

Outwardly, there is more charm than politics in Chris' music, which makes her one of the least threatening composers for women still in the prepubescence of their feminist awareness. Chris' gentleness is yet a very strong thing, as witnessed in *Hurts Like the Devil*, expressing sorrow painlessly. *Sweet Woman*, inspired by and during the first National Woman's Music Festival, written with Jennifer Wysong, is so very touching, soft, and still conveys such strength when Chris sings out either for a single lover or for the unity of all women:

*A little passage of time 'til I hold you
and you'll be mine
Sweet woman, rising so fine.*

I can't imagine anyone not loving this album. The happiness in *Song of the Soul*, the tragedy of captured *Wild Things*, the gleeful reunion of lovers in *Shooting Star*, the erotica of a *Dream Child* promising to "touch your secret weakness with my fire," the nearness and dear-ness of *Sister*. With the assistance of Meg Christian, Margie Adam, Woody Simmons, Holly Near and so many others, *The Changer and the Changed* can only be called a promise fulfilled.

If there's a time when
you're feeling so far down it
feels you can never get up
again, listen to Chris William-
son to start feeling high once
more. Music is a panacea, as
Chris suggests in her delivery
of the Margie Adam composition,
Having Been Touched:

*Music, oh sweet melody
Won't you draw her close to you
And comfort her for me.*

(notes begin on following page.)



III. NOTES: To the Ancients, "Music" Meant Arts, Science, Philosophy

(Some of the following asides are concerned with women's music only by the vaguest parallels, but are given to provide an historic background and weight to statements made in the Introduction.)

1. From the third to seventh centuries, patriarchal religious leaders were closing specific Goddess temples and suppressing women's religions. Most history texts conveniently fail to note that judeo-christianity and islam were not the only nor the largest shapers of civilization up to medieval times. The lack of pagan literature and art is the result of repeated purges, not an indication of illiteracy or a lack of pagan art and intellect. "Shadowy antiquity" or doubtful speculation are *not* the only places to find evidence of pagan greatness and the role women played in shaping the world and their own lives. In AD 380, Emperor Theodosius outlawed the worship of Artemis/Diana in Rome. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian (AD 527-65) destroyed the last pagan universities in Athens, and converted the Parthenon and all other remaining Goddess temples into christian churches. At least one surviving chronical describes St. (sic) Paul closing a Goddess temple by murdering Her priestesses. Thanks to Muhammed in the seventh century, worship of the Goddess Al Lat was repressed, to resurface as the masculinized Allah. Violence was the rule of these zealots, whose criminal gynocide heralded the long, painful death of women's traditions.

2. Greek men tolerated the festive rites of Aphrodite, celebrated in the hills by otherwise severely repressed women. The cult of Vesta was popular through much of Roman development; Her priestesses were the most respected female citizens. Women's tradition and song thrived even in these strongly male-oriented societies.

3. Although history-of-science overviews dote on listing "firsts," it is difficult to find references to the first astronomer to predict eclipses: Aglaonice of Thessaly, whose knowledge "allowed" her to pose as a sorceress, and whose sex makes her even today as unimportant as, say, the Benedictine Abbess St. Hildegard whose pre-Galeleon theories anticipated both Galeleo and Newton. A thick volume, *Women in Science* by H.J. Mozans (M.I.T. Press, Cambridge Mass., 1913-40-74), grazes the surface of women's vast contributions to physics, chemistry, medicine, archeology, invention, etc. I don't delude myself that many readers of GENRE PLAT will look for or read this book, yet it would provide much to interest persons curious about what HISTory repeatedly leaves out. Women's cont butions did *not* begin and end with Hypatia and Mme. Curie!

4. Besides the handicap of overcoming the patriarchal conditioning that forces women away from higher math, and the kind of masculine "intellect" that caused students at Cambridge, England, to riot against women's degrees (with slogans like "Get you to Girton, Beatrice!" and "Here is no place for maids!"), even when a woman *does* rise above these barriers, her works are too often lost, ignored, or credited to men. Thus, Heloise becomes, according to too many historians, merely the motivating force for the mathematician Abelard, when in fact she was his equal or superior. Emilie du Chatelet, rather than being acknowledged as a mathematical genius, is too often mentioned as a satellite to Voltaire. Already, discoveries once attributed to Mme. Curie are being attributed to Mme. Curie and her husband; eventually we may see them attributed to Pierre Curie and his wife, and then Marie will become the motivator of Pierre's genius. Lists of the "great minds" of history

(from Ptolemy to da Vinci to Einstein) neatly overlook Hypatia, the universal genius of geometry, astronomy, philosophy, invention and more. The death of Hypatia at the hands of Alexandrian mobs has unfortunately given rise to many romantic tragedies rather than to a recognition of a martyr to the feared genius of women.

5. *Women's Work*, produced by Marnie Hall, is a two-record set from Gemini Records, 808 W. End Ave., New York, NY 10025. It includes a booklet about these generally overlooked classical composers. *Jazz Women*, from Stash Records, Inc., P.O. Box 390, Brooklyn, NY 11215, is a two-record introduction to female jazz composers and performers. Many blues innovators have in recent years been recognized less for their contributions to music than for their colorful and often tragic lives; many people do not realize some of these women wrote much of their own material alone or in collaboration.

6. The Original Philosopher - the Muse - was female. Menagius (1692) found no less than 65 women philosophers mentioned in the writings of the ancients, yet even the eloquence of Aspasia is known to us from little more than the praise of her male pupils and contemporaries. With rarest exception, only the ancient writings of men escape the ravages of *Father Time*.

7. *Women Artists*, by Karen Peterson and J.J. Wilson (Harper & Row, 1976), is an introduction on this topic, from the Middle Ages on. It begins, "In the myths about the invention of art, the first artist is named as Kora...a young maiden who was moved to sketch the shadow outline of her lover on the wall before he went off to war." Supposing that the cave women of prehistoric times stayed home with the kids to nurse them, then those familiar conceptions of cave "men" drawing on walls would more logically depict cave women. It is the result of cultural insanity (i.e. sexism) that Sabina von Steinbach is not as well known as Michealangelo, or Barbara Ragnoni as renowned as Goya.



8. In AD 380 most of Sappho's songs were burned with other pagan masterpieces by order of the First Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, whose mandate that pagan faith be repressed was observed by the newly christianized Emperor of Rome, Theodosius. This champion of christian goodness had 7000 pagans massacred in Thessalonica. Another purge of the masterworks of antiquity, Sappho and other women included, took place in the 11th century after a resurgence of paganism. Pope Gregory VII led the insurrections that robbed Western Civilization of a wealth of pagan literature, and for such deeds he was canonized in a later century. Moses Hadas in his *History of Greek Literature* calls the destruction of Sappho's lyrics "the greatest single loss in all literature." (p.44)

9. Corinna is said to have taught Pindar, and polished his poems. Robert Graves and Samuel Butler have established that Nausicaa is the true author of *The Odyssey* though Homer remains heralded as the greatest poet of history. Aspasia, who tutored Socrates, very likely wrote the fabulous orations of Pericles, yet historians time after time dismiss her as merely Pericles' mistress (Pericles, however, was homosexual). Theono, Erinna, Aristoclea are among the conveniently "forgotten" poet-scholars whose names should come to mind as swiftly as Plato or Homer.

Bill Beard reviews

DEATH TRAP

»

VALENTINO

On one level, there's absolutely nothing to be said in favour of *Death Trap*. It's a grossly sensationalistic concoction of extreme violence, sleazy sex and patently obvious dramatic situations. It looks as if it was shot on a shoestring with two sets, some coloured lights and a cast largely made up of nobodies. This indeed is the seamy underside of the film industry, what perceptive French critics of Hollywood used to call *cinéma maudit*. The vast majority of such movies are so ramshackle, so blatant, and so totally incompetent that they're one small step away from 100% chaos and incoherence. But strangely enough, these sewers of Hollywood have, by the very fact that their conventional demands are so minimal, created a strange climate of expressive freedom - a freedom available to those few filmmakers with the talent to use it. In the past, directors like Edgar G. Ulmer, Joseph Lewis, Phil Karlson, Roger Corman and Don Siegel have plainly understood the law of B-movies: include certain mandatory qualities of sex and violence and you can do whatever else you like. Consequently these directors were frequently able to express a tougher, less predigested, more original vision than anything available within the confines of the respectable cinema.

Tobe Hooper, the director of *Death Trap*, seems very much in this tradition, even if his exact place in it is debatable. Hooper achieved a measure of fame - more notoriety, actually - with his first film, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, a movie which provoked reactions ranging from delight to total disgust. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* has been banned in most Canadian provinces, so I haven't seen it, but after sitting through *Death Trap* I can understand what all the shouting has been about, both positive and negative. A mere outline of the scenario of *Death Trap* will give you an idea of how thoroughly the movie fulfills the current demand for violence. The central character is an old crazy by the name of Judd, who runs a decaying hotel situated in a Gothic swamp in some kind of Never-Never-Land version of the American South. Old Judd doesn't get too many guests staying at his hotel any more, for obvious reasons, and his only constant companion is a giant crocodile (not alligator, he keeps informing people) who will, as he succinctly puts it, "eat anything." At this point the least perceptive spectator in the house understands that this particular crocodile is going to eat quite a lot of stuff, much of it human, in the course of the movie. And his expectations are certainly fulfilled. The first visitor to the hotel is a young girl who's just been ejected from the

local cathouse because she's too squeamish to satisfy the customers. Muttering dark imprecations about scarlet women unintelligibly under his four-day growth of beard, Judd at first makes a clumsy pass at the girl and then hacks her to death with a large cultivating rake and feeds her to the croc. All this is before we've even finished watching the credits.

The plot, if it can be called a plot, is too complicated and too trivial to be worth trying to explain. Suffice it to say that subsequent visitors to the hotel meet a similar fate, or narrowly escape it after being subjected to considerable terror, and that at one point old Judd is chasing one scantily-clad woman through the swamp with a scythe, while another is tied to the bed in one of the hotel rooms and her six-year-old girl is being menaced by rats and cobwebs while waiting for Judd to get back to her under the building. Hooper's narrative method is plainly to take the conventions of terror and violence and multiply them until they go past the conventionally sensational into the Expressionist mode, and then multiply them still further until they finally enter the realm of the abstract. Every remnant of conventional narrative and character presentation is ruthlessly destroyed, until unvarnished hysteria rules supreme. The violence is sometimes sickening in its extremity, but the annihilation of conventional restraints is liberating and exhilarating at the same time, so that the film surprises even the most jaded addicts of sleaze.

There's also a sardonic sense of humour present, rather similar to the one often found in Roger Corman's films. One of the crocodile's first victims, the husband of the lady tied to the bed and the father of the little girl under the building, is a very funny piece of two-dimensional characterization, starting off as a boring, rabbitly bourgeois consumer, and then revealing depths of eccentric craziness no one would have ever suspected. Later on, as Judd shuffles irresolutely around his living room wondering who to feed to the croc next, or God knows what, with muffled screams filtering down from upstairs and childish whimpers seeping up from under the floorboards, the radio carols forth a country-and-western ballad: "The man I found in my darling's arms...was her brother...who had just arrived in town...I can't go back to Houston, 'cause I shot my darling's brother down...."

Further evidence of Hooper's fully conscious control of his material lies in his handling of sets and lighting, both of which are, like the action, extremely stylized. Judd's hotel is as frankly artificial a set as Munchkin-land in *The Wizard of Oz*, with clouds of mist drifting in very prettily in the exteriors, and the windows admitting lurid oranges and blues in the interiors. The visuals constantly stress the unreality of the situation, adding one more element to the abstract-Expressionist quality of the whole movie. And the acting is so flat and unconventional that the effect is further enforced. All these characters, particularly Neville Brand's mumbling, totally incoherent old Judd, look as if they're enacting a dream, stumbling and screaming their way through the exaggeratedly stereotyped situations with a kind of somnambulistic enthusiasm.

Judging by *Death Trap*, Hooper is obviously an original filmmaker with real gifts, but whether the movie can be recommended to a general audience is another question. The violence is quite stomach-turning at times, and the film never counterbalances its extremes with any intellectual insight or human warmth, as for example David Cronenberg's *Rabid* does. On the other hand, Hooper's combination of genuine grand-guignol and almost *Caligari*-like Expressionism, and the general audacity of his conception, may constitute real attractions for filmgoers with strong stomachs and no ethical compunctions about violence in the cinema. No matter what one's reactions to it are, *Death Trap* is unquestionably a different little movie. ((In the U.S., *Death Trap* has been released as *Eaten Alive*.)

Valentino is a movie notable for two things: the first appearance of Rudolph Nureyev as a film actor, and the bizarre talents of its director, Ken Russell. How a man as essentially crazy as Ken Russell ever succeeded in getting the godlike Nureyev to work for him I don't know, but here he is, starring in a very strange biography of the biggest heartthrob in the history of silent films. Actually, *Valentino* isn't really a biography, nor will it seem all *that* strange to anyone who has seen Russell's last four or five movies.

Russell has made something of a specialty of what one might call biographical fantasies. His riotous imagination has spectacularly transformed the lives of such famous people as Tchaikovsky (in *The Music Lovers*), Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (in *The Savage Messiah*), Gustav Mahler (in *Mahler*), and Franz Liszt (in *Lisztomania*), and in every case has offended those who were deluded enough to expect some modicum of historical accuracy. But expecting historical accuracy in a Ken Russell movie is no more sensible than expecting photographic realism in a portrait by Salvador Dali. Russell's talent is anarchic, fantastic, and utterly personal. It's also incredibly energetic and direct, seemingly emerging straight from his unconscious onto the screen with no intermediate conceptual stages. Perhaps his nearest likeness amongst filmmakers is the Fellini of *Satyricon* and *Casanova*, but next to Russell, Fellini looks restrained and cautious. Russell is a primitive, and those people who can only see the rough edges and tastelessness of his films are simply missing the boat. Russell's tastelessness is part of his talent, and the real question is whether that tastelessness is too high a price to pay for the boldness, colour and originality that come with it. I don't think it is.

Valentino continues the pattern set by Russell's previous movies. *Valentino's* life is fragmented into a series of stylized tableaux which simplify and distort it to the point where it's unrecognizable. This is not a movie about Valentino, but (to employ a musical metaphor which I'm sure Russell would approve of) a fantasia on themes taken from the life of Valentino. Russell seizes on the real Valentino's basic guileless simplicity, and makes his hero a poor honest working man who never wanted more than to retire to farm oranges in California. The persistent rumours about Valentino's less-than-wonderful performances as an off-screen lover are boiled down to the discomfiture of an ordinary romantic Italian male in the face of female aggressiveness. Various figures populating the Hollywood of Valentino's time - Alla Nazimova, Fatty Arbuckle, Jesse Lasky, Wallace Reid - are painted into the background with crude but energetic swatches of colour, and events such as the filming of *Monsieur Beaucaire* and the promotional tour taken by Valentino and his wife Natasha during Valentino's suspension from Metro are converted into striking but wholly unrepresentational set-pieces. The most elaborate of all the set-piece tableaux in the film is Valentino's boxing-match with the redneck reporter Larry O'Neal, the result of a challenge issued by Valentino after reading a newspaper article describing him as a "powder puff". Such an article really did appear, and Valentino really did issue a challenge, but of course no fight took place, let alone the spectacular contest staged by Russell, in which Valentino receives his symbolic death-blow at the hands of a rampant crude Americanism which he's too European to share and too nice to reject.

The movie's narrative structure is full of echoes of the flashback/quest framework of *Citizen Kane*, in which a reporter tries to reach an understanding of a great man's private life after his death by interviewing the people closest to him. *Valentino* begins with its hero's funeral, historically an event of considerable magnitude,

and concentrates on a handful of people whose memories of Valentino constitute the bulk of the film. First there's his first wife, whose flashback contains Valentino's early days in New York as a gigolo and floorshow dancer; then there's June, the young producer's assistant who rescued Valentino from a cabaret in California and got him into movies; then follows the immensely colourful Alla Nazimova, probably the only really arty star actress in Hollywood history; and then there's Nazimova's lesbian lover Natasha, the high-powered actress and designer who became Valentino's second wife.

Nor do the *Citizen Kane* echoes end with the film's flashback structure - the stunning final sequence of the movie has Valentino returning alone and drunk to his apartment, suffering from internal injuries after the boxing-match, staggering balletically around the empty room, then falling to the carpet; the camera, following him down, reveals a bowl of oranges looming hugely in the foreground; lying on the floor, Valentino reaches out for one which has fallen on the rug; the camera, now at floor level, with the orange again huge in the foreground, watches him unable to grasp it; he expires, and the camera changes its focus from him to the orange, like Kane's snow-filled glass bowl and cry of "Rosebud!" the symbol of all his simpler yearnings which he was doomed never to fulfill. It's a touch of visual genius worthy of Welles himself.

Indeed, throughout the film Russell's immensely fertile visual imagination pays dividends. The cabaret number featuring Carol Kane as an impossibly ghoulish flapper is splendidly staged, as are the later scenes between Valentino and Natasha in their lavish home, which is furnished with mirror floor tiles and elaborate lattice-work tracery. Nor can one help but be impressed by the gargantuan flowered cape, borne by a squadron of purple-veiled votaries, which Nazimova shows up in at the funeral. But it's impossible to catalogue the gorgeous visual strokes Russell presents us with, aided in no small degree by the splendid costume designs of his wife Shirley. Russell seems to have preserved, and even enlarged on, the long-neglected traditions of the Hollywood musical in his use of decor and costumes, and it's certainly refreshing to see them once more employed with such vigour.

Of course the movie has its awkward patches, too - so many of them, in fact, that many viewers may be inclined to dismiss the film as merely ridiculous. Most of these come in the dialogue, which drops clinkers with a regularity that at times becomes discouraging. In this area the less attractive side of Russell's primitivism is all too apparent.

But I haven't even mentioned the performance of Rudolph Nureyev yet. Russell has said that he went after Nureyev for the part because Valentino himself was a dancer, and he felt it was necessary to have a dancer play him. Maybe so, but getting the greatest male dancer since Nijinsky to do the role seems almost like overkill. At any rate, the results are fascinating. Nureyev is no professional actor, that much becomes clear very quickly. His delivery of the already banal dialogue is often stiff and never subtle. But he shows such eager enthusiasm, and manifests such boyish innocence, that one can't help liking him as a personality even when one is failing to admire him as an actor. His physical presence, though, is something else entirely. He looks absolutely terrific throughout, even when he's just serving as a clotheshorse for Shirley Russell's costumes, and when he dances - or, for that matter, whenever he moves - the effect is electrifying. Not since the heyday of Fred Astaire has there been a movie star who could add a whole new dimension to a character through movement. When Nureyev starts dancing, the effect is one of supreme beauty, but (as with Astaire) even more striking is the *unexpectedness*

of it. And even though the choreography isn't particularly inspired and the integration of the dance numbers into the whole lacks smoothness, Nureyev takes the breath away time and again.

Despite the awkwardnesses and absurdities, *Valentino* has more than enough originality and true accomplishment to be well worth seeing. The combination of Russell's uninhibitedness, the flatness of the dialogue, and Nureyev's rudimentary acting will undoubtedly cause many viewers to dismiss the movie as rubbish. But those who are prepared to grant the film a measure of patience, and above all to receive it with an open mind, will, I think, be rewarded with a delightful experience.

Susan Wood



Tidepool

Editor's Note: For the past six months I've been writing Susan Wood nice, charming, saccharine letters: "Dear Susan, I know you've been extremely busy, what with school, and go-ing conventions, and organizing the UBC English department, and all, but could you please just let me know if you're going to be able to do a column for GP3, and when I can expect it? Please!" Because Susan is one of those rare persons who managed to get through childhood without ever learning the word "no", she would write back nice letters listing all the articles she was supposed to be writing for other fanzines, too, and then promise to get to her Tidepool column as soon as possible. The other night I was looking for an old NWA and found instead a copy of AMOR 2.5, from which I gleaned the following article. Things haven't changed a bit for Susan (or possibly for Charles Burbee) in four years. This article, Susan's part of it, was typed in March of 1974. How to Stop Writing for Fanzines was originally written for NASQUE, FAPA Mailing #62 (Part 1) and NASQUE, FAPA Mailing #64 (Part 2). I've been unable to track down a specific date - all Burb would tell me is that it's "old as the hills." It seems to have first appeared sometime in the late 1940's, and has been reprinted nearly everywhere since.

If only Alexander Graham Bell had spent his life investing, or idling, or indulging in irresponsible idiocy, instead of inventing, I might have been able to stop writing for fanzines.

Late in June, the editor of CSFIC QUARTERLY called, with his usual request: "Could I please have your column for my fanzine soon?"

"Huh? What column? What fanzine? Oh, yeah, OSFIC EVENTUALLY! No."

"There's no need to get nasty. Besides, how can I publish regularly when you Famous Writers won't give me material?"

"John, there must be other fans in Toronto *fauuching* to contribute to a fine offset zine like OSFIMAGGE. Go bug someone else. You've nagged two columns out of me, and that's more than anyone else has done recently. You *know* I don't write for fanzines anymore. The only writing I've been doing is for ENERGUMEN, and we killed that off, and my Canadapazine, and I killed *that* off. I don't have any time. I don't have any ideas. I'm writer's-blocked. I'm gafia. I'm..."

"You're wailing again. Now stop it. I know you can think of something - by the next TORCON committee meeting, ok?"

"John! I've *stopped writing for fanzines!*" But he had already hung up. "Pushy faned!" I snarled at the phone. "Besides, I won't be at the next meeting. I'll be at Westercon. *Ha!*"

Thanks to John's reminder, my writer's-block-desperation-depression plunged to a new low. It wasn't that I didn't *want* to write for OSFIC REALSOON; but somehow, I couldn't. My unfinished thesis (by now a Canfannish legend) had been growing icicles for a month (I keep the manuscript wrapped up in the freezer, for safety). In a fit of wild enthusiasm, I had stencilled one article, by Mae Strelkov, for my long-forgotten fanzine ASPIDISTRA, but had left the rest of the material to age. I kept remembering, guiltily, the articles I'd promised to people like that Ohio neofan. And I kept being reminded. Faneds are pushy that way.

But I had stopped writing for fanzines.

I really had.

Although... It wouldn't take too much time to put something together for OQ. A humorous look at that Dick Geis sex-and-sf novel... That theory I'd had about William Morris' fantasy novels... A Westercon report... In the space of a few weeks, I'd roughed out four articles (mostly on jets between Toronto, San Francisco, Toronto, Regina, and Ottawa; high altitudes seem to inspire me), researched two more, and, somewhere in there published the ultimate ASPIDISTRA. Thanks to John's nagging, I'd started to write for fanzines again.

The only problem was, all this fanwriting was interfering with my life. I'd barely had time to plan two Canadian literature courses, and couldn't spare a moment to write the lectures I had to give the day after the worldcon. I'd neglected the fanhistory display, and avoided the whole OSFIC IRREGULARLY problem. So what happened? Of course. The phone rang. OQ's editor gave his usual greeting: "Could I *please* have your column? I really intend to publish OSFIC EVEN... er,

OSPHIMAGGE...you've got me doing it too, you know I mean The Clubzine, right after TORCON, and since you'll be moving to Regina, I'd like something before the next committee meeting."

"NO! Nononono! I'm too busy."

"Not even if I asked nicely? You're writing for lots of other fanzines, these days."

"That's exactly the problem. I can't *stop* writing for fanzines, and it's all your fault. But I'm stopping now. NO! I cannot write for your fanzine!"

"Not even if I point out that I am no mere faneditor, but also TORCON treasurer, and I can refuse to pay the bills for the All Our Yesterdays room?"

"Will the end of the week be too late for your deadline?"

"Fine. Do a nice one-page review of *Time Enough For Love*. Or even a six-page analysis. I'm feeling generous, and I've got a lot of pages to fill."

"How about 'Who Sawed Courtney's Boat - The Real Story'?"

"Huh?" said John. "Courtney?"

"Courtney's boat," I explained, patiently. "You know, like 'Rosebud' and 'Dave Kyle says you can't sit here' and 'It's Eney's fault' and 'He's down in the bar.' Fabulous fannish sayings. I've discovered that the Courtney's boat story actually happened, and it has Canadian Content, and if I ever get enough time when I'm not fan writing, I'd like to find out how it got into fannish legend. And write a fan article about it, of course."

"Lady, what *ate* you talking about?" John demanded. "I ask the local sercon fan to write about the new Heinlein book, and all I get is...."

"Fabulous fanhistory, you fakefan. I haven't even seen the new Heinlein book, I've been getting the fanhistory display together, and all I've been reading is FANCYCLOPEDIA. Goshwow, not to mention boyoboy, the third edition of that should come out next year, and I'd really like to do something important and fannish, like help edit it. If I had time. If only I could stop writing for fanzines!"

"Oh, for pity's sake," John creebed. "Write me an article about how you wish you..."

"Could stop writing for fanzines! *THAT'S IT!* I've just finished reading *THE INCOMPLEAT BURBEE*, and you don't *need* me because *he* wrote an article for Bill Rotsler's *MASQUE*, called

HOW TO STOP WRITING FOR FANZINES

by Charles Burbee

Part One

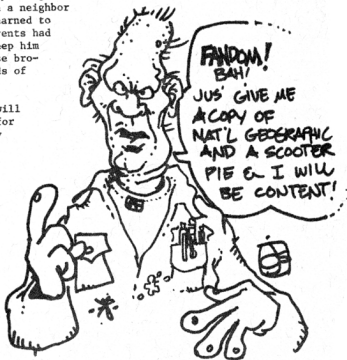
It breaks over you eventually - the realization that you are wasting too damned much time writing for fanzines, those ephemeral things read only by a few esoteric folk who believe only what they believe before they start reading your article. By God, if I were re-writing this I would change that sentence. I really would. If I

were rewriting this article. But before I go any further along this digression I'd better get back to my original clause or I'll find myself explaining how to write a fanzine article and this is meant to be an article on how to stop writing for fanzines except MASQUE.

It comes to you with compelling force that you are doing yourself little good banging out wordage for fanzines since your writings have little effect on the intelligentsia, though this may be explained perhaps by the lack of a fannish intelligentsia.

And so you stop writing for fanzines, except MASQUE. It is not easy to do, in a way, because once the brain is channeled to thinking along fan article lines, everything that happens is magically twisted and shaped into a fannish article. Whole paragraphs pop into your mind and you want to grab a typer or a pencil and jot them down before you forget them. And if you neglect to do this your trained mind goes right on developing the article, right down to supplying a solid punch line, something it usually doesn't do ahead of time. At a time like this the article writer is suffering the pangs of birth and simultaneous death. He longs both to bring his opus to print and the notice of a handful of esoteric eyes hidden for the most part behind lenses of varying thicknesses, and to slay the beastie before it gestates. This is the critical period. It is a towering monster of an impasse. The weapon to slay the dragon might be to shrug and say, "Fugg it." Or, if you choose to lessen the shock of your capsule statement, you say, "The hell with it." And then you stride away, taking big steps, and leave the idea where you hatched it. If you're a big man, that is. If you're just an ordinary person such as I am, you just shove the idea aside and concentrate on something significant. This would depend on what sort of person you are and what you consider significant. For example, when I was plagued by the urge to write an article on the various methods of masturbation bragged about by past members of the LASFS, I simply changed the subject and remembered the trouble a neighbor of mine had when his first-born learned to walk by watching flies and his parents had to pick him from the ceiling to keep him from eating the light bulbs because broken glass is dangerous in the hands of small children.

So after a while your brain will no longer turn our fannish ideas for articles and you are comparatively safe, unless you know somebody like William Rotsler who is such a fine fellow withal that it is difficult to refuse him when he asks for material. But you buckle right down and say, The hell with you, Willie, don't you know I've stopped writing for fanzines? And so, by God, you write an article for MASQUE to show that you can stop writing fanzine articles any time you choose.



Part Two

When I wrote, in the long ago, the first part of this article, I still was not sure of myself. I was telling you how to stop writing for fanzines without really knowing myself how to do it.

But now I know.

You just stop, that's all.

That's what I did. I think I did it in a kind of roundabout way, though. I promised a big article to Boggs about fandom in a satirical vein. Then I promised Lea Hoffman a huge article about F. Towner Laney. Well, it must have been the mere idea of having to do those articles that made me bog down for good. I wrote several pages of each. I think at last notice I had some 20-odd pages of the Laney item and some six or eight of the one for Boggs.

But the thought of finishing them, polishing them up for publication, was just too much for my moribund fannish fancies, I suppose. I wrote scarcely a line for anybody after that. Boggs and Hoffman, wherever you are (in Minneapolis and Savannah, respectively?) I apologize for my inertia.

Oh, I am a beast.

For many moons I have lain here in this dark hole, both hibernating and estimating. But now I am crawling out of the hole.

And what do I find? Do I find my fannish interests dead as they deserve to be? I do not. Do I find that I look aghast at my past activity and vow no future such? Not so.

As a matter of fact, I am thinking quite seriously of finishing those titanic tasks I set myself to some time back, which means Boggs or Hoffman or somebody will soon receive these items I promised them so long ago. And if they don't want them, odds are I'll publish myself. With Rotsler illustrations, by golly.

I am even thinking seriously of running for FAPA office next year. I am thinking of running for both Prexy and Official Editor. I see no reason why I can't hold both offices at the same time. The Constitution says nowt against it.

Actually, then, unless you are basically a fugghead, as I am, you can stop writing for fanzines any time you want to. Set yourself impossible or gigantic tasks and find yourself shrinking to inactivity in the face of such a monumental pile of work. You will fade away from the field and no one will ever remember you existed, except maybe Tucker, who will write a nostalgic paragraph about you in 1956.

But, if you are basically a fugghead, you are lost. You'll never leave fandom because fandom needs fuggheads.

Fuggheads are the life-blood of a healthy fandom.

You'll never stop writing then. You'll go on and on and on, writing stuff like this for other fuggheads or for Willie Rotsler.

Sometimes, you'll leave a little space for the editor to doodle in, especially if he fancies himself to be something of an artist.

This is the second of a two-installment series on how to stop writing for fanzines. I can't write any more on this subject. It might interfere with my fanzine writing.

COLLATION



Jeff Frane
Seattle, WA

GP2 was looked forward to with some excitement and much anticipation. But, well... I was disappointed, m'dear. I can't really find anything here to be excited about. I did like your editorial, ~~what there was of it~~, although I thought it was a little short. It's obvious that you're talking about me... It isn't? But, I thought...you and I... oh, never mind. *{(Jeff who??)}*

Suggestion no. 1.: Doug's article is his usual perceptive best. A little dry, maybe, and herein lies part of the problem. It was a very poor choice to lead off the material; it sets a tone that isn't conducive to enthusiastic readership. It's followed immediately by another review. Coming close on the heels of your rather abbreviated editorial, all this has a tendency to mire the reader down more than a bit.

The average reader, I think, likes their (his/her,per) genreplats to be wry, witty, and fast-moving.

Say, that was pretty tricky of you, padding out Marta's piece with white space and picking a larger typeface to justify using up two pages on *another review*?! You even repeated most of the first paragraph twice. *{(Okay, blush.)}* And, face it babes, that was a pretty dull piece to begin with; having to read part of it twice didn't help. (Richard Delap may not believe it, but I know that Marta is capable of writing better than this.) *{(Dang it, Frane, you just got no sensahumor...)}*

Tidepool was a potentially nice lead-in to Bangsund's piece, but too long by quite a bit. Susan did succeed in whipping up my interest in JB's article. I've only recently become exposed to his writing, and have enjoyed it immensely. One of his fanzines had the clearest, most involving account I've ever read of another country's government (Australian parliament); that article

almost made me understand how that oh-so-strange system works. "John W. Campbell and the Meat Market" contains some of the virtues of that other piece: the clarity, the personality, the wit; but they exist here in much slighter quantities. I liked it, but I expected so much more.

Didn't anybody ever tell you not to write around the illos? (p.13) They sure told me when I did it in HEDGEHOG. It is hard to read. (Actually, if truth be told, I got the idea from HEDGEHOG. I kind of thought it looked nice, and didn't have any trouble reading around. But yes, as a matter of fact, I did get complaints. Ahem. I won't do it again.)

That's a pretty good lettercol, though, with an impressive WAHF list. Angus Taylor's comments about stories being "mostly sf" or "mostly mainstream" are well taken, although they really don't do much toward clearing up the (essentially irrelevant) question of what "sf is". "Science fiction" is basically a publishers' label, one that we use merely for convenience. It has no real connection to literary (or entertainment) value.

Gee, I hope you take kindly to criticism.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Seattle, WA

I liked the cover, and I liked your editorial, and the rest of the zine bored immeasurably - and that made me feel really bad, because in spite of my mean-nasty LoC to #1 it was a great fanzine. I have visions of a zillion LoCs coming to you saying the usual "Great improvements! You're getting better and better!" but for me I strongly suspect your moving and miscellany hassles kept you from putting enough care in this issue. I am expecting #3 to be something exceptional, however.

Your editorial was on a topic I'd myself been contemplating for a long time when GP arrived. The topic is very important. I'm "accused" of being an honest writer, but in fact I am a very careful writer, especially in the last two years, having taken great care not to violate portions of others' privacy which they've shared with me, and of keeping many of my



feelings and experiences strictly to myself, and increasingly resenting the turkies and toadies who invade my privacy in print. It is interesting to note that the only people who ever have invaded my privacy in print have been assholes I hardly knew existed, but who somehow got the warped opinion that we'd had "important" contact or had been personal on some level - my sharing, say, something that is a *little bit* personal, then sharing a thing that is a *little bit* personal, and then publishing a perzine that blows a moment into a momentous occasion, psycho-analyzing and reporting and projecting their own foolish values and ultimately making me sorry I ever said "hi" to such idiots - and then feeling guilty, too, because all this well-meant invasion of privacy done in the name of honesty and bravery is well meant, I'm sure. It's just that the "honest" little jerks are too stupid to know what is personal, impertinent, untrue, damaging or simply apt to hurt someone's feelings. An honest, personal writer has to be a good writer, and most of them aren't. An alarming percentage of them are sipping little boys trying to be "sensitive" by saying "look at me, I can cry!" without ever seeing who else is crying. ((Nerd-ship isn't restricted to men, Jessica. At least half of the people trying to guess who I was writing about in the editorial were women - some, many, asked me outright, therefore, I felt, missing the whole point of the editorial. Maybe they didn't realize they were asking me to invade my friend's

privacy. In some cases I felt like what they were saying was, "Tell me who it was and let me just try and guess why you didn't want to do the article; sounds like it might be smutty." I have to admit, tho, that I did tell some people, depending on who they were, and one person I invited to go ahead and speculate, but only because he knows the person in question. I'm not so simon-pure, either. But I really do respect the fact that you are one person who didn't even hint for me to tell you who I "didn't" write about; you responded to the intention of the article/editorial, and I like that. Thank you.))

David Vereschagin
New Sarepta, Alberta

Invasion of privacy is something I wrestle with every time I start a new issue of my personalzine - the invasion of my own privacy. How much am I willing to let others know, and what do they have no business knowing? (Just recently Gil Gaier commented that I publish a strange personalzine, because it never gets personal.) ((Maybe Gil doesn't know you very well. Well, I don't know you that well, but I think you get very personal.)) And if you're going to talk about a friend, you should know just how far you can go. I don't think it matters whether anyone knows the person you are talking about or not. What matters is how the person will react when they read it themselves. And if you're unsure, you'd better find out or forget it.

Ronald M. Salomon
Framingham, MA

I subscribe to the "a fanzine is a cocktail party by mail" theory and like to read about People. And since we're all in the same small pond how big a wave can ya make? Unless two people seal themselves away from the world there's always a risk of being overheard and of one or the other or both participants relating their meeting to others. It's the risk you take when you're in contact with another person. And getting the other person's opinion or ok on airing the contact made is rarely done in any event, mundane or fannish, and to

me would be a form of pre-censorship, repugnant to lots of people nowadays. Privacy, there ain't no such animal! Once that second person opens his or her mouth in the direction of the first (person) without in the course of the conversation mentioning, "Ummm, don't go around repeating this, please," well I'd take it for granted that no secret need be kept.

~~And then again I like to water other people's little secrets in their mouths.~~
((And that's just why I've learned to say to people, "please, this is privileged information. Keep it to yourself." It does work.))

Liz Lynn
San Francisco, CA

Your editorial re: "personal journalism" interested me. I wish I had been present at the non-con in Seattle to overhear the other folks' comments. As you know, I send out a letter-substitute, my lizzine. ((Not for general distribution, people; don't bother asking.)) It really is a letter-substitute and not a fanzine; I don't reprint letters that I get in response, and though certainly it talks a lot about fannish things, it also talks about the other things I do, Aikido, what I'm reading, etc. It goes now to about 57 people, and I'm sure more people than those 57 see it.

Because of this, I think it's really important to respect the privacy of people I might mention in the zine. If, in private conversation, I indulge in defamation of character or in just plain gossip, "Bob Silverberg eats kimchee!" (gasp) I assume that the person I'm talking with is going to keep her mouth shut, and I pay the penalties if I'm wrong. Of course, in the Bay Area, where nothing is private or sacred, Everybody hears Everything and no story is wholly believed, the only way to really keep a piece of information private is to keep your mouth shut Entirely. ((We also happen to lead a slightly charmed existence here, tho, in that we are not as susceptible as some other places to really malicious gossip.)) But with a zine, even one with such limited circulation as, say, my lizzine, anyone can see it. Fandom being what it is, people may still be looking at the things we put in print now in fifteen or twenty years. And even if the things I choose to say -

now - are complimentary and loving, do I really want them kicking around fifteen years hence? Conversations are evanescent, but what gets into print remains. I have not got such a high opinion of myself that I want my judgements kicking around, long after they and I have changed.

And (sorry, folks), it just ain't so that people in fandom are kind and sweet and loving. Just as there is Instant Friendship in fandom, so is there instant nerdehip, instant animosity, and a danger of saturation, boredom, and mischiefmaking just for the sake of seeing something happen. Fandom may be a family, but I don't know any large families where everyone gets along with everybody. We are all clever, god knows, and it's terribly tempting to be clever at other people's expense, especially if one doesn't know them. Best example of this I know is Harlan Ellison, who gets shot at by people who've never met him, and the next best example is Joanna Russ, who is reviled (not by the readers of *GENRE PLAT*) as the archetypal Strident Feminist Bitch by people who wouldn't know Joanna if she punched them out in the street. (Which she wouldn't. Q.E.D.)

Perhaps the dividing line is a) how much you care about a person, and b) how much a person can hurt you. If I care about someone, then no matter what I think, unless it is a comment about a part of their public lives, "Hey, Bob, I *love* *Dying Inside*," I keep it out of print. If someone can hurt me, personally or professionally, I also keep negative comments off the printed page. However, does this mean that if I don't care about X and he cannot hurt me, I can say what I like about him? What I say can still hurt him. How do I balance the judgements of my ego against someone else's pain?

Complicating the situation is the fact that, by publishing fanzines or even letter-substitutes, we make ourselves into public people. If I say in print, "X is a snob," X has every right to say, in print, that I am a judgemental bitch. If I say X is a good writer, or a bad writer, that's different, just as it's different if X wants to make the same judgement of me. But what if I, in my lizzine, choose to write a personal piece about, say, spending time on the fringes of a

motorcycle gang, a thing I did when I was nineteen. I am making a piece of my life public, and if, say, John Shirley (whom I don't know, and only use here for consistency of example) chooses to comment in print that I don't know what I'm talking about, what's the proper response? A shrug? A nasty letter? A defensive letter? Ignoring the whole thing? Probably a polite note pointing out that It Ain't Fiction, buddy, it's My Life.

I respect Denys Howard's opinion (as you state it) that we should become more open and honest with each other. However, I'm not sure I agree, even with the ideal. At least a part of fandom, it seems to me, consists (like other highly verbal groups) of point-scoring. Cynic that I am, I see no way to eliminate this. I am not going to be honest and open with people who can only play the game. I am not going to be *dis-honest*. I am going to be protective, which, I believe, is not the same thing.

And I don't know what constructive criticism is.

I'm talked out. It's an interesting problem though, and I hope other people respond. I'm definitely curious to know what people who are old in fandom (unlike myself, a mere babe) think.



Victoria Wayne
Toronto, Ontario

Susan said something about it being all right to name names in print when praising someone else, but one should be purposely ambiguous when slamming. And this is in fact what one usually sees in fandom; I suspect, in the form of kindness directed to those who perhaps would take criticism a little hard. To say the truthful and frank thing at all, in print, it seems to have to be hidden in anonymity. Why should this have to be? You'd think that someone willing to expose their work and themselves to public view, as in fandom, would be willing to take the raps, if such there be; and if not able to, that person should really do some heavy thinking whether fandom is the place he wants to be at all.

I'm not advocating slanders in print, but merely honest critical remarks, negative things on matters that truly deserve negative comment. Even here you see this deliberate vagueness. Honestly, is it a kindness to lead a mediocre "talent" on to believing he is great? I'd rather have an honest negative review any day than something intended solely as panacea to a wounded ego for a product that is actually crap.

Honesty is all - you should know of which you speak and feel confident in your opinions; but if it's considered okay in fandom to lavish printed praise on the praiseworthy, then it should go hand in hand with honest home truths directed at the inept, the insincere, the fugghead; and if the good are named, so should be the bad. If they're unable to take it, then I pity them, and pity in my book includes not one atom of respect.

But fandom is chicken. It's very few fans who are willing to name by name those they consider inept or untalented; only slightly more willingness is displayed in the case of outright fuggheads. Yes, you have to tread carefully; some things are considered actionable; but an honest, fair remark, even if negative, should ideally not be taken the wrong way.

Hell, I'm chicken, even though I have in mind at this moment the names of several fans who I feel are mediocre or even inept

and who have others bamboozled in emperor's new clothes style, who have a coterie of kindnesses built around them, who can do no wrong in the eyes of their "groupies". And so I don't name names.

And to direct some of that honesty at myself, I've been the recipient of kindnesses myself in the past for work that wasn't very good; and right now I feel much more comfortable with the cooler but far more honest reactions I get to the stuff I do now, which is more genuine and in most cases, in my eyes, better. But I'm not proud of the earlier stuff, and having gone through a bit of it then does not oblige me in the slightest to admire it now.

So I go on being chicken and hating myself for it, but I'm in too precarious a position now to jeopardize anything in possible offense of friends-of-friends-of-friends. Things have a way of getting back to you, distorted. Frankness seems to increase exponentially in person to a small audience and no permanency in record. When will we see a proper balance between avoidance of slander suits and outright trashing, and honest laying out of cards on the table for all to see?

It's getting to the point where I'm sickened by the lily-guilding that goes on in fandom; and Susan has hit on a main point in this business.





Mike Glicksohn
Toronto, Ontario

I've just read an article written by Ben Zuhl for a local fanzine about myths in fandom and the differences between real and fanzine personalities. This is a subject I've long been interested in. Or, rather, it's two subjects since there is a definite difference here. And I'm interested because I'm very personally involved in the matter. The real me, which few people know, including myself I guess, is only marginally like the fanzine me and both are different from what other people say about me in fanzines, that is the "myth" figure, the image that is well-enough known that fans who've only entered fandom a few days previously can drop references to my "character" as if they actually know what I'm like. Of course, this is true of many fans but it is definitely a subject worthy of some very serious consideration. I've been toying with attempting a serious piece on it for some time but I doubt I'm the right person to do it properly. I've got the background and the personal knowledge but it needs a writer of John Bangsund's capabilities to do it justice.

The matter of how personal to be in fanzine writing is yet a third fascinating subject. Because I doubt my ability to

handle such material well and because I'm concerned over the ephemerality of so many of the locally intense (in the mathematical sense) feelings I experience I've always avoided writing about my personal life in fanzines. ((That article in MOTA wasn't personal? I'm not sneering - it just occurred to me that if you don't consider that personal, then it leaves me at least with some interesting speculations as to your character. Not a put-down. Not a value judgement. We none of us can resist doing it, I guess.)) I admire people like Don Thompson and Gil Gaier, to name just two of many, who put their personal lives and feelings out for all to see but I just couldn't do it myself. However, this is entirely a matter of personal decision, coupled with a sensitivity towards the feelings of the other people involved. (If I ever wanted to discuss my more sensitive areas I'd definitely do it in such a way that I compromised none of the other participants. No one has the right to embarrass other people in print, no matter how idiotic they may choose to appear themselves. In that sense, I agree with Susan: ambiguity if people could be hurt seems to me to be the very least one can expect in fanzine writing. But then I always was old-fashioned and clung to out-moded ideas connected with chivalry.) (This has nothing to do with what one might call Revenge Writing, of course. If someone does a number on you and you want to expose their fuggheadedness to the eyes of fandom then naturally names and facts are needed.)

However, once that decision has been made, I'm at a loss to understand some of your statements here. What does it mean to say "Personal opinions are not necessarily valid in all cases"? Are you trying to tell me that something Susan Wood wrote in AMOR and believed in suddenly became false when a wider audience was exposed to the idea? Expediency may sometimes be the order of the day but integrity is still worth preserving. If someone is willing to put their beliefs into print then they ought to be willing to stand by them: anything less is hypocrisy. And the simple fact of the matter is that once something is published and not copyrighted then it becomes public domain: if a fan publishes a very personal journal and is seriously concerned that it

go no further than a limited circle of readers then said fan had better have total and implicit trust in the readership or had better copyright the material so as to at least have some legal recourse if it gets reprinted without permission. The only other alternative is to refrain from publishing anything you wouldn't want to have spread around. But to publish personal opinion and then either complain or recant if a "stranger" sees it strikes me as gutless and rather stupid. (I hasten to reiterate the point that I'm essentially in agreement with your ideas here and I'm not accusing anyone of doing what I've just said I'd find irresponsible. All I'm saying is that if - very hypothetical - that happened, I'd not have any sympathy for the person involved.)

Having said all that I must admit I was enormously frustrated by your handling of the personalize you all thought had over-stepped the bounds of fanish propriety. I'd rather you hadn't said anything at all than had described the incident in such maddeningly vague terms. I haven't the faintest idea who you are talking about, what was said, how it was said, and whether or not there's any reason for you to be upset. You certainly managed to "voice opinions about a second party without hurting that second party" but by doing so you rendered your objections meaningless. I fail to see the point in that. Since you're dealing here with a simple matter of journalistic responsibility I don't see why at least the name of the second person couldn't be introduced. On matters of policy, opinion, practice etc I'd have no compunctions at all in naming the people I disagreed with. Fanzines are an open forum for such discussions. But you'll never catch me writing down who I spent my last convention with, because that's purely a personal matter. Still, as I said, it's a very subjective decision and I'll live with the one you made. I'll be frustrated, but I'll live with it. *(So here's an attempt at an answer: In the perzine in question, X mentioned running into Y for the first time at a convention. X said he had wanted to talk to Y but Y was always with a large*

group of people and instead of going up and joining the conversation and introducing himself, X stood around waiting for Y to notice him. Because Y never did notice him, X went off and wrote in his perzine the bald statement that 'Y is standoffish.' Now I know for a fact that Y will talk to anyone who wants to talk to him and therefore feel that X's opinion of Y as standoffish is just not valid. I've seen this happen a lot, and it's even happened to me, tho not in print, that I'm aware of. Yes, if you do believe something to be true and want to write it down for all our fanish microcosm to see, then do it, but please publish all the facts as well. I just don't think it's right to make value judgements that are purely subjective without also stating your reasons for arriving at your judgements.// We're having a lot of fun with the new copyright laws down here; so far as I can figure it, things no longer go into the public domain if they're reprinted without the copyright claim - so long as they have been copyrighted some time or other. I.e., if I reprinted a Tiptree story in these pages and neglected to either claim copyright or to state that the story was copyrighted, it would no longer go into public domain because it had previously been copyrighted. Clear as mud, right?))

Alan L. Bostick
Irvine, CA

I am not particularly uncomfortable in reading various personalzines that people send me. And I don't go around spreading in general circulation zines what I come across in them. Restricted circulation, to me, is in effect a statement of DNQ. *(And don't we wish there were more people who felt the same way!)* I don't think that I'd want to put out a zine of the intimate personal type mainly because I'm spooked by the mail service. And there are some things which I don't tell anybody, not even my most intimate friends.

As for the article that should be written but for the privacy rights of the people involved, my suggestion is that you write the article, send a copy of it to the person involved, asking permission to publish it. Judging from what you say about the article, and from my own guesses as to who the other

person is (while not transparent, hiser identity is not very opaque) it's likely that permission would be granted. But use your own judgement; that's all that counts in the long run, isn't it? (Not so opaque as all that, after all. No, I wasn't writing about Grant. And, again, the point of the editorial was not whether or not I should write about this particular person, but the fact that I had to go thru a lot of soul-searching about whether or not I'd be invading the person's privacy in writing about them. And as it turned out, my friend was pleased that I hadn't written the article. So, in this case at least, I'm pleased I did show good judgement.))

Marta Randall's article reminds me very much of a certain Monty Python routine, the one about a great concert where the soloist keeps breaking violins until a riot breaks out in the orchestra pit. Anyway, I was highly amused by Marta's piece. Try to get more of this kind of thing.

Thanks very much for reprinting John Bangsund's piece on John Campbell and the meat market. In my view, it's the best piece of writing in the entire issue. (It's mildly reassuring to us mere mortals that the best thing in your zine is a reprint. Even Perfect people can sometimes fail to be totally perfect.) But I find myself less than enthusiastic about Susan's piece that precedes it. Why are we being told all this? I, for one, don't need to be told how rewarding fanatic can be. I've been a fan for several years now, and I have yet to feel that my activities have been or are a waste of time. And why does John Bangsund need an introduction? I've known of him for some time, and his article certainly stands by itself. The explanation of the previous history of the article is very much appreciated, but it hardly justifies the length Susan goes to. Sorry, but I guess I missed the point. (Well, not all of us have been in fandom for years. Some of us have only discovered fandom fairly recently, and part of our delight is in learning what went before. I, personally, knew nothing about John Bangsund or his article before Susan suggested it for reprinting, and found both her intro and the article itself very in-

teresting. So long as we can continue to find articles that are good reading, well-written and to some extent give a bit of fanish history, we will continue to do reprints, too.))

Rich Coad
San Francisco, CA

Christ, I haven't done this in months; isn't shouting a drunken "It's great" good enough anymore? Oh, well... You raise an interesting point in the editorial. Personally I feel that one should be able to say virtually anything about anyone in a fanzine, though one should stop before writing "Well-known hog fucker X did..." If I feel that someone is an utter cretin I'm not about to censor this feeling from a fanzine just to save their delicate, prissy little self-image. ((But what if you're the real cretin, and not everyone knows this, and thus your stuff gets read and believed. (Please, people, Rich Coad is NOT a cretin.)) It is more likely, though that I'll ignore them completely. By the same token if I like someone, or their work, I'll not be embarrassed into silence by pre-availing thought. This is known as obnoxiousness. Of course, I wouldn't set out to hurt anyone but I have a tendency to believe that everyone is or should be as thick-skinned as I am. Inevitably, though, it comes down to a personal choice, and you can always refuse to have anything do do with someone you feel goes too far. ((Oh, but you can't always avoid the turkeys. Fans, and especially the more obnoxious ones, seem to have a habit of pushing themselves onto people. So you're at a party and there's some nerd you really don't want to be around and you try to politely avoid them, and they've got this fanzine and they go off and write nasty things about you. It happens.))

I tend to believe Bill Beard when he says that Rabad is a fine little film, as I have seen *Shivers* (released here as *They Came From Within*), as fine a horror film as any. A wee bit disgusting though. Also, no one will believe me when I tell them *It's Alive* is a great little film.



Christine Kulyk
Edmonton, Alberta

Please don't be offended when I tell you that I think the best part of Issue No. 2 is the letters section, which provides the welcome humour which is largely missing from the rest of the issue (except for Marta Randall's witty article). Throughout the zine, I am impressed by the high quality of the writing, and by the nature of the material, all of which is in some way interesting/thought-provoking/informative for me. My only quibble is that it isn't silly enough - no, that should be "silly," in the sense of Monty Python "silly" or *The Princess Bride* "silly" or *Spanish Inquisition* "silly" - perhaps the word I am really looking for is "fannish" except that this term cannot be applied to all the aforementioned types of delightful "silliness." Grant Canfield's bacover and a few of the interior illos are more like what I want to see, but they almost seem out of place (which doesn't do them justice at all) among the seriousness of the other material.

There, now, I've gone and done what I hadn't intended to do - I started out to write a loc full of gushing praise for what is surely becoming one of the very best fanzines I've ever come across, and instead I've ended up complaining about a silly thing like "issue no. 2 isn't silly enough." Good grief! Really, I like GENRE PLAT; it's just that I have a soft spot (in my head?) for "silliness." ([Of course, a lot of it has to do with the material on hand. Our standards are pretty high (at least we like to think) and not just everyone can write funny stuff - good funny stuff. With any luck and a bit of free time, we'll get Grant writing, and he's terribly funny, and we have some promising things and people lined up for future issues. We probably never will be as "fannish" as many other zines, because we don't want to read like any other zine; meanwhile, maybe this ish's Tidepool reprint will satisfy your craving for fannishness, and Marta's piece is just this short of hysterical.)]

Wayne Hooks
Richmond, VA

Susan Wood was interesting, especially speaking of writing for fanzines instead of piling up literary brownie points by doing articles for journals. Actually, writing for fanzines is becoming respectable in academic circles, or at least in some academic circles. I can only speak for Virginia Commonwealth University, as each graduate school is an independent universe and what holds true in one university is not so in another university. But, if you handle your titles well enough, you can claim your fanzine credits. After all, there are several magazines which seem to fall somewhere between the literary magazines and fanzines, all being small press and literary magazines are respectable for credits. ([Several people in the UBC English Department are terribly impressed whenever Susan's name appears on the cover of ALGOL with Isaac Asimov's....])



Patrick McGuire
Columbia, MD

I bow to your superior wisdom and experience on Canadian Commonwealth non-advantages. My reading has obviously been behind the times (though from what I read it wasn't *all* that long ago that Canadians used to get all the London dramatic parts calling for an American, since they could get work permits and Americans couldn't, and if "King of Kensington" is to be believed - they were showing that in Orlando, FL, the only Can. show not counting "Starlost" that I've ever seen on US tv - there are lots of Commonwealth people who got entry permits for Canada easily not too long ago). But that merely means my metaphor is bad. If not merely Empire, but even the Commonwealth has for all practical purposes passed Canada by, that doesn't mean the final empire is in similar straits. If you use the positive word community and not the negative word ghetto, I think there is quite a bit to be said for sf's sense of community. It probably does encourage the existence of a high degree of mediocrity rather than extremes of a lot of unpublished people plus a few big sellers, but from many points of view this seems all right.

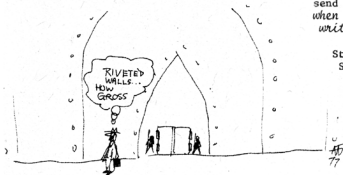
A visa to visit England? I'm not sure this is current policy, but as recently as 1975, you could stay up to six months in the U.K. on an American passport with no visa. You mean it's worse for Canadians? (That would make a perverted sort of sense, since Canadians are more likely to have English relations, and hence to want to stay, but still....)

((This is where we get into language difficulties. When I said "visa" I meant "passport." I know that Canadians need passports to visit England, but don't know for sure how long they can stay there on one. I had a friend who lived in England for a year with no difficulties on his Canadian passport. I know he worked while there, but don't know how much difficulty he had getting a work permit. I expect things have toughened up some in the past few years. It doesn't work quite the same way for British subjects coming into Canada. For many years British people (like from England, Scotland and Wales) had no difficulty getting entry permits (or whatever) into Canada. They also didn't have to wait the mandatory 5 years before applying for Canadian citizenship that everyone else had to wait, could simply go down and get their citizenship papers. No testing, and obviously no need to make them swear a loyalty oath to the Queen. I believe Pierre Trudeau changed this just before I left Canada, tho. I'm reasonably sure he did make the change in that people becoming Canadian citizens now swear their loyalty oath to Canada instead of to the Queen. One of you Canadians help me out here, please.))

Re "Tidepool." Academic writing is such a different experience from fanwriting (other distinct experiences are letterhacking, doing a non-fiction article for a pro audience, and writing fiction) that I think the overlap is fairly minimal - an hour devoted to fanwriting is not necessarily an hour subtracted from academic writing - you can do the fanwriting to keep yourself sane while you're writing something serious and footnoted, and sometimes even when your brain is too exhausted from "real work" to turn out anything else. (Though in this latter case you'd better review your work with a clear head before you send it off.) ((But there is a difference when you've only got one hour in which to write, as I often the case with Susan.))

The trouble with comparing Campbell to Stalin is that it's rhetorical overkill.

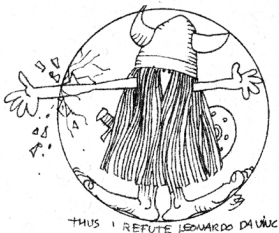
Stalin is on public record as being a consummately evil man. Campbell never had absolute power, so all we can say is that he didn't abuse the power he did have to anything like the extent of Stalin. Campbell went off on Diagnostics kicks and whatnot for a year or two, but Stalin supported Lysenko for his whole life. Stalin was



actually suspicious of new technology, by no means the thorough technophile that Bangsund would have us see. I grant you the possibility from what I know of Campbell through his writing that he *might* have succumbed to temptation as thoroughly as Stalin if given absolute power, but that's pretty weak evidence on which to justify comparison of Campbell with a man who wrought more evil than anyone in this century with the single possible exception of Hitler. Inexcusably weak evidence. If you forget the cliché that lets you compare anyone you dislike to Stalin or Hitler, and think about what you are actually *saying*, I think the selection of this article for reprint reflects not altogether favorably on Susan and G.P.'s editorial collective as well.

David Vereschagin
Edmonton, Alberta (he moved in the course of my typing this local)

Oh, boy, here we are again discussing What Is Science Fiction and How Does it Relate to the Mainstream. It must be true, what is said about sf fans being lonely, insecure children. Here they are, all grown up and still worrying about not being accepted, or just how much they have to gain from acceptance. The secret suspicion that yes, we *are* superior to those other dolts and will prove it in the long run is rising to the surface. Of course, I'm one to talk, having defended sf's right to exist in the wake of some inane comments on *Star Wars* and sf in general in the university newspaper. We're all defensive about our choice of reading matter but perhaps a bit too much so. For the most part I have given up trying to explain to nerds that sf is not *all* escapist literature. Of course, this is conducive to the development of self-righteous feelings ("You're wrong, but I'm not going to waste my time explaining things to lower life forms."). This is really leading me to some pessimistic thoughts - "Marching Morone" and all that. Let's see if I can figure out just what it is I want to say here. I don't know - it seems the "ghetto mentality" is still very much with us and if we really are coming out of the ghetto (or, as some suggest, are



out of it already) perhaps we should re-examine our attitudes to see how well they suit our new environment.

David Bratman
Berkeley, CA

One of the most surprising items in the ish was Angus Taylor's letter. He starts out by making an incisive slice thru all the crap which has piled up around the subject of Definition, but then adds to the crap a bit himself with his Taylor's Synthesis. Once one tries to cut down all the definitions into two categories, one finds they all slop over the edges again. I can't really see this disparity between form-definitions and content-definitions. But I will agree that definitions are an ideal type. (I also agree that sf is an ideal type, but I think I mean something different by that than what Angus Taylor does.)

Paul David Novitski
Seattle, WA

Angus Taylor, old friend, old space cadet, old bean, methinks that in arguing against Susan Wood's remark that "there are no easy 'definitions' of anything so alive as sf" you have wound up arguing her case quite well. The model you construct, a spectrum ranging from Form (fantasy) to Content (our relation to the cosmos), is neither defini-

tive nor easy to apply to specific science fictions. At best you will be able to describe your own personal concept of sf, but then we're back at the same old problem that we *all* have various ideas of what science fiction is and has been, and we can always find exceptions to anyone else's rule. Susan's description of sf as "alive" suggests an apt biological analogy: just as plant and animal species blend into one another temporally, geographically, and genetically, so genres of fiction. Sometimes it's of practical use to blur your vision in order to see species as discrete, but that's always a conceptual imposition on the reality and not the other way around. Taxonomists and literary critics can be both, at times, be a pain. When the desire to classify occludes the perception of individual uniqueness, I will protest with the same attention to detail that geneticists give to the organisms they study.

On the other hand, if you first accept that your are not defining the body of literature called science fiction but rather your own expectations of the field, then I agree that the construction of spectra is a fun and handy exercise. Except I think you ought to begin with more than two nodes to your range: the more complex your model, the more closely it will mimic the complicated creature that is sf.

I don't particularly like the two nodes you've started with. I've never understood the wit nor the usefulness in distinguishing "form" from "content," especially with regard to fiction. Since fiction is comprised of words and punctuation -- and since there are no true synonyms -- any two passages which differ graphically (in *form*) will necessarily differ in meaning and effect (i.e., *content*). Of course, you were speaking on a larger, fuzzier scale, say thematically rather than syntactically. Whether you're dealing with printed words or poetic archetypes and symbols, the same principle applies.

But why in the world do you call "beyond the hill" a *form* and "man's [sic] relation to the universe" a *content*? How can you separate the two? How is it possible to depict a character visiting an-

other [aspect of the] world without saying something -- if even implicitly or unconsciously -- about the relationship of character to universe? And surely such transitions exist in most fiction, mainstream *or* sf. Most fiction I've read deals with personal realization through experience. The author constructs a physical and psychological setting, then changes it, and the satisfaction we derive from reading the story results from our accompaniment of the characters on their journeys. Whether they are confronting the slimy telepaths of Betelgeuse IV or meeting the new secretary at the office (and are those different forms or different contents?), the kinds of purpose the authors took to their typewriters could have been identical *or* diverse. There are outer-space stories that leave me flat, with none of that cosmic flash of wonder for which I open sf books; and there are mundane fictions (such as Salinger's) that are anything but mundane and knock me into orbit. I don't think it's sufficient to reply, well, shucks, we can ignore those pesky exceptions. It is just those exceptions that form the body of fiction we wish to define!

I believe it's a fundamental error to try to use a theory of cognitive dissonance to rationalize, after the fact, what is essentially an economic ghettoization of stories about rocket ships and time machines and (ellipsis, ellipsis) everything else we call Science Fiction. Theories like Suvin's and Delaney's are tremendously exciting, but I do not see them necessarily applying any more to Science Fiction than to any other category used by publishers and distributors to market our wares. To me, the idea of fictive cognitive dissonance is a (largely successful) attempt to view analytically the emotion we call *Sensawunda*, whereas a dishearteningly small fraction of the stuff I read in sf magazines and books actually evokes that exquisite high. Most sf is still space opera, says Paul pessimistically, because it's easy to write and sell. Its settings are the hulls of spaceships propped up by dusty two-by-fours, the skins of aliens worn by actors retired from Thursday-night tv. Most of the time I would rather read a mundane story with spaceships than a mundane story with Oldsmobiles or horses, but that's because

my visualization of a spaceship gives me a tiny rush, not because the sci-fi writer (and I use the term advisedly) has produced anything special. I suspect it is your knee that is reacting so enthusiastically to The Science Fiction Genre, not your mind.

And I sincerely apologize if I've misread your brief letter in GENRE PLAT 2.

Angus Taylor
Amsterdam

These sci-fi people certainly get enthusiastic, don't they? I just don't agree that that many angels can dance on the head of a pin, Paul. I'm sure my count must be correct. Methinks that in arguing against my spectrum model of sf you have wound up arguing my case quite well. Consider: what I was trying to say was that people can never construct a satisfactory definition of sf because they keep trying to see it as a discrete species, instead of realizing that any definition is only an *ideal type*, imposed by one's head on the real living spectrum of stories. I think you maybe explained my argument better than I did. Thank you. Second: as to form and content - who's separating the two? Me or Harlan Ellison? I said form and content should complement each other. That's because, as you point out, there's a certain inherent relationship between the two. A certain form "says something - if even implicitly or unconsciously" about content, and vice versa. But sometimes what is said *implicitly* does not match what is said *explicitly*. Then you have a disparity between form and content. I couldn't have said it better. Thank you. (Say, would you like a job as a ghost writer?) Re-read my original letter if you think I'm putting you on.

It comes back to this, I think: How is it possible to point your finger at a story and say, "This is science fiction" if you don't know what science fiction is? Where people go wrong is that they keep trying to define it in terms of a fixed species. But it's *alive* (eek!). I don't disagree with Susan about that at all. I just don't agree that you therefore have to abandon all hope of a definition. All that's required for success

is to abandon Aristotelian logic (and that means Linnaeus' categories) and come over to dialectics, the modern problem-solving miracle, first invented by the ancient Chinese as a secret cure for government and later packaged and distributed by two German doctors. I don't think we disagree so much about the definition of sf as we do about the definition of definitions. And on that score, too, I'm willing to be dialectical. But I'm sure we've lost our bored-to-tears audience by now, so can we agree to call it a draw?

((Personally, I found it all rather entertaining and highly amusing. In fact, since there has been quite a large response to the comments in the first two issues on the nature of criticism and definitions of sf, I'd be willing to start an open column for the continuation of these subjects, thus freeing the lettercol for less heavy trivia. If you, the readers, would like to continue this, er, discussion, in an open column, please let me know.))

Michael Bishop
Pine Mountain, GA

Of course I'm extremely pleased with Doug Barbour's comments about *Stolen Faces* and *A Little Knowledge*, and I hope that at least one or two people agree with the substance of them. Neither book, so far as I've been able to tell, has been greeted with huzzas or hosannas in the various newspaper reviews that have appeared, and *A Little Knowledge*, which Barbour seems to prefer over *Stolen Faces*, has taken its knocks. It's good to see the two books placed in intelligent context and then examined with some understanding; it's even better, if you happen to be the author, to find that the reviewer who has so placed and examined your books, also happens to *like* them. But of course praise is always tastier than the burnt black bottom of the pan, and for both I keep a shaker of salt at hand.

We also heard from: Ole Kvern, Bob Barnes, Susan Wood, Joe Pearson, Vivian Bregman, Neil Kvern, Ben Fulves, John Boston, Marta Randall, Eric Lindsay, Jon Gustafson, Graham England, Glenn Garrett, Wayne Hooks, Bruce Gillespie, Doug Barbour, John Durno, Randy Pierce, Bill Beard, Jeanne Gomoll, Dan Steffan, Don Garvey.

