I hope you don't mind me looking at my notes. You see, I figure there had better be someone here who knows what I'm saying, even if it's only me.

I gather I'm supposed to convince you all that fandom is still a force in science fiction. Well, to begin with, I'm sure you'll all agree that fandom is a force. A force is a thing that moves objects from ome place to another, and by ghod it moved me. No, what the other side are going to argue, I suppose, is that fandom uses its force in the wrong way. That it spends too much time talking and writing about fandom itself instead of about science fiction. In other words, that it doesn'ttake science fiction seriously enough.

Well, of course there is a trend that way, and it has been going on for a long time. By a curious coincidence I happen to hamma have with me an extract from a magazine called...er...AMAZING STORIES, Vol.1 No. , dated in which our guest of honour wrote the following momentous words.

"One of our greatest surprises since we started publishing AMAZING STORIES is the tremendous amount of mail we receive from---shall we call them 'scientifiction fans'?--- who seem to be pretty well orientated in this type of literature."

That is the book of Genesis of science fiction fandom. Fandom was created and named. Now in the beginning was Forrest J Ackerman. And the Lord looked at Forrest J Ackerman and sawé that he was good. And he divided him into two parts, the light and the serious. The serious he called Sam Moscowitz, and then light he called Bob Tucker. And ever since then these two people have, for me at least, symbolised the two aspects of fandom.

Now I don't think anyone will disagree that the serious side of fandom is still a very powerful force. Serious constructive fans write scholarly reviews of immense help to authors—or at least immense interest, because pro authors like egoboo too—or, they dig up rare works for anthologists (some of which would have been better left buried), they give inexperienced editors useful information and advice (whether they ask for it or not), they publish checklists. They do a hundred and one things to help the pros and improve the standard of science fiction.

Take even in the last few months such worthy efforts as the Don Day Checklist, the Pay Bradbury Keview, the Journal of Science Fiction, and FANTASTIC WORLDS. And in Europe the International Fantasy Award and Ken Slater's OPERATION FANTAST. But if these serious constructive fanshave a fault it is that they cannot see that there is a place for the lighter side of fandom too. They used to criticise Bob Tucker for not taking science fiction seriously enough, and they are criticising his successors today for the very same thing. Way back in 1939, to quote from THE IMMORTAL STORM, Sam Moscowtiz QUOTE "realised that when people laugh at

something they would no longer takeit seriously. "UNQUOTE. Well I don't think that's true. People laugh at birth and death---in fact I believe there and even people who make jokes about sex (not among us today I trust)---but they can take these things seriously enough when the time comes. In fact maybe a sense of humour makes them all the better able to cope with the grim realities of life....

Well, of course the critics of Bob Tucker were proved wrong when he showed he was able to be serious and constructive with the best of them, and even to create some excellent science fittion himself. And those critics have been wrong all along the line. Way back in 1938 a group of what the Rhodomagnetic Digest would call 'cultist' fans were turning out in England a magazine very similar to WMMM Walter Gillings QUANDRY today. And it was those same people --- Ted Carnell, Arthur Clarke, and Bill Temple--who put English professional science fiction on the map. And the died-in-the-wool cultist fans of today are carrying on in the same tradition. You meddulmballmeddidnaralmaacknaebdraebdribomeqeerataretaretaretaretaretarandarataretarandarataretarae Auchmanahkannamunahankanamanm can see their names all over the contents pages of mmon the latest British prozines. Ted Tubb, John Aiken, Vince Clarke, Ken Bulmer, James White, Peter Ridley, and Alan Hunter. And there's a group of even younger fans behind this new Scottish prozine NEBULA. Teenage fans like dahm Matt Elder and John Brunner, the latter Astounding's youngest author. These are all members of the 'cultist' fandem which is not supposed to be doing anything for science fiction, every one of them a subscriber to QUANDRY.

In America the amenage age of the average fan is less, but I'm willing to bet that some of the young Quandry-type fans here today will be big names in tomorrow's science fiction. I'll bet that history will repeat itself, and that some of the serious-minded fans who are criticising erville J Youngfan for ignoring science fiction will wake up to find themselves reviewing Grville's new novel and wondering how he left them behind so fast.

The truth is that/the fannish side of fandom, the nunmanaturantal members as ocalled 'non-constructive' side, in that is the more creative one. The young creative writer with in fandom will prefer writing immaginary parodies and imaginary convention reports and fannish mythology to writing about what other people are writing. Just in the same way that it?

mamminths the fannish side of fandom thank still attracts writers like Robert Bloch and Bob Tucker, whom you might call fandom's deathless pros.

And it's better training for an imaginative writer, which is maybe why so often a promising new author pops up suddenly from the ranks of the lighthearted fans while the solemn ones are still discussing the work of his predecessor. It's not so much that the he couldn't write long sober articles about the distinction between science fiction and fantasy and which it is that Ray Bradbury writes and so on. It's just that he's exhausted these subjects as topics of conversation. There's just so much can be said about them and most of it has already been said. Several times. Once he's sat all through it once the brighter fand rapidly leaves the serious constructive stage and emerges on the other side looking for something that gives him more scope. He's apt to find it in the fascinating world of fandom itself, with its wacky hythologies and fantastic legends and its constantly changing population of interesting people with engaging senses of humour.

Finally I'd like to say this. I've tried to prove that fandom is a constructive force in science fiction because that's what I was asked to do. And I do think that it does act as a sort of training ground for young writers. But what I don't see is that it needs to justify its existence as something that helps to sell science fiction, any more than anything that gives pleasure to people needs to be defended because it doesn'tvdo something else. Why, you might as well criticise people singing in their bath because it doesn't increase the sale of gramophone records!

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