bugshit clearly has nowhere to go but up. FP7, however, transcends its origins far more than might be expected. For instance, the discussion of Philip K. Dick. The "less-than-human" motif is one that I've noticed and given somewhat different thought to, in fact coming to a conclusion almost opposite from yours. The idea that I might be a simulacrum has never seemed worth worrying about, but having been raised liberal Jewish, I am tempted to believe that each and every one of the four billion or so apparent human beings on this Earth has some sort of claim on me, and it gets rather oppressive. If a sizable number of them were in fact machines or simulacra or cabbages in human form, the problem would be a bit more manageable. Clearly, the traditional ideas that the ones with the dark skin or the ones with the tits are such subhumans is untenable, but if there were such a group, and it were identifiable...

I'd question your description of the idea that souls can die as Episcopalian or Christian, though. As I understand Christian orthodoxy, souls can be damned, but they cannot cease to exist. A more likely source for that approach is another of Dick's religious interests--Gnosticism. Many Gnostics taught that an immortal soul is not a birthright of all. Some Gnostics believed that a few were born with immortal souls; others, that only those who created souls for themselves in this life (by Gnostic practices) would survive death. [You're right. But what Gnosticism and more orthodox Christianity share is a cosmology rather more fraught with danger, with the possibility of eternal failure, than most other world-class religious systems. Certainly more than the sort of picture of life-after-death favored by most other sf writers when they decide to waddle into this inherently murky territory. One of the things I admire about Dick is the way he applied the classic extrapolatory techniques of sf to his own (apparently sincere) Christianity, emerging with a worldview occasionally almost Lovecraftian in the horror and finality of its potential pitfalls. Occasionally. Most of the time it just came out as darkness in the corners, just enough to give a

sense of moral depth. Which is something science fiction, and science fiction fans, could use once in a while. Problems aren't always soluble. It's possible to lose everything.]

I couldn't agree more with your discussion of "Fandom." (Except watch that stuff about "boring academics" around this house.) I've always identified myself as a science-fiction fan, rather than a "fannish" or "fanzine" fan. I was brought into fandom by the great "sercon" fanzines of the 70s. At the risk of being thought "earnest" or "elitist," I've said that fandom should be about science fiction, particularly about written science fiction, about the literature of ideas and possibilities. (And quite clever of you to provide an example of how fascinating "sercon" writing can be, just a page before.) Your con sounds magnificent; deal me in. [Mmmrrrrffmmf (sound of lengthy disagreement being squelched). Er, see my comments further on.] [24 October 1985]

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FP #7 runs the gamut from light and casual fannish reportage to heavy sf criticism to serious discussion of fannish concepts and each section is as good a demonstration of the way to handle that sort of material as one can expect to see. Don't let this go to your head but gaddamn it this is what a snappy ensmallled personal-zine should be like! (Just to keep the balance I might add I thought your use of typefaces in the letter excerpts section sucked, so there!) [Oh dear. Is this any better?]

In my antepenultimate apartment I encountered a mouse (only one, after eight years, which is reasonable for a second storey flat I suppose) and I too had much difficulty convincing my partner of its reality. Doris would glance knowingly at the scotch bottle and agree with me in that irritatingly condescending way people have of trying to avoid suggesting that you're lying or nuts. Oddly enough this problem disappeared one evening when she was sitting on the rug watching me doing my mini-gym exercises and the rude little rodent ran across the back of her hand. (Happily we live in an area of the city that the dreaded cockroach still considers terra incognita. Should that situation ever change I'd seriously consider moving, no matter how many funny fanzine articles might result.)

Your thoughts on Corflu are extremely well considered and it seems to me that you've put your finger on some very basic issues. At the same time you recognize that at least to a degree this is a communication problem so it may very well be more or less self-correcting. If we hear "fanzine fans' convention" and interpret "old-fashioned convention like fandom used to have" perhaps we shouldn't worry too much about what the rest of fandom says or thinks about us. That said, though, I do think you make some cogent observations well worth thinking about. (And I say that as one fan who isn't an intellectual even if I do read books and consider myself to be of superior intelligence to the majority of people I encounter day to day. But I can rarely talk about pasting in electrostencils for more than a couple of hours without getting ~~whitely~~ bored.) [5 November 1985]

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I think a Mexican-style convention on its own, as a regular thing, wouldn't work over the long haul here in the U.S. quite as well as (1) it has in the U.K. and (2) Corflu already has. I think it would be a perfectly fine idea, though, to make Corflu a Mexican-style convention every once in a while--sure, why not? A literary sf con might work a few times on its own, but even with the admonition in all its advertising that it would feature no other-media programming, it would certainly have more of a tendency to draw media fans and dorks from the woodwork out than Corflu does presently being centered around fanzine fandom. I think where you err partly is in the assumption that we in the U.S. are working with something approaching the same dork-to-trufan ratio as exists in the U.K. I doubt that; I think the reason Mexican is the fine convention it's reported to be is largely because they don't have anything near the same ratio. But that aside, there are many media fans and dorks who are plugged into the convention circuit and who go to as many cons as they can--so the more obvious we can make it that we are far from being the kind of convention they enjoy, the better off we are. Corflu has already been listed in SF CHRONICLE and LOCUS, and will be in ASIMOV'S before we put it on, through nothing any of the Desk Set has done--and while we've not been entirely without requests for information from locals who haven't the slightest idea what fanzine fandom is about, I feel we've received fewer than we might have reason to expect had we tried to make it a Mexican-style convention. As it is, I can tell these people a little about fanzine fandom, and if they're interested in it or interested in learning about it, fine, but otherwise they might better consider Boskone...

No, I didn't interpret what you said in FLASH POINT as meaning you were down on Corflu per se; and I agree that as fannish/ideological discussions go, this one's head & shoulders, waist and knee-caps above "TAFF: Conspiracy or Elite?". [11 November 1985]

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Putting on a convention--Corflu--for "fanzine fans" is no more specialized or selective than putting on a convention for costumers, gamers, Trekkies, or any other group. It makes sense in this era of huge worldcons to have specialized smaller cons, tailored to the tastes of a specific set of people, rather than trying to be all things to all fans. This way everyone can find a convention to his or her taste.

I found the first two Corflus very much to my taste. The size was just right--around 100 people--so that the con did not fragment noticeably into sub-cons, but there were enough people to provide a good mix and to absorb any of the more "tedious" people there. Some aspects of the programming may have been naïve, but the fanzine room--the room with the electro-stencillers and mimeos, where actual fanzines were produced and run off--was one of the centers of the convention (four or five fanzines were produced for and at last year's Corflu), and uniquely vital to the con.

But, more important, the appeal of the first two Corflus drew a number of older fans from out of the woodwork. Thus, I could hang out not only with new fans like Victor Gonzales, but old fans like Art Widner, Dick Ellington, or Dave Rike. We all had in common a conception of fandom that traces back to the Older Days; we were all into fanzines as an integral part of fandom (a concept lacking in much of modern fandom).

And this coming Corflu will have no "mimeo workshops" or "apa panels," as you should know, since you will be a part of its program. (You're not going to put on a mimeo workshop or apa panel, are you?)

The contrast with Mexicon is unfair, especially since you have equally little first-hand knowledge of that convention. The conditions which prevail in Britain are not the same, nor has Britain suffered the fragmentation or anti-fannishness endemic here. (A number of British "regional" cons are quite fannish in conception and attendance; there are presently no American conventions--aside from Corflu--of which this can be said.)

Thus, Corflu meets a need in this country for a fannishly-oriented convention. The rubric "fanzine fans" is simply the easiest and most efficient way of selecting for a fannish attendance.

It seems to me that your reverse-chauvinism is getting in your way if you think you can so easily reduce the contributions of someone like Bob Tucker to "Twain-esque crackerbarrel folk wisdom," an insult to Tucker, to Twain, and to fandom.

"Sercon" as a term arose (from that "anti-intellectual," Boyd Raeburn) in specific response to the specific actions of specific people (among them: Ed Wood) who lacked any real intellectual rigor and substituted in its place pomposity, dullness, and a total absence of any sense of humor whatsoever. The sercon fans prized lists--bibliographies, indices, catalogues--over critical inquiry or intellectual insight. Contrast Ed Wood's JOURNAL OF SF (or whatever it was called) to HYPHEN--and note in which fanzine Damon Knight and James Blish appeared with their critical pieces.

In the fifties--the period which spawned "sercon" as a term--anti-intellectualism was rampant among the general populace. Intellectuals were called "eggheads," and one of the reasons Eisenhower defeated Stevenson was the latter's perceived intellectualism. Fans as a whole stood on the side of intellectualism--after all, we read sf, believed in the possibility of space travel, and were aware of the possibilities offered by science; many of us were utopians of one sort or another, and we were all literate--and it was in this context that "sercon" was coined.

Equally, the "ordinary guys, working in a machine shop" line from Burbee and Laney was created in a context that took for granted the basic intellectualism of fandom. On the one hand, they were laughing at fandom's occasional pomposity, and on the other hand, they were laughing at themselves.

To take these things out of context, thirty and forty years later, to offer them up as American anti-intellectualism (as opposed to British intellectualism!), is to do violence to fact and to the spirit that created them. And it wholly misses the point.

The point is that of course fandom is founded on intellectual postulates and traditions, but that one must keep one's sense of perspective. Fans aren't slans, nor should they preen themselves over their superiority to the general populace. Such pomposity is deserving of ridicule, and ridicule is what it got. "Sercon" is a term of ridicule. It is every bit as appropriate today--in an era of academic navel-picking over sf--as it was thirty years ago. What is weird is the way some people have tried to make the word over into a simple descriptive term, bereft of pejorative connotations. No doubt some enterprising fan will someday try to do the same with "asshole."

There is a profound difference between Burbee or Laney lampooning that great Bag of Wind, Walter J. Daugherty, or laughing at the self-serving lies of an E. Everett Evans, and Peter Prescott slugging science fiction in NEWSWEEK. Fandom has always had its fuggheads--and always will--and humor is by far the best way to deal with these fools. But an attack on the pretensions of a fan is not the same thing as an attack on fandom. And an attack on a fan with intellectual pretensions is not an attack on intellec-

tualism.

Keep in mind that your paragon, Willis, valued Burbee and Laney as well as Joyce and Proust. [28 October 1985]

Avedon Carol I'm not sure your thoughts about cons necessarily work precisely the same way for
9A Greenleaf Rd both countries. This Mexican will feature a guest named Alan Moore, for example.
East Ham, London Your average fannish fan may say to herself, "What is Alan Moore?" No matter, for we
E6 1DX UK shall go and find out, yes. But put out a flyer somewhere in America that says ye SF
con shall have for a guest Alan Moore, and let this news out of a very carefully-held
bag, and you turn up at your small, serious-fannish SF con and discover it's full of lots of complete
strangers who are Alan Moore fans. They know why Alan Moore deserves to be treated as one of the most
created and talented writers of SF&F today--he writes SWAMP THING, he did that SUPERMAN Annish, he had
that great stuff in WARRIOR. He's Real Good, you bet, and I'm a big fan of Moore. But it may not be safe
to let it be known you've got him at your con, or you may end up huddled in the corner of one big comicon
wondering how it happened. You better get Robin Morgan for your GoH. And don't tell anyone outside of
fandom.

But I agree completely with your idea that we should stop downplaying fandom as a "literary society."
I have come to the conclusion that the biggest mistake fandom ever made was to let the idea of Party Land
overtake the image. "Come to Fandom and Talk Seriously About Science Fiction"--that should be the image.
After we lure in the elitist little intellectual bastards, we'll shut the doors and have a party. But
don't fucking tell anyone, or they'll want our beer. [24 October 1985]

A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE had remarks on the matter of Corflu, intellectualism, Mexican and whatnot, some of
which I'll quote illustratively here. TERRY HUGHES commented that the sort of con
I seemed to be advocating was "very close to the mental image I have of how Wiscons are." Maybe so. I've
never been to a Wiscon. To judge from a polemic by Jeanne Gomoll in a recent issue of the Madison group's
newsletter, though, they seem to be in some danger of blanding out. PASCAL THOMAS confessed that I'd made
him "feel guilty about the amounts of silliness I have smuggled into French fandom"--!? I always had the
impression Continental fandom could use all the silliness it could get, starting with tag-team mudwrest-
ling between Franz Rottensteiner and Sam J. Lundwall. Feel guilty no more, Pascal. On the other hand,
JANICE MURRAY thanked me for making her feel better about Corflu: "I bought a supporting membership, but
didn't think I would be comfortable around all those 'fanzine' fans. Now I'm giving serious thought to
attending. I'm in three apas, I vote in TAFF & DUFF, I've even been known to read a science fiction book
or two. Your comments were just what I needed to hear." You're welcome. But tell me, Janice: if you
were worried about whether you'd be comfortable around all those fanzine fans, how do you manage to
survive crossing the street in Seattle? Last time I looked they were the dominant ethnic group in several
neighborhoods of that city, and certainly a vast proportion of the crowd you hang out with. Anyway...
PAUL SKELTON took me to task for the way I "identify and highlight certain characteristics of US and UK
fandoms, and in doing so you inculcate a polarized view. Fandom is either this or fandom is that . . .
Fans are a spectrum." Yes, yes, but since nothing I was saying depended for its validity upon the
absoluteness of the dichotomies discussed, I didn't feel it necessary to insert endless waffling qualifi-
cations. As that HYPHEN bacquote said "When you are burdened with the destiny of fandom as I am you must
classify some things or it all turns into a ball of goop." Skel also remarks that it seems to him that I
was "passing through the same territory that I passed through in my MICROWAVE article, although we were
headed in opposite directions (you heading uptown to the opera, whilst I was going downtown, bowling)."
Opera, schmopera; I was looking for a friendly cafe. If Skel is right, I should be alarmed, since I quite
disagreed with his "The Songs of Fandom" (in MICROWAVE 8), and raise my eyebrows at the dichotomies he
offered therein: a 50s fandom largely fueled by virtuous, kindly "egoboo," contrasted with an 80s fandom
dominated by ruthless scrabbings for wicked "status." Bloody hell, when were the "Fansmanship Lectures"
written, anyway? But smiling, always smiling... GARY DEINDORFER wrote to assure us that he isn't a
"reflex-arc type person," enclosing a very human tape of himself playing alto sax as evidence. More to
the point, he wanted to be sure we didn't regard him as some sort of lowbrow: "I transcend intellectua-
lity. As proof of this, read the enclosed article on Proust." We're convinced, Gary. Finally, MARTIN
MORSE WOOSTER, to whom I didn't send FLASH POINT, wrote an enthusiastic page on how right I was to attack
terrible, elitist Corflu ("spiritual equivalent of Darkover," "minor sect," etc), and concluded: "In any
case, I would say see you at Corflu except that I know that you are not allowed to have anything to do
with me." My, that's not just self-pitying, that's offensive. Oh well. And we also heard from DOUG
BARBOUR, REDD BOGGS, BERNADETTE BOSKY (with an interesting phone-call-of-comment), JEANNE BOWMAN, BRIAN

EARL BROWN, RANDOLPH FRITZ, CHRISTOPHER HATTON, KEN JOSEPHANS, JACK PALMER, DAVE RIKE, ALEX STEWART, HARRY WARNER, BOB WEBBER, and DONALD A. WOLLHEIM. Thanks, all.

CLOSE CAP TIGHTLY TO RETARD THICKENING: "Fandom," in FLASH POINT 7, was heartfelt, off-the-cuff, and redolent of all the faults peculiar to writing done at a white heat. Which is to say it was badly argued, in places overstated, and distinctly half-baked. (May have had a mixed metaphor in there, too; who knows.) That's all right; this is conversation, not the exchange of graven tablets, and much of what you had to say in response was interesting. What do I think now? I'll try to be brief.

Corflu vs. the Mexican idea. Many of you saw the merits of Mexico's convention-programming mix, but at the same time felt that duplicating that mix in the States would result in a very different convention. I was particularly struck by Avedon's point -- too many walk-ins, no matter how intelligent and wonderful, would make the sort of con we're trying for impossible. We couldn't assimilate them. I also noted Jerry's assertion that he was going into debt to attend this year's Mexican on the strength of its being a convention of fanzine fans, which he wouldn't do were it being touted primarily as a gathering of literati, no matter how stellar the intellectual fireworks -- a point fannishly equivalent, I suppose, to the old saw that "blood is thicker than water." Funny thing is, I know just what Jerry means.

First principles, then: what fandom is, and what we're up to. No given article or issue of a zine, no program item, no discussion topic (including science fiction itself) is more important to fanzine fandom than the fact that we're all discussing it together as part of an ongoing conversation. The discrete parts of that conversation are less important than the network and community it grows out of and which it also simultaneously creates. We are a gregarious species, and conversation is a sacrament: In the beginning was The Word.

For this reason I agree with Jerry, and with most of the rest of you. Abstractly laudable though "a science fiction convention" might be, in North America it wouldn't serve our real purposes, would contribute little toward the maintenance of fanzine fandom as an ongoing conversational community. When I wrote "Fandom" I was being wistful about how we've lost the wonderful mechanism of science fiction as a reliable sorting device for the discovery of potential trufans -- but pretending that nothing's changed won't bring it back. (Certainly the idea that "fandom should be about science fiction" is a non-starter. Arthur Hlavaty may say that but he definitely doesn't practice it, which is why I find his zines more interesting than 99% of the science fiction I see. SF can be tremendous stuff, but in the real world little of it merits the sustained attention of grownups, much less the title "literature of ideas and possibilities." Real life has ten times the ideas, possibilities, and unalloyed Sense of Wonder. And fandom is part of real life.)

Let me be more specific. When I call the ongoing conversation "more important" than any specific topic we might discuss, I mean that no amount of inherent worthiness will sustain any discussion in fandom without the sense of continuity generated by those aspects of fandom we habitually think of as "lightweight." Our fannishness sustains our more serious conversations, gives them depth, historicity, and the potential to continue over decades. And this is what distinguishes us from similar interest groups like mystery readers or model-train collectors: the fact that, in the long run, most of us are more interested in one another than in the ostensible subject. Frankly, I think that's something we can be proud of. There's a persistent tendency in Anglo culture to view this sort of desire as vaguely disreputable, somehow not quite germane, weirdly self-indulgent and sleazy -- "cafe fandom," to coin a phrase. Not to put too fine a point on it, I think this is rubbish. What could be more important than engagement with one's fellow human beings, I can't imagine.

But it's important to keep in mind that, in talking about the "ongoing conversational community" of fanzine fandom, we aren't talking about an abstract system, a set of game rules, but about fanzine fandom as it is, about a collection of specific people and friendships, contacts and associations. Looking at that particular group it's apparent that in the last couple of decades our social gatherings have become diluted by a massive influx of people who're less interested in our own peculiar pursuits. These other people have their own virtues and are surely entitled to basic human courtesy at minimum, but their priorities, their ideas concerning what fandom should "be about", are different and -- as long as the average convention consists of 700 of them and 10 of us -- are bound to prevail. So while intelligent and well-meaning convention fans like Ben Yalow shake their heads and tsk-tsk at the current tendency for fanzine fans to withdraw from "working within the system", to my mind the wonder is that Corflu wasn't started up ten years ago. We have worked "within the system," as long as I've been in fandom, and the alienation only deepens. Most fanzine fans aren't the extroverts and get-it-done mensches con fans are. We're introverts; our recreation involves the investment of more energy in fewer people. In that context, Corflu seems an inarguably healthy development: not secession (hardly; most of us will still attend

Boskone, Norwescon, the Worldcon and all the rest), but the establishment of one yearly convention where we can be thoroughly ourselves.

But I wasn't arguing with these assumptions in "Fandom." What I was wondering, rather, was whether we must confine ourselves to flying the flag of "fanzine fandom" -- whether we might not get more of what we want by establishing a convention devoted to, you know, people who read. Which would neatly eliminate the light-saber crowd without leaving out the non-fanzine-oriented trufan types, all the Louise Sachters and David Hartwells most of us consider as much part of the community as any fanzine fan. Jerry and Avedon's points, however, demonstrate the problem with that, and the rest was brought squarely home to me the other day when I received a flyer for a con to be held in Boston next year, one "Readercon", emphasis to be on books and publishing and sf-as-literature. Just what I was talking about, right? Except that confronted with the thing itself, I can see pretty clearly what it'll amount to: an unusually pleasant small regional, doubtless, with perhaps as many as fifteen people present whom I already know, and the opportunity to meet several more. But not the nationwide gathering of hard-core fandom I want, that Mexican amounted to, that Corflu is gradually shaping up as. Jerry Kaufman won't go into debt to come to Boston. Old-timers like Russell Chauvenet and Art Widner won't climb out of the woodwork to attend. No reflection at all on Readercon's organizers: but that's how it is.

In sum, I guess how I currently feel about Corflu is: it's working. When this year's flap over the scheduling conflict is gone, I hope we can continue to encourage the Sachters and Hartwells to attend; I suspect we won't have to do too much encouraging. I still want Corflu's organizers to watch out for the tendency to allow our community to be defined by the rest of fandom. I still regret the loss of fandom-at-large as the cohesive community it once was. But for all that I've been occasionally irritated by the smug tone of some Corflu reports, and by the disturbing phenomenon of people publishing fanzines which they give out at Corflu and don't otherwise distribute (I'm sorry, Allyn, but I don't regard that as fanzine fanac) -- for all that, I still think Corflu is worthwhile, and look forward to the third one with an eagerness I haven't felt since my first year in fandom.

A few other, more subsidiary points, then:

On iconography. Something many of you didn't seem to grasp was that in part I was talking about image more than about reality. Sloppy writing; I didn't signpost it as clearly as I should have. Certainly, I didn't mean to insult Charles Burbee or Bob Tucker, both of whom I regard as sublime geniuses of a sort. Rather, I was trying to get at the way their myths have percolated through fannish consciousness over the years. The historical context Ted asserts for their actual achievements is absolutely correct. But Avedon, aided by mystic knowledge of what I actually meant (i.e., we'd discussed it in person) scored a bull's-eye with her remark that "the biggest mistake fandom ever made was to let the idea of Party Land overtake the image." That's it, that's it exactly. Paradoxically, one long-term effect of insurgentism has been a gradual increase in fandom's perception of itself as a bunch of "wild and crazy guys" -- true enough, except that eventually this leads to a further stage where suddenly you're surrounded by barely literate assholes who only know Wild and Crazy, strange crypto-mundanes who never were the intense, twisted, "elitist little intellectual bastards" most of us were as fetal trufans. But, by god, they sure know how to Party Hearty, you bet. It is to barf, and watching them take over local fan group after local fan group under the banner of "fannishness" (though few of them ever set typewriter to paper), I know what Yeats meant by "mere anarchy." But I respect Bob Tucker, and my copy of The Incomplete Burbee is nearly worn out from re-reading. ("You'll just have to excuse us artists.")

"Intellectualism." Oh, come on, guys, we don't have to have the standard-issue discussion of intelligence and the relative value of intellect, its nature and measurability, now do we? OK, Sergeant, round up all the usual observations. Intelligence is not a single-axis phenomenon; intellectualism is not defined by how many Susan Sontag books you read last week. What this means, Mike Glicksohn, is that if a mathematics teacher whose hobby consists of writing lengthy letters to amateur journals "isn't an intellectual," then I'm Mr. T. Give me a break. I couldn't ask for a better illustration of my point that, over here, the tendency is for everyone to claim they're Just One Of The Guys. Poot on that, Mike, and you are too an intellectual, tough shit and neener neener. (Note that I wasn't saying that British fans are intellectuals and we aren't, or that "intellectualism" implies some sort of absolute superiority. The world is full of intellectuals who are idiots. But it'd be refreshing to see North American fans cop to being secretly smart, once in a while. Come on, be the snotty elitists you're all covertly dying to be. You can do it. Try.) (Besides, if you think you're successfully passing as One Of The Guys, think again.)

Guests of Honor. I agree with Rich Coad up, down, and sideways on this final point regarding Corflu. My impression is that the original impulse behind the early Corflus' having drawn names from a hat for the GoH slot was a fine and noble one: we're all Guests of Honor here ("why, dear, every day is Children's Day!"). All of which is good as far as it goes but, point made, something of a waste thereafter. The

fact is that there are umpty-ump reverend fancestors among us who deserve to be feted, and never will be by the other cons (example off the top of my head: Elmer Perdue). We ought to remember that making someone a GoH doesn't amount to saying that so-and-so is inherently superior to the rest of us riffraff, no matter how badly certain other conventions might pervert the process. Rather, in so doing, we're saying that, hey, we'd like to highlight the degree to which so-and-so exemplifies qualities which we prize. "Honor" is as much for those doing the honoring as it is for the recipients; it's a means of expression, a way of making values manifest. It seems a shame to let the opportunity pass. But I suppose that's up to future Corflu committees, none of which I'm likely to be on in the near future. (Cincinnati in '87; Seattle in '88!)

WORK IN PROGRESS: Most of you will have seen our note in FILE:770 to this effect, but to recap briefly, the story on our TAFF report (and IZZARD 9, and The Complete TAFF Guide, and...) is that Teresa recently suffered some rather worrisome heart irregularities, and while the cardiologist says she's basically okay, she's supposed to do everything she can to reduce the stress in her life. Since as a narcoleptic she can't very well cut out the prescription stimulants (though she did stop smoking), and she doesn't plan to quit her job, this means fanac: i.e., we're going to be slower than we'd like in finishing various joint projects. Just as proof that a report really is in the works, that we haven't in fact been lying around half-clothed reading the Weekly World News (much), though, what follows is a selection from our vast chromium-and-nickel-plated air-conditioned files. We were there. (We wish we still were.) Voila:

1. Greg Pickersgill interrogates Alan Dorey: "Correct me if your interpretation of this is wrong, but..." Later, he explains that he was merely trying to give Alan an out from a difficult situation." He seems puzzled that we still find the original line funny, not to mention characteristic.

2. From chapter (x), by Teresa: I Disgrace Myself Utterly in the Alan Dorey Quiz

"I'm going to be in the quiz bowl," Tom [Weber] told me.

"Me too," said Patrick.

Chiz chiz chiz HOW DO THEY RATE? When I'm not hearing how Mike Dickinson and Malcolm Edwards think Tom is some sort of mutant because he, a mere American, has argued with them about M. John Harrison (they do not yet know that Tom will argue about anything), I'm getting called "quiet" on the same page of the program book where Patrick is puffed as "dapper" and "formidably erudite." As this bit was written by Rob Hansen, who has only talked to me in Patrick's company (or, better still, in Patrick and Moshe and Lise's company) I think there may be some connection between my theoretical quiet and the volubility of Patrick's erudition.

"No kidding," I say, with some restraint. "How do you guys rate?" Years may have gone by, but I have not forgotten that I was once the fastest finger on the button in the MileHiCon Trivia Bowl, nailing down three obscure questions about Zelazny's works in the final round when the opposing team had Roger Zelazny on it.

I mention this episode to Patrick. "Did I ever tell you about that?" I ask. "Ten or eleven times, dear," he responds.

Tom informs me that he and Patrick had simply happened to be on hand when fanroom mastermind Jimmy Robertson was rounding up teams. "Hell, I was already on 'Question Time'," says Patrick, referring to another spiff-sounding event I'd missed. "Why don't you simply be me for the quiz?"

I harrumphed, and went off to apply a vise grip and straightedge to my nose.

After a bit I wandered back into the fanroom. Rob and Patrick met me at the bar. "Hi," said Patrick. "It's arranged. You're going to be me."

"Starting when? And what are 'you' theoretically doing? Do I hafta be you? Is it reversible? What if someone slaps me on the back?"

Rob explained that I would be taking Patrick's place on his team, The Guys In The White Hats, along with himself and Owen Whiteoak. Tom would be on the other team, captained by Greg Pickersgill. Rob helpfully added that his team had won all the previous annual quizzes. Not consoled, I mustered my state of panic into enough composure to go and buttonhole Jimmy about what kind of quiz this would be. "Ooon't worry," he told me. "Just quaystions on science feection an' fandom..." "Okay," I said. "I think."

I went back over to Rob and Patrick. In the meantime, opposing team honcho Greg had shown up, and was busily attempting psychology on a deeply unimpressed-looking Rob. "Well," he would say. "Ready for the Big Quiz now, yes indeed," and bounce up and down slightly on his toes while standing about three inches from Rob's face. Balling his fists he threw various short jabs and feints into the air, intoning "hup...hup hup...hup" into the interstices of the conversation, settling and resettling his jacket on his

shoulders. Rob responded by draining his pint and ordering another. This titanic struggle of naked will continued until a problem came up with the AV setup in the next room, and Greg departed to show the hapless souls involved the error of their ways. "It's the suit," Rob laconically explained. "He always gets like this when he's wearing his white suit."

3. Jimmy Robertson waxes enthusiastic on fellow Scotsman Owen Whiteoak: "He's got all these grit records, like Wheat Rabbit. They're like the grit to him..." We nod and consult sotto voce in a desperate attempt to decode this intelligence.

4. From chapter (y), by Patrick: Chez Willis

The guest room at Strathclyde looks out over the Irish Sea; on a clear day you can see Scotland, and most days you can see the lighthouse of Donaghadee looking uncannily like the lighthouse on the back covers of all those HYPHENS published years before the Willises moved out to the coast. Stacked neatly around the room were towels, clean sheets, incredible Irish apples, and other comforts; next to the bed was a copy of the Seacon edition of The Enchanted Duplicator upon which some hand had inscribed the word "Gideon"; and on the bed was an electric blanket.

Neither of us had ever slept under an electric blanket before. Neither of us had ever visited a country where "room temperature" is so cold that butter stays hard when left out, either. Having by then gone through several fannish households and the Eastercon in a state of mild hypothermia, unfamiliar or not the electric blanket was a godsend. We luxuriated, and remarked on it the next morning. "I wasn't quite sure how to operate the controls," I said. "Teresa kept wanting to turn it all the way up, but I kept thinking of all those high-voltage coils and wondering if we really knew what we were doing. Like, what were all those variable-current buttons about?" (Electrical appliances in the UK seem to demand rather more user knowledge of watts and volts and stuff than they do over here. I'd already despaired at alien, incomprehensible bathroom outlets, and taken to shaving with a safety razor instead; I've always felt a certain sympathy with James Thurber's aunt who felt that electricity might leak out of empty sockets and spread wrongful vibrations throughout the house.)

"Oh, I wouldn't worry, you can set the controls to whatever you want," Madeleine reassured me. "The wiring can take it."

"Thanks," I said. "I mean, we were mostly concerned about how you'd feel if you woke up in the morning to the aroma of roast TAFF delegates wafting throughout the house."

"Well, I suppose it'd give an entirely new meaning to the concept of joint candidacy," said Walter without taking his eyes off the newspaper. And we all went outside to ritualistically bang our heads on the pavement, five times facing east and three pointing north, as prescribed by venerable and hallowed Irish fannish tradition.

5. Walt Willis on The Enchanted Duplicator: "Writing it was like reading it, only slower."

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