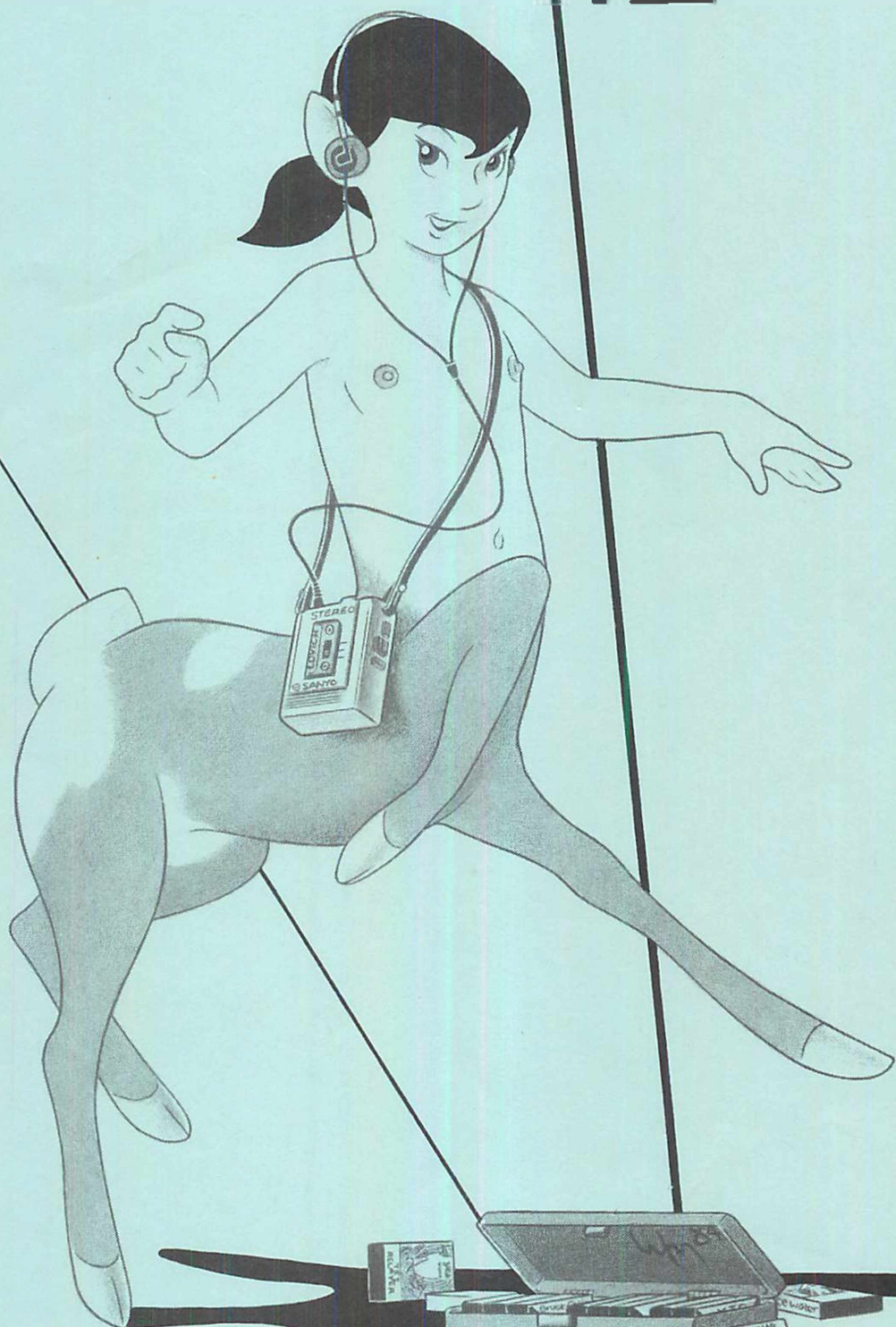


12



Mainstream



MAINSTREAM 12

Mainstream #12 takes its hat off to those who publish it: Jerry Kaufman and Suzle, who live at *N*E*W* *A*D*D*R*E*S*S* 8738 1st Avenue N.W., Seattle, Washington 98117 USA (new phone number 206-782-9272...beware of answering machine). Throwing its hat in the air, it shouts that it can be had for \$2 a copy (and worth it), letters of comment, contributions, trades, or demonstrative shows of affection. It dances madly around its hat, proclaiming itself Pacific Fantod Press Publication #2, and waves in the direction of Mike O'Brien. Pausing for breath, it recommends Terry Dowling for DUFF, Lilian Edwards for TAFF, and 1988 for therapy. It trips over its hat, notes the date (December 25, 1987), and introduces its contents:

Cover...fore and aft...TARAL

Bewitched, Bothered and Bemildred...page 2...JERRY waxes fannish.

Mexicon Jigsaw...page 5...DAVE LANGFORD puzzles all with a convention report. STU SHIFFMAN does the heading.

The Technocrat of the Breakfast Table...page 10...JON SINGER returns, with art by ANDREW PORTER (page 11) and KEN FLETCHER and REED WALLER (page 13).

Random Access Memory...page 14...TARAL muses on some of last year's fanzines, with a series of WILLIAM ROTSLEER drawings.

The Con Game...page 23...memoir and meditation by TOM WHITMORE; the cartoon accompaniment is by ALEXIS GILLILAND on page 25.

Slouching Through Metaphysics...page 26...DICK ELLINGTON runs into a little astral travel, bracketed by ATOM (page 26) and STU SHIFFMAN (page 29).

Mozart on Morphine...page 30...GREG BENFORD runs into a lot of trouble.

Crosscurrents...page 34...JOSEPH NICHOLAS leads off the lettercol by calling for shorter lettercols.

Suzlecol...page 42...SUZLE recounts recent crises.

All lettering guide work by Suzle

Thanks to those who collated Mainstream 11: Joan Baker, Chris Bates, Judy Blinder, Grace Carlson, Matthew Davison, Shelley Dutton, Gary Farber, Glenn Hackney, Jane Hawkins, Janice Murray, Carrie Root, Kate Schaefer, Chuck Spear.

Note to Walt Willis: Thanks for noticing the light. It's still on...why not drop by and get a closer look?

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BEWITCHED, BOTHERED & BEMILDRED

JERRY KAUFMAN

It's become time to introduce another issue of Mainstream. This is, thanks to our sloth, the tenth anniversary issue. To commemorate the fact, we've got a stellar line-up. That these writers came to us by chance or through desperation (ours or theirs) is of no consequence. They're still stellar.

Dave Langford is first, with his hilarious report on Mexican. This was the convention we attended in Britain last year (yes, Britain!) but didn't feel able to justly describe. Our British readers (and luckier American ones) have already seen it in This Never Happens, from which we reprint. Dave, of course, needs no introduction, but (wait for it) here's one anyway: author both fan and pro, publisher of Ansible, and purveyor of software, he is also an expert Oxford native guide and puzzle solver.

Many years ago, in another fanzine, Jon Singer began his column, "The Technocrat of the Breakfast Table," for us. We continued it in Mainstream, and here it is again, after a hiatus of several issues and years. (Was it one issue or two, Suzle?) Jon covers the usual range of oddities, and offered to write about the new superconductors, but we said that once you've been scooped by the cover of Newsweek, there doesn't seem much point. Jon, if you didn't know, is a polymath who can cook Chinese, identify plants, cure phobias, build lasers, program computers, or write--with equal ease--a manual or a funny fan article (both with footnotes).

Our cover and our first column of fanzine reviews are both by Taral. For some reason he conceived of Mainstream as a frequent fanzine. He now sees his mistake. Taral is an artist who has not only his own highly crafted signature style, but also a genius for accurate parody. (His "Rotsler Letraset Sheet" was one of the funniest pieces of fan art of 1986.) His knowledge of fanzines is both broad and deep, and his opinions are both unique and uniquely expressed. (Since he wrote "Random Access Memory," Dupress Nos. 2 and 3 have appeared. In 2, Linda Bushyager devotes part of her editorial to responding to a letter in which Taral made many of the same points he makes within our pages. We recommend that you read it.)

Last year I nominated Tom Whitmore for DUFF. "Get your name out before the voters," I said. "Let them know who you are." As a result of that advice, Tom sent us "The Con Game," his Guest of Honor speech from a Westercon of several years ago; he also sent (to Izzard) the tale of his discovery of valuable and bizarre manuscripts in his basement. Both pieces have been published well after the end of the DUFF race and Lucy Huntzinger's victory. Now you'll know what you missed.

Dick Ellington's piece on out-of-the-body travel arrived well before we saw Shirley MacLaine's Out on a Limb, but ever since that show I've been wondering if we're running a New Age fanzine. Dick's been active in sf and politics since the early fifties; currently he designs and typesets books, and was in part the inspiration for Serconia Press.

One of the original Void Boys, Greg Benford has a brush with a different void in "Mozart on Morphine" (my favorite title this issue). Greg's pieces in fanzines recently have easily been as good as his fiction; like Dave Langford, Greg is the very model of a modern Profan, the character in The Enchanted Duplicator who helps Jophan to his destination.

Currently many of us are struggling with the problem of egoboo. Is it a necessary substance? Is it better in one form than another? Is there such a thing as faulty, or tainted, egoboo, "egoboo that you want to send back to the factory," as I've heard one or another Nielsen Hayden put it?

The fanzine Hugos, for instance, may be such a faulty form. Some people have contended that the nomination and voting process tends to be in the hands of those with more money (for Worldcon membership) and goodwill (towards the one zine they see) than experience or taste. (This viewpoint presumes that those with more experience and taste are spending their money on publishing or subscribing to fanzines.) Those opposing this view contend that the first group should band together to support their choices, making whatever financial sacrifices are necessary; furthermore, they say, everyone knows that the awards are only popularity contests, and the idea of quality is irrelevant. (Again presumably, the word "Best" in the award titles is, like too much sf, only a polite fiction.)

I've exercised my pique towards the Hugo in two ways: one year I joined with others to an advertisement calling for "No Award" to win; the next year (this one) I buttonholed people in print and in person to nominate the fanzines I thought were the best (not the most popular). Both achieved equivocal success (No Award came in second last year, I believe; this year one of my definite recommendees made the ballot, and one of my "maybes"); the former excited vocal opposition. There must be other, better methods. What are they?

One other, at least, is the type that has done me the most good, when I've earned it: the personal response from someone whose taste and experience I respect. One letter of sincere appreciation, one favorable review is enough to convince me I've been doing the right thing. (So I'm not as self-assured as, say, Buck Coulson. Few of us are.) Egoboo already flows in this way throughout the bloodstream of fandom, which is the mail (and let's include the telephone wire as mail).

There must be some way of going further with this sort of egoboo. What, I wonder, if the sincere appreciation could be shared with others? What if the object of praise could be presented along with the praise itself? What if the old practice of the Fanthology were revived?

Paul Skelton suggests just this in a recent File 770, but with a unique slant: he proposes that a poll be conducted and that the most popular pieces constitute an annual Fanthology, all to be administered and published by a new organization. I think this is fascinating, though I don't know about starting a new organizations. But if Skel wants to conduct the poll and publish the results, I'll buy it. I love Fanthologies of any breed.

I don't, however, think it would be any improvement over the Fan Hugos. It would still be the result of favoritism, elitism, popularity, disdain, ignorance, and all the other real or supposed faults of the Hugos, and it would be just as anonymous. I'd much rather see the Fanthology that Skel would produce if he selected the contents himself. It might not be a perfect collection, but no one would expect it to be--no one person's choices could be.

Because of this inherent imperfection, and because of the multiplicity of tastes we exhibit, perhaps we'll see more than one Fanthology being done in a year, as people react to others' announced plans. I think this a good thing: let a thousand Fanthologies bloom! I even dreamed about producing one, so it seems the idea has wormed its way into my subconscious. It's reckless of me to suggest I might do a 1987 Fanthology in 1988. You know how long I'm taking about Kaufman Coast to Coast (my third-person Australia epic). But if no one else steps forward, or Skel does his Fanthology-by-poll, I'll do it.



Mexicon Jigsaw

DAVE LANGFORD



[Editors' Note: Back in February of this year (1986), we attended the Mexicon in the United Kingdom city of Birmingham. It was a small convention that focussed on science fiction as literature, and on fanzines, to a degree. Among its features was a contest requiring the entrants to identify quotations from science fiction works, cleverly worked into a story; the finalists then had to identify science fiction personalities from a gradually-assembled jigsaw puzzle. The winner would be declared the "Brain of Mexicon."]

Dave Langford told all about it better than we could, in the pages of This Never Happens #3 (edited by Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake), so we're reprinting it here, with permission. Mostly you'll be on your own among the exotic flora and fauna, but when we can't resist explaining something, we'll confine ourselves to a discrete footnote.]

¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶

All you need to do to win one of a galaxy of colossal star prizes is to rearrange these pieces in order, so that they form a coherent picture of Mexicon 2. Winning entries will be judged by their closeness to the definitive version, as unanimously decided by a hand-picked panel of Michael Ashley, Joy Hibbert and Ken Lake. First prize: a copy of the next This Never Happens, to be read during a luxurious weekend for one in the privacy of your own bathroom. Second: two, er, shop-soiled jokes from old Langford fanzines. The editors' indecision is final.

1. This is like Nick Lowe's brain-rupturing challenge of ability to improvise in extremis. "You are on a Saturday panel beginning shortly after dawn. Having been instructed that Neil Gaiman is chairing it, you have made no notes whatever about Science Fiction's Stupid Ideas. Little do you know that Neil, David Gernett and Bill Gibson have been told Dave Langford is in the chair! A microphone is thrust in your direction. As the convention hall slowly spins before you and turns black, all you can remember is an old cartoon of a banquet seating plan. TOP TABLE. SEA OF HOSTILE FACES...."

2. Nobody can ever explain why the con's overall symbol is a not particularly Mexican cuttlefish. Why is a cuttlefish like written sf?

- (a) Both have a surface fishiness and a hard core
- (b) Cuttlefish like fresh water the way sf hacks like the mainstream.
- (c) Whether thrust between the bars or lining the floor, both are used in budgies' cages.

3. Interesting Mexican diseases: John Clute's cold, in keeping with the dominant ideology, becomes everyone's cold but especially mine. Wandering gastric 'flu interrupts the course of true love as Dave Bridges and Linda Blanchard (United At Last!) alternate their days of groaning on a hotel bed of pain.* Hazel traces her morning desiccation to heating pipes cunningly placed to send a deadly all-night sirocco up her nose. Martin Hoare has hurt his knee and never makes it to Birmingham at all: rumours escalate round the con until a Novacon ex-chairman who shall be nameless asks, "Is it true about Martin coming home blind drunk and falling over Katie and breaking both his legs?" (Martin, unknown to us all, lies in the Royal Berks Hospital with Wafarin anticoagulant trickling through his veins. By the time we visit him, even he is bored with jokes about rats and clots.) On Sunday the hotel helps fans appreciate the joys of hypothermia by its witty old Novacon trick of turning off the heating. We leave early, in a haze of germs; the 1815 to Reading is later dubbed the Plague Train and for days is decontaminated in shifts by biowar experts from BR Travellers' Fare.

4. Greg Pickersgill, "fandom's answer to Sotheby's," has a fanzine auction technique all his own. Flogging good stuff bores him: "Some issues of Mainstream here." Audience: "Which ones, which ones?" Tossing the potential complication aside, Greg seizes on a run of Pete Prasford fanzines. "Now this is a truly amazing example of how to produce a highly ambitious magazine of fanwriting, fiction and poetry...very badly. You would not believe the heights of ineptitude scaled by Prasford in this sustained, matchless performance which may be unique in fandom as we know it," etc., etc. Nobody buys them.

5. Euphemisms of Mexican: When a fan is inclined a few ethereal degrees from the true vertical, and tends to stare happily past your left ear at the coruscating lights of infinity (we do not mention Phil Palmer, we do not mention Bill Gibson), the full and unanswerable response to your curiously raised eyebrow is, "I've been in Ted White's room."

Ted White spends a lot of time in Ted White's room.

6. This can't be happening. I stopped entering quizzes years ago. "Brain of Mexican," indeed. The luckless finalists (Davies, Edwards, Headlong, Illingworth, Langford, Mullan, Scott, Wareham) huddle in the con-hall doorway and say rude things about Kev Williams. Kev's semi-impossible qualifying test involving spotting hordes of sf lines (several of them not from Jack Vance stories) assembled into a patchwork of plagiarism. All the most hauntingly elusive ones prove to be spurious Williams insertions--bits of literary Polyfilla. There is no justice.

7. Chris Priest looks a little strained. Leigh Kennedy looks a little strained. For only the second time in recent memory, Leigh (live-in client of the mighty Priest literary agency) is in the same room as Lisa Tuttle.

Man-mountain book dealer Jim Goddard, who's lately switched his hair-dye colour to black, injects good cheer: "Cosh Chris, I think Leigh's really wonderful."

"Er, that's nice, Jim."

"No, I mean really wonderful, really."

"Er, yes Jim."

*They probably caught it while staying with the Pickersgills, recent victims. We were staying with them, too, but were spared. jak/svt

"No, really. I really mean...."

What does he really mean?

8. "Er," I say compellingly, everyone having utterly run out of words some 45 seconds into the panel. "Er, you can get things you might call 'stupid ideas' even in rather good books." In a feeble attempt at controversy I quibble with the description of lethal computer programs in chapter three of Count Zero. (If it takes sixteen countem sixteen seconds for the dreaded "black ice" to "eat into your nervous system" and stop your heart, a simple dead-man switch would presumably offer complete protection.) A savage argument fails to develop. "Uh," ripostes the master of cyberpunk. "I never thought of that...don't know how I'd get round that...." He sinks into a tortured, forty minute reverie.

I feel extremely guilty and reprehensible.

Afterwards, Bill heads rapidly for Ted White's room.

9. Very late Saturday night, Geoff Ryman and Rachel Pollack announce their life-enhancing Celibacy Training Programme. Their strength is as the strength of ten because their parts are pure. After resolutely refusing to contemplate this for several pints, I decide there are things with which I was not meant to stop meddling.

10. Behind me I overhear a low, insinuating whisper. "A hundred and fifteen thousand words.

John Clute is dribbling slightly, caught as though by the gaze of a cobra. Chris Priest leans closer: "And don't forget the thesaurus." A shiver of potent emotion passes through JC's coryza-racked frame. He is a man visibly weakening.

This is complicated. The week before, Chris and I accidentally became dealers for an exceedingly expensive word processor. We wanted to play with it: by careful misdirection we steered the saleswoman away from the realization that we were mere authors. Authors pay £425 a go, plus VAT. Dealers get shop demonstration copies for a nominal sum. Nudge, nudge.

Chris now hopes to make a few bob by actually being a dealer, unerringly picking a logophile victim whose weak spot is the built-in thesaurus and spelling-check dictionary. "A hundred and fifteen thousand words...."

From Clute, a low and lustful moan.

11. I find Hazel in a corridor, looking fraught. "Roz Kaveny has just spent half an hour telling me all about her emotional problems with her teenage masochist girl friend. She makes me feel horribly boringly normal. I can't cope...."

Perhaps there is something in celibacy after all, for other people.

12. In a searing poll whose results I largely forget, the Nigel Richardson Award for the fan one would most like to see in mini-skirt and suspenders goes by a landslide to slinky, sensuous Ashley Watkins, with runners-up Nigel Richardson, Geoff Ryman and Joy Hibbert.

(True Confession: actually I've never fathomed why fishnet stockings and suspenders are supposed to be sexy. Some hangover from days when any legwear less redoubtable than a half-inch barrier of wool automatically spelt wantonness?)

The lady who actually is wearing the prescribed get-up proves to be one of the group of Hitch-Hiker fans..."towellies," as Alex Stewart enthusiastically calls them in a fan panel, with sundry comments like, "If it wasn't for you lot this con would be at the Strathallan!" Waves of spontaneous towelled indignation erupt from the audience. The debacle is as usual handled by G. Pickersgill, his personality in no way attenuated by being at the back of the hall without a microphone.

As the panel fizzles, Alex fades hastily away to the bar. There, ashen-faced and trembling, he is heard to say, "Of course that was just a ploy, you know, to liven up the discussion...."

13. Great moments in Mexican food: Friday night: Hazel and I feel like (a) being alone; (b) not venturing into blizzard-ridden Birmingham. We madly escape into the expensive hotel restaurant*, leaving a thwarted Arnold Aiken to the horrors of cheap convention snacks resembling special effects from a splatter movie. Saturday: same procedure, but Arnold has spent the day arranging a second mortgage and tags along. I tuck into a succulent piece of dripping red, rare Carvery meat. I don't think you're supposed to cook pork like this. Sunday: the convention lunch is the Living Slime That Ate Manhattan, on rice. Fans trained in forensic analysis deduce this delicacy to contain flour, water, and red and green bits, but are unsuccessful in isolating a taste. Memo: living for a day on soup and alcohol is a less successful cold treatment than I hoped.

14. A second piece of concealing jigsaw is lifted, to expose...an inch-long arc of what could well be a bald head. The previous wisp of revealed truth, in the bottom left corner, resembles cobwebbed coconut matting. This is another Kev Williams labyrinth to baffle the Mexican Brains of us experimental rats. Which famous sf personality is bald and looks like a coconut?

Well, you get three chances. "Damon Knight?"

"Bloody hell," cry feared foes Edwards, Headlong and Illingworth, discovering too late that the first lucky guess has just eliminated half the competitors including them.

I don't remember much more beyond the fiendish Williams's cunning jigsaw of some white-haired person who appears to have a heavy five o'clock shadow. "Um...Keith Roberts?"

It is Kate Wilhelm.

Nevertheless I am forcibly draped in a poncho saying BRAIN OF MEXICON 2. Sue Hepple, creator of this high-class garment, follows me around watchfully to make sure I don't take it off. Somehow I end up on the fan room floor with the added glory of a silly Mexican sombrero. Linda Pickersgill says things to me. I fail to hear them. Everyone (ie. Lilian Edwards) asks what my hands are doing underneath the poncho. Fans are not as original as one might wish.

All evening I nervously avoid Keith Roberts.

15. Best one-liner from the con newsletter Cactus Times, tucked away in a LOST AND FOUND column: "In the small hours of this morning, The Grand Hotel, Birmingham; please return to Toby Roxburgh."**

**Poor fellow couldn't find the remarkably-distant overflow hotel, with his room in it.svt

*It was the only restaurant, this Carvery, overpriced, piss-elegant, and--dare we say it--provincial. The lunch set-up, also pricey, disappeared when we were hungry: svt/jak

16. The Harveys are chatting amiably about Lee Montgomerie.

John: "She used to go up to London for the weekend and come back pregnant occasionally."

Eve: "We never did find out who was the father of her child."

John: "Did she?"

Clearly this is the ugly face of Café Society Fandom. How glad I am to inhabit the austerland unscandalous world of Ansible address lists. Let's see, D. West (though not Ann) has moved to Keighley, Dave Bridges is moving to Texas, Maureen Porter is moving to Folkestone....

17. Of course, as soon as we left it all started to happen. A final forum for complaints led to great bayings and ululations from one Alison MacDonald (who she?), complaining that the Brain of Mexican quiz had been foully rigged and slanted so it could only be won by the sort of low person who had in fact won it. Gregory, speaking for the defence, made uncharacteristic use of tact.

Nor were we there when Abi Frost, star of (inter alia) the disco floor and Cactus Times, became very excitable in the bar and in succession asked approximately 85% of chaps at the convention if they would undress her. D. West obliged, though only to the waist. My informant didn't say from which end.

Nor did I witness the salutary incident, sworn to by Dave Wood, in which D. and Hazel Ashworth lovingly turned Joseph upside down (only for Judith to very properly rescue him and lead him away).

On Tuesday we saw Jerry Kaufman and Suzle, who earlier [at the con] had looked a bit subdued.

"So what did you like best?"

"Definitely Sunday night! That was when it really started living up to the stories we'd heard about British cons!"

The moment my back is turned....

---Dave Langford---

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This seems like a good place for a few impressions of Mexican.:::The bar was as much a focus as we'd heard such are at British cons. Not only that, but there was a small bar in the back of the con hall, so people could drink while watching (and joining in on) the program. There were a number of Brits who didn't drink, but they too joined in the relaxed atmosphere. People spoke up at the panels I saw a bit more than at US cons, though not remarkably so. (But the crowd at the fanzine panel was pleasingly well-informed. Even the "non-publishers" (so what do I call someone who doesn't publish a fanzine) followed and joined the conversation.:::The disco was a lot less lively and popular than I expected. Most of the people there, especially the men, stood around watching, drinks in hand. Many of the people dancing weren't very good, but had a good time moving their bodies around in some semblance of rhythm, apparently a novelty for fans everywhere. (In the Northwest, we actually have discos that are frequently crowded, with large numbers of people who dance well, though Lord knows if any of us can do the latest moves.) The best dancer was Linda Pickersgill. But then she's from N'Orleans. jak

THE TECHNOCRAT OF THE BREAKFAST- TABLE

1) Sex, sex, sex...well, not quite, but related.

When someone is pregnant, they grow a special container for the fetus to develop in. (It's called an Amnion.) The container is filled with liquid (called, unsurprisingly, Amniotic Fluid), which serves as a shock absorber, among other things.

The inner lining (epithelium) of the Amnion is about three cells thick, and is immunologically interesting: because the fetus is genetically different from the mother, it is important that the mother's immune system not decide that it is "foreign tissue" or graft rejection will set in. (It is possible that this is what happens in some miscarriages; I don't know.) In any event, many of the genetic markers that identify tissue are not expressed, or are expressed only minimally, by this epithelium.

What that means is that you can take the stuff and transplant it into people, and they won't reject it. Now, consider a person with an inherited enzyme deficiency. It would seem to be fairly straightforward to do a bit of genetic engineering on this Amniotic Epithelium, to cause it to generate lots of the enzyme, culture up a bunch

of it, and then implant it as a sort of fake endocrine gland. Of course, the stuff would not be particularly regulated, so there might be some concern about how much of the enzyme it generated. This is an issue with, say, diabetes, where you need very different amounts of the enzyme (insulin) at different times, but it would at least be a start, and maybe they can eventually find out how to control the stuff. It may also be that for some conditions it is not particularly an issue, and that merely having some nominal amount of the enzyme around is sufficient.

I found this item in Nature (that issue of late January, 1981, from which I reported another item a while back); I haven't heard a thing about it since. Anyone got any handles on further work? As I recall, they did, in fact, put pieces of Amniotic Epithelium into a few healthy volunteers, and none of them rejected it during the six or seven weeks of the trial.

One final note: as you might expect, around those hospitals where people have babies, there is a good supply of the stuff. Makes it easy to work with.

2) Speaking of diabetes:

As you may know, there are special little areas called (yes, Firesign Theater fans, it's true) Islets of Langerhans. (Not quite "Isles," but close.) The cells in the Islets make insulin, and presumably do other important things that I know not of. In diabetes, they get either destroyed, or turned off, or whatever, so that the functions are lost. I think that in one form of the condition, the body's immune system attacks the Islet cells.

Some bright soul has had the idea of sticking Islet cells in little bags made of permeable plastic, so that nutrients can get in, and wastes and insulin can get out, but so that the cells cannot be attacked by the immune system. (Either the white blood cells cannot get into the little bags to eat the Islet cells, or the proteins that alert the white blood cells cannot get out of the bags, so the immune system never figures out that the Islet cells are present.)

I believe that they are now trying this out in dogs, and getting some promising results. It will be a while yet before they get it to people. (Some interesting questions remain, including: endocrine glands, which secrete their products directly into the blood, are generally regulated by hormone levels in the blood. Are these regulators small enough to get in through the permeable plastic membrane?)

3) Speaking of trying things out:

My neighbors in Boulder, Robin and Howard Daugherty, are wonderful. Robin is a former president of the Handweavers' Guild of Boulder, and has a new book out on basketry (shameless plug); Howard teaches Russian and Polish at the University. He also picks up jokes from visiting scholars. This one is from Poland. The scene is a classroom; one of the students raises a hand...

"Professor?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Who invented State Socialism?"

"The scientists, of course."

"Well, why didn't they try it out on dogs, first?"

5) What?!

David W. Berry rumored at me, just the other night, that someone had succeeded in introducing the light-producing genes from a firefly into some plant cells. (The editors of this fanzine say they heard the cells were from a tobacco plant.) Not only is this very unusual in that it involved crossing over between kingdoms, but it has lots of, well, odd implications.

§Self-illuminated Christmas trees

§Autolocating tomatoes and other fruit for night picking by robots

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
 "DRAGON SINGER"
 —ANNE McCAFFREY—
 NEW
 * * * ASTONISHING! * * *
 BOLD! JON
 ORIGINAL! FANZINE! SINGER
 COMING SOON!!!

- \$ Jack O'Lanterns without candles (especially if they can keep the light-emitting cells on the inside wall of the pumpkin)
- \$ Lit walkways without unsightly lamps and power cables

Need I say more? [Editors say: how about self-lighting cigars?]

Actually, it is quite staggering to put animal genes into plant cells and actually get them to be expressed. (I presume that they are expressed, and that the plant cells actually do glow. I haven't seen a full report yet.)

6) Neep-neep rumors (thanks to Arthur Hlavaty for the term "neep-neep")

Everyone on the street (in Silly Valley, anyway) seems to think that Apple, Amiga, and Atari are all about to issue 68020-based machines which will far outperform current personal computers (possibly excepting the Compaq 386). These machines will probably be somewhat more expensive than most current machines, though price is one of those gray areas.

At any rate, rumors seem to converge on a set of characteristics generally including:

- \$ 1 to 4 Megabytes main memory, very likely expandable to at least 16 Meg
- \$ 68881 or other math coprocessor routinely available either as standard issue or as an easy upgrade
- \$ Built in 20 to 40 Meg hard disk
- \$ Nice big screen, possibly even as large as 1280x1024
- \$ UNIX[™] operating system or equivalent, possibly as an option (certainly some kind of multitasking capability is an obvious necessity for the next rank of machines, and UNIX[™] is certainly the most obvious candidate)
- \$ Possibly various advanced sound and graphics control circuitry (the current Amiga already has special graphics chips, which people seem to like a lot)

I have heard a rumor that Apple will introduce a 600 dot-per-inch version of the Laser-Writer eventually. That would be wonderful for those of us who care about these things; I definitely count myself in that group, so I am hanging out with 'bated breath. There is also a persistent rumor that Apple will be bringing out some sort of intermediate Macintosh, with one (or possibly two) slots. Rumors of color Macs abound, as usual. I'll believe it when I see it. Ain't rumors great? I don't know what to think anymore....

7) Three quick book recommendations

A) Using Your Brain--for a CHANGE!

by Richard Bandler

Real People Press, 1985

\$6.50, trade paper edition

This is a very good companion-piece to Frogs into Princes, by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, same publishers, same price, 1979. The new book is full of exercises for you to enjoy, and new NLP patterns. [Editors note that NLP is Neuro-Linguistic Programming.]

B) Getting to Yes

by Roger Fisher and William Ury

(of the Harvard Negotiation Project)

Penguin, 1983

\$5.95, trade paper edition

This one was suggested by Tom Whitmore. I am very impressed--this is a good solid job, and is very practical.

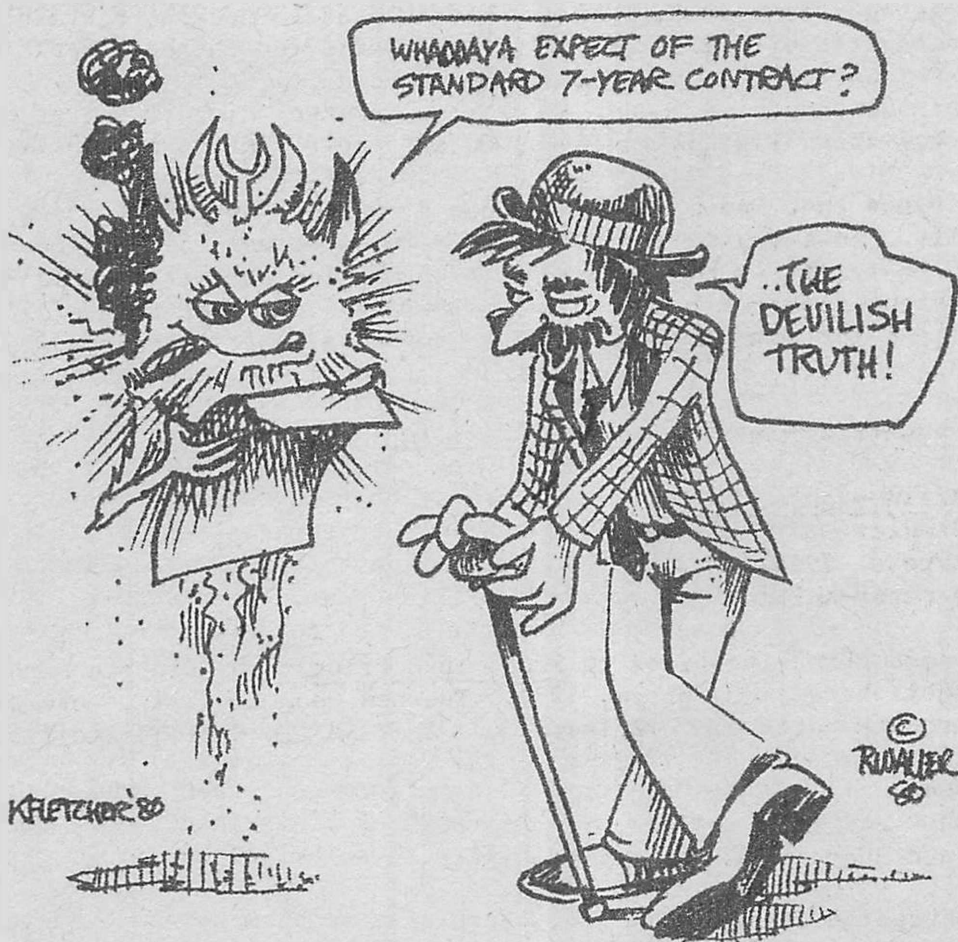
- C) The New Science of Strong Materials, or Why You Don't Fall Through the Floor, 2nd Ed.
by J.E. Gordon
Princeton University Press, 1976
roughly \$9.95

This was suggested by Laura Creighton, John Gilmore, and Hugh Daniel. This book is truly a wonder. Be prepared for a relatively dry wit: "Most commonly a relaxed stress simply reverts to heat but children have discovered that it is possible to convert the strain energy of catapult elastic into the fracture of, say, glass." The book is an excellent, penetrating, and almost incredibly lucid treatment of an extremely important subject.

8) Just my way of saying goodbye.

In closing, I wish you all many wonders. May your backups never get corrupted, may your colors always print the way you want them to, may your disk access time ever decrease, and may your kitchen knives always have a good edge (if not, maybe I will come and visit, and sharpen them for you...).

Jon Singer



RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY

TARAL

Because of Avedon Carol, here I am at a typewriter instead of taking a walk on a nice May evening, instead of working on the bomb-bay doors of a model B-1, or instead of finishing off the latest Spenser novel.

To be honest, I probably wouldn't be doing any of those things. I'd be running off a zine for the cartoonists' apa I belong to, or doing some other sort of fan writing. But I should be doing even those things instead of this.

What about Avedon then, you may ask. And what am I doing? It began with a letter a couple of months ago. Avedon had just published a zine with Rob Hansen called Church, and apparently there had been only two reviews, one of which was less than a comfort to her in her old age. Why doesn't someone start reviewing American, I mean half-American, zines again, she said, or words to that effect. Nowhere did she say specifically me, or say that someone should review Church, but are we not fen? Fo we not have broad mental horizons? Do we not misconstrue one another at the drop of a hat? So I did the customary thing and read between the lines. Then I wrote to Jerry, one of the editors of my favourite genzine, and offered him my invaluable experience as a fanzine reviewer. Naturally he misconstrued me. But that's another story.

Whatever happened to the zippy little fan mag, does anyone know? I remember the theory well. At that unhappy time, gnezines had become lumbering dinosaurs, rarely seen, and a number of older hands had said, "Wait a minute, annual fanzines fail at building the topicality and esprit of a trufandom." This seemed so, and thereafter quite a number of short, frequent, witty little fanzines appeared. After a year or so, unfortunately, these tree-shrews of the fanzine world, whose size and agility were supposed to enable them to survive the coming Extinction of the Dinosaur, became almost as scarce as the genzine.

At about the same time a certain monotony set in. Zines were looking pretty much alike from Epsilon to Flashpoint to Instant Gratification. Worse, they left an impression on my mind of having read alike. Not to put a fine point on it, the British were the worst offenders. American zines, after years of breast-beating, were showing rather more individuality than the standard all-text, lines of *'s to separate one article from another, con reports which all mentioned the same people, and the inescapable Theory of the Week of Fanzine Publishing For All Time in every British zine. Needless to say, every succeeding Theory was much the same: good fanwriting had to be done by someone D. West had personally met at the bar.

Aw, yes, I do exaggerate. I have no trouble telling Crank apart from Ansible. Or Skel apart from Joseph Nicholas. The purpose of this bit of artificial iconoclasm is mostly to get a rise from the audience, of course. A performance, as D. would put it. But one drop of truth there is, that there's been a dearth of zines lately, and that it's been a long time since any of them have had the ability to surprise the reader with something new.

The problem--though I've no doubt it isn't seen as a problem by some--has caused reaction. Of all things there has been a small renaissance of genzine publishing. It's as if edi-

tors figured it was better to publish 40 pages annually than 8. Or maybe it's postal economy. Or sunspots. But I think some fan editors just like editing a genzine, for the fun of balancing the material, laying out the pages, and holding something substantial in their hand after the work is done. That it's too much trouble to do often goes without saying, but it is worth doing when you feel like it. Perhaps it's just that my entry into fandom was in 1972, when the genzine held the field, when the articles were supposed to have form and a punch-line, when fanzines were expected to have the same attention paid to the editor's efforts to publish it as to the writer's efforts to fashion words, so that a fanzine was attractive and interesting to the eye. Perhaps I exaggerate here too, for the majority of zines then as now were crudzines, and looked anything but attractive, however many scribbles the editor crammed into corners. But I remember also that the words lost to make space for art were rarely any better than the drawings. In any case, a number of people must feel like me that there aren't enough of the genus Fanzine General-Interest around anymore, since a number have appeared in the mesozoic forest of fandom again.

Two of the most obvious examples are Mythologies and Time & Again. The last issues of both are a bit dated now, however, so I won't go into either in any detail. Any general observations of Mythologies, though, ought to include mentioning that Don D'Amassa began his zine in late '74. Few people ever saw the first three ditto issues, so in a sense Mythologies began with the fourth, mimeo issue in early '75. Title is often credited as the zeitgeist of 70s fandom, and certainly it was one of the influential focal points of the time. As were APA-50, Mota, and A Woman's APA. But I think Mythologies has the best claim as the focal point for the later part of that decade for the largest cross-section of fandom, while still keeping standards. There were better zines that hardly ever came out, and there were better zines that only the chosen could get. But nearly everyone read and put their two cents worth in Mythologies. It came out quarterly in '75 and '77. (Admittedly there was only one issue in '76, and it slowed down in '78.) It was aimed at the expanding interests of an intelligent neo-dom, was mostly quite well written, and every issue had an immense letter column that was sensibly edited.

In retrospect Mythologies doesn't seem as tremendous as it did to me in 1975. The topics in the letter column are dead issues, some of the writing seems a little more wooden than I remembered it, and there are faghoots, a form of humour I never gave a crap about. But nothing about Mythologies embarrasses my fondness for it. It is a good, solid, basic publication, whose pages are more often worth reading than not, and it deserves to be remembered as the Cry or Spacewarp of its time. The new incarnation of Don's fanzine is every bit what the original was. How it will fare in the 80s, though, will be interesting to see.

Jackie Causgrove will be remembered for publishing Dilemma (and later Resolution), Dave Locke for Awry. Neither one has published anything of note since sometime in the late 70s, but last summer they put their heads together for the first issue of Time & Again. Time & Again is in part a political statement. There are portions devoted to Topic A, and other ramifications as well. (If you are lucky, the phrase "Topic A" has lost its meaning. Good.) The bulk of the zine, though, is straightforward fanwriting meant to entertain rather than spread a point of view. Much of it was first rate, none of it outright bad. At worst the first issue had material that's typical of a lot of midwest zines, and is too laid back and amorphous for my taste. At best were Tucker, Grennell, Harry Warner, and Eric Mayer--not quite at their best, but nevertheless standing out. If there was one thing about Time & Again that I could not abide it was Dave's introductions to each piece, which are nowhere as entertaining as Harlan Ellison's, and cosmically redundant. I mean, do I need to be told who Bob Tucker is? Or that Skel is a popular English fanwriter? Was Dave under the impression that this was Analog? On the plus side though, as out of fashion as it is to admit it, was the Bergerou cover. Nine separations,

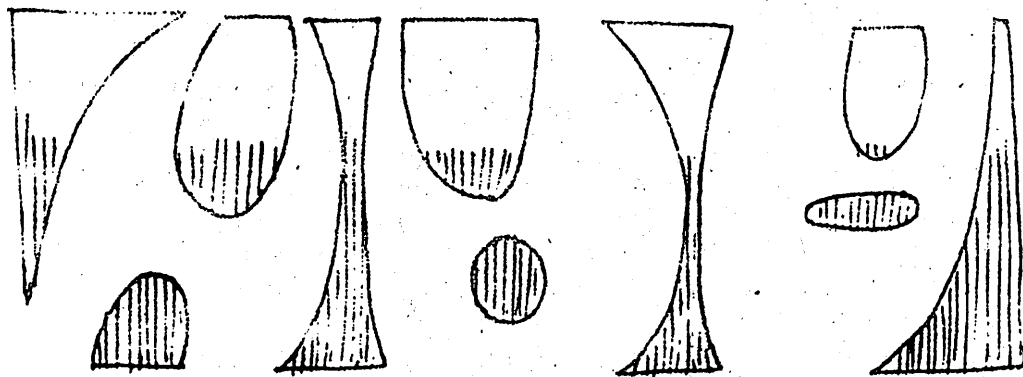
if I haven't miscounted, but that isn't the point. Whatever is said about the man, it can't be denied that he produces striking covers.

Before we get into recent zines, and detail, there's one other example of the trend to genzines that I won't discuss at all, but feel that it adds weight to my argument to mention. In February I too returned to the genre, and put a first issue out of New Toy; one, I hope, of many New Toys to play with as we in fandom collectively sink into second childhood.

Practically the last place you'd expect a normal genzine from these days is Britain, but in fact there are two of recent note. Pam Wells' Nutz came to my notice rather late in its career. The fifth issue to be precise, but Pam kindly extended my subscription retroactively, and sent me the fourth issue as well. And we are currently up to the sixth. The first thing Pam says in the new issue is, "People are still criticising Nutz, saying there should be 'more Pam Wells' in it." Hmmm. Well, this is indeed a problem, but not so bad that Nutz is in any real danger of being a fanzine "which is technically sound, but desperately bland," as Pam says later in the editorial. There is a tendency among British fans to deplore any writing which doesn't say "bloody hell" often enough. Beside the belligerent authorial voice, the no-exaggeration-barred style, if it is well enough done, is also held in high regard. But it's harder. Harder still, Pam tried to impress personality on Nutz solely as a First Cause. This paper creation wouldn't exist, she says, in this way unless I, and only I, caused it to be. The problem with this approach to editing is that it's easy to lose sight of the demi-urge behind it, and to take the issue for granted. Without seeing the guiding hand behind the material and its presentation, the articles fall apart into a random aggregation of separate existences. Enough of metaphor: a behind-the-scenes personality simply isn't visible.

The way out of that dilemma is to chose contributions for the strength of their individual personalities. If there is a personality behind the choice, it will emerge as clearly as it's ever going to with strong material. So the question isn't as much Pam's own visibility in Nutz as the strength of personality of her contributors. A table of contents listing articles by D. West, Dave Langford, Joseph Nicholas, and Avedon Carol would be in no danger of seeming colourless to any reader. But what about a table of contents with Chuck Harris, Chris Bailey, and Pam herself? Harris makes an immediate impression on most of us, Chris Bailey mainly with regular readers of Nutz, I suspect, and Pam I will limit myself to saying is Pam. It's not a weak line-up, but it doesn't raise your expectations unduly, either. So it comes down to reading the fanzine.

Overall it is weak. Chuch Harris's piece is quite the best written of the lot, but it's



UNIMPORTANT SHAPES

Reveals

essentially a reply to an article in the previous issue. It doesn't stand on its own, and is basically minor, a filler piece. But it is the strongest piece in the zine. Pam's own piece, for all that the British foam at the mouth when Americans do it, is little more than an average convention report telling the reader

who she met and where she was at a given hour of the day. I didn't know who the people were, they didn't seem to do anything that should interest me, a stranger, particularly, and the writer didn't lie effectively enough to make it entertaining as fiction. This too was weak, even though on the face of it Pam's piece ought to have lent "personality" to the zine. The final piece was a medley of Chris Bailey's moving experiences. I use the word as he does, literally the transportation of his chattel goods from one address to another. The anecdotes are intrinsically amusing in each case, but never add up to anything more than a series of unrelated incidents without pacing, flow, or a discernible pay-off at the end.

All of these articles should have been published, even together in one fanzine, but needed something as a backbone, an outstanding article to stiffen the rest of the issue. The previous Nutz, though not without problems of its own, was the better product, with more memorable material.

Curiously, Pam sent me a shorter zine called Strumpet as well, and it contained just the material necessary to pull Nutz together. Pam herself writes more interestingly about molestation on the busses than she does about conventions, and "Slow Sweet Honey" by Linda Pickersgill is just the gem needed as the centerpiece of the genzine. It pains me to kick Pam, who trusted me with her back issues, but Strumpet is a better fanzine than Nutz 6.

Still Life, by Simon Ounsley, is the other purely British genzine in the docket. In its third issue, Still Life has an eight-issue life. There's a continuity, intentional or not, from Simon's earlier zine Still It Moves. The first two issues of Still Life are rather short by comparison with the third, and are clearly personalzines of the usual British sort—a lot of short subjects by the editor tossed together with letter excerpts, quotes, and filler, separated by lines of @@@'s and ***'s. The recent issue, however, weighs in at a surprising 67 pages, and has a cast of several distinguished contributors. With one exception, this is all strong material with such a sense of personality that there's no chance of anyone calling Still Life wishy-washy or bland. "Shock of the New," D. West's contribution, is virtually a personalzine within the issue, two pages longer than Still Life 1.

As usual, D. covers the map with his explorings, like Henry Hudson covering the New World. He opens with a charming description of killing mice for recreation, and somehow transforms this into an exegesis on fanhistory. But before the reader can grasp this straw the kaleidoscope has changed again, and D. is talking about the mystery of technology to the Unscientific Man. He's not really through with fandom, though. He's merely illustrating the nature of theories, and how a theory of fandom must needs be another fucking hassle, even if it's his theory. There's a digression through several popular books on sociology first, though. And the, voila! Michael Ashley. "Whenever he starts into his unemployed-Rock-existentialist-dying-of-boredom routine...I quite approve of fetching him a whack or two, but even so...he does come up with an interesting piece of fanwriting once in a while." This is a particularly clever twist since there is indeed a Michael Ashley unemployed-Rock-existentialist-dying-of-boredom article in this very issue of Still Life. But with a quick "Proust Bites Madeleine--Willis Lashes Out With Loc," D. is off on another tangent. The subject of homosexuals comes up, and therefore a swipe is in order at Richard Bergeron's motives for Plunging All Fandom Into War. Dave Bridges is put over some troubled water next, and the Bowers weakness for ellipses in his writing is briefly lampooned. "Bowers...is the guy...who is really...nuts on...dots..." The boot is put to Dave Locke and Jackie Causgrove, and just to prove D. is impartial, Patrick Nielsen Hayden is likened to a junior college lecturer. Moshe Feder is given a Bronx cheer for being too obtuse to realize that the \$25 price tag on Fanzines in Theory and Practice actually was the crude message to American fans that they needed him more than he needed them. (If I were D. I'd think this attitude over carefully. It might be a shock if he

found out that this wasn't nearly so true as he'd like to believe.) Suddenly you realize that in spite of all the red herrings, D. was talking about fandom all along, and sneaked it up on you.

"Shock of the New" is in fact a British education tv series of considerable merit. By the way, it is also very much like D.'s fan writing in the way it begins with an idea, then tracks it across hundreds of miles of intellectual terra incognita, until the narrator unexpectedly arrives where he knew he was going all along. In the case of the television program, the thread of development is logical if not clear. I'm not at all sure the same statement can be said of D.'s ideas, whose convolutions and torturous ways are less likely to be the destination than the journey. A better title might have been "Einstein on the Beach," a composition by Phil Glass that I interpret as a look into the decaying mind of the dead scientist. It would be a fitting Westian touch to leave that statement lying on the ground like a gauntlet of challenge. However, D.'s mind isn't decaying by any means. The resemblance to Glass's minimalist masterpiece is a matter of style, not the specific image of Einstein. It isn't exactly flow of consciousness, but a theme that appears and submerges unpredictably in a sea of variations on it. D. isn't subtle about it. Where Glass is haunting, D. is inexorable.

All of which says that "Shock of the New" is very strong medicine for the ailing genzine breed. Perhaps that's why it appears at the end of the zine, in case all else fails. Undeniably the other potions in that issue are not as drastic.

But effective nonetheless. Hazel Ashworth's little piece, "Vive la Difference," for instance, is a valiant attempt at sharing a personal experience that falls only a little short of making as strong a statement as D.'s. She recoils from mundane society, where people are judged on their appearances, to find a home in fandom, where fans see more than skin deep. Fandom also judges people, not by a pretty face, but as Hazel demonstrates by their insight and wit. In a fine piece of play-acting Hazel gives us the Hunchback of Notre Dame as he might be welcomed into fandom. He immediately turns on the next neo in line, a pretty face who's unable to defend himself intellectually, and helps drive him out. What's the moral of this story? I'm not actually sure. Perhaps that fandom has standards that matter, or perhaps that it's the same inside as out. In spite of this trifling ambiguity, which I find more engrossing anyway, Hazel plainly had something to put across to the reader, and found the right way to do it. The doing of it, in fact, seems to me to be more important than the idea.

"My Brilliant Career" by Michael Ashley was precisely the sort of fanwriting D. West thought earned him a whack or two, but was occasionally interesting. I may have read one or two other pieces like this one, so haven't yet reached the threshold over which his fatalism becomes an irritating device, if it does. To what can I attribute the small number of Michael Ashleys in fandom other than its middle-class nature? In the decrepit Britain of Margaret Thatcher you'd think there'd be more political writing, not less, but punks and unemployed Asians in Liverpool don't write fanzines as a rule. Providing that it isn't overdone then, such writing as Michael's has a sense of reality that keeps us from drifting off into Cloud-Cuckoo Land. Maybe.

On the other hand, Mal Ashworth's "On Our Own Now--Forever" was a rehash of pipe-dreams that were old when Carl Sagan was in knickers. This paean to clichés about space, and impressive, big numbers like 23,520,000,000,000 miles in a light-year, are the sort of thing I cut my teeth on, continue to dream by privately, but don't want to read in a fanzine. The proper place for this article was in an archaeological relic like Erg; hardly in Still Life. Mal's piece was the only weak-kneed piece in an otherwise hearty issue.

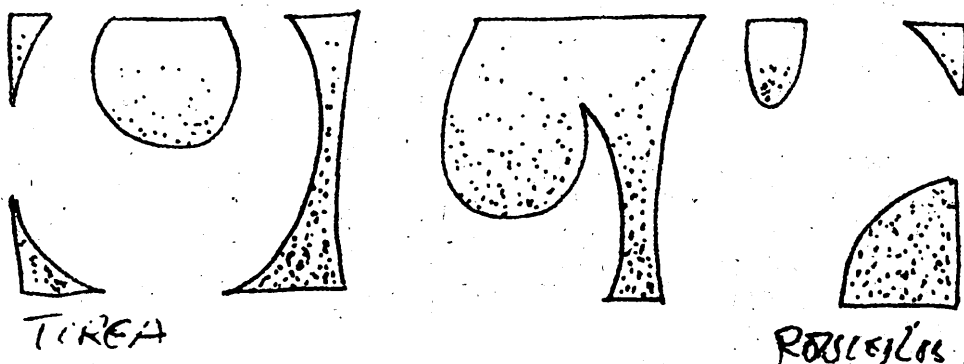
I left Simon's own writing to the last. Glandular fever, known as mononucleosis to Americans, is more than a catch-phrase to him; it's been a way of life now for quite some time. Unlike Chris Bailey's anecdotes about moving, in Nutz, Simon's own experiences with the British medical establishment are not a mere sequence of unrelated events. Each separate degradation and humiliation is latched onto the one before by a brilliant dead-pan opening, "I'm still ill." Three little words say so much. They say everything is futile, that British medicine is ineffectual, that Britain is bogged down in bureaucracy and inadequacy. They speak of a growing sense of panic. And then Simon unfolds a brand new horror in his vain attempts to deal with a minor but irritating disease. The whole thing has a forward momentum which leads the reader to the final disillusionment, that the disease will just fade away on its own before it can be treated anyway, sort of like the British Empire....

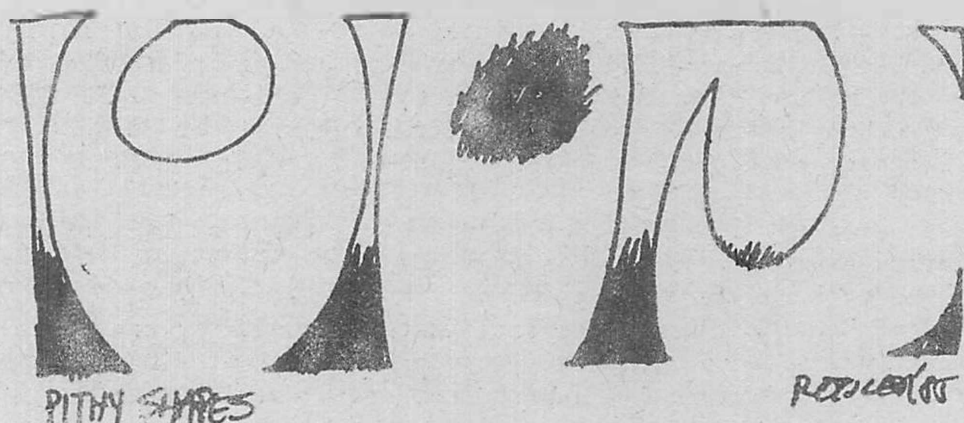
Now that was a genzine! I only wish that it had been uniformly legible.

There've been only two issues of Fuck the Tories so far. As far as I know it's the only tricontinental fanzine, published by Valma Brown and Leigh Edmonds in Australia, Terry Hughes in the US, and Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas in the UK. With only two issues behind it, Fuck the Tories is a bit green on the vine yet, but might actually be an early bloomer. There may or may not be much change with future issues. One other zine reminds me of it, somewhat, **** Extra, produced by the Katzes and Kunkels a few years ago. Both zines are the result of formalized teamwork, and are dominated by inflexible schtick. In the case of **** Extra it was an unbelievable level of fannishness, and a different theme for every issue. For Fuck the Tories it's dogmatic Marxist rhetoric. The effect on the Katzes and Kunkels was to retard change or growth in the zine. Whether or not the same thing will happen to Fuck the Tories remains to be seen, but already I weary of the schtick.

Perhaps it's because I'm sick to death of the notion that the opposite of right-wing looniness is left-wing looniness, when it's all the same duty-to-the-state crap, and shooting people for such things as publishing fanzines. The opposite of either or both is disobedience of anyone who talks such foolishness, plain and simple. But Ted White (at Disclave) tells me that I'm taking a humorous device too seriously. I suppose he's right, but with the distaste I have for intellectual pitfalls such as the antique left-right dichotomy, it's hard to see the fun.

With that said, the reader might understand a little better why I found some of the choice of material in Fuck the Tories' second issue unfortunate. Their editorial device led them to print "A Neo-Stalinist Critique of Frank Herbert's Dune," a piece whose humour rests entirely on the exaggerated Marxist jargon, but isn't really very funny. Much more successful was "Got the Trots? The Joseph Nicholas Guide to the British Sectarian Left." The humour here arises from a general observation that could be made for all special interest groups from the Maoist Republican Falange to fandom. "Ideological purity is naturally much more important than winning boring old elections," Joseph concludes. Sometimes this is not true, much as it would





, be better if it were. All the same, wryly put. Joseph also writes a totally non-sectarian piece about Interzone magazine, my favourite of the issue. Leigh Edmonds writes with the same freedom (save a few opening gestures) about "The Leaden Age of Fanzines," a review that hits the nail twice on the

head. The list of material doesn't end here, but the items I've named will do to illustrate a point.

Here's a case of too strong a personality in a fanzine. Or perhaps too false a personality would be more accurate. Instead of a fanzine that's bland, Fuck the Tories tries so hard for personality that the forest is in danger of disappearing behind the trees. The schtick, that is, at times takes the place of genuinely interesting writing. Clearly the best material in the issue is that which doesn't try to live up to the zine's image.

The converse of what I've said is also worth saying, that Fuck the Tories is one of the most unusual fanzines of late. Whether or not it works, the editors have tried very hard to break out of the common mold, by doing something that's simply different. There's hardly enough of that done these days, and I'm willing to forgive a lot from anyone who'll try.

When I was a neo, Linda Bushyager's Granfalloon was already on its last legs, with only two more issues to appear at long intervals. From '73 to '78 Linda published a newszine instead. Karass is little mentioned anymore, though I thought it was rather better than File 770 in some ways. (The '70s are a decade out of fashion.) Then Linda lapsed into an eight-year binge of fantasy novels, video-taping, cards and monopoly. I suppose that would be enough to blot out the memory of any greatness. Nevertheless, in its day, Granfalloon was one of the state of the art zines. Like Mythologies it's aged a bit. Its graphics look somewhat quaint at times, especially looking back after the wave of semi-pros, the resurgence of '50s fashions, and my own education in laying out zines. Some of the material is earnestly sercon. And yet it had a gaudiness of scope, since you didn't know what to expect with each issue—one of Arnie Katz's columns, the acerbic zine reviews of Jeff Gelncannon (who Linda argued with herself), portfolios of art, articles by Mike Glicksohn or Mae Strelkov, even two chapters of a novel by Ted White.... Much of the best art in fandom appeared in Granny as well.

When Linda announced at Corflu that she was going to publish another genzine, it was met with doubt. After all, eight years of watching tv will wither any fan beyond redemption. I suppose to everyone's surprise Linda handed out copies of the first issue of Duprass at Disclave, three months later. Another surprise: Linda had a co-editor, Leslie Smith. Hence the name, meaning "a karass of two."

Unfortunately, the first issue is a big disappointment. No, I didn't expect a reincarnation of 60-page Granfalloons in three colours and photo-offset insert. But I wasn't prepared for a zine with electrostencil burn (many causes, but it always turns part of the page grey), ugly MacIntosh titles, cooked leterset, and poor layout. I can only guess at

the reason for the big disparity between Linda's old zines and the new, but it wouldn't surprise me to find out that Leslie had something to do with it, and an infatuation with a home PC would account for the rest. Perhaps Linda was out of practise as well. The appearance doesn't make or break a fanzine, however. Only the material can do that. I'm afraid what I have to say is going to hurt the feelings of some friends.

There are only three articles to speak of in Duprass, discounting the dual editorials. Neither of those was a literary exercise, so I won't even speak of them again. Of the three contributions, Mosher Feder's was probably the best, though ostensibly only an article about his collection of Coca Cola cans, bottles, posters, coasters, trays, toys, and dishrags. To add a twist, Moshe twice strays off into plausible fantasies about his collecting. They begin with fact, and gradually depart from truth until the reader is far down the garden path, then Moshe brings them up short. It's an effective gimmick in itself, but too much an ornament hung around the main bulk of the writing like a gilded frame around a dull painting. This was a fine article for supporting a better feature, but it just wasn't up to supporting the whole issue.

"My Night With Bob Tucker" runs a close second with Moshe's piece. Someone with different tastes might place this account by Linda of Leslie's stay with Tucker ahead of "Coca-Cola is Just a Goddamn Hobby." It doesn't matter. Together the two articles begin to bear up their weight, but are still second-stringers and need something extra to make a memorable zine.

Unfortunately, the crucial role fell to an introduction by Darrell Schweitzer and an extremely old piece by Bob Tucker. It seems likely that this was meant as a theme--one article about Tucker, one by him--but the Tucker article is so primitive that it has only historical interest, and not much of that. This fictional convention report from the year 2132 is painfully juvenile and unfunny in the extreme, which isn't surprising since Tucker wrote it in 1934, years before he reached his maturity as a humourist. As a piece of fanhistorica, it might have stood up as filler, but the other material needed something stronger than this to back-up. A lack-lustre zine was the result.

This is a harsh evaluation of the first issue of Duprass, I realize. Many of the readers probably enjoyed it very much, as I actually enjoyed Moshe's bit on Coke collecting. But I know that Linda can publish a much better genzine than this.

Compare Duprass to Chuch. Rob Hansen's and Avedon Carol's zine is the shorter of the two by several pages, but is the more substantial. Look at this material! Between the short intro and outro by Avedon and Rob there is a very uncharacteristic article by Patrick Nielsen Hayden. Patrick's writing has usually been perky, analytical, and outgoing, but "Quarrel" is a personal, inward-looking piece on his feelings that I thought he'd never write. Following this is "Our Lady of Pain," in which Dave Langford mixes dentists, Lovecraft, and an odd young lady named Dolores, who has a plaster leg. Only Langford would write about a date like this. Chris Priest also writes about a date, but his takes him to the Cavern to sneer at the Beatles in 1962, for impressing his girl too much. To round things out, Jeanne Gomoll tells how little girls find out about sex, and it turns out to be pretty much how little boys find out about sex, in dirty magazines. In this case, Good Housekeeping.

What all this material has in common is not merely subject matter, but a personal touch that only the author could bring to it. In the case of Langford's piece I'm not sure there actually is a subject, and not just a way of writing which seems to make subject matter out of itself. No problem with finding a personality in Chuch; the zine is alive with it. In my opinion this is the finest fanzine that either editor has published, and the proof that a genzine need be neither long nor pretentious.

In fact, Chuch is quite plain. By British standards it is modestly overproduced, with ATOM headings for every article, a cover, and legible mimeo throughout. With slightly more elaborate drawings for headings, and art to begin the first page, illustration would have probably been at an optimum. Any more would have justified the common superstition about art in fanzines.

Simon Ounsley's Still Life is the more impressive of the two, with its epic article by West, and Simon's own travails, but it's also a flawed issue. Though Chuch is smaller, it is better balanced without a monument to the author such as West's. There's no misjudgment such as the article by Ashworth. It's legible. Moreover it's attractive, though simple. Chuch does lack a letter column, and could benefit by more presence by either Avedon or Rob, but this is close to an ideal genzine.

What I review next issue is completely up to you, the fans, of course. Things have been in something of a slump of late, and I have no idea what'll come in the mail. When I sat down to write this column I had no idea what I'd review this time, and started selecting zines from a pile that I'd recently read. Because Avedon had begun me reviewing again, I knew only that I wanted to work over her zine. From there I began choosing other genzines. That fit with notions I had, and gave me a position to define. My attitudes to current dogma nearly wrote themselves, independent of forethought. (Some of you will think it shows.) The conclusions I drew in the end were spontaneous. So let's not spoil a good thing by trying to plan for next time.

---Taral, 1986

Zines reviewed (compiled by jak):

Mythologies, March 1986, ed. Don D'Ammassa 323 Dodge St., E. Providence, RI 02914. \$3.00 for a sample, or letter of comment. (Produced by Sheila D'Ammassa.)

Time and Again: #2 says that Dave Locke is sole editor, at 6828 Alpine Ave. #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236. \$3.00 sample copy, trades and letters.

Nutz 6, Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11 2DA, UK. The Usual. Strumpet is from the same address.

Still Life 3, Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village Street, Leeds LS4 2PR, UK. The Usual.

Fuck the Tories 3, Terry Hughes, 6205 Wilson Blvd., #102, Falls Church, VA 22044, Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, UK, and Valma Brown & Leigh Edmonds, P.O. Box 433, Civic Square, ACT 2608, Australia. The Usual, with trades to all continents.

Duprass 2, Leslie Smith and Linda Bushyager, c/o Leslie, 6092 Drexel Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19131. The usual or \$5 for 3 issues.

Chuch, Avedon Carol and Rob Hansen, 9A Grenleaf Road, East Ham, London E6 1DX, UK. Editorial whim.

And maybe Taral has copies left of New Toy (\$2 or the usual), at 1812-415 Willowdale Ave., Willowdale, Ont. M2N 5B4, Canada.



THE CON GAME

TOM WHITMORE

When I was approached by Lee Forgue on behalf of this convention, I was given a choice. I could work on the convention, or be Fan Guest of Honor. I had to go off and think for a while. Working on conventions I understand: I've done a fair amount of that. It's always opening night with a new stage crew and no dress rehearsals. But no one had ever approached me about being a Guest of Honor before. I decided that I ought to try it once, just to see how it felt. Well, now I know. Some of you will be pleased to hear that I'm not planning to stop working on conventions in the future.

Seriously, if there is any reason I can see why I'm up here, it has to do with the amount of time I've put in working on Westercons and Worldcons. Some of you may not realize this, but the World Science Fiction Convention is the largest convention in the country run almost entirely on volunteer labor. Westercons are up there in size, too, and there are other big regionals with well over a thousand attendees each year. The volunteer network that runs these conventions is large and diverse: it contains computer programmers, nurses, bookstore owners, students, authors, and professional administrators, among others. This network has been called the Permanent Floating Convention Committee. The PFCC is a name for a phenomenon, rather than a real organization. There are people that are attracted to the idea of working on conventions. Their reasons vary, but most of them like the idea of helping a few thousand of their friends to have a good time. The ways they help vary widely: some enjoy arranging program schedules, some enjoy taking minutes and keeping records, some enjoy dealing with hotels.

I take the easy way out. None of this spending months on the telephone, trying to get a big name pro to agree to be on the panel on the future of garbage collecting; none of this writing fifty pages of a manual that nobody will bother to read, but everyone will criticize, or negotiating a hotel contract that the hotel won't bother to read. No, I devote my time to working at conventions, not on them: particularly, I enjoy working in the group called Operations, Security, Troubleshooting, or Those Elitist Goons with the Walkie-Talkies.

Why? It's a chance to see what actually happens as the microcosm of the convention collides with the macrocosm of the attendees, the hotel, and the larger world outside. It's a chance to try to help people get a solution to whatever problem they have, be it the misplacing of a friend, the need for a typewriter, or worry about a bat in the atrium of the Hyatt Regency in Phoenix. It's strictly limited in the amount of time it takes: you only have to be available something like twenty hours a day for five to seven days. After all, it's vacation time, and what's vacation for? It's a chance, at its best, to be one of a group of people working together for no other reason than sharing a goal. And it's a chance to be part of some of the most bizarre stories I have ever heard of. You think science fiction is strange!

There was the time at ChiconIV when I was pointed to a couple of people who were not wearing badges, but had just come out of the volunteer co-ordinating area with a green cloth dragon. After various runnings around, we found out the dragon didn't belong to them but to one of our gophers, and got it back to him. Now, there would be nothing particularly strange about this, but at the same time as I was dealing with this problem, another set of operations people were dealing with trying to figure out whether another

green cloth dragon really belonged to the person who claimed it was talking to her. We had a lot of fun trying to sort out the two reports later.

Or take that bat I mentioned above. At Iguanacon one of the main convention hotels was a Hyatt Regency, which had their usual fifteen-story lobby. At one point, one of the operations crew noticed a bat flying around in it. We tried to catch the bat and get it outside, but to no avail. Eventually, we decided that since it didn't have a convention badge, it wasn't our problem: after all, we were trying to take care of our members.

There is no truth at all to the rumor that Ops had to be called in at Discon II to get Joe Haldeman out of a bathtub full of lime jello. None at all. Why, we only helped buy the jello and get him into the room.

And then there was the report that gypsies were stealing children at Noreascon.... The rumor was never substantiated, but we all had a good laugh about it.

Operations is present at Westercons, too, but not in the same way. At Westercons, things are less organized; which makes sense, when you think about how much smaller a convention it is. On the other hand, sometimes it's not just a difference of scale. My major work with Westercons has been on masquerades, and there are stories galore from them. There was the Westercon where almost no advance work had been done on the masquerade, and I ended up coordinating setup and layout on four hours' notice. That one worked only because people are basically reasonable, and we had the Flying Karamazov Brothers for the *entre'acte*. Let me give you a bit of advice: never have a hypnotist for an *entre'acte*. They tried that at Chicon IV, and the medics were kept busy most of the rest of the night dealing with hysterical people who were stuck in trances. And never have a stripper: they tried that at Midamericon, and aside from causing a feminist walkout, she dropped her bra on Robert Heinlein, who wasn't too amused.

Getting back to masquerades themselves, some of you may wonder why Rotsler's Rules for Masquerades say, "No peanut butter!" That dates back to a costume at LACon where someone came as an underground comic book character: "The Turd." He was clothed in a bodystocking and liberally coated with quarts of chunky peanut butter. Most of us are familiar with peanut butter as refrigerated or at room temperature. At body temperature, it's a lot messier. Needless to say, it rubbed off on people around him. He got his comeuppance, though: the peanut oil soaked into his skin, and for the rest of the convention he could clear rooms just by walking into them.

Slightly more seriously, there was the matter of dealing with the labor board at a San Francisco Westercon. They wanted to close the convention down because we were violating the child labor laws by having volunteers under eighteen years of age. That took some negotiating, but eventually they agreed not to.

And then there are fire marshals. Fire marshals are the bane of people who want to get things done the easy way. Mike Jittlov was giving his presentation in a room which had the screen along a long edge at one Westercon, and he thought that the people would be able to see better if they put the screen on a short edge. He asked everyone to turn their chairs. Presto! No fire lanes! Presto! Instant hotel panic! Craig Miller got to get everyone to stand at the edge of the room while a crew of twelve attendees moved the chairs around under the direction of the hotel banquet manager, who could only have supplied one person to move chairs.

You see, Operations actually does some useful things. We serve as the main information conduit for a lot of the convention. If the person running programming needs to find the head of the art show, we get to do it. If the guest of honor needs the parking meter on

his RV fed, we get to feed the meter. If the escalators have been turned off...again, we get to bitch at the hotel...again. We have the telephone numbers for whatever emergency medical help the convention has on staff, so we end up dispatching them to medical crises. This communication function is the main reason you'll see people roving around with walkie-talkies at large conventions: they're out there trying to find out what's going on. If they run across anything out of the ordinary, they tell the operations base about it, and offer help. Whether the situation is either routine or a real emergency, the rover does what is necessary before moving on. And occasionally the network of walkie-talkies is useful in the field: for example, when we were trying to locate the people throwing paper airplanes in the aforementioned Hyatt Regency lobby before the people from the hotel did, so we could tell them quietly and politely to cool it.

The major reason this all works can be summed up in a philosophy promulgated by Henry Ford: interchangeable parts. For example, will Ben Yalow please stand up? [About eight people stood up, without prompting--a reference to the id badges many of us got at Chicon II, proving we were all Ben.] Not identical parts, mind you: I have nowhere near the same set of reactions as, say, Craig Miller or Kate Schaefer to a problem. But I know how they'll react, and I know they'll deal with the problem in a reasonable manner. Neither of them would punch out the banquet manager if he wouldn't serve a meal. And neither of them thinks she's too important to lend a hand putting up art show flats.

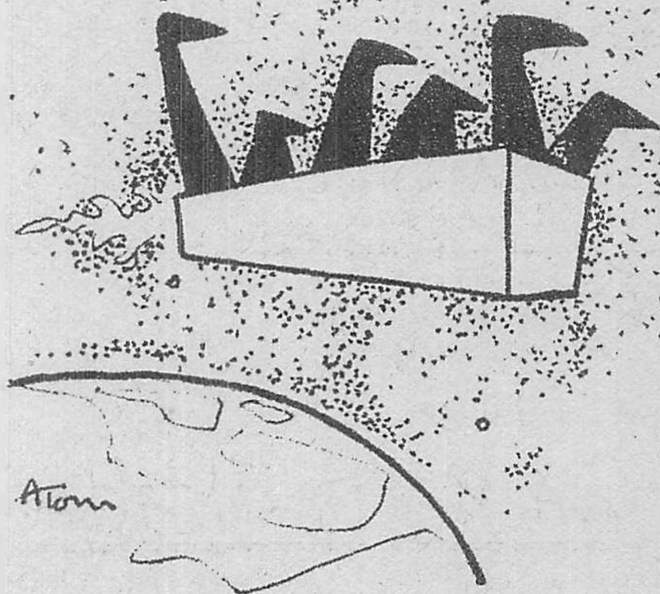
But what does all this have to do with science fiction, you ask. Lots of people have commented on the unique interaction between fans and pros in the science fiction world. To some extent this is due to fanzines, but I think to a much greater extent it continues because of the conventions. The conventions provide a social focus for fans and writers where people can get the immediate feedback that comes with face-to-face interaction. It also gives the editors immediate feedback on what the fans want and what the writers are doing. All the editors will tell you that if they listened only to the fans they'd never be able to sell to the general public, but you'll still find a lot of them at any convention; and when they think no one is watching, they're listening.

If there were no science fiction conventions, I think the fanzine world might well die out; then science fiction fandom would be no different from mystery fandom of ten years ago, with lots of readers and very little interaction or sense of community. And, without the people who are willing to devote time and energy to fan conventions, the conventions as we know and love them would go away. They might be replaced for awhile by professionally run media conventions, but these would not be the same. I for one like the current form of sf conventions; for this reason, I give my time to them. I get back from this a feeling of belonging to a society that I help create, which is a feeling hard to come by in a world characterized by existential angst. And, as I said, I get some amusing stories. Now I'll be able to tell everyone about the convention I didn't get to work on. Thank you, Lee and all, for making it possible.

---Tom Whitmore, 1986 (Westerschron '83)

[Small editorial comment: The crew member who spotted the bat was me, actually; and said bat was, in fact, caught by New Jersey fan Steve Davidson, using his Aussie-style hat, and was let free outside. svt]





In Mainstream 3--for those of you with even worse memories than mine--Jerry Kaufman did a delightful fannish takeoff on the out-of-body experience, winging out from the base of Stapledon's Star Maker, and I started thinking back to when I first read that book, which was really the beginning of my own quest for the Answer. I can't remember for the life of me what the question was now but Star Maker was my first encounter with the idea of astral projection and out-of-body experiences and it impressed the hell out of me.

Okay, so I was a fifteen-year-old in a Catholic high school and easily impressed by a lot of things. I also freely admit I didn't have the intellect to understand most of what Stapledon was driving at but the basic idea of leaving the body and going--vaguely--somewhere else stuck in my mind. I understood it was just fiction but later, as my reading horizons broadened somewhat, I began to run across accounts of what at least purported to be the real thing and that really impressed me. It also put me properly in my place since it was obvious that the people who had done this neat trick were all Great and Wise Men who had worked and studied for years to get to this point and unless I wanted to go study in India for twenty years or so, I could just damned well forget about it for myself. You will realize that pharmaceutical shortcuts weren't yet in vogue. So I just wistfully filed the whole thing away.

Then, in the fifties, I stumbled onto Jack London's The Star Rover. Okay, so it was fiction again, but it sure was a different approach. To synopsise for you fake-fans who are going to read it any day now, as soon as you finish Moby Dick, the protagonist, a professor, is railroaded into Folsom Penitentiary in California where he experiences incredible brutality at the hands of a totally corrupt prison administration. He ends up in solitary where he is regularly subjected to the prison's worst punishment, The Jacket, in which the victim is laced and buckled very tightly into what amounts to a body-length

SLOUCHING THROUGH METAPHYSICS

DICK ELLINGTON

straitjacket and left there for long periods of time, resulting in excruciating agony. He also meets, via a tapping code, two long-time cons, Ed Morrell and Jake Oppenheimer, and they instruct him into their method for beating The Jacket. They call it the Little Death, an induced trance-state wherein the body slows into a state of low metabolism and the mind eventually leaves the body. There is a certain amount of mysticism involved but basically London rings in reincarnation and has his protagonist go back and live a number of past lives, a clever hook to hang a batch of decent short historical stories onto. The book is kind of a weird amalgam of a whole lot of things and is still a Problem for the literary types to classify. Mainly it's a left-wing critique and general muckrake of prisons in general and a very solid exposé of the California prison system. I suppose you could quibble a bit as to whether it's "really" science fiction or not, so if you haven't read it, don't feel all that guilty.

It did stick in my mind though and a few years later, idly researching some information on crime and criminals of that time period I came across the startling fact that a number of the characters in the book were drawn from real life, names and all, including Jake Oppenheimer and Ed Morrell, who were actually inmates of Folsom at that time. Naturally I delved right in and tracked the whole thing down immediately....

You bet. Real Soon Now.

So Other Things intervened and it was some years later, when I was here in California not that many miles from Folsom, that I had a meeting with Joan London, Jack's daughter and a fascinating person in her own right. She kindly pointed me at a fine London scholar and through him I eventually found out that most of the hardline data on Folsom was completely accurate and was supplied to London by that same Ed Morrell.

All this got filed away in one of my seldom-used memory banks until, some twenty years later, I got casually acquainted with one James Robert Morgan, a.k.a. Robert Gilford. After a few conversations I had pretty well decided to take a crack at doing an as-told-to autobiography of Morgan and we started tape-interviewing.

Why? Well, Bob is an old Depression bank robber of some standing who had ended up doing some forty-odd years in some of the worst slams in the country, broken only by brief periods on the outside as a result of his four headline-making escapes. He was and is on permanent life parole under maximum supervision, having earned sentences totalling more years than half a dozen people could possibly live. If I ever get the book sold, you can read the details. For our purposes today, students, we will simply note that Bob broke rock in the quarries at Folsom for some fifteen years (1935-1950) and later ended up in Alcatraz.

After a small disagreement with a guard there, during which Morgan kicked that gentleman onto the permanently disabled list, he was beaten half to death and tossed into the notorious Cell 14 in solitary where he set the record--97 days. After that he was popped into a regular solitary cell for some five years. At this point in the taping earthy old Bob was regaling me with amusing little anecdotes about how one passes the time in really strict solitary, and I'm interrupting him, prodding him to try to get at what really interests me: how a human being can survive and maintain some grasp on sanity under these conditions.

At one point Bob mentioned that he used to really needle the guards, and amuse himself, by "playing possum."

"How'd you do that?" I queried idly.

"Well, there was this trick some old-timers at Folsom taught me--something they called the Little Death...."

Hooboy! Here it is! An alarm bell went off and the mental computer scurried around brushing cobwebs off the files and reactivating. I managed to stay deadpan though and just pressed him for details. (Later I did ascertain he'd never read The Star Rover.)

He explained how if, as in solitary, you really had a lot of free time and a lot of patience you could do this trick. You just lay real quiet and concentrate for a real long time and eventually you get one of your big toes to go to sleep, then you work on the other big toe, then one foot at a time and so on and after a couple of hours, you got all the way up to the head....

I was maintaining my cool with great difficulty.

Bob explained how the guard would come by and see him just laying there and then would come in the cell and Bob would have no detectable heartbeat or breathing and they'd figure he was dead and go rushing off to get the MTA (prison medic), but that took an hour or so and by the time the MTA showed up, Bob, who could hear all that was going on, would have put himself together and be up and walking about his cell. The guards would be flabbergasted and embarrassed, the MTA annoyed as hell for having his time wasted, and Bob would get a big laugh out of the whole thing.

I am getting impatient but trying not to show it.

"So, uh, what did you do when you were, uh, out of it like that?"

"Well, you can just get your mind right out of your body."

Mental "Eureka!" from me. This is really it.

"Uh huh, and what--uh--happened?"

Brace yourself, Ellington.

"Oh, I used to fly over to Frisco and look around at the places I used to know when I was there and the people."

"Yeah, go on."

"That's all. I'd just fly around for a while over there and then come back."

"Umm. Never tried to go anyplace else?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Didn't see much point to it."

Well hell, I dunno. Maybe it's just garbage in, garbage out. I think maybe I'll just go back and try rereading Stapledon.

---Dick Ellington, May 1986



MOZART ON MORPHINE:

In August of 1985 I went running on the beach at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The Sun was low and red and I muzzily watched the crumbling, thumping waves. I was running barefoot on the sand. I paid no attention to the small crowd forming up ahead and so when the first shot came it took me completely by surprise. I saw the teenagers scattering and the man in his twenties poking the small silverly gun at them, yelling something I couldn't make out. I wondered if the gun was loaded with blanks because it wasn't very loud. The man started swearing at a kid near me who was moving to my right, and I was still automatically running the same way so when the second shot came I was just behind the kid and the round went tssiiip! by my head.

Not blanks, no. I did the next hundred meters in about ten seconds, digging into the sand and turning to look back only once. A third thin splatting sound followed me up the beach but no screams, just more swearing from the man who was backing up the gray concrete stairs and trying to keep the pack of kids from following him. I stood a hundred meters away and watched him fire one last time, not trying to hit anybody now but just keep them at bay, and then he turned and ran up the remaining stairs and onto the street beyond.

I ran back and asked the kids what had happened and got a lot of conflicting stories. Then I ran on down the beach and at main beach in Laguna saw a cop. I started to tell him what happened and he said he had been sent down there to block this route, since the police were trying to track the man down in the streets. It was evidently a drug deal gone bust and the kids had started jazzing him around and he got mad.

Walking home, I thought about Churchill's saying, that there was nothing as exhilarating as being shot at and missed. I felt a touch of that, and remembered a similar time-compressing moment in June. I had been visiting my parents on their 50th wedding anniversary, and with my father was on the way to the reception after that morning's church service. It was a mild sunny day in Fairhope, Alabama, and I was lazily breathing in the pine scent as my father stopped at a stop sign. He started off and from the corner of my vision I saw a sudden movement. It was a car that a nearby telephone junction box had hidden from view, coming from the right at 40 miles per hour. I yelled, "Dad stop!" and he hit the brake and the other car smashed into our front end. Our seat belts restrained us but somehow coming forward I smacked my head into the roof of the car. Getting out, I realized dimly that if my father had not stomped down on the brake they would have come in on my side of the car and probably right through the door. It was that close. The other people were more shaken up than we were. The woman was driving without shoes, the car was borrowed, and she had broken her hand when their car went off the road and into a shallow ditch. My father took it all quite mildly and it seemed to me I could smell the pine trees even stronger now. The surge of mixed fear and elation came as I paced around, looking at the smashed cars.

In late September I was making my final plans to go to India when I developed pains in my stomach, high up. My children had the same symptoms, a standard flu that was going around, so I stayed in bed a few days and expected it to go away. I had to fly to northern California for a conference on Friday. On Thursday I was doing pretty well, running a little fever, though the pain had moved down some. I was getting used to it and it didn't seem so bad. My plane tickets were ready and I picked them up. I went into the university and was sitting in my office at noon when the pain got a lot worse. I couldn't stand up. It was pretty bad for half an hour. I called a doctor near the university and

GREG BENFORD

made an appointment for two o'clock and waited out the pain. It subsided by one o'clock and I began to think things were going to be okay, that I could still travel. But in the doctors' office I showed an elevated white count and a fever and some dehydration. When she poked my right side it hurt more. She thought it might be appendicitis and that I should go to an emergency room nearby. I thought she was making too much of it and wanted some mild pain suppressors so I could fly the next day but on the other hand thought it might be good to check into matters. I wanted to go to the hospital in Laguna, where I knew a few doctors. She started to call an ambulance but I was pumped up by then and went out and got into my car and drove very fast into Laguna, skating fast down the canyon road. I stopped at home to tell Joan and she drove me into the emergency room.

It was the real thing of course and soon enough I was watching the fluorescent lights glide by as the anesthetist pushed me into the operating room. He said I must have a high tolerance for pain because the appendix was obviously swollen and sensitive. I asked him how quickly the drugs took effect, he said, "well..." and then I was staring at the ceiling of my hospital room and it was several hours later.

I had a good night, slept well. In the morning my doctor told me his suspicions had been right, that when the pain got bad in my office it had been the appendix bursting. By the time they opened me up the stuff had spread. I asked to see the appendix and they brought it up to me later, a red lumpy thing with white speckles all over the top of it. I asked what they were and the aide said casually, "Oh, that's gangrene. It's riddled with the stuff."

The doctor said there was a 60% chance the antibiotics would not take out the gangrene that had spread throughout my lower abdomen so of course I figured I would be in the lucky 40%. By the early hours of the next morning, Saturday, I knew I was wrong. I became more and more feverish. I had stood up and walked around in the afternoon but when the night nurse tried it with me again I couldn't get to my feet. I was throwing up vile sour stuff and the orderly was talking to me about inserting some tubes and then the tube was going in my nose and down my throat and a bottle nearby was filling with brown bile, lots of it, a steady flow.

I couldn't sleep, even with the drugs. There was talk about not giving me too many drugs for fear of suppressing my central nervous system too much, which didn't make much sense to me, but then, little did. Things began to run together. The doctor appeared around 6:30 and said the antibiotics weren't working, my white count was soaring. A man came by and reminded me to use the plastic tube with a ball in it that the nurse had given me the day before. You blew into it and kept a ball in the air and that was to exercise your general respiration. It seemed dumb to me, I could breathe fine, but I did it anyway and asked for some breakfast. I wasn't getting any, they were feeding me from the array of bottles going into my IV, and wouldn't give me more than ice chips to suck on.

There were more people around by that time and I realized blearily that this was very much like the descriptions in a short story of mine written a decade before, "White Creatures," and what these quickly moving white-smocked beings were doing was just as incomprehensible to me as it had been to the character in that story. My fever was climbing a degree every two hours and Joan was patting my brow with a cool cloth and I wanted some food. I didn't see how they could expect a man to get better if they didn't feed him. All they

did was talk about stuff I couldn't follow very well, they spoke too fast, and added more bottles to the antibiotic array. They started oxygen but it didn't clear my head any. My IV closed off from vascular shock. A man kept punching my arms, trying to find a better way in and it hurt so I told him to knock it off if he couldn't do better.

Then they were tilting me back so the doctor could put a subclavial tube in close to my heart. It would monitor the flow there and provide a big easy access for the IV. Then I was wheeling beneath the soft cool fluorescents again and was in a big quiet room that was in the Intensive Care Unit. I laid for a time absolutely calm and restful and realized I was in trouble. The guy with the breathing tube and the ball was gone but the nurses made me do it anyway, which still struck me as dumb because I wasn't going to stop breathing, was I? If they would just give me some food I would get better.

But after the gusts of irritation passed I saw in a clear moment that I was enormously tired. I hadn't slept in the night and the tubes in my nose tugged at me when I moved. They had slipped a catheter into me, surprisingly painless, and I felt wired to the machines around me, no longer an independent entity but rather a collaboration. If I lay still with my hands curled on my chest I could maybe rest and if I could do that I could get through this and so I concentrated on that, on how blissful it felt after the nurse gave me another injection of morphine, how I could just forget about the world and let the world worry about me instead.

I woke in the evening and then the next morning the doctor startled me awake by saying that I was better. They had called in more exotic antibiotics and those had stopped the fever's rise, leveling it off at 105 degrees, where it held steady for a day and then slowly eased off. The room was still prickly with light but Joan came and I found her presence calming. I listened to tapes on my Sony and every hour or so called for an injection and lifted off the sheets and spun through airy reaches, Mozart on morphine, skimming along the ceilings of rooms where well dressed people looked up at me with pleased expressions, interrupted as they dined on opulent plates of veal and cauliflower and rich pungent sauces, rooms where I would be again sometime, among people whom I knew but had no time for now, since I kept flying sedately along the softly lit yellow ceilings, above crimson couches and sparkling white tablecloths and smiles and mirth. Mozart had understood all of this and saw in this endless gavotte a way to loft and sweep and glide, going, to have ample ripe substance without weight.

When the doctor took the stitches out a week later he said casually, "Y'know, you were the closest call I've had in a year. Another twelve hours and you would've been gone."

In November I went to India anyway. I hadn't fully recovered but it seemed important to not let the calm acceptance of mortality I had now deflect me from life itself. My fear of death was largely gone. It wasn't any more a fabled place, but rather a dull zone beyond a gossamer-thin partition. Crossing that filmy divider would come in time but for me it no longer carried a gaudy, supercharged meaning. And for reasons I could not express a lot of things seemed less important now, little busynesses. People I knew were more vital to me and everything else seemed lesser, peripheral--including writing.

In Agra I arose at dawn to see the Taj Mahal by the rosy first glow. It shimmered above the gardens, deceptively toylike until you realized how huge the pure curved white marble thing was. The ruler who built it to hold his dead wife's body had intended to build a black Taj also, across the river which lies behind. He would lie buried there, a long arcing bridge linking the two of them. But his son, seeing how much the first Taj cost, confined his father to a red sandstone fort a mile away for the last seven years of his life. There the old man lay on a bed and watched the Taj in a mirror in his last days.

On the broad deck behind the Taj the river ran shallow since it was two months after the monsoon. On the right was a bathing spot for devotees. Some were splashing themselves with river water, others doing their meditation. To the left was a mortuary. The better off inhabitants of Agra had their bodies burned on pyres and then the lot was tossed into the river. If one could not afford the pyre, then after a simple ceremony the body was thrown off the sandstone quay and onto the mud flats or into the water if the river was high. This was usually done in early morning.

By the glimmering dawn radiance I watched buzzards picking apart something on the flats. They made quick work of it, deftly tearing away the cloth, and in five minutes had picked matters clean. They lost interest and flapped away. The Taj coasted in serene eternity behind me, its color subtly changing as the sun rose above the trees, its cool perfect dome glowing, banishing the shadows below. Somehow in this worn alien place everything seemed to fit. Death just happened. From this simple fact came India's inertia. I thought of Mozart and heard a faint light rhythm, felt myself skimming effortlessly over a rumpled brown dusty world of endless sharp detail and unending fevered ferment, and watched the buzzards and the bathers and felt the slow sad sway of worlds apart.

---Greg Benford, 1986

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[The best book I've read recently is Tempest-Tost, by Robertson Davies, concerning a group of amateur actors. But the bit I'd like to quote is about book collecting. To set the scene, young Freddy Webster, bookhound, discusses with her friend Solly the chances of her getting a few free books. It seems a local worthy, Dr. Adam Strange has directed his granddaughter Valentine to allow the local clergy to have the pick of his library after his death. The first speaker is Freddy, an innocent fourteen-year-old girl. jak]

"Still, I don't suppose a preacher would know a really valuable book if he saw one. They'll go for the concordances and commentaries on the Gospels. Do you suppose Val would let us look through what's left?"

"Freddy, my innocent poppet, there won't be anything left. They'll strip the shelves. Anything free has an irresistible fascination. Free books to preachers will be like free booze to politicians; they'll scoop the lot, without regard for quality. You mark my words."

Freddy recognized the truth of what he said. She herself was a victim of that lust for books which rages in the breast like a demon, and which cannot be stilled save by the frequent and plentiful acquisition of books. This passion is more common, and more powerful, than most people suppose. Book lovers are thought by unbookish people to be gentle and unworldly, and perhaps a few of them are so. But there are others who will lie and scheme and steal to get books as wildly and unconscionably as the dope-taker in pursuit of his drug. They may not want the books to read immediately, or at all; they want them to possess, to range on their shelves, to have at command. They want books as a Turk is thought to want concubines--not to be hastily deflowered, but to be kept at their master's call, and enjoyed more often in thought than in reality. Solly was in a measure a victim of this unscrupulous passion, but Freddy was wholly in the grip of it.

Still, she had her pride. She would not beg Valentine to regard her as a member of the clergy for a day; she would not even hang about the house in a hinting manner. She would just drop in, and if the conversation happened to turn upon books, as some scholarly rural dean fingered a rare volume, she would let it be known, subtly, that she was deeply interested in them, and then--well, and then she would see what happened. [Pages 192-193, Penguin edition.]

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To have 17 pages of a 42-page fanzine devoted to letters is at least 7 too many, and very probably 10 too many--40 percent of the total fanzine, by God! Relatively speaking, the letter column is thus much too long. And as for its contents...long letter columns, I find, are long because they are comprised not of a few solid contributions from a tight selection of a few individuals but because they are agglutinations of extracts of varying lengths from as many letters as possible. Repetition is the inevitable result--not of what is said or the way it is said, but of the subjects being discussed. This in turn points to another failing of fanzine letter columns, apparent regardless of their length: most letters are merely reactive, responding to what was said in a previous issue on a fairly elemental and anecdotal level, and do not therefore develop the arguments and topics any further, discuss them with any greater depth and insight. This points us towards a characteristic--and what I feel is a characteristic failing--of most letters: the fact that they are knocked out in one draft, written on the run, with the result that the thoughts they embody are almost invariably never expressed at a length sufficient for them to be properly developed and discussed (and are sometimes expressed in very clumsy language indeed). A long letter column compounds these inevitable failings to the point where it becomes impossible to read, simply because it is so dull and hence so signally fails to engage and retain the reader's attention.

I remember you saying that you do edit your letter columns pretty tightly, and it's true that in comparison with the bloated monstrosities that masquerade as letter columns in the pages of equally bloated monstrosities like Holier Than Thou, yours is a model of economy; but in comparison with the letter columns that typically appear in British fanzines it seems just as long. Which last remark (especially the use of the word "seems") is to move away from theory towards subjective impressions, and thus to abandon coherent argument; but overall I think the theory as I've outlined it holds together quite nicely. The question, of course, is how well it applies to your letter column--and I feel I have to say that, well, actually.... Do you not yourselves say, at the end of it, that your editorial responses tend to diminish the further you penetrate, that you "just want to get it over"? A sure signal, I would have thought, that you yourselves recognized that it was getting too long for its own good, and not just because all that apparently endless copy-typing was beginning to wear you out! [March 18, 1986]

{{Some of what you say is true, but the cry of exhaustion is just that: sometimes I don't have the energy to see my vision through to completion. It is a vision, too, growing out of my own theoretical understanding of the lettercol. It's rather an Utopian Socialist understanding: the lettercol is where fandom at large becomes part of the process of the fanzine, responding to the ideas and "gifts" of the previous issue and returning its own. Yes, it's reactive, but that's its function. Additionally, it provides some of the continuity that a fanzine needs to be a creation in time as well as in one particular moment. Thus a fanzine becomes the sum of its issues, and a lettercol adds to that sum. It's as much a part of the prevailing tone as any article or editorial. Finally, the lettercol does the lowly duty of providing egoboo to the contributors. Egoboo must not only be done; it must be seen to be done. Despite all this theory, I think this issue's lettercol will be our shortest. Let's see how our theories, yours and mine, deal with it. jak}}

Mike Glicksohn
508 Windermere Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M6S 3L6
CANADA

I trust the connection between the first two articles in this issue is another example of brilliant editorial acumen and not just pure shit luck? I refer, of course, to the concept of computerized fanac, something I myself worked on as far back as the mid-70s.

What I hadn't seen before, though, was the idea of a generic introduction which seemed to work very well from the example given. And to think I spent dozens of hours of research and investigative telephoning when I had to introduce George Martin at the '85 Rivercon! If only you'd published this issue a few months faster I could have saved much time, expense, and emotional turmoil. Just see if we ever return your full wallet, again, Tompkins! (The idea of a computerized locking service was one I tossed about a decade ago, albeit the service in question was for locs by yours truly. I never figured Harry needed any help and I'm pretty sure no computer could produce locs as quickly or as well as Harry does, even in this day of microcomputer revolution. The bulk mailing of the latest Xenium was on Monday, March 10th, and sure enough, the fifth response I received was a two-page loc from Harry, less than three weeks later. On the other hand, your locs have still not shown up....)

{{The generic introduction is intended for those conventions that, like Corflu, have generic Guests of Honor. When one has more than a day's warning, one can manage all that research and planning. Say, wasn't it my wallet you found? As for Xenium, it's probably the most elegant fanzine being produced today. I'm afraid that's all the loc you get. jak}}

Jeanne's article was fascinating, especially since I go out of my way not to communicate with any fellow traveller I didn't leave the house with that morning. I scowl, I make my hair look shaggier and more menacing than usual, I scrunch up in the seat, I pointedly read one of the two or three books I carry with me on flights/trips just so I'll have an excuse not to engage in pointless prattle with the mindless morons that compose the mass of the nation's travelling public. Oh, every now and then I get drawn into a conversation with someone who proves to be every bit as interesting as most of the fans I travel across continents and oceans to see and talk to but these incidents are rare enough that I feel justified in generally ignoring the people fate throws me next to on various modes of public transportation. Jeanne's article highlights the occasional gems that one is lucky enough to find and is a supremely well-written (and well-illustrated) piece but I think it should come with a disclaimer pointing out that the odds of this happening to you are about on a par with the odds of sliding nose first through a mud puddle in a nearby field and spearing a truffle.

So are these Wozniaks, Deads, and Baums fans or what? I mean, how do they rate space in your fanzine? There's obviously no connection with science fiction so one figures they must be fans, right? What zine does Wozniak pub? Are these Dead people filkers? Is Baum that Australian chap they call the Wizard? Boy, it's getting so you can't tell the fans without a program.... [April 3, 1986]

{{Go on, pull the other one. Just in case you're the least bit serious, Wozniak helped start (or was the main force behind) Apple computers---another nail in the burial crate of mimeography. Baum was the Guest of Honor at the second Corflu and the subject of Suzle's generic introduction. As for the Dead, ask Lucy Huntzinger, David Emerson, or Owen Whiteoak. There are some things even I can't explain. jak}}

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Of course, I was a bit disappointed at the way Gary Farber's article ended. Midway through it, I was hopeful that his method of creating Harry Warner locs might be adapted to activating during the remainder of my lifetime, saving me the strain on precious bodily fluids that each additional loc creates nowadays. At the most, I thought, I would need to write in

Jack Herman
Box 272, Wentworth Building
Sydney University 2006
AUSTRALIA

Jeanne [Gomoll]'s article was the one that attracted me, for a special reason. I spent three years as a teacher of English as a Second Language, that is, trying to teach English to students from 13 to 18 who had another language as their mother tongue. The difficulty of this was in the fact

that I had no other language, and, anyway, the whole idea was to teach not translation but the ability to use English as if they were native speakers. In other words, to conduct lessons only in English. This meant that pictures became very important: any object that could not be shown directly had to be represented by photo or drawing. And I am a lousy artist. Frequently one could rely on illustrations in books, but when it got to abstract ideas, and many of these students were at matriculation level where abstract ideas were necessary, things became far more difficult. I can appreciate Jeanne's dilemma and marvel that she achieved so much.

Art [Widner] is another whose achievements are to be admired. I'm in an apa with Art, CRAPA-Pi, and his contribs are amongst the most sane I have read in apae. His speech is a good one, preserving the contrast between then and now, and, surprisingly, now doesn't come out too badly. This sort of memoir, with the real void between the two episodes of fandom, is probably a more accurate account of the differences than we get from those who have been in fandom all the way through and have undergone the subtle, gradual change.
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Brian Earl Brown An Art Widner speech--with footnotes! I'm not sure how Art worked in
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natively spellings by that august journal, the Chicago Tribune, which originated them in
its bout of spelling reform years ago. [Feb. 6, 1986]

Bev Clark
10501 8th Ave. NE, #119
Seattle, WA 98125

Buck Coulson's loc made me think about why it might be that fans
don't want to hear about writing in talks. I have a variety of
ideas.

Talk about writing is sercon, a lot of the time.

The busman's holiday syndrome--a lot of fans in general, and all fanzine fans, write themselves. They don't want to hear about the act or process of writing when they're not doing it.

Superiority, related to the busman's holiday--most fans who write a lot, even if it isn't for pay, feel that they know as much about writing as the person spouting off about it. Those fans (like me) who write and get paid for it, but don't write fiction, may have this reaction in spades to talk about writing.

Simple jealousy, which is self-explanatory.

{{And that sums up and completes the topic. But you've started a hare in this field of enquiry. You write for a living. Have you noticed that, nonetheless, sf fandom does not consider you a professional writer? Just as "fan" means one thing to the world in general and another to fandom, so does "pro"; it's a person who sells science fiction for publication. One doesn't have to make a living at it, either. SFWA allows you a membership on the strength of two stories, while some conventions will give you a free membership for one. I can't recall having seen this distinction made elsewhere, so I thought I ought to rush it into print. jak}}

has something to do with the caption.... [April 4, 1986]

{{If you like Stu's back cover, you should pick up Captain Confederacy 5, a comic book from Steeldragon Press. He has the beginning of an alternate world comic strip in it. (For those who notice such things: the address I show for Cathy is not the one she had when she wrote the above. I'll try to use people's current addresses when I remember, and keep your confusion over people's whereabouts to a minimum.) jak}}

Taral
1812-415 Willowdale Ave.
Willowdale, Ont. M2N 5B4
CANADA

Since I'm the strong, silent type, it's not my wont to write letters to fanzines on a regular basis. Yet every now and then there is a compelling reason to break my silence and once again prove that I'm in reality as vain and petty a type as any other fan. Skel provides the opportunity in this case.

I don't wish to disillusion him about the processes that go on in an artist's head. They are apt to be much less logical in the sense you or he mean "logic" than Skel thinks. There may be another sort of logic entirely, as in the case of the cover I did for Mainstream 10. I never considered the art in a narrative sense at all. The wine and erotic aid do not imply an amorous encounter either before or after the instant pictured. Nor is there any thought on the relationship of the wee, twee person to offstage lovers. The picture is simply organized differently than a story.

As usual, I started with a figure drawing, with some idea of the sort of treatment. In this case I wanted more than a comic character, but less than an alien; a small animal that was half human perhaps? The pose of the figure suggested a personality or a mood, and the expression on her face focused her personality sharper still. In my mind I see her as a coy young girl with an awakening itch to scratch. Knowing that about her, I surrounded the squirrel-girl's body with various sensual items. They all imply eroticism, but taken one at a time, only the rubber is overtly sexual. So we see that the picture does make sense, but thematic sense rather than narrative sense. Most of all I was interested in personality and sensation.

But I'm a writer too, and like Skel I had to satisfy a narrative urge as well. All that came to mind at first was that the squirrel-girl was named Gwenevere. It seemed to fit her, though I'm not sure I can explain why. Something to do, no doubt, with the jumbled impressions I have of the Arthurian Gwenevere, and my Gwen's gown-like tail. Certainly she was never a Kjola, as Skel correctly divines. (No Kjola ever stood eight or nine inches tall, or had a tail, or wore a pelt of tawny gold fur, as does Gwen in most of the coloured copies I've done.) I also felt that Gwenevere was a witch's familiar, but which witch is alas a question I had no answer to for a long time.

Rather recently I've been able to associate this picture with a number of others in a similar state of narrative description. The witch is the Machine Maid (a drawing completed only tomorrow as I write this). The witch is responsible for the predicament of Peter and Marion, an Eller Wood Doll (the subjects of an abandoned comic strip I began over ten years ago). The witch's plans are foiled by Penelope, a rustic spirit in the form of a centaur with new wave tastes in music (who also appears as the cover of Mainstream 12). And so on. If anyone was interested I could go on, but to pall is the greater part of digression, so I'd do better to remind myself that I'm the strong, silent type at this point.

Unless, of course, anyone should invite the further ravings of the real me. [Undated.]

{{Thanks for the inside look at the creative process. By the way, we liked the teeshirts you're doing of your own work. How can people get them? jak}}

Jack Herman
Box 272, Wentworth Building
Sydney University 2006
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Allen [Baum]'s article on not introducing the Grateful Dead was amusing, even for a non-fan of the Grateful Dead. Here I reveal myself as a true philistine, but I never did understand what all the fuss was about. Obviously this is a defect in my makeup. I mean, this is a group that inspires such loyalty in its fans that a newspaper concert reviewer (in San Jose), herself an ardent fan, forgave a concert that she would have trashed had it been given by anyone else. It started an hour late--"but they're the Dead, and we love 'em." They had problems with the sound; they had problems with the music; they frequently forgot the lyrics. But all was forgiven, because they were the Dead, and she loved 'em. Of course, they're not the only act that inspires such devotion; they just happen to be the subject of Allen's foray into SoCal and so handy. [April 8, 1986]

{{I'm puzzled by the appeal of the Dead, too, though I've mentioned the names of some of fans who are also Dead fans. Maybe one of them can enlighten us. But what you're really annoyed by, it seems, are fans who forgive their idols, whoever they may be, flaws they would be quick to point out in anybody else. Am I right? Like "pro," the word "fan" is different in different mouths. To the general public, a fan is just such an uncritical devotee. To us it can mean something different. jak}}

David Palter
137 Howland Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M5R 3B4
CANADA

My favorite [piece] is "Fen Koans" by Chas. Belov, written with an evident knowledge of both fandom and Zen, and satirizing both with equal success.

I was a bit startled by "Morning of the Living Dead" because this sort of thing deals with matters--personal dealings with Steve Wozniak and his wildly extravagant US Festival--which would be of considerable interest to the general public; surely such an article would be publishable in some large circulation magazine, to the profit of its author, Allen Baum. This is not really a question of an article which is too good for fanzine publication--nothing is too good for fanzines--but perhaps too potentially commercial. Why give away what you can sell? However, I'm not complaining. It is a fascinating article and I'm glad to have had the chance to read it. [Feb. 25, 1986]

Church Harris
32 Lake Crescent
Daventry
Northants NN11 5EB
U.K.

I guess you know now why Birmingham doesn't rate a mention in Frommer's England and Scotland on \$25 a Day. Brum is a Dump and a Plague Spot, the pimple on the arse of this accepted isle, and the Royal Angus Hotel is the only reason for not razing the whole place to the ground and turning it into a sewage disposal plant or a bowling alley.

This is not just my opinion either. We spent part of the Saturday trudging around the shops searching unsuccessfully for view cards to send to Walt Willis and Patrick and Teresa. The storekeepers were amazed at such an odd request. There are no architectural wonders available for photographic immortality unless you include the Municipal Gasworks, the Texaco Filling Station, and the statue of Brum's Greatest Son, Neville Chamberlain. And who, in their right minds, would want people to know they were in Birmingham, anyway?

I don't like beer. Well, not much. I think Real Ale and that vile oatmeal soup called Guinness are truly revolting. I will drink light-beer if I have to--especially Foster's Australian lager, which is now brewed in England--but usually I prefer gin...lots of gin, one ice-cube, a lemon slice and a teaspoonful of tonic water. Budweiser are trying to get a foothold in the British beer markets now. It runs to twice the price of home-produced beers but frequently features in a half-price special night promotion. I don't think it will ever be very popular though.

{{I should think not, when you have such lovely lagers as Harp and Fletcher's Chaser. jak}}

Eli Cohen is probably right that the photo-copier will eventually replace the mimeo so that

future Jophans will wonder what t'he'll is an enchanted duplicator, and lay awake o'nights wondering about the trufan at the handle. Dave Langford has just made the Giant Step and bought a Canon copier. And I'm trying to screw up courage to tell Sue that I'm buying one with this year's vacation money.

Trouble is--apart from the fact that Sue is Miss English Amazon 1986 and boxes in the light-heavyweight division--the toner kits are so expensive. I reckon I'd need a whole drum for each issue and at Brit prices that would be about \$60 before I'd even bought paper and stamps.

It's a lot of money...but give us time, we're working on it. [March 17, 1986]

{{Each issue of what? It's been a year, and I still haven't seen any fanzines from you. Or didn't you ever buy the copier? jak}}

Walt Willis
32 Warren Road
Donaghadee
N. Ireland BT21 OPD

Many thanks for Mainstream 11. For me it was full of significance as well as interest. Frinstance the thought that Art Widner has read The Enchanted Duplicator fills me with a sort of awe I find hard to describe: to me Art is a mythological giant stalking among us about six inches off the ground. Zen Ghuism is a truly beautiful thought, and obviously one whose time has come as can be seen by Milt Stevens' reference in File 770 to saffron clad fans chanting HARI WARNER HARI WARNER. When one includes Skel's assertion of Harry's immortality, with Gary Farber's hi-tech proposal for its realisation on the physical plane (how much more hygienic than Pickling Bloch For Posterity), one cannot but feel that one is present in a period of transcendental epistemology. Can not one but? In the letters I liked Norman Hollyn's Chevy that gave no trouble for hours and hours and your own politely devastating answer to Chas Belov. Liked Jeanne Gomoll and Mike O'Brien too, only slightly miffed that Mike visited Ireland without calling on us; why, we could have shown him the very spot where Bertie bought her concertina--not Brian Boru's concertina this time. [March 1, 1986]

{{Please send all references to transcendental epistemology to Izzard, where they know what to do with them. As for my answer to Chas Belov, actually I was being a condescending snob, as Bernadette Bosky pointed out. However, Chas' point, one with which I agree, was that people who tend to like Holier than Thou or Dillinger Relic are not the same people who like Izzard--or even see it. Different canons of excellence, different cultures, different tastes, different personality clusters. Who knows? jak}}

Mike O'Brien
829 Indiana Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90291

Yes, Suzlecol. A favorite part of my life for longer than Suzle will ever admit. I have a followon. It was not with malice aforethought that I caused people riding in my parents' old Panzer American Stratocruiser to sit there with tire irons, luggage, etc. in their laps. No, it was all due to something quite different, that didn't surface for years. I never did come up with the idea of the driveshaft hitting the axle. I claimed at the time that the BODY was hitting the axle. That later turned out to be correct. Years and years later, when the old boat was about to be put to sea for the final time and I had left home for good, my father told me that they had discovered a broken rear spring. The boat was so massive and so low that no one had ever noticed the fact. Once it was discovered, no one could understand NOT noticing. It was true, though, and it was the fannish load in the back that caused the body to sink down and hit the rear axle. Not until the rare day that my father loaded the car way down did he finally discover that there was indeed a problem, and get it fixed.

Ah, youth.

Perhaps I have been spoiled by laser writers, etc., but I am not happy with the reproduction on this issue. Is JDBerry's mimeo really in this bad shape? It must be, to have put all those typos in my article :-)

{{Typos? What typos? svt No, really; we looked, and all we could find was one unclosed parenthesis. jak}}

That last, by the way, if viewed sideways, is a smile face. You think fandom has strange typographic conventions, wait till you see Usenet! It's fandom on speed. Daily flaming interchanges. Feuds, wars, name-calling, pleas for sanity, and typographic conventions to let personality come through the text. The smiley face, indicating humorous intent, is one of the most useful, and most widely used. Variants include 8-), meaning smiler wears glasses; :-), meaning shit-eating grin; and (far less widely used) :-)', which means smiler tends to drool.

Brilliant article on Irish harps. Makes me wish I were back in Ireland.

May the good Lord preserve our friends,
and turn the hearts of our enemies,
or if He can't turn their hearts,
at least turn their ankles,
so we shall know them by their limping.

Who is this O'Brien character, anyway? Do I know him? Did he used to be in fandom or what?

Looking at Laura Haney's letter makes me think that strangely, electrical and mechanical devices DO like me, though not to the slavishly fawning extent they do Jon Singer. They maintain a certain vein of pawky humor which says that though I can always get round them or get them fixed, the eventual diagnosis of what was or is actually wrong will almost always be something I never thought of--my own idea is almost invariably wrong. I don't know why this is. Perhaps instead of just leaving me there looking like a helpless schmuck, they're content to make me look like an idiot. Lately I've been cultivating the attitude of the Good Soldier Schweik, which is where I say, "Pardon me, Sir! I'm an idiot, Sir!" but still manage to carry the day. It's either that, or the bigger hammer technique.

{{You've surprised me. I didn't realize anyone else knew Good Soldier Schweik. svt}}

As for Bev Clark, well, I never say "on line." It's too reminiscent of the IBM world, which I hate. Other words I use sparingly include "targeted," and "tasked" I avoid completely. I prefer such precise terms as "died," "all messed up," and such ilk. "Went berserk" is more rarely used, and "crashed" is one of our most frequent words. Other terms, more normal but less printable, are used when referring to vendors. Diane Fox mentions prisoners as types who understand about Waiting for Godot. Those who are waiting for a vendor to return a phone call also have no problems with this play. Except for spontaneous weeping fits. [Feb. 2, 1986]

{{We also heard from: Mike Acker, Harry Andruschak, Casey Arnott, Allan Beatty, Robert Bloch, Bernadette Bosky, Robert Coulson, Carolyn Doyle, Ru Emerson, Steve George, Jeanne Gomoll, Rob Gregg, Steven Klafka, Eric Lindsay, Luke McGuff, Jim Meadows, Jeanne Mealy, Craig Smith, Pascal Thomas, Phil Tortorici, Bob Webber, and Jean Weber. And Hope Leibowitz. Most had brief but kind remarks about our contents. One had nothing but complaints, but we hear his Significant Other--another Mainstream reader--wouldn't speak to him for weeks when she found out. At least he wasn't being insincere. And we know from first-hand observation that he's generally a Cool Guy. So we considered his objections, examined our literary consciences, and published this issue anyway. jak}}

SUZLCOL

SUZANNE TOMPKINS

Too much has happened. That's what it is. Too much has happened in the almost two years (wince...) since the last Mainstream. Shall I discuss them in order of degree of trauma? (In which case, it would run--We Moved! We Got Married! I Had to Drive on the Left in England! Followed closely by--Our Car Died. I'm serving on two convention committees [Corflu 5--1988; World Fantasy Con--1989] at once. And, that old favorite, this whole damned issue has been held up for months because, while I've been dealing with all of the above, I haven't been able to make myself sit down and do, uhm, this.)

Actually, I won't (much to the great sighs of relief I can almost hear) discuss anything in too much detail. It appears that because I have, in fact, too much to write about that my mind is blank about all of it at the moment. (Watch, however, for the appearance of my book --How to Pack and Move Everything You and Four Other People Own in Less Than Two Months Without Permanently Alienating Everyone You Know*. Soon to be a major motion picture!)

Take my advice. Never get married and move during the same year. I think I've developed a twitch....

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Moved??? Yes, that is correct. WE HAVE MOVED!!! The house we'd been renting for 8+ years finally, and much to our surprise, sold and we had five weeks to find a new place and re-locate. Go back and check the colophon and then rush to your address book, mailing list or both and immediately make this correction. So far, I've only had to go one round with the Post Office (they started returning mail addressed to Jerry marked "No Forwarding Address on File" because Bob Doyle and I started our COAs a week earlier than Jerry had, and they assumed we had all left the house, ignoring Jerry's COA completely for a few days), and I'd like to keep it that way. (Not in the colophon: Bob Doyle's new address: The Tuscany, 1215 Seneca, Apt. 511, Seattle, WA 98101; World Fantasy Con's new address (Bob is the U.S. Agent for the 1988 London WFC): P.O. Box 31815, Seattle, WA 98103-1815.

We called in all of our Moving Karma, accumulated over the past ten years (more, if you count the help given in New York to people who are now here), and we had 21 people helping throughout the course of the day of the Big Move and at least ten others who couldn't be

* The first in a series of self-help books for the newly-moved-into-a-house-that Needs Work. Coming soon--How to Mismeasure Rooms for Linoleum and Carpeting and its companion booklet Cutting Crooked Along the Worst Possible Edge; How to Purchase the Wrong Size Sink Stopper/Light Bulb/Window Shade/Bathmat/Etc./Etc. and Lose the Receipt; So You've Never Used a Power Drill Before?; Sixteen Ways to Install a Traverse Rod, One of Which is Actually Correct; Getting to Know Your New Neighbors, the Jukes Family; You've Decided You'd Like the 60-Ton Bookcase Better Where???; and How to Not PANIC When Someone Who Helped You Move Put the Box Which Contains All of Your Tools, Curtain Hooks, Nails, Pins, Etc., Etc., at the Bottom at the Very, Very Back of a Pile of 30 Boxes Belonging to Someone Else Where It Won't Be Found Until Given Up For Lost/Stolen More Than Three Weeks Later (Subtitled: How to Return a Used Hammer).

there but came later to help clean, finish up, etc. It was a truly monumental task--aside from the eight years of accumulated belongings of three fandom- and book-oriented people, we also had Gary Farber's fanzine collection (56 boxes--now being slowly shipped eastward) and 30 boxes of miscellaneous Jon Singer kipple. Jerry and I would both like to thank our crack moving team profusely (even the unknown one who buried our box of tools under Singer's stuff--marked "Christopher" for no good reason, it was hard to tell what it was). They all outdid themselves and we are very grateful.

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-Married? Yes, that is correct. WE GOT MARRIED! (And I now understand why people elope.) It all started about a year ago, early one Sunday morning in December when Jerry and I had gone out to breakfast at some ungodly hour because Bob had gotten up at an even earlier ungodly hour and put on 1, then two, loads of laundry, through which, of course, we couldn't sleep (this was later to become known as "It's all Bob's fault"). So, making the best of the situation, we naturally went to a Greek restaurant and got engaged. March! we thought; we met in 1968 at Marcon in Columbus, Ohio. March would be the start of our 20th year of, um, acquaintanceship. March was too soon, though, as was April. May seemed to be perfect, although in retrospect, I think that August would have been more appropriate--I'd have been actually ready by August. (Though, come to think of it, that's when we found out we had to move.)

We passed the first hurdle (figuring out how we should do it) when we discovered that a friend of ours, Valerie Fisher, was a minister (Church of Divine Man...don't ask), enabling us to have the wedding on a Saturday instead of using a justice of the peace or somesuch on a weekday (which we thought a j.p. would require) and not having anyone attend the actual ceremony. We then proceeded to make, as it turned out, two mutually exclusive decisions. One--to have the ceremony/party at our house (after all, we'd had 90 people for an eight course dinner, so we could certainly handle a mere wedding), and second--to invite everyone we knew. As time passed and the RSVP list grew to nearly 100, we began praying for good weather (in the Specific Northwest, mid-May can be beautiful and sunny or blustery and stormy, often on the same day...) as we would have to hold the ceremony itself outside somehow.

It turned out to be a cool, but sunny, day and we ended up on the front porch with our guests spread out on the front lawn (that sounds funny, but you know what I mean) attempting to hear what was going on over the din of traffic from the main highway half a block away. We were really delighted that so many people made it, especially from New York, Los Angeles (well, Venice, actually) and the Bay Area. We would have been more delighted still, if we had time to actually talk to most of them. I know I saw Jack Palmer, for example, but don't think I actually spoke to him. Likewise, Doug Faunt was one of those who came all the way from the Bay Area and I think we maybe exchanged three words.

Partially this was due to sheer numbers and some timing I had decided on that limited the party. I would have changed some of what we did and the order in which we did them at the last minute if I could have, as well as things like actually planning on a receiving line--I just didn't think about it and neither did anyone else. It just sort of happened and logistically it didn't work too well. Much of the rest of the blame lay with an aunt and uncle of Jerry's who decided to attend the wedding and expected us to spend every minute with them. I had hoped that Jerry's mother (who lives in Seattle) and visiting sister and brother-in-law could sort of take care of them, but apparently we risked mortally offending them if spent time with anyone else (like close friends who'd come 3000 miles) and that did cause somewhat of an unnecessary strain. (Calling our house at 9:45 the next morning to find out what hotel we were staying in so they could invite us to breakfast, however, was a real hoot. Especially since Bob forgot which hotel we were staying in and, when they called

the hotel he thought we were in, they were told that we had checked out. Well, someone named Kaufman may have checked out, but since the reservations were in my name at a different place, we didn't get the message.) There are times like this when I am grateful for having aunts, uncles and cousins whom I have never even met.

I think the best part of the whole thing, aside from everyone having a good time, was that everyone really seemed to like the ceremony itself. Valerie had given us a basic wedding ceremony from her ministry and we re-wrote it to suit us. Since then I've been asked for copies of it by two couples who have or are about to be married, and, especially since it was the one thing Jerry and I were both a bit nervous about, this has made me feel very good.

At this point, I think I'll save the rest of "The Wedding" story for next time along with a few memories of our February 1986 trip to Britain, which was wonderful, bloody cold, but wonderful, for a time when I feel less pressure and my memory returns. I must tell you about the Seattle Hilton where we went after the party to get away from the house, etc. The view of Interstate 5 was truly fabulous!....

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By the way, Jerry and I have been carried forward, through the generosity of others, into the '80s! We are now at the forefront of modern publishing technology. Yes, thanks to a fabulous Wedding Present, Jerry and I now have a mimeo and an e-stenciller that were manufactured in this decade! (Thought we'd gotten a computer, didn't you??) Which is why this is the first Mainstream published on the Pacific Fantod Press. (The first zine pubbed on it was 5-Way Corflu, the first Corflu progress report, which, despite Jerry's editorial, is already done. And actually only six pages of this issue were run off on the PFP.) That's a combination of Specific Northwest Press and Fantod Press, a name dear to Mike O'Brien, our benefactor. We combined the names because we weren't sure if "Fantod" had been used before. We were sure the combination would be unique.

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When I tried to bring my editorial up to work on it (on the computer at work), I discovered that I had inadvertently erased the two pages or so I'd started 1½ years ago. Instead, I could only find "Edit#11" listed in the directory, and thought that might be it. It was, of course, my column from last issue and when I brought it up, I saw the first line--

This column is dedicated to Terry Carr. He knows why.

I felt that knot in the stomach feeling and stared at it for a while. Terry and I had had a running joke going on for years and this was just its latest manifestation. Although we never really corresponded and I would see him only about once or twice a year, primarily at conventions, I always knew that "he knew why"--that when I was sitting at the typer working on a column that I was writing it for him. Not specifically just for him, but I could see Terry, in my mind's eye, reading it and, I would hope, laughing. That to me is the essence of fandom--writing something, listening to how it sounds, wondering if it will make sense, hoping that it will be enjoyed, by people you know, sometimes well, even if you've never met them in person.

It meant a lot to me when Terry would let me know that he liked some of my stuff (my minuscule amount of writing); he never failed to make me feel accepted, "one of the gang." I shall always miss exchanging communiqués with someone who lived 800 miles away via yearly fanzines. And, of course, God, I'll always miss Terry.

--Suzle, December 1987

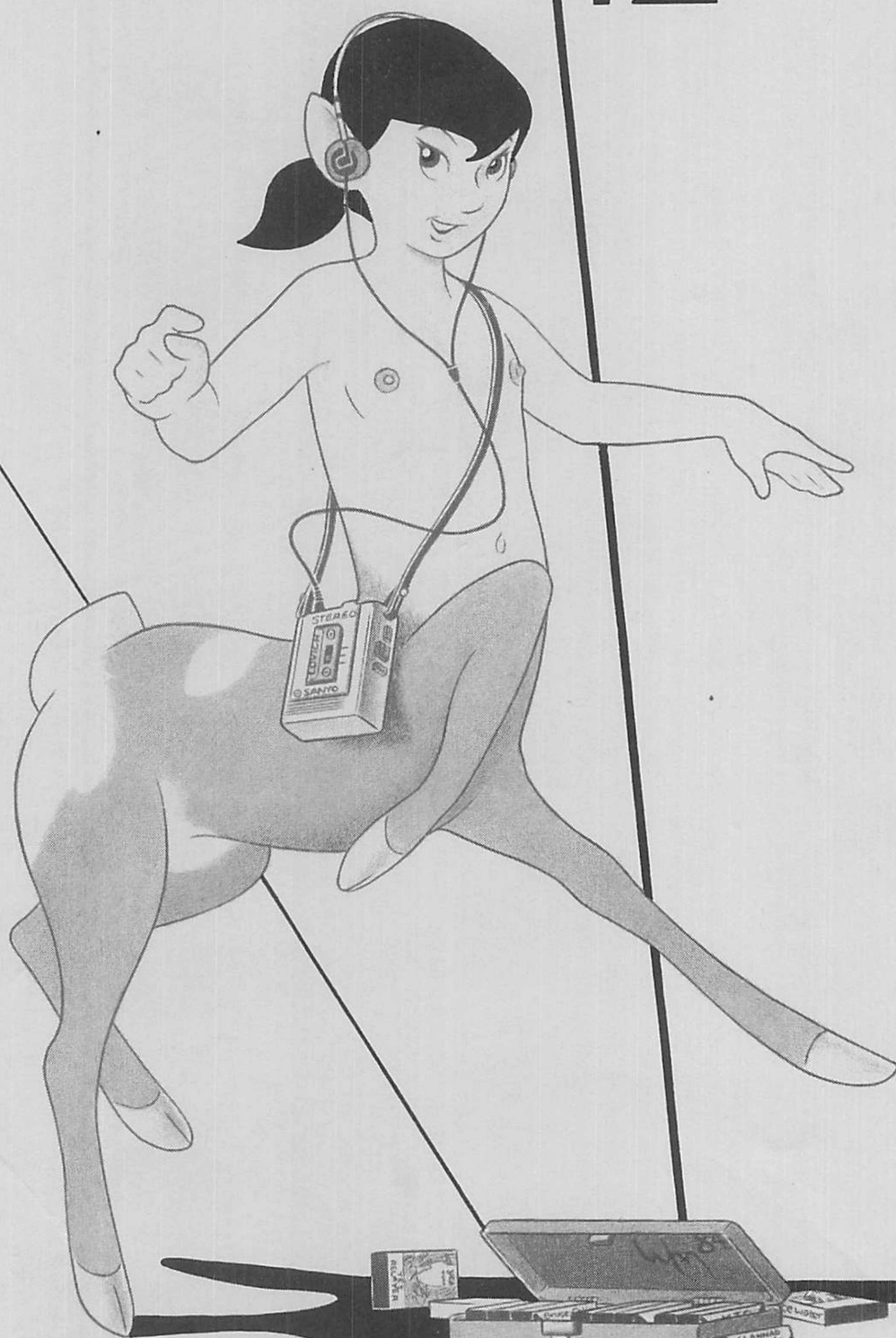
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