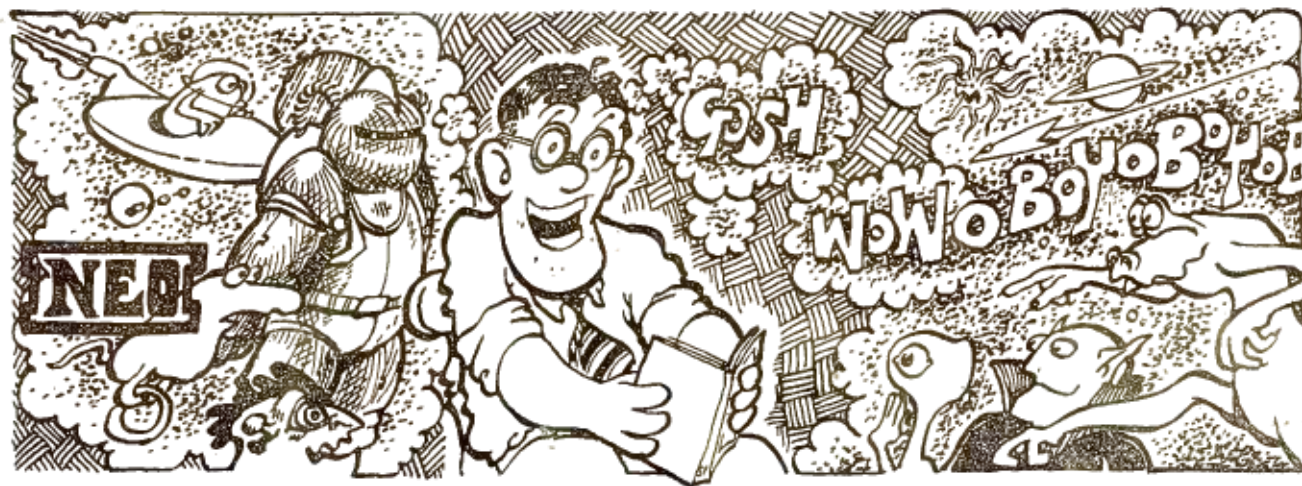


# MAYA 9





# GHUCEPHALUS ~ editorial tub-thumping

Some sweeping  
generalisations  
about SF

"Ursula Le Guin was on the radio this evening, on Newsbeat," Henry Pijohn said. (Newsbeat is a news-and-current-affairs magazine programme on the BBC's rock music station.) Wow lucky-old-her why-the-hell-did-I-have-to-go-and-miss-it, I thought. More publicity for good old SF. "What did she say?" "She said the same old boring things all SF writers say when they get on the radio," Henry replied.

At that point I think I must have looked as flabbergasted as I felt, because somehow an animated sort of discussion started.

Now Henry may not know as much as some of us about the minds of SF writers (after all, he isn't one, has no aspiration to be one, and doesn't very often read the work of one) but he does very often say uncommonly perceptive things interspersed with his strange circular arguments and incomplete sentences. So while he was effectively saying the same thing again another three or four times over the next ten minutes, I did some thinking while I was arguing (a rare and notable combination) and decided I very much saw his point about SF writers.

"What did she say exactly, anyway?" I asked him.

"I can't remember. I can remember what it was like, though."

"Well, did she say things about how SF is the literature which can really look at man's relationship with his expanding technological world —"

"Something like that, I think."

"Did she talk about how nowadays it is possible to appreciate an SF novel on all kinds of different levels, for the story, the characterisation, the ideation, the philosophy, the anthropology, the —"

"Yeah, I think she said that too."

"What was she like to listen to?"

"She was all eccentric and intellectual. All SF writers come over as eccentric and intellectual."

"Henry, will you stop hitting the nail on the head?!"

So you see, I haven't the slightest idea what Ursula Le Guin said in her interview, and upon Henry P. Pijohn's head be it that she's mentioned here at all, but I do now have an idea for this editorial, and I have a very definite idea about the direction I want to push your opinions.

Henry's comment there is a very accurate and unpretentious representation of the way outsiders tend to think of the SF fraternity, even though made here by someone with at least a glimpse of the inside view. When you examine them, the SF fraternity's public relations are abominable. (By "SF fraternity" I mean here those authors of not entirely solitary bent, together with the SF fan community, taken as a single body. I'll leave the relationship between pros and fandom for another issue or two just yet.)

For example, take the comment made by Edmund Cooper in his interview in Cypher 12. (Admittedly Jim Goddard asked him to say something controversial, but he wouldn't have said anything like this if he didn't believe it at least in part.) He described the people who attend SF conventions as cranks and crackpots.

I resent that comment. I don't deny it (it's undeniably true of perhaps 10% of a convention's attendance, but that's so of almost any large common-interest gathering of people), but I resent it.

Examples of the crackpots are some of the people the Observer reporter who went to Novacon 4 managed to sniff out so unerringly. Dave Langford and Dermot Dobson rose like foolish trout to the bait of an interview, and made utter idiots of themselves by overemphasising their commitment to SF. I mean, why the hell say you read a novel a night?? If that comment is exaggerated, then they did the rest of us much disservice by giving the reporter superb laughter-copy. If it's true, they're so totally immersed that reality has little meaning for them and they deserve everything they get.

As a result of this sort of bad copy, the silly image spreads, and the kind of result you get is the utterly bigoted letter in Science Fiction Monthly a few months back from one J. Kingsbury deploring the space they were devoting to SF fandom, which he described as the "lunatic fringe of science fiction". Malcolm Edwards had a good reply published in which he listed the lunatics who have become

three-quarters of the world's contemporary SF writers after being in fandom for at least part of their careers (Clarke, Asimov, Moorcock, Ellison, Silverberg... you missed John Wyndham out, Malcolm.)

Another result is that you get contacted by real crackpots, like the UFO freak of 20 years' standing who wrote about the North East Science Fiction Group. Luckily a mildly discouraging letter put him off and he never appeared at a meeting, but his letter is a reading experience of Monty Pythonesque intensity. I'd print it as an illo, but there isn't room.

Our PR isn't all bad, though. We have had some really excellent treatment from the local papers in the Newcastle region, especially the Evening Chronicle, who actually like what we have been trying to do with Tynecon and the North East Science Fiction Group, and have printed five small pieces about us, all told; they've been responsible for attracting many of the group's regular members.

However, you can get flak for almost anything. Being too informal, for instance. Because I had access to a good typewriter and seemed to be managing OK, I had the job of writing all Tynecon's Progress Reports. At that time Victor Gollancz Ltd. and the Sunday Times announced their SF competition — prizes to be presented at the 1974 British SF Convention, namely Tynecon. Of course, we felt this was a tremendous boon both to SF as a whole and to our convention, and were very pleased to help John Bush, Gollancz's chairman, in any way we could. When he wanted extra copies of our Progress Reports, off they went to him. I believe he wanted them for the Sunday Times literary critic who did the write-up on the Competition results, one Godfrey Smith. Progress Reports being chatty things by nature, they make good knocking copy for anyone in a sour mood, and Smith seemed to be in just that. From 28 pages of writing he unerringly picked the four chattiest sentences, savagely chopped them out of context, and used them as prize specimens in his rather sarcastic description of the convention itself. The "organiser", as he described me (what about the rest of the Committee, and all the other helpers, Smith?) was very displeased with being mauled thus, but could do nothing about it except rue the lost chance of presenting an SF con as an event worthy of any genuine interest or study. I think John Bush was also privately very disappointed at the Sunday Times's less than worthy treatment of both the convention and the competition they themselves had helped create.

So even what Ken Bulmer and Chris Priest had complimented me on as the best-written Progress Reports they'd seen were likely to be picked on and made fun of. Pete Presford, you're in dire danger.

(I think Smith's attitude is typical of a lack of acceptance of SF in the world of British artistic criticism that is almost universal, and very unlike the situation in the States. Over there, a progression in opinion seems to be giving SF ever-increasing respectability. That this isn't so much in evidence here is only partly due to the attitude of the British leaders in aesthetic judgement (whom I would characterise in general as conservative, effete, anti-scientific, and living in a thoroughly rarefied atmosphere). There are most certainly faults on the SF side as well, though. Despite the above comments on the rarefied atmosphere of literary criticism in England, a review of Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed in the same paper, the Sunday Times, described it as "furiously cerebrating science fiction". (I think the reviewer was Smith again, but I'm not sure.) This provides even more evidence: even the literati aren't after too much intellectual depth.)

So where have we gone wrong? Why are we presented as such intellectualistic weirdoes? A friend of mine (not a fan) once described Gannetfandom as "excessively normal". (He may have been the only law student ever to be a squatter while studying for the Bar, but that's immaterial.)

How come such a lovable bunch as SF prodrom and fandom can cause such bewilderment and misunderstanding among newsmen?

What I think we have failed to do is to sound like normal, understandable human beings when we talk to the Press; to present a normal "image", to use the jargon of deceit. We perhaps should present that part of ourselves that Anybody Can Understand.

Harry Bell knew that, albeit possibly subconsciously, when he wrote to the Evening Chronicle to tell them that following a suc-



cessful national convention's inspiration of a fair amount of local interest we were starting up a local club to meet regularly. That, they can understand. If Harry had told them we wanted to get lots of people interested in going to conventions and producing little magazines, they'd probably have started scratching their heads, or grinning and saying "Nutcult here, everybody!" to their friends. People can understand the formation of a club. There is also one simple thing about SF itself, as a literary genre, which people can understand and like even if they've never read a word of it in their lives because they have nightmares about bugs or something.

That is — the telling of a story. Anybody likes a story.

Once again, Henry Pijohn had words for it. He said something like: "When I read a science fiction book I don't want to be educated and go to sleep. I want to enjoy myself and read a story."

Because they see their task as the "elevation" of SF to what they see as the level of the mainstream, SF writers in public emphasise its role as educative literature almost exclusively, with the result that its value as something to be read and enjoyed purely on a simple plot-and-character basis gets forgotten. How often have you heard an SF writer say something like these quotes (to take two scientific and two artistic examples):

"What we are exploring is the interface between man and the machine society."

"Cleve Cartmill/Arthur Clarke/Leonardo da Vinci described the atomic bomb/communications satellite/helicopter and got investigated by the FBI/no money/laughed at for his pains."

"We take our present society — or one from the past — and we introduce a change (that's the important thing) and see how it works. It's the change, you see; it means you can write about virtually here-and-now, or about any far-flung world in the whole wide universe. Science fiction encompasses the whole of literature within its boundaries — literature is just science fiction written in a world we know has happened."

"SF is not just a lot of cardboard heroes, you know. We're into character studies virtually as deep as any in mainstream literature (not quite, mind you — you've also got to build a world for your characters to live on), and non-linear narrative, and multilevel plots, and McLuhan pastiches, and circular novels, and...sex, even!"

But how often have you heard an SF writer say these things:

"Deep down, what we all want to do is to write a book so that people will come up to me and say "Thank you... I enjoyed that."

"Publishers want authors to write books which sell, and they sell because lots of people like reading them and come back for more."

"Quite often I find an SF book so exciting I can't put it down. I just want to find out what happens next."

"Try it — it's really great stuff."

So there you are — eight statements, all true enough to be clichés: Four of them are the type SF fans know and love because they've read them in fanzines or heard them at conventions over and over again; and four are so simple that any self-respecting fanzine editor would consider them beneath him. But there are only four which would really interest the average fifteen-year-old Radio 1 Newsbeat listener — the latter set. You may pick up an SF book

because you've been told it's a literature of cognitive estrangement, but if he hears that, your fifteen-year-old won't — he'll drop it.

Please, you big-name writers; you're our media representatives — remember your audience's I.Q. doesn't necessarily start at 135. Then, the reporters may start liking you, because notwithstanding your proven ability to communicate on paper in story form, you may now communicate simple interest and enthusiasm as well. This isn't asking you to talk down; it is simply asking you to refine to its utmost the usual process of simplification, clarification and communication which you all go through so often and successfully, for the benefit of your real audience. That audience isn't the "eccentric intellectuals" who moan at you in fanzine editorials or buttonhole you and argue, gimlet-eyed, at conventions, or even the relaxed fannish ones who sit at convention bars and booze while ignoring you; they too probably know their SF rather too well. If you talk to them you're preaching to the converted. In mathematical terms the lowest common denominator is the number large enough to encompass everything: so too in most genres of literary endeavour. SF is no exception.

Rereading the above, I feel I may have given the impression that I think SF consists purely and simply of storytelling, plus speculative (often scientific) ideas.

Not so — would that life were that simple. If you read a book where these are the only ingredients, you will find something lacking, something which would have given the book its real substance (an essential tang, like the alcohol without which the headiest wine is merely insipid grape-juice). I feel that substance may be lacking in one book I'm reading now (Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's *The Mote in God's Eye*) and it was certainly missing from the most recent book I finished, Arthur Clarke's *Imperial Earth*.

*Imperial Earth*, although it is at least as long and detailed as Clarke's previous two books — *2001* and *Rama* — and more complex and non-linear in story-line than anything he's written before, is plotted within a rather smaller, more personal compass than the previous two books. The entire action takes place within Saturn's orbit (Titan's, to be precise) and concentrates on the lives and work of the Makenzie clone of three brothers, the last two cloned from the first in father-son-grandson fashion. They are the leading "family" on the nearly-independent colony of Titan. The book focusses particularly on Duncan, the youngest — and Clarke being the writer he is, this narrow, personal focus is the book's major failing.

All of Clarke's major characters are imbued with a quality of wide-eyed naiveté which is very appealing when we are ourselves feeling wide-eyed and naive, but anyone who brings a blasé and sophisticated approach to this work is likely to notice faults and gaps. For example, in *Imperial Earth* Clarke puts Duncan Makenzie through the usual routine of wonder at the simple things of Earth, simply to emphasise that he was raised offworld and has never seen dozens of trees together, or a horse in the flesh. Such innocence is utterly inappropriate to the characterisation of a thirty-one-year-old administrator rising fast through the Titanian hierarchy, but Clarke shows no signs of realising this.

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NEXT ISSUE:

SPECIAL CANADIAN ISSUE. Bob Shaw, Doug Barbour; expected are Mike Glicksohn, Malcolm Edwards, cover by David Hardy.

November 1975.

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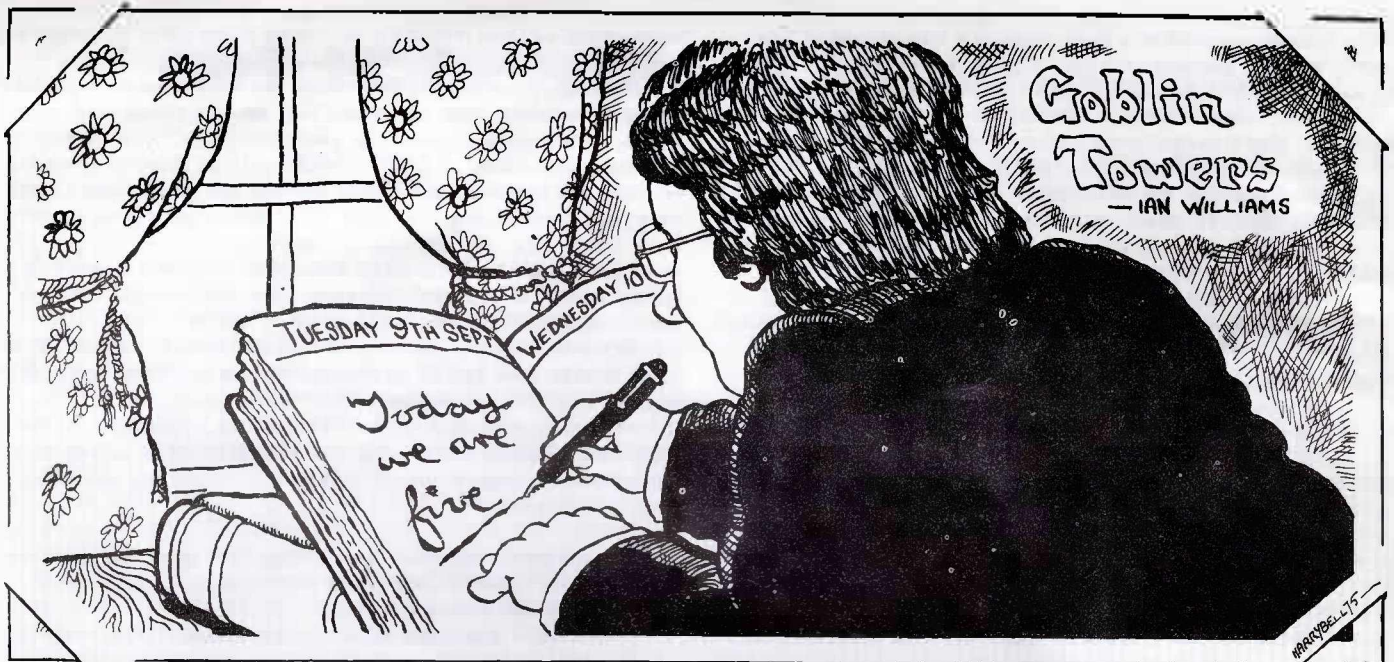
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1. This is for Gray Boak and Marv Legg.  
With love and more than a little gratitude.

2. A friend and I were talking about the time when the committee was introduced at the Tynecon 74 banquet. (Tynecon was the twenty-fifth British Easter Convention. I was the Secretary, Ian Maule the Chairman, Rob Jackson the Treasurer, Harry Bell the Press Officer, and Irene Bell was herself. Remember the se names, you'll see a lot of them later.)

"I was watching you," he said. "Harry seemed quite overcome by the applause, and stood looking down at the table. You were beaming all over your face, looking around at the audience, obviously feeling pretty pleased with yourself."

Damn right.

3. The Gannet is a subterranean pub. You get to it by going down some steep steps and turning a corner. Straight ahead of you is a medium sized room. In the room, the seats form a large M shape, or rather two adjacent U's. In the corner of one of these U's on the second Tuesday of September 1970, a bunch of people gathered. Most of us had met several times before, but it had been decided it was more convenient to meet at a pub in the centre of Sunderland on a quiet evening. I suggested the Gannet, having had my twenty-first there and thought it a reasonable place.

I arrived shortly after finishing work at the library at 7.30 and was the first there. (This was to prove a frequent occurrence.) Eventually, the others turned up. There was Harry Bell, a link with the past as he had been in fandom long before any of us, but had gaffiated because there were no other fans in the area and he felt he was losing touch with the outside world. Harry is a couple of inches taller than me and of similar girth. Then, as now, he was a civil servant. He was also recently engaged and brought along with him his fiancée Irene Taylor, a pleasant-looking bespectacled girl with rounded features and long fair hair. Ian Penman is an old school acquaintance of mine who had never gotten over his infatuation with American comic and had begun his own comics fanzine *Armageddon*. At the time he was at the local college of education, training to be a teacher. Ian had introduced me to a friend of his called Jim Marshall. Jim had a gadfly interest in a number of subjects — mainly sf, comics, fantasy and drawing. He was a very talented artist, and at the time had aspirations of drawing for Marvel. His idiosyncratic views on things were both refreshing and annoying, a nice contrast to Ian's smooth reasonableness. Then there were Thom Penman and Ritchie Smith, blood brothers of sixteen and still at school. They were both fascinated with the 'underground' despite knowing little about it. They also had high hopes of becoming sf pro's and, after reading some of their material, I thought so too. They tended towards the cynical but had seen so little of life that it was purely a superficial adolescent yob. Ritchie ('craggily ambling') came over as an intellectual yob, Thom (bird-like, nervously agitated) a milder version (but at the

same time more extreme in some of his fatuous pronouncements). We had high hopes of these two, which rose when Thom was expelled from school as a disruptive influence and Ritchie warned.

So we met and talked, feeling each other out, trying to find common ground to relate to each other.

4. For a long while we simply called ourselves the North East Science Fiction Group. It wasn't until the following year that a certain Greg Pickersgill named us Gannetfandom.

Suddenly we had an identity: we weren't just a science fiction group. We were Gannetfandom.

5. The first issue of *Maya* appeared in November 1970. It was printed on a Roneo, blue ink on yellow paper. The cover was by Jim Marshall. Sparse and effective, it portrayed a brutish hominid who wielded a bone, standing by a ruined tower. Interior illustrations were by Jim, Harry, and Terry Jeeves. The reproduction was pretty faint. The written content was a strange mixture of book reviews, a column about fanzines by Gray Boak, a comic strip drawn by Jim and based on a children's poem of the editor's, poetry, a piece about Oxford by Mary Legg, and a variety of assorted trivia. Every group member had contributed something in one way or another. All in all it was a pretty fair first issue considering the editor had only been in fandom about a year. His name was Ian Williams.

Hey, that's me!

6. I've lived nearly all my life in Sunderland, in the same house. I did spend three and a half abortive years in Lancashire training to be a teacher. At the end of them, I moved down to London, stayed with a student friend, did a variety of temporary work, and discovered fandom. Living there didn't suit me either so I came home. I came home to find I had virtually no friends left and there were no jobs. For three months I sat in the house, read books, listened to records, vegetated. That did me no good, so I got a job in a library and tried starting a science fiction fan group.

I succeeded.

I'm the Gannetfather.

7. The North East of England does not have a reputation as one of the most attractive parts of the country. The common image is of coal mining, ship building and high unemployment. I work as librarian in a pit village within the confines of an expanding Sunderland; the pit, like so many others, has closed. Ship building in Sunderland is on the decline. The unemployment....

Fourteen miles west of Sunderland is the city of Durham. When you enter it by train from the south, you can see, high on the hill, the huge, beautiful old cathedral and the castle: below them, bound by steep banks, runs the river Wear.

Stay on the train and you reach the south bank of the Tyne, the town of Gateshead. (Harry and Irene live there.) An old iron bridge crosses into Newcastle, a large and often ugly





city that is currently being torn down and rebuilt. I studied to be a librarian at Newcastle's Polytechnic. Rob Jackson is a newly qualified doctor in one of Newcastle's hospitals. Tynecon was held at the rather grand old hotel which forms part of the railway station.

You can travel further north into beautiful countryside, to wild coastline. There are castles and hills, old pit villages and new towns.

Gannettfandom lives in an area that is a curious mixture of beauty, antiquity, lawdriy new, and depression. The Vikings raided. Bulldozers push it down. The Romans built a wall. Councils build blocks of flats.

These are the things that have conditioned us. And things like affluence, protest, rock, technology in a changing society, mundane jobs, and even science fiction.

8. This article is about a fanzine, a fan group, the writer, and something more.

It is an attempt to combine two forms. The first is one that I used in a piece of prose entitled 'Reflections of a Depression' that appeared in *Zinri 4*. In it I wrote:

'Fragments that connect, albeit elusively.'

The second is the one I used in my personalzine *Soldhartha*, a series of numbered sections which denoted either a change in subject or a gap in time between writing.

9. Gannettfandom had begun to make a small name for itself in fanzines by the time the '71 Easterner rolled round, but no one had actually met any of us except me (from the previous year's con) and those who dimly remembered Harry Bell. This time I'd managed to talk some Gannets (we had our name by then) into going along.

I travelled down overnight on the train with a rucksack full of *Maya 2*'s, arriving at the Giffard Hotel at the ridiculous time of six in the morning. I spent several hours talking about fanzines to (what was in the process of becoming) *Harbinger*. Before Ian Maule, who had joined Gannettfandom the previous November, arrived and made himself at home. Eventually Thom Penman turned up and pleased everyone by appearing to be the fool they'd all expected, mumbling on about the book of Ecclesiastes. In all fairness, he was even more confused than usual, having spent nearly a dozen hours travelling down on his new motorbike. Maule pleased everyone by groping a married woman, and I provided a source of amusement with my snuff (an old joke) philanderings.

*Maya 2* was also a source of wonderment. The reproduction was even worse than the first issue's. 'Did you have to piss in the ink, Williams?' said Greg Pickersgill. The layout had improved and there were a substantial number of excellent illustrations (if you could see them) by Jim, Harry, and Kevin Cullen, who had provided a very striking cover of a girl's face peeling away to reveal an android underneath. There were a lot of good articles, notably Mary Legg's piece on British fandom in the mid-sixties (which, if I hadn't drastically edited, would still be being run in *Maya*). I tried my hand at fanzine reviewing for the first time and found it was something I had a talent for. The letter column was long and lively. The consensus of opinion was that if I could lick the duplication problem, I'd have a pretty hot fanzine on my hands.

Several months later I was fed up with it and gave the editorship to Ian Maule who found just that.

10. The group grew slowly. We gained a couple of new members and, after a while, lost them. The hard core remained,

#### Key to photos

Top: Harry Bell, Rich Gordon (now the author Stuart Gordon), and Mary Legg. Christmas Eve 1965.

Inset: Gray Book (with beard) and a slightly more of Ian Maule. Cutout: A silly Jim Marshall, and a rather more bored Maule.

Third row, left: Photo taken at the Gannet. A tedious Ian Penman and a stern Captain Cook were in.

Right: The infamous photo of Ian Williams at Chessington, sans everything except *Vector 59* and a pair of glasses.

Fourth row, left: Harry Bell with ring.

Right: Thom Penman, Highway 61 style.

Bottom left: Three (very) relaxed *Maya* editors. L to R: Rob Jackson, Ian Maule, and Ian Williams.

Right: Irene Bell.



Jim brought along a girl called Katie for nearly a year, and Ian Penman brought so many we've forgotten most of them. After three years we had gained, as permanent members, Henry Pijohn (a nice guy but negligible as regards fannish activity), and Rob Jackson. I must have fallen in love at least three times by then. Ian Maule was reflecting on his two moments of glory. Ritchie was getting blasé about chicks and Thom wondering if he'd ever go out with one. Let's say this was by Christmas '72.

The way the group meshed was still very similar to the way things were when it had first begun to get going, in that there were a number of tiny sub-groups of people who thought along similar lines. Jim and Ian Penman talked to each other and saw each other outside the group. Thom and Ritchie were as tight as ever, but impressed by Jim's odd ideas. Harry, Irene and Ian Maule were the more fannish corner of things. Then there was me at the centre of the spider-web, getting on with everybody at a variety of different levels, and seeing everyone out of Gannet-meetings in different groupings. For most of the formative years of Gannetfandom, I was the focal point of the group (I'd better add that much of what I say here was first said by others), the person who more or less held the group together. I was, quite literally, the Gannetfather. This suited me fine, it made me feel good. Not that I had done this deliberately; I liked (and like) everyone in the group and was surprised that some of them found it difficult to talk to the others. But there I was, the group's common denominator.

11. "In order to describe adequately an event or series of events, it is necessary not only to relate the physical occurrences (i.e. movement, speech, actions), but also the emotional effects (preceding, concurrent, or proceeding)."

12. Several months after the '71 Eastercon, Ian Maule published *Maya* 3 to general acclaim from the fannish world. In retrospect, it wasn't that hot an issue, one problem being that it was about half composed of material I'd gathered plus a letter-column (edited by me) on the previous issue. It did have a very good five-headed con report which Maule compiled, and vastly improved reproduction and layout. A litho cover by Harry Bell was an added attraction.

Before *Maya* 4 arrived, there was Chessmancon. I found this a pretty lukewarm event. The hotel was small and seemed to be occupied mostly by pro's and BNFs: most of the other fans were lodged in overspill hotels. It did have its amusing moments such as the time we found out a downstairs bar was the local gay hangout, and when Thom Penman hit Maule over the head spilling a little blood and no beer. But it was a marking time sort of convention for Gannetfandom; mostly we hung around the bar talking to established buddies and getting pissed.

We didn't seem to get our interest back until Maule produced *Maya* again. The fourth issue was bloody good. Sandwiched in between two litho covers (Paul Neary/Jim Marshall on the front, Alan Hunter on the back) were lots of goodies. The fifteen page lettercolumn occupied fully half the issue and was significant in that it featured a large proportion of U.S. fans. In fact, Maule's major contribution to fandom during this period was not in producing an excellent fanzine but in reviving and intensifying contact between British and American fandoms which during the previous few years had been rather lax and spasmodic. John Piggott's excellent fanzine review column in that issue also helped by focussing on five noteworthy American fanzines. John Hall had a nauseatingly funny article about those angry young fen, the London-based Ratfandom. Rereading it three and a half years later, I found myself getting nostalgic for those bygone irresponsible days. The most notable piece in the issue was my first *Goblin Towers* column. In it I described a meeting I had with some travelling Jesus freaks when I tagged along with a girl I had designs upon, and the surprising, disturbing effect they had on me. Even now it stands out as an honest and valid piece of writing, which I'm still proud of. (\*)

13. So okay, we had a good fanzine as a focal point for the group. Several of us were writing and drawing for other British fanzines. Within fanzine fandom we were gaining a small but re-

(\*)Ed's footnote: The controversy finally peters out this issue.

(\*\*)Ed's footnote: I'm not having your Women's Lib controversy in my fanzine, Williams!

spectable reputation. This was fine by us, but there was more to fandom than fanzines or just going to cons. We felt ready to tackle something bigger. And this something was ready and waiting for us.

At the previous Eastercon, Bram Stokes the sf bookdealer had put in a provisional bid for the '74 Eastercon. His idea was to hold a multi-con, combining sf, horror and comix. We didn't like the idea and, as far as we knew, neither did the rest of British fandom.

So we oppose the bid, we said to each other.

Having made the decision we were faced with selecting a committee from the heterogeneous group called Gannetfandom. We needed committee members who (a) had credibility with the rest of fandom, (b) could be relied on to do the work involved. When we looked around Gannetfandom it was really pretty obvious. Maule had to be chairman because he was very well-known. I was the secretary ("Well, you write, don't you?") Rob Jackson was picked for the treasurer's job because he was keen, knew a surprising number of important people despite only being in fandom a short while, but mainly because his family was so well off we realised he wouldn't need to abscond with the funds. Harry Bell was press officer because we'd picked the best three jobs. And Irene Taylor was on the committee to show we weren't male chauvinists, and besides she had (and has) a nice smile. (\*\*)

Our bid was to be voted on at OMPACon, the Easter '73 convention. We'd plugged the bid in fanzines during the two months between our actual decision and the con. We had done our homework, found a couple of likely hotels, decided on a policy and on a Guest of Honour. All we had to do was win the bid.

As soon as Maule and I entered the hotel, in the middle of a bunch of other Gannets for protection, things seemed to go all our way. Rob had arrived the night before to plug the cause which, to judge from the reaction he'd gained, was already won. Loads of people were wearing "Newcastle in '74" badges, a neat bit of publicity/propaganda we'd thought of.

"Oh, who won the Checkpoint Best Fanwriter Poll, Rob?" I asked somewhat disinterestedly.

He told me

"Ian, it's gonna be a great con!" I squealed, turning to him. But Maule had disappeared, to spend most of the weekend in bed with the delightful Julia Stone, leaving me and Rob to do all the work.

At the bidding session, Rob and I had a bad time because of our intense nerves. But rather than taking advantage of this, Bram threw it all away by being annoyed with the audience and telling them they'd already made up their minds. I still wasn't sure they had, so I took a reprisal at the microphone and restated our position only with less stuttering than before.

We won easily and found ourselves swamped by people wanting to register and/or give advice.

"We want to put on a traditional British con," I had said in public. Later, in private, I said to Ian and Rob, "How?"

## The Tynecon '74 Committee

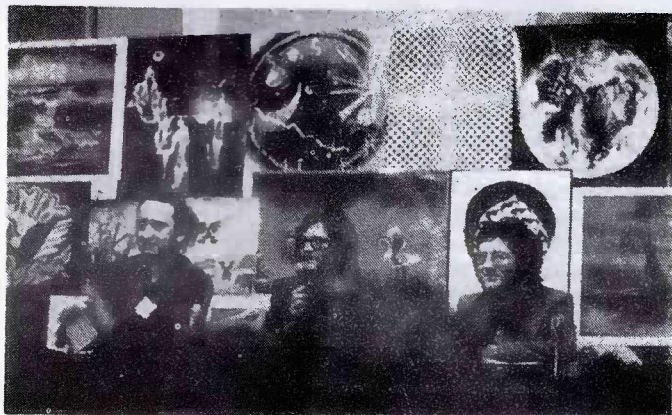


14. The story of Gannetfandom between Easter '73 and Easter '74 is really the story of Tynecon. This is a convoluted, lengthy saga which a fifty page fanzine couldn't do any real justice to. I just can't describe it. I can, however, make an attempt to list the ingredients.

More than anything else, it's work. Hour after hour, day after day, mo... oh hell, you can fill the rest in.

It was also committee meetings. Nearly every Saturday night, we'd gather at my house in the early evening. We'd lay in a few bottles of beer. Then we'd talk, argue, discuss ideas, tell each other what we'd done since the previous meeting. Tyne-





con brought the five of us very close together. Apart from the committee meetings, we also met, along with the rest of the Gannets, every Tuesday at the pub where, despite all our good intentions to the contrary, we still ended up talking Tynecon shop a good deal of the time.

It's letter writing. You want to know where your supporting membership goes to? Apart from the progress reports, it's on paper, envelopes, and stamps. We wrote to writers, publishers, artists, British Rail, fans, newspapers, film distributors, bookshops, printers, discotheques, fan organisations (like other cons, the BSFA etc.). We wrote for money, advice, articles, advertisements, art, people to appear on the programme, films, cartoons, comfort, donations, publicity, display stands, screens, photographs, information, insurance — you name it. We visited the hotel regularly. We printed membership forms, press handouts, ad rates sheets, information sheets, sent ads to fanzines.

We made mistakes like confirming someone's appearance on a programme item and stating the time it was taking place when said person hadn't even been asked.

There were disappointments like the following summarised replies to two letters I wrote —

"Yes. I'd be glad to appear on something if Judy and I manage to come over." Roger Zelazny.

"I'm not coming. I'm afraid." Roger Zelazny.

There were a number of similar such.

There were also shocks. Like a new British sci magazine appearing called Science Fiction Monthly which gave us a substantial plug resulting in god knows how many enquiries for information flooding through my letterbox.

You want to know what's involved in organising a convention? It's work, frustration, work, worry, work, talk, work, plan-

ning, work, organising, work. It can be hell, but, by hell it is also fun.

15. There was much more to our lives than Tynecon during the twelve months between April '73 and April '74. It was certainly an eventful time for four fifths of the committee.

Rob Jackson spent about three months in Sri Lanka during the summer, and shortly after Tynecon took his part I finals.

Harry and Irene got married to each other. They asked me to be groomsman to which, with a lump in my throat, I accepted.

My own life was something of a series of problems and calamities. In August '73 I began, against my own better judgment, going out with a sixteen year old. That lasted a rather traumatic eleven months but we both learned a lot from it, so that was okay. I had my librarianship finals at the beginning of December. In the middle of these one of my grandmothers died. At Christmas the grandmother I live with became pretty ill which worried me, but she recovered. The day after I came back from Tynecon she went into hospital for several weeks. Oh, it was a fun time. Dull, it wasn't.

A couple of Gannets discovered the pleasures of going out with young ladies for the first time. And Jim Marshall appeared to have found the girl of his dreams in the extroverted, intelligent Judith Ahl. Their characters seemed to match very well, and, apart from Jim's beard and Judith's big tits, they even looked like each other.

In retrospect Gannett fandom was undergoing some subtle, yet quite crucial, changes which only became fully apparent several months after Tynecon.

16. Maya 5 had appeared well before our decision on Tynecon, in November 1972. It's probably Maule's finest issue. There were a number of excellent illustrations and caricatures by Harry Bell, a lot of good, slick fanwriting which included my second Goblin Towers column and one of my best fanzine review columns to date.

Unfortunately, it took Ian a further year and a half to produce another issue which turned out to be the worst Maya yet.

The mantle of editorship then descended upon Rob Jackson who in pretty quick time threw out Maya 7 which contained some exceptional writing by Bob Shaw, Chris Priest and me. It was marred only by a feeble lettercolumn, a fault directly traceable to Maule. I felt, at the time, it was a little bit bland. I was wrong. The following issue showed Rob using a more ambitious layout though perhaps the articles weren't quite up to the stand-

#### Key to photos

Top left: Harry and Irene Bell during our committee meeting in the middle of a lake in Cumbria.

Second left: A rather thin photo of Ritchie Smith.

Third left: Bob Shaw while Guest of Honour at Tynecon.

Top right: Brian Aldiss and Rob Jackson at the inaugural meeting of the North East Science Fiction Group.

Bottom left: Rob Jackson, Ian Maule and Ian Williams rather nervously welcoming people to Tynecon.

Bottom right: Kev Williams, Henry Pijohn's back, and Josh Rawlings's hat surrounded by the Cumbrian Lakes.

Photos by Thom Penman mainly also Harry Bell and Kev Williams and Ian Williams.



ard of Maya 7.

Looking back, despite having had three editors, Maya has developed in a surprisingly consistent manner. First the neo-ish genzine, a ragbag mixture of crud and quality, then refining into a solidly faanish, well-written zine neatly mimeod, then budding into a potential quality genzine using litho printing. And it's still improving.



17. I woke up feeling as bad as I'd ever been during the previous three days. I coughed, spluttered, and sneezed. Dimly I realised that it was a Wednesday morning and I'd taken the day off work. Bleary eyed, I peered at a nearby table on which stood a mound of convention material and I realised that for me Tynecon started today.

It wasn't an auspicious omen. Somehow I struggled through the day, going to Rob Jackson's to spend it with the others, cutting badges, writing names on them, filling in receipt slips, and putting them with the con booklet, badge, pen and programme into envelopes.

I spent a restless night at Harry and Irene's. Next morning we went to the Royal Station Hotel where we worked our arses off putting up shelving, display screens, stands, displays, arranging tables, and sorting out auction material. I felt unfocussed, drugged up to the eyeballs with a chloroform based medicine. By the time the evening came around I had managed to shake it off and had worked myself into a state of hyperactive nerves, as had the others.

I hope you don't expect me to describe what Tynecon was like, as this article is long enough. Let's just say that the con-com aged a year in the space of four days. We were all dynamic one way or another. Rob's dynamism was like no-one else's. His was a kind of bobbling ball of befuddled wool unravelling as it bounced. Maule's took the form of being a mini-dictator, rapping out orders. Harry was quietly assertive in a shy sort of way. Me, well I never walked anywhere that weekend. I was always running along corridors, leaping up and down stairs, yelling things like: "Where the fuck is...?"

Rob worked all the time, gradually coming to pieces. Harry and Irene never got up before 11 o'clock. I got by on Saturday doing the minimum due to the presence of a certain young lady. This was fortunate as by the end of the day Maule all but collapsed, leaving me to keep things going on the Sunday.

18. Oh, it was a success, a marvellous glorious success. Despite it being organised by five shy introverts. Despite our inexperience and the numerous mistakes we made. Despite the committee nearly being at each other's throats toward the end. (#) We did it.

19. Okay, let's take a break from all this backpatting and personalities.

Gannetfandom in its time has published a lot more fanzines than just Maya. All of them vastly inferior to Maya mind, but it's worth having a look at them.

(#)Ed's footnote: I don't remember this. I remember being kissed fairly thoroughly by Irene during Bob Shaw's room party and being so shocked by it that I tell over Peter Nicholls or somebody, and I remember Ian being thoroughly maudlin: imagine section 18 being repeated ad nauseam for half an hour. Other than that, my memory is almost blank.

(\*)Ed's footnote: Other zines from up here, mostly containing more personal writing, have included Maule's Well and Paranoid, from Ian Maule, and the odd little groupzine Gannetscrapbook.

(@)Ed's footnote: NESFiG was brought on by the success of Tynecon locally as well as nationally. We decided to try to introduce other people to SF discussions and thus fandom, rather than just fall back entirely on our own small circle of friends in Gannetfandom. We tend to organise NESFiG in any spare 30 seconds our left little finger may have between Maya, artwork, medicine, housework, whatever.

Dick Geis's first fanzine since SFR, Richard E. Geis, made me go goggle-eyed, so in December '72 I produced my own personalzine Siddhartha. So far I've published six issues, which on reflection aren't as bad as I used to think (with the exception of the first and last ones). Unfortunately, they did mark the start of a trend which led to a flood of British personalzines. It got so that most of the talented British fen were wasting their time doing their own thing (man) instead of writing for others. Eventually this pissed me off so much that I've come full circle; I'm now editing Goblin's Grotto, a refined and polished version of what I originally intended Maya to be. The second issue should be out by the time you read this.

Right now Gannetfanzines are getting bigger and better. You all know what Maya is like, and half of you should have Goblin's Grotto 2. Harry Bell does The Grimling Bosch, his personalzine, and one of the newer Gannets is also plotting a personalzine. Armageddon is Ian Penman's excellent litho comics fanzine, and Duried was Kev Williams's first fanzine, best described as Monty Python meets Jack Vance. (\*) You'd think that after five years of active fanpubbing we'd be getting tired. Must be something in the polluted air up here.

20. Tynecon exhausted Gannetfandom.

For a few months we just vegetated, getting pissed, having woman troubles, publishing personalzines, just going through the motions of living and being in fandom. It wasn't really one of the best times.

By September things began to get interesting again. Mine was a married, but separated, young lady down Manchester way. Rob, Harry and Irene's thing was NESFiG. This acronym stands for the North East Science Fiction Group. An offshoot of Gannetfandom, it is intended to be a serious attempt to hold meetings with guest speakers and/or films. (@) The first meeting had Brian Aldiss as speaker and about sixty turned up. NESFiG has just celebrated its first year and looks like continuing. It hasn't been an unqualified success, just staggering on from meeting to meeting. There is a definite lack of organisation and planning, but it is a good idea, and has been worth doing if only because it gives us a chance to talk to people like Brian, Bob Shaw, and Chris Priest other than at cons.

It has also had a side effect in that it has nearly doubled the size of Gannetfandom; this has made a big difference to our weekly meetings.

21. All things change, especially fan groups.

Ian Maule moved down to London earlier this year and since then his fanac has been minimal. Jim Marshall married Judith over a year ago and they moved to the west side of the country. Thom Penman, Gannetfandom's great white writing hope now works in a library and behaves like a married man. Ritchie Smith is now back here after moving down to London for several months, where he found something to justify his cynicism. He was the Gannet most likely to be found scratching poems on the wall of his garret with a bloodstained finger, but who now appears to be on the verge of making it in the big time. A collaboration with Thom has just appeared in New Writings in SF 26, another has sold and there are several more on the way. He's also nearly completed a solo novel which, to judge from the fragments I've seen, is hot stuff.

Tuesday Gannet meetings now average a regular attendance of fourteen. The newer Gannets are all pleasant, good-drinking people. The Gannetfather talks to them but he's more often to be found in long conversations with Harry and Irene, and Rob Jackson. He sits quietly over his pint, more subdued than he used to be, feeling twinges of nostalgia for the old days, but perhaps not really wanting them to return. He looks around at the familiar faces and thinks back on the five years of Gannetfandom. They aren't easy to summarise, those five years of friendship, of arguments, crying on shoulders, getting drunk together, talking, listening, back biting, criticising, piss-taking, working together, of warmth and of hostility, changing relationships, goodbyes and hellos, of caring... yes, of caring.

22. Mary Legg and Gray Boak got me involved in fandom, took an interest in me, helped me.

This article is for them.

And for anyone who's ever been a Gannet, and for anyone else who knows or feels what I'm trying to express.

Ian Williams, September/October 1975.



## slice of life — peter weston



"In what novel was the principal character named Wade Harper?" asked the fan at the back of the room.

There was a stunned silence. The audience could scarcely comprehend the sheer impossibility of the question.

Expressions of despair appeared on the faces of the team being challenged, brows furrowed and teeth clenched with the intensity of concentration. The seconds ticked by and I was sure they didn't have the slightest idea of the answer. Vernon looked at his watch...

"Three To Conquer," said Laurence Miller. "By Eric Frank Russell."

"Call Him Dead," I muttered under my breath, recalling the original title when the serial first appeared in Astounding. Then I joined in the applause. I shall have to watch this man, I thought. He's getting dangerous.

Then it was the turn of Pauline's team. The BSFG was holding a quiz night, and rather than the usual method of splitting everyone into teams and then asking questions devised by the Committee, Vernon had introduced an ingenious new system by which members made up their own questions to ask each other. Of course there had to be some rotation of both parties, each time, and by nine o'clock things were getting a bit complicated.

"Who won the Doc Weir Award this year?" asked Pauline, sneaking in an unfair fannish reference.

"The what?" chorused her opponents.

Rog Peyton grinned. He, Vernon and Pauline were the only three out of the thirty or so present in the room to have even heard of the Award; other than, of course, the actual 1975 winner himself. (\*\*) So much for fannishness in the Second City!

But that was the end of a round, and now Vernon started to work out the score. First he drew a series of lines on a large piece of graph paper, then took out his slide rule. Those in the front row heard an arcane rumble, "Two points if they get it right," he muttered, "but only one point to the following team, if they got it right, and deduct one point from the first team if they couldn't, adding that to the score of the team who asked the question in the first place..."

He scribbled away while the hum of conversation grew and grew. Ray Bradbury began to do conjuring tricks. Roger started to sell books. Others went to get refills, fan-wives to talk about whatever it is fan-wives discuss when they get together, and Adrian Mellor took rapid notes for his sociology thesis. Proudly I looked around the room. This was the Birmingham Science Fiction Group, 1975.

My column in the last Maya produced some gratifyingly perceptive comments, like "What did happen to the 33rd issue of Speculation?" and "Why were you moving a coal bunker to the top of your garden?"

Let me explain. Despite Harry Bell's illustration to the contrary I don't actually keep coal in the thing. Rather, for the last couple of years I've used it to hold my compost heap; a spoonful of Garrota makes the grass cuttings ferment (\*\*)Ed's footnote: Peter is too modest to mention it, but he won it himself this year.

away merrily.

What I was really trying to do in my first installment was to set the stage, as it were, to introduce some of the local SF crowd and to take my own life-story up to the historic point at which I made Contact with the original BSFG. Having got that far, I intended this time to move on and contrast those early days in Charlie Winstone's front room with the present-day slick and sophisticated Group. The trouble is that I don't feel like doing it just now. Instead I thought I'd work off some steam about the new Andromeda anthology, the first volume of which has just been delivered to the publisher.

Let me digress. Back in 1965-66 when the "old" BSFG was starting to disintegrate, we made several abortive attempts to get the club onto a better footing. After they each failed I remember observing that what was really needed were some older, wiser heads. I was dimly aware that we callow youths were penniless innocents; and more, that it would be almost impossible to maintain an "open" Group (as opposed to a huddle in said front room) where there were no old-timers to crawl occasionally out of the woodwork (as there are in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New York and London, all cities with long fannish histories).

I wasn't quite right. I thought we needed more experienced fans to take over, but if all the BNFs of the day had actually migrated to Birmingham we would probably have felt resentful, crowded out. Instead we had to grow up ourselves, put some solid fannish experience behind us, and become in our own right those gnarled old veterans, able to dodder around annoying all the young neofans with stories of how much more fun we'd had in the Grand Days of 1963.

So now, waiting for the quiz scores, I looked around the familiar walls of the George Room at the Imperial Centre. I saw the keen fans — Vernon, Pauline, and Hazel, each of whom have chaired Novacon, and Stan Eling and wife Helen, who will be chairing the next one. I saw David Hardy, our astronomical artist and F&SF cover illustrator; Rog Peyton, owner of one of the U.K.'s largest SF bookshops; David Sutton, one-time editor of Shadow and now of professional horror anthologies; and Adrian Cole, who has just sold a 180,000-word novel (his first) to a U.S. publisher and has given up his job to write full-time.

Dimly I sensed the ghosts of others not at that particular meeting. Jack Cohen, fandom's amiable Mad Professor and chairman of Novacon 4; Bob Rickard, whose magazine The News so impressed the Fortean Society in the United States that they recently flew him out to Chicago — and who has been commissioned to write a book on Fort's mysteries.

And other good people, tending to drift away into the mundane, now, but still apt to turn up at occasional meetings. Tim Stannard of the old Aston Group, now a wealthy socialite and solicitor, driving an Alfa Romeo and with a big house in Edgbaston. Geoff Winterman, one of the few survivors from the front-room era and now headmaster at a large West Midlands school. (Geoff originally made Contact through the old Cheltenham SF Society, and his first memory is of Peter Mabey's booming chuckle, "You say you live in Dean Drive? Ho! Ho! Ho!") And there's my pal Tom Shippey, Oxford's youngest



don and the man who sets the SF questions for Mastermind. (\*)

Yes, we've come a long way, and that's without counting the two or three dozen others I haven't mentioned, people like Laurence, and Kevin Easthope, who last week bought a Gestetner 380 through the Exchange and Mart because he wants to publish a fanzine. These are our seed-crop, our fans of the future.

And then I suppose, there is me.

I'm pleased that a witness exists who was present all through the evening which led up to my being offered the chance to edit the Andromeda anthologies. Despite Ritchie Smith's comment in some Gannetazine(\*\*) about "that hustler Weston", the witness (who is Chris Morgan) can vouch that I made absolutely no overtures to Anthony Cheetham.

This is the way it happened.

Last year Anthony Cheetham secured a top job, as managing director of Futura Publications, a new paperback house backed by the considerable muscle of the British Publishing Corporation. Because he had known Rog Peyton for some time, and seemed a friendly and approachable sort as publishers go, he was invited along to our February meeting this year to talk about the problems and rewards of SF publishing. He gave an excellent talk and the evening was a great success.

Afterwards — well, you know how it goes. Everyone hangs around the bar, and there were Chris Morgan and I, by ourselves at a table, rabbiting on about the merits of various SF authors and discussing the stories which we were going to write when we got around to it. (That's actually doing Chris a disservice. He does get around to it, while in February I was only just beginning to write and, for reasons which will get steadily more clear, have not managed to go much further even today.)

There we were, until Anthony came and sat next to us and joined in. We'd never met before, not even corresponded in any way, but I found we seemed to have similar tastes. We both liked Fritz Leiber (but disliked other fantasy), Larry Niven, some Heinlein, and oh, various other congruencies. We chatted: I didn't make any particular effort to be ingratiating since I figured that with all the other eager busybodies in fandom he was long since spoken for, and anyway, at the time I was feeling a bit fed up with publishers generally over several matters which I won't even try to explain here.

After a while Anthony excused himself and retired, and that was that, until on the following Wednesday morning I received a mysterious white envelope through the post. "I'd like to persuade you to edit a new anthology series..." it began.

Yippee! Call me Charles Hornig II!

In many ways that was just the start of my present troubles. Oh, no doubt at all, this was a wonderful opportunity and I was overjoyed to get the invitation. But I didn't realise at first how much work it would entail, nor the unfortunate effect it would have upon some of the other things I was trying to get going, earlier in the year.

Editing can often be a thankless task. Speculation long ago cast me as an editor rather than as a writer, and I sometimes wonder if things might have been different if I'd never started that fanzine. Writing has never been easy or natural for me; I've had to work at it, and editing is too easy, too much of a cop-out. It doesn't force one to develop any real facility with words, and so although I entered fanzine fandom in 1963 it wasn't until quite recently that I started to do very much more than re-type other people's words for public consumption. Except, that is, for an abortive early phase during which I used to write LoCs and other bits and pieces (the first "Malcolm Edwards" columns(#), and an OMPazine, Nexus).

These efforts died an early death under the sheer press-

(\*)Ed's footnote: Mastermind, for overseas readers without the benefit of BBC TV, is an incredibly popular quiz in which the contestants answer questions on their own speciality as well as general knowledge. At least two have chosen SF so far.

(\*\*)Ed's other footnote: I have a vague memory that it wasn't Ritchie, but I'm not sure.

(#)Ed's yet another footnote: These were written before this pipsqueak newcomer came along and went ZOOOM through the fannish firmament, who just happened to be actually called Malcolm Edwards.

ure of editing. Only in the last half-dozen issues of Spec did I start to make time and space to spread myself editorially, and only since I've shelved publication for a while have I managed to do anything more than that.

(There, I've admitted it. For the last two years I've been shying away from the repeated question: is Spec dead? The answer is no, but it is resting and will have to stay resting until pressures of family, work, house, garden and other commitments start to ease off a little.)

From the middle of 1974 onwards I've been trying to develop some sort of greater fluency, and spurred on by redundancy and three weeks' unemployment I managed to sell a fair volume of professional work last year, although mostly for non-SF media. But still, I have managed to turn out the SFM pieces, even though no-one but Merf Adamson reads them, and by February this year I'd become very much involved with a projected series of stories upon which Tom Shippey and I were collaborating — the first time I've ever tried to write fiction. The advent of Andromeda, I feared, could once again submerge the nascent spark — and so indeed it has happened.

Right, so I had six months to assemble the first volume. Easy! My first move was to write to all the British professionals whose addresses I knew, and to some favourite U.S. authors. Then an announcement in Locus and SFWA Bulletin, and a letter to all my ex-Speculation contributors saying, in effect, "this is your chance!" Not because I necessarily wanted to play favourites, I hasten to add, but because Anthony Cheetham had stressed his desire to encourage newcomers and these were the people most likely to succeed at writing fiction if they should turn their hand to it. Half of my former contributors were professionals anyway (Chris Priest, Mark Adlard, Brian Stableford, David Redd, and so on).

So far, so good. Then I made two mistakes. I wrote to SF Monthly and to The Writer, both places where, I reasoned, I might expect to find aspiring young hopefuls.

That is known as "leading with your chin".

A deceptive calm followed for two months, during which time I bought my first stories, two resulting from that announcement in Locus. I went through most of the professional-quality material on the market and learned a few things which ten years of fan-editing had failed to teach me. One is that good stories do not grow on trees. Any editor has to work hard to get access to a decent selection of material before competitors snap up all the choice items. Can I hear hollow laughs from Terry Carr, Harry Harrison, Ken Bulmer? (not to mention Messrs. Baen, Ferman and White). It helped, of course, that word-rates for Andromeda are fairly high by British standards, but even so, this was an unknown new venture and writers have existing commitments...

I was also surprised at the number of sub-standard manuscripts floating about. Stories written years ago and which agencies regularly send out time and again, the second-rate pieces not really bad but which don't excite, don't inspire one to publish except in desperation. In fact I suspect that's how a lot of SF does eventually get into print. But, with the advantage of long deadlines, I didn't have to be desperate and I was determined not to compromise, to accept nothing I didn't personally feel sure about, no matter what by-line was on the manuscript. Shame I had to reject all those Heinlein stories...

But I jest. I remember wondering about the feasibility of starting an Editors' Standard Tip-off System, so we all know where a story has been. Say, Harry puts a coffee-stain on the back page, Ken fills in a few 'o's on Page 1, Julie Davis bites off the corners. This idea occurred to me after I accidentally dropped a peanut-butter sandwich on an offending item; fortunately the brown stains came off otherwise someone would have been thinking the worst of me...

I have had some funny experiences. Agents in particular, whom one would expect to be old hands at this game. Obviously I can't name any names, except to say that some agencies are better than others and our good friend Les Flood is above reproach. But some of the others!

There was one agent, for instance, representing an established writer, who wrote a letter something like this:

"When I first took on X he sent me a huge pile of stories and I thought I'd never get through them. But I've worked



away and managed to place all but four, and now I'm pleased to send these to you."

The items in question were yellowed and dog-eared, and the sales pitch above hardly filled me with confidence before I started reading.

Then there was the agent who sent me three long stories by someone I'd never heard of, the sheets un-numbered and unbound, so they all fell into a pile when I opened the envelope. Of course he hadn't enclosed a return envelope or postage, and I had to resist a strong urge to throw the whole lot away. Glad I didn't: some time afterwards his client wrote to me direct, asking if I'd seen the stories since she'd been trying to get them back from the agent for the last six months at least.



But all this was as nothing compared to the storm that was about to hit me.

My notices appeared in the magazines, and hundreds of little would-be writers must have thought, "Aha..."

Every morning the postman staggered up my path with an armful of manuscripts. I grew to dread his approach. Six, eight, ten, twelve per day! All those rejects from the SFM Story Competition. All those rejects from the Sunday Times/Gollancz Competition. My little girl Alison started to say each morning, "More rubbish, daddy."

I filled a crate in my study and started on a second. I fell far behind on reading them. Most of the people submitting seemed to be absolute amateurs without the most basic idea of writing a story. One was so unbelievably bad in every possible way that I wondered if C. Platt had come back from the grave to hoax me again. One envelope was tastefully decorated with blue spiders, painstakingly drawn in ballpoint ink. There was a woman who wrote asking if I would consider her story but who didn't actually send it, nor an SAE. I didn't see why I should reply to that, so every week she would write again, with increasing desperation, asking would I consider her story? I figured if she didn't know enough to actually let me see it, then it probably wouldn't be very good. Maybe I missed something?

Purple ink in exercise books, illiterate scrawl, no return postage in a good half of the cases. Do people really value their work so little? Am I expected to subsidise their hobbies? Ten pence per envelope is a fair average, and I received nearly three hundred stories, all told.

Look, I'm sorry to sound contemptuous; bear in mind

that I was trying, all the time, to do the decent thing, acknowledge submissions, read them quickly and make helpful comments. But it wasn't being made easy for me. Doubtless many people think what a churl this man Weston must be. And yet when I asked the advice of an older, wiser editor, he/she (no names) said bluntly: "No return postage — then throw them away." This seemed a bit hard, so now I send them back without a stamp; let the authors pay a few postage dues and they'll soon catch on!

One man wrote to me, and I kid you not, saying that he had a story to submit but he wondered if I would require a stamped-addressed return envelope? He enclosed a stamped-addressed return envelope for my reply. I couldn't face it and told him I was full up.

That's it, you see. After a while it gets so that you can tell whether a story is going to be any good just by looking at the accompanying letter. Little things, like if the author can't spell "story" then he probably isn't going to make it. All right, I know Samuel R. Delany for instance can't spell for peanuts, but "story" isn't really a very hard word, is it? (I am not joking!)

I showed one letter to Adrian Mellor, after we had fixed the hot water pipe in my bathroom. It said, "I am enclosing a story of 5,261 words length."

"You gave it away, baby," he said sorrowfully.

Only once did I lose my temper. Some idiot sent a manuscript along, just among a dozen one morning. It joined the pile. Two weeks later he sent a terse little letter demanding to know why he hadn't yet heard from me. A week later he sent me a registered letter in which he strictly took me to task for not answering, hinted that he might take his story elsewhere, and ended with a thinly-veiled threat to sue if I dared to use it without his permission.

I was so annoyed that I wasted ten minutes finding the wretched manuscript (it was halfway down the pile, waiting its turn), read it quickly (well, the first two pages. That was more than enough: I think it was variant 6-B on the Atlantis theme) and wrote back telling him what he could do with his story. Naturally he hadn't bothered to enclose return postage.

What a waste of time, though, when out of all those manuscripts I didn't find a single piece I've wanted to take for Andromeda. My only successes have been to pick up four or five "possibles", stories which seem to have a little bit about them in some way or another. Rather late one night I came across a quite surprisingly good story, written by a 17-year-old schoolboy and very nearly acceptable for publication somewhere, if a little too reminiscent of Anderson's Trader Team. In this, and a few other instances, I tried to be as helpful as I could, saying what I thought could be improved and inviting the author to re-submit.

These are the hardest to deal with, the stories which are nearly right, too good to return with just a rejection slip alone. I usually have to read through the manuscript a couple of times in cases like this, trying to put a mental finger on what seems to be wrong. It's hard, and I'm anxious not to be dogmatic and impose my ideas on someone else, but so far this approach seems to be working quite well. Everyone so far has seemed to take my comments in the spirit in which they were intended, and I've subsequently been pleased to accept several items which have been rewritten in this way.

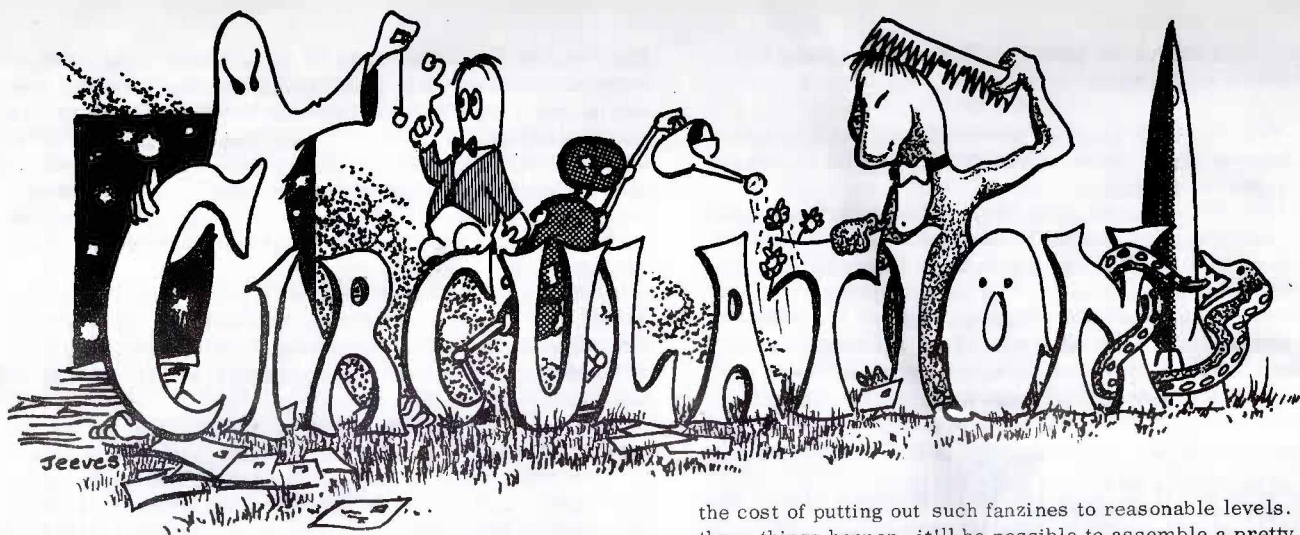
And the really good stories, the eleven which will eventually appear in the first book, where did they come from?

From just the places you might expect. From existing professionals, and from many of the people in fandom, some who are starting to carve out names for themselves in the SF field; Andrew Stephenson, Rob Holdstock, Ian Watson, and so on. And for the second volume my original hope has paid off; I already have two first-time stories from ex-Speculation contributors, both of which I think are very good indeed. All in all Andromeda has been a battle but I'm well pleased with the result and I'll be very interested in the reactions of fandom.

Meanwhile, for the next column, I plan to dig out some old records I haven't looked at for nearly ten years. When I first started my fanac, you see, I kept a couple of filing drawers of all my correspondence. What's in there? Cliff Teague and the Second Coming of Degler; the early Zeniths, and the start of the Platt wars. Who knows what I will find!

Pete Weston, September 1975.





There were rather a lot of nice compliments about the letter-column last issue. I'd like to repay the compliments to everybody who loosed, especially those whose letters I published for giving me such good material to work with. I've got even more good material to work with this time, which has made the job of arranging it in a readable order even more difficult and challenging than last time. I think I've arrived at a pleasing result again: this time, all the real arguments are towards the end of the column, providing a climax, just like they have in those things... you know, books... The fact that the first half of the column consists mainly of well-known people saying mainly nice things isn't deliberate, honestly; it's just that their letters fitted best in that order. See what you think of it, anyway. Have fun.

Harry Warner Jr.,  
423 Summit Ave.,  
Hagerstown,  
Md. 21740, USA.

Your wrapping method provided mint condition arrival, although there was a disconcerting liveliness to the issue as I read it, suggesting that it was trying to roll back into the fanzine equivalent of a foetal position.

The cover is gorgeous. The only possible criticism might be the tinted paper: I think it would have looked even stronger on stark white stock. But that's nitpicking. I can't help wishing that by some fortunate accident, this cover might find its way into the centerfold of an issue of *Playboy* some day. The American male might never recover from his surprise.

As Peter Weston mentions, 30 issues or so seems to be the lifespan of quite a few fanzines. I noticed it while working on the second volume of the fan history (whose creation caused most of my locless condition in recent months). Without looking it up, I believe *Quandry* ended with about 30 issues and I know that I produced 30 issues of *Spaceways* (and just the other week, I got a letter from a neofan asking how he could subscribe to it, just 33 years after its final issue!). When science fiction has driven other courses from the curricula of good universities, a professor might win promotion to department head status by publishing a brilliant analysis of how widespread this phenomenon really is (discounting extraneous factors like fanzines with extremely small or large numbers of pages, those produced in joint editorship, and so on). Pete also makes me wonder if this predilection to astronomy will continue to influence neofans. It's so much the in thing today to poohpooh the space program, and I'm afraid that stars and nebulae may suffer from guilt by association. I was among those who were mad about astronomy, even before I discovered the prozines, almost wearing out the one book in the local public library that provided in basic language the basic facts about constellations and planets and such things.

I marvel at a nation where civilisation has reached such a point that one can get a plumber on the same day to handle an emergency.

The letter section is a pleasure to read, because you've done such a skilful job of making one letter flow naturally into the next. Your format is splendid, and I imagine that it's a forerunner of how many fanzines of the future will look, with postage and paper costs going skyhigh: fewer pages with more on them. Maybe the day will come when one fan in each nation will own photo offset equipment and publish most of the nation's fanzines on it in some format such as this, making a sensible profit that will bring down

the cost of putting out such fanzines to reasonable levels. If all these things happen, it'll be possible to assemble a pretty good fanzine collection in comparatively little space, a smaller proportion of a fanzine's edition will get thrown out, the price of old fanzines will decline, and utopia will be here.

((I only hope this lettercolumn hangs together as well. I don't think I've done all that bad a job this time either, though it is more difficult because a lettercolumn is like a broom — as it goes along, it collects more and more subjects (bits of fluff?), and it is more and more difficult to keep sweeping them all along... Anyway. Here's someone else going on about astronomy and fanzine lifetimes...))

Bob Shaw,  
31 Birchwood Drive,  
Ulverston,  
Cumbria LA12 9PN.

I would say that *Maya* is now on the main sequence of the Rustle-Bedspring diagram, which charts the lifetimes of fanzines and places them in categories such as Well-Read Giant, etc. On the main sequence, *Maya* can

look forward to a long period of stability, which is what traditionally attracts the best fan writers and inspires them to make the extra effort to keep up their quality.

It occurs to me that the joke above requires the reader to have not only a strong stomach but to know about the Russell-Hertzsprung diagram... ((I thought Hertzsprung came first, but never mind.)) ...and is therefore a proof of what Pete Weston said about an interest in astronomy being common among SF fans. I think he is absolutely right there, even if he mistakenly believes I don't know how to say 'flower'. One of the things which separates fans from other people is that fans know exactly where they are in the universe and how little they mean to it, whereas if you stop somebody at random in the street the odds are that he will be ignorant about basic astronomy. It is a well known fact that the people chosen to write scripts for science fiction movies and TV series don't know anything about science fiction, and this often manifests itself in the way they regard words such as star, planet, galaxy and nebula as being completely interchangeable. A further proof of Weston's Theorem!

Sam Long,  
Box 4946,  
Patrick A.F. Base,  
Fla. 32925, USA.

Pete Weston was rather enjoyable. His article was a bit slow starting, and it wandered a bit from time to time, but overall it was quite good. The fannishness of plumbing is questionable, but the fannishness of telescopes and rockets is not. He might have mentioned that he got his lifelong desire when he was here on his TAFE trip: I took him out and had him fire a weather rocket from the Cape. What one is used to, one finds unremarkable, and so I find weather rockets and satellite pictures and radar unremarkable... after all, we launch metrockets from the Cape thrice a week. One even gets blasé about Saturns and Titans. believe it or not. To Pete, the flipping of the firing switch for his metrocket was on the order of a religious experience.

I also took Gordy Dickson out to launch one soon after the Apollo Soyuz launch. One can understand fans, even BNFs like Pete, getting all het up about launching a metrocket, but you'd expect a major writer like Gordy, who's sent rocketships across the galaxy hundreds of times, to be a little more urbane about such things. I assure you he was not. He was like a little boy again when



his rocket went off; his grin was a mile wide. I saw him three weeks later at a con, and he was still telling people about his launch.

((That doesn't surprise me nearly so much, actually. So much imagination is based on wishful thinking — in SF writers, finely directed and plotted, maybe — so to turn even a small segment of the wish into reality must be a tremendous experience.))

Darrell Schweitzer, 113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, Pa. 19087, USA. I might add something to the discussion of the (de)merits of "academic" criticism in SF. I think its influence on the field is virtually nil, because no-one reads it but other academics. The reason is that the writing in learned journals of that sort is often shockingly bad. It seems the experts on literary art don't know how to form a sentence or a paragraph, or how to use the right word and not its second cousin. Certainly none of this criticism can carry much weight except in English departments. The students never see it, unless they are particularly conscientious, or have to write graduate term papers which require regurgitation of such material. I find, though, that it is often possible to avoid this experience, since the students tend to write like the teacher, only worse, and this bores the teacher to distraction in a short while. They are unwilling to admit that the whole system is wrong, but it is a relief to get a readable term paper once in a while. Thus the student who can actually write has an enormous advantage (I once dashed off a B quality paper in two hours, called "Mark Twain's Science Fiction and Fantasy", for a graduate English course. It will be published in Outworlds sometime in the future. The style isn't academic at all, and there are no footnotes.)

The reading public, which supports books by buying them, never sees this sort of thing at all.

((Funny how one never sees any academic discussion of the entertainment value of SF books. I suppose that would be too interesting to the general public, and therefore beneath notice.))

Chris Priest, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Rd., Harrow, Middx. Maya 8 is an exceptionally good and interesting issue. I read it in half an hour, and if you want a succinct reaction to it, then the thing that's wrong with it is that there's only about one-eighth enough of it.

I'd like to pick up a few things from the lettercolumn. I'm always amused, as I think you were, by relative newcomers who haven't previously heard that Bob Shaw, say, used to be a fan. It reminded me forcefully of the time I was at one of my first cons, and I overheard a conversation. One eager young fan, a round and sweaty individual, with bum-fluff on his upper lip, as I recall, was haranguing his friend, "HARLAN?" he was saying. "You mean you haven't heard of HARLAN?!" My God, you call yourself a fan and you haven't heard of HARLAN?!" I was very humbled by this, because I didn't know what a HARLAN was either.

Keith Freeman has missed my point, I think. It is only science fiction writers who call people from Earth "Terrans". The point I was trying to make was that this is an sf idiom, one which has no meaning outside the genre, and thus likely to keep the walls of the ghetto in place. The trouble with sf is that it's too full of sf-stuff (to rephrase Josephine Saxton). The beauty of a book like The Dispossessed — about which I was making the remark — is that while being unmistakably at the heart of the very best science fiction it is also an excellent novel, one which can compete with the best of what is being published as general fiction. (Indeed, Gollancz published it on their general fiction list.) It's the use of idioms like "Terran" which enhance the ghetto trappings. What's more, it is an inaccurate term, probably coined by one of the mercenary hacks of the '30's. As I recall it, "terra" translates as "earth", meaning "soil". Keith says: "Just as pertinent a question would be, 'And is it only science fiction writers who write about faster-than-light travel?'" No, not as pertinent, and anyway the answer would be 'no'. I've got at least a dozen books on my shelf which talk seriously about faster-than-light travel, and not one of them is by a science fiction writer. Five minutes in the science section of his local library would convince Keith that I kid him not. Faster-than-light travel is a crucial part of metaphysical and cosmological thinking; "Terran" is a junky bit of sf-shorthand that a writer of

Ursula Le Guin's quality would be well advised to forget.

I reeled back from Marc Bowden's jab at the jaw, because until that moment of reading his letter it hadn't occurred to me that Fugue could be linked with The Dispossessed. For a minute or two I took it as flattery (in spite of what I said about the book in my review, I consider The Dispossessed to be one of the five or six major sf novels), but then, sadly, I came to the conclusion that the jab at the jaw was just a jab, and no more. What Bowden means is that my criticisms of The Dispossessed are the same as his criticisms of Fugue.

((That was my reading of his letter too: hence my comment that his criticism was rather personalised, ad hominem.) I felt that Ursula Le Guin was setting out to characterise Shevek, describe her worlds etc. etc., in such a way that the reader would participate and "identify"... but she was not wholly successful; if I may say so, my intention with Fugue was quite different.

One last comment on a comment on my review. Of course I understand the nuances that Richard Wilson describes of "meet with", "talk with", etc. These are just superficial aspects of a profounder truth: that American English and English English are two different languages with some words in common. Ursula Le Guin, in private correspondence, retorted strongly to my niggling at her use of "talk with", saying, substantially, that she was an American and what the hell was I going to do about it? On reflection, I think that my criticism was not so much of Ursula, as of her English copy-editor. The Gollancz edition of The Dispossessed, which was the one I read, had been dutifully converted to English English as far as spelling went, but the nuances were left intact and thus seemed alien.

But enough of comments on comments. The two best bits of Maya 8 were the articles by Pete Weston and Malcolm Edwards. Pete's piece was excellent fan-writing; funny and natural and interesting. Its qualities were beautifully pointed out by Malcolm's reviews, and the observations he made about the difference between "old" fan-writing and "new". When I first encountered fanzines, the "old" fan-writing was in its last throes, and the first fanzines I read seemed to me to be painfully unfunny, illiterate and esoteric. Shortly after this, the "new-wave" fanzines of Charles Platt and Pete Weston started appearing, and although they were sometimes painfully serious, at least I knew roughly what they were talking about. Since then, of course, much has changed and the "new" fanwriting that Malcolm describes has emerged.

Anyway, it was a good, readable, and provocative issue, and I'm looking forward to the next with almost more interest than I'm looking forward to the next Speculation...

((Hmmm. Er, Pete: what did happen to Spec-33?))

Pete Weston, 72 Beeches Drive, Erdington, Birmingham, B24 0DT.

I'm delighted to get a fix of belated egoboo from Susan Wood, although sorry that she should apparently have been awed by Speculation: that was never the intention. I'm surprised, too, since her own work in OSFIC and other Canadian fnz in the early '70's used to impress me a lot, and I used to write to her occasionally asking if she'd do something for me. Of course she got involved with Energumen and I guess that took all her time.

However, I know what she means: when Dick Bergeron's Warhoon used to appear I got the sulks for days. Now there's a fanzine: about the best, most intellectual-with-wit mixture of fan-nish and serious contents I have ever seen. Somehow Dick always brought out the best in all his contributors, and made me wonder why I bothered to try and emulate him.

Although I remember with one issue of Spec I counted up and found that every single contributor had a degree (for what that is worth), save me! What a state, to be given an inferiority complex by one's own fanzine.

((There's a possible answer to Darrell there: that when academics "slum it" in fanzines, they become readable, as they certainly did in Speculation.)

Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave., Toronto M6P 2S3, Ontario, Canada.

Let me go on record on record or tape or paper or stone tablet as being completely and utterly and totally opposed to your new method of mailing the fanzine. Even after nearly two weeks crushed beneath the almost unbelievable weight of my twenty-six volume set of "Totally Unwitty Exagg-



erations in the Work of Mike Glicksbn", the damn thing is still all folded up on itself like a young girl who's actually seen a nude photograph of Greg Pickersgill: I doubt it will ever get straight again, and as a fan who loves and cherishes and preserves and protects fanzines, I'm appalled at your casual mutilation of your own child! I bet you kept your own copies all flat and pristine (isn't she married to Malcolm?) and attractive, didn't you? HA! I'll tell you what, you can mail 'em out any way you want to, as long as you treat your own copy the same way as you treat the rest. Then we'll see, yessirree...

((This seems an opportune moment to make a general apology to all those poor mutilated copies of Maya, and their new owners, who had to struggle so to keep the things open rather than rolled up into a little tube. I had absolutely no idea that the paper would be so determined to stick to its new shape once rolled up. I hope the Post Office manage this new paper-bag lark OK, and don't tear all the corners off or something — but at least you'll have flat Mayas.))

I applaud heartily the return of Peter Weston to the fanzine scene. His contribution is a splendid blend of chatty fannish anecdotal writing with serious and thoughtful contemplation. His general conclusions as to the bent of most sf fans happen not to apply to me (I've little interest in either astronomy or rockets: I didn't planet that way but what I missile live without) ((YEEAUCK!)) but I found his speculations intriguing.

I do not, I regret to say, think highly of your layout this time, Robert old sod. Having one piece start in the middle of another and then sticking another piece into the middle of that piece seems unnecessarily complicating to your readers. You might also investigate the use of some sort of indicator to show the conclusion of a given article. Just for us slower types, of course. On a couple of occasions I wasn't sure if the bottom of a page was the end of the article or not, and it wasn't until I'd started the next couple of paragraphs that I could be sure.

((See Dave Rowe's letter later, Mike, for someone who puts the same case even more vehemently. As for indicators of the end of a column: done, as of this issue.))

Hey, Malcolm Edwards writes most enjoyable fanzine reviews, even if he somewhat fails to see the reason behind the admittedly pompous wording of the FAAn Awards ballot. The key phrase is "with the doings of amateur and professional literary sf personalities." It was aimed, fairly obviously, at eliminating from consideration any fanzines based primarily on Star Trek, Planet of the Apes, Space: 1999, or other such viable or inane spinoffs. Not that there's anything wrong with such fanzines, just that we didn't want to consider them for the awards. It might have been easier to say "a fannish fanzine is what we point at when we say the phrase" but some sort of more or less formal definition was needed. A "fanzine" can be almost anything produced by a fan, and the awards weren't envisioned as applying to Locus, or comiczines, or other such areas. Hence the restriction to literary sf, so that fanzines which do use reviews, critiques and articles (such as Maya) are eligible, and the use of "fannish" and "doings of..." etc. It worked, and while it may need a little polishing, I think it's a good sound idea. I hope it gets established.

((I don't think Malcolm felt the wording was unnecessarily pompous; he's too brainy not to see the reason. He was simply pointing out that the phraseology was rather self-important.))

Malcolm's other remarks are insightful, interesting and damn well written. I like the column and hope he continues it. If I published anything, I think I'd like to have him review it.

I found it somewhat amusing to read various people in the lettercolumn displaying their ruffled feathers when to me it seemed that they were all answering each other and essentially saying exactly the same thing. Brian Parker's letter, for example, is the absolutely perfect answer to the comments in Jon Harvey's piece. You needn't have said a thing, Rob, except to point this out. There is only one sin in publishing a fanzine, and that is publishing bad writing. It makes no sense at all to attack another fellow's choice of writing style or content: as Brian says you can take it or leave it. If Jon doesn't like what you choose to publish in Maya he doesn't have to get the fanzine. Complaining about it is pointless though. A faned has the Sacred Duty to publish the sort of material he likes and the sort of writing he likes: even if it's nauseatingly disgusting stuff like Paul Skelton does in Interno. And I wouldn't have it any other way!

Merf Adamson,  
14 St. James Close,  
Hedon,  
Hull HU12 8BH.

Ghucephalus ((in M7)) was, I confess, interesting. Judging from the fanzines I personally have seen, I wouldn't guess that fan publishing was going through a bad patch.

Of course, I haven't seen all, and I dare to ask who has (though it would appear that Pete Roberts has seen a large proportion): but even allowing for a biased sample (I picked up mine at Seacon), there hardly appears to be a dearth of material or zines to publish in. Much of this, no doubt, will be obviously me making something up in order to disagree and get you to write back and tell me where I'm wrong; but I would make the prediction that since the appearance of Science Fiction Monthly many new fans have been recruited, and are making their presences felt.

((Surprisingly enough, not really: most SFM readers seem to be surprisingly passive, preferring just to turn up to cons, and if they do think about fanzines it's generally in a passive way, by subscription. I've only had about three or four locs from people who can be identified as introduced to fandom by SFM.))

You yourself have noticed the influx, with all those letters on M7: I'm willing to bet that a large proportion were from neos like myself.

((No. Just that more people got M7 than M6, and also a greater percentage felt inspired to comment, to get in on the new, rather changed Maya.))

Of course, the percentage of those who stick with it and eventually become BNFs will not be a large one, but even that must be encouraging. So that part of your thesis, that fanzines are at a standstill, should be out of date. Good thing too. The other thing that I noticed, the idea that faneds are thinking "Erk, my zine isn't half as good as that, better fold" due to inferiority complexes following the sight of one of the American zines — maybe. And I agree that there should be no competition, explicit, implied, or imagined. Not that I'm saying "Away with the fanzine awards! No more Novas or Hugos!" Credit where credit's due; but the thing is not to let the idea of an award get hold, so that one merely produces zines for the purpose of winning. It is, of course, a worthy aim to produce a zine of the highest possible standard; but there is the rather insurmountable limit of the amount of talent that the editor is in possession of. If it's as far as your talent goes, then one can be proud of being the best crudzine editor around, but one shouldn't be upset by the fact that it's still a crudzine. If it's published, it will be read, and that's the whole idea — that other people should read, and react to, the stuff that you wrote. It's an egotrip ("Gee, someone's actually reading something I wrote!").

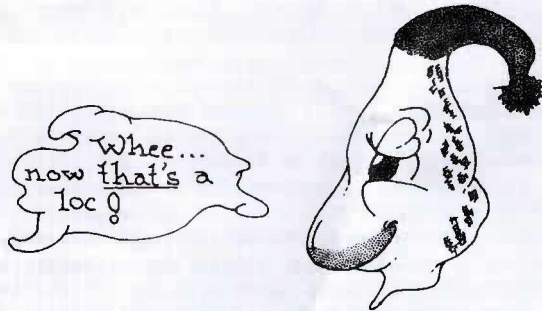
((The above was from Merf's loc on M7; somehow, Merf seemed to anticipate things people said in M8's lettercolumn well enough to illuminate and amplify them, in particular Dave Rowe's comments that fandom should be fun. So much of the fun in fanzines is that of reading and reacting. For example, see below. I quoted some of the following to Pete Weston in a letter I sent him with a quick summary of the reaction-so-far to his column in M8, and Pete's reaction is in his column this time. I wonder what Merf's reaction will be?))

On the subject of religion, I think that the SF Vs. God match was won and lost some time ago: and I think that the same conclusion was reached — that they're not mutually exclusive, though they may not be the best of bedfellows, and that it's all up to the individual. I know a few Jesus Freaks (the Cod Squad) personally, and though I find their sugar-coated platitudes difficult to swallow, or to relate to the real world, some of them are really great people. They don't go round trying to convert people (luckily), but they do seem to believe in all that stuff, so I say, "Good on 'em!" Individual beliefs for individual people. As long as people try to be consistent (like vegetarians not having gravy on their soya steaks), then ok. Live and let live. Just so long as they realise that we will tolerate them only until they start imposing, and poking their noses where they aren't wanted, these minorities are ok. I think that covers everybody....

((So do I. That's a very good last word on religion. Anyway, some of my best friends are Christians...))



Pete Weston, judging from what I've read of him in various places, always writes well, and I really enjoyed "Slice of Life." Great Stuff. Funny, I flirted with astronomy a while there too, but I never even got as far as learning the constellations (though I did read all the Patrick Moore my local library could get me, and can now point out Orion and Cassiopeia — on a good night). I think what started that off was "Fireball XL5" on the telly.



Between then and now, I have read a fair amount of sf, but it wasn't until '71 that I actually started getting Analog (July, curiously enough, the month John Campbell died. Hmmm...), and when SFM arrived, I discovered that fandom existed. Seacon was my first, and I'm booked for Novacon, so I guess I've gotten started. I shall have to wait to see whether it all comes to anything.

Since John Brosnan's Big Scab 3, I find it difficult to read anything by or about Malcolm Edwards without grinning like a loony. However, and despite my lack of observation of the zines reviewed, this one seems to be good stuff. It gives a good broad outline of what is being published and, by use of Triode, what used to be published by faneds in their zines.

As for his comments on Alan Hunter's article on comics: without having read it, maybe it's presumptuous to take sides, but I disagree with the article (or rather, with Malcolm's description of it). People have been trying to tell us for years that since we got into space there's nothing left to write about. It seems to be a popular misconception among those that don't know the field. SF is more than just (just!) spaceships and alien worlds, even though they do account for a fair proportion of it. No, sf is still "where it's at". Comics — nuts. Ok, so they may be a pretty good investment, but apart from that, they have nothing to recommend them. Sometimes, if I'm feeling complacent, I'll buy a couple to shock me back into an appreciative frame of mind; then, maybe, I can laugh at them, and I hand them to my kid brother to draw in. But, from the ones I've seen (a fair selection, I think), comics don't seem to have progressed at all in the way that sf has grown up from its own naive beginnings under Gernsback. Indeed, over the years, they seem to have deteriorated somewhat.

((I've never been inspired to find out enough about the general run of commercial comics to know if what you say is true or not, but I rather suspect it might be. I have, though, seen some quite extraordinary experimental French comic books, with themes of cosmic grandeur and artwork to match, but what seemed to be a total lack of scientific logic (I don't know about this for sure, as I don't read French with any great fluency.) Ask Harry Bell — he has them.))

There has been a proliferation, but no increase in quality which would make them worth collecting for their own sake (apart from the value appreciation rate); the stories, while not necessarily predictable, are trite, and the pseudoscience in some of them is just so bad that I'm amazed no-one seems to have noticed — and the supposed real science is worse: one recent comic I came across had the two heroes suspended in the middle of a space in a fast-accelerating craft, thus avoiding the crushing forces they would have experienced in g-couches bolted to the floor. No way. If they're going to avoid flying out through the tail of the machine, they have to accelerate at the same speed as the craft, and are therefore subject to the same forces of acceleration as if they were in fact on acceleration couches. Comics seem to be simply a money-making exercise. It's an area that hasn't been fully exploited up till now, so the publishers are out to cover it. And good luck to them, if there are people around who'll buy regularly and

boost profits — but it'll be a sad day if ever written sf loses out to comics, as it would seem Alan Hunter wants it to.

As for Peter Roberts' loc, it's true that "academic literary journals and their contributors have no god-given insights or rights to discuss any form of fiction." Dammit, books (=literature and particularly fiction) are written for people to read and enjoy. If those people happen to enjoy dissecting the ones they read, then fine, it's the same sort of activity as picking your nose — it depends on the company you do it in as to whether you get accepted or yelled at. (Actually, in both cases, it's not so much the act itself as what you do with the results that elicits the response.) And anyone can do it. Ok, so those who've had the practice and the training can often be more deft in their analysis or movement, but that's not to say that the untrained (nit-)picker can't contribute something useful or tasty to the subject. But in the end, it all comes down to what the majority agree on that has more weight. A critic can pan a book, but it can be a runaway best-seller (or inversely); a few people might look askance at a nose-picker, but the habit is very widespread. They might all be valid criticisms, in one sense, but in other senses can be totally irrelevant. "Continuity and discontinuity as a Structural Principle..." might be true and interesting, but if it doesn't make any difference to the enjoyment of the process of reading Lucky Starr and the... then it's irrelevant to anyone reading for enjoyment.

((Spot the circular logic in that last sentence.))

Of course, there are ramifications and ramifications, such as the argument that it's possible to enjoy something more if you can see the hidden allusions to, say, Hjarl's Saga, than if you can't. But then, if you don't know they're there, you don't have the disappointment of missing them if you haven't read the Saga.)

I agree with your reply to Darroll Pardoe, too. Though, being a neo (just when do I grow up into a full-fledged fan?) I still have quite a large interest in sf, as well as the actual fandom itself. SF is the way I came to fandom, and is the way others do, too (well, I mean, fandom grew out of sf, didn't it?). He has a good point, though, when he says that British fandom is a part of the whole of world fandom; though it's a good thing to be patriotic, and all that, one ought to take the overall view into account, too.

((Someone once said that you stop being a neo when you stop asking "When do I stop being a neo?" Hell, man, your two locs, and the two issues of Parvenu I've seen contain more insight, humour and just plain Good Sense than some people manage to produce in ten years of fanaticism.)

I have a soft spot for anybody who can not only use nose-picking as a metaphor for SF criticism, but also expand it to ten lines. That's what this fanzine needs — more snot. Talking of which...))

John Hall, 101 Lakeside Rd., London W.14. Will you explain, simply and without words of more than three syllables, for I am a bear of very little brain, why it is that SF is the core of Fandom? I know, you don't subscribe to Dr. Darroll's theory, but you didn't actually say why. I don't know sometimes what Fandom did to deserve Darroll Pardoe, but there we are, and I must resign myself to incomprehension. Nice chap really, you know.

((But what I was saying was that SF is NOT the core of fandom — there is a lot of SF discussion in fandom, and a lot of people find their way into fandom via a liking of SF — but it's not exclusively SF by a long way. Merf, above, is a typical example, as I am, of someone who started via SF, but neither of us want to restrict things to SF. The core of fandom is communications of various different sorts; if you read Mike Glicksohn's letter last issue and my reply, you'd have got a fairly good idea of my philosophy about fandom.))

SF is neither the gateway nor the core, actually. SF becomes more and more irrelevant as time goes on.

((No. SF is a gateway.... Paul Skelton and Merf Adamson both agree with you about the increasing irrelevance of SF to the confirmed fan communicator.))

The comix and Rock whatsits ((I assume you mean fandoms)) still labour blindly where so-called "SF" fandom was ten years ago.

((Compare that bit to Alan Hunter's letter below.)) We have moved on. Is The Dispossessed SF? Who cares? Although I have not yet read it, I'm sure it's damn fine literature, and that's what we're all in it for. Like it or not, we're a bunch



of intellectuals — pseudos maybe, but intellectuals all the same. At least some of us are, Dave Rowe, and happy and carefree though we may well prefer to be, we would not be so silly as to go round proclaiming that fandom is supposed only to be FUN. Fandom, I need hardly remind you, is A Way Of Life. Life is often hard, and quite often requires thought, the application of the mind. MATRICULATION etc.

Your image, Rowe, displays us all as happy hippy hop-heads. "Punt!" we cry, discarding an issue of *Zimri* as "pretentious" (I restford, are you reading this???) Fandom is a kind of debating society with teeth. That is why we fight so. Above all Fandom is not a game, it is outside niceties. Which is why I feel the slightest compunction to be at all reasonable when I read lines like "I would certainly prefer ((to hear)) of the subject of which he is a fan, rather than what a naive twenty-year-old did when confronted with militant student action" (Poke In The Eye With A Burnt Stick Award to woollyback Jon Harvey of Mynachdy, Cardiff) or the inanities of Keith Freeman who does not yet appreciate that any writer can write of the future but not all are SF writers per se. VIZ. Nevil Shute's *On The Beach* and Edgar Pangborn's *Day*. Before going to the bottom of the class, Freeman, answer me this. Is Kurt Vonnegut an SF writer or merely a writer?

To return to my theme, I definitely feel that fan must come to terms with the fact that "SF" fandom has moved on and to view it merely as a correspondence club that produces magazines, or a friendly society plus laughs, or a drinking club, or an International Standing Conference on Science Fiction, is both shortsighted and plain ignorant. Fandom is that body of people concerned with primarily literary arts but with no professional part in those arts. ((Okay, but you'd have to add a rider: "... within the activities of fandom..." or you'd be excluding that large body of people still active within fandom who've made money out of SF. Every single contributor to *MS* had made at least some money out of SF: even the editor has.))

If the word "arts" appears twice, it's because we are involved with just that: Art. Lives have been given over to the enjoyment of that ethereal muse, and we are no exception. I repeat, we are a bunch of intellectuals.

(The above may lead to brainstorms I read at a Con or large fannish gathering. I freely admit that the idea of calling the likes of Howard Rosenberg or Brian Burgess, or 101 other apparent cases of lobotomy. Intellectuals is a bitter pill to swallow. For the peace of mind of any to whom this obvious flaw in my reasoning has occurred, I suggest that there is Fandom and there is fandom.)



((Right on. We are intellectuals I think, and even the most fanish of us still retain some vestige of curiosity about something or other outside fandom: be it SF or what ever. But what you think of this idiot, John!))

Alan Stewart,  
6 Frankfurt am Main 1,  
Eschenheimer Anlage 2,  
Fed. Rep. of Germany.

What will Peter Weston's sociologist friend make of "fandom"? I shudder to think. A group of insecure individuals full of inferiority feelings, trying desperately to bolster up

their little world of make believe against the encroachment of the big bad "mundane" world outside?

What will he conclude from the fact that the term "fan", short for "fanatic", which suggests a person of extreme and unalterable views, as for example a religious fanatic, or at best a

mindless consumer of a specially produced trashy product, like a pop fan, is proudly used by many science fiction enthusiasts to denote themselves and their fellows?

Will Adrian find it odd that many "fans" try very hard to dissociate their interest group, their "fandom", from the interest itself, SF, to try to create a "fandom" in a vacuum? To be a fan of fandom is a pretty pointless exercise in introversion, group introversion even, and one which finds little favour among the newer readers of fanzines, although the "fannish fans" are very well dug in in the U.K. and insist on passing on (to other more sensible pursuits) with as much whimpering as possible.

The "intimacy" of which Jon Harvey complains so bitterly in *Maya 8* is what I would call cliquishness and ingroupishness, which, coupled with the use of redundant short-hand jargon, not surprisingly put off someone entering this sub-culture for the first time rather than encouraging him to join in the fun.

Darroll Pardoe's statements that "British fandom has never been big enough to stand on its own. It has always been a part of the whole international complex of fandom" are really quite remarkable. If we examine U.K. fanzines and conventions we find no evidence of British fandom's meshing particularly with the rest of the world, the growing numbers of continental European fans attending the Eastercons notwithstanding. They come but they don't mix much.

As far as British fanzines are concerned there is practically no American involvement in the form of contributions, while the number of letters of comment from over the water appearing in U.K. zines is pretty small. And when I look at an American fanzine I sometimes wonder if anything at all exists outside the U.S.A. and Canada. No, this "international complex" is just another fannish myth like the notion that British (or any other non-U.S. or Canadian) fanzines have any chance in this day and age of winning supposedly international awards like the Hugos or Fannies without deluging the whole of the North American continent with copies.

((Wow. For someone who considers himself interested, you're pretty cheesed off, aren't you? Either that, or you're just playing devil's advocate. I'm not going to argue with you over in-groupishness — if you don't like what you can see inside the group when you're already half-way inside, that's your affair. But on overseas contact — we can't be in the same fandom! If you don't bother to send your fanzine to the States, you can be sure you won't get much response. I like "deluging the whole of the North American continent with copies", as you disenchantedly put it, because I like getting American fanzines in trade, and I do get lots and contributions from American fan. Mike Glicksohn and Doug Barbour will be in next issue. Fandom is as international as you make it. Your point about the FAAn Awards (note the proper title) isn't valid either, because anybody who wants to win the award has to have a reasonable circulation among voting fans. I voted. Did you?? If not, then don't grouse about the insularity of the thing. It's you who is insular. Cost is no barrier either — it's now 12p cheaper to post Maya overseas than in England!))

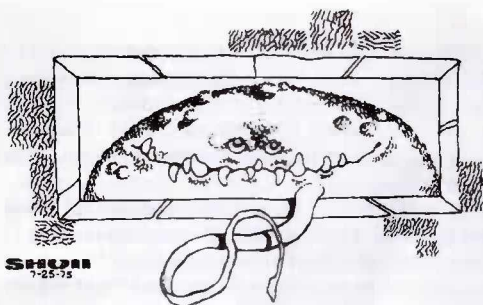
Alan Hunter,  
4 Cranleigh Gdns,  
Southbourne,  
Bournemouth,  
BH6 5LE.

In answer to Malcolm Edwards's criticism of my article on comic fandom in *Triode*, I would like to make a few comments so that other readers may not fly away at a tangent and, as he has done, miss completely the entire point of "It's a Comic World". Some-

where near dead centre in his refutation comes the statement "nowhere does he consider that one might be an SF fan for the simple reason that one likes SF but not comics". There may well be such people around, but the reason I never considered them is because they have no bearing whatever on the thesis I was presenting. I know several people who enjoy sf immensely, would never look at a comic — neither would they dream of encouraging or indulging in fan activity of any kind. My comparison was between the attractions of sf and comics as a fan activity — the fan activity comes first, the subject is of secondary importance. Malcolm has rather put the cart in front of the horse.

There is further criticism from Malcolm Edwards for the "school essay" style of my article. This was because I was trying to present, in as clear and logical a manner as possible, ideas and conclusions which I consider to be of some importance to the





dwindling number of sf fans still around. It seems that he has become so bemused by the "rambling" style of fan writing, which he holds in such high favour, that he can no longer follow a logical argument, and so retaliates by calling it "debased".

Another quote — "comics fandom... still has every one of the ghetto characteristics SF fandom has gradually shrugged off". I can only understand this to mean that sf fandom is no longer concerned with sf, but only with the odd thoughts, and odder behaviour, of the in-group. He may call this evolution, but I call it suicide.

((You have taken Malcolm to mean exactly the reverse of what he did mean. He means that, culturally, sf fandom is more receptive to outside influences than in his experience comics fandom is. SF conventions are attended by people from the wider artistic and journalistic community, who are welcomed at them and enjoy them in their turn, particularly for the sf discussion; and sf fanzines are wider-ranging in their outlook than comics fanzines are — they aren't concerned purely with the subject of their fandom (i.e. sf). They are concerned with anything and everything of importance to their editors and contributors; is it, then, so surprising if these people consider their own lives important? In recent months I have myself written articles in which the subjects of major concern include: air travel, tea-planting and charity in Ceylon (as well as meeting Arthur Clarke), medicine, etc; and have seen articles galore on politics, baseball, cookery — you name it, it's probably been written about in fanzines. SF fanzines, that is. This is what Malcolm meant, according to my reading of his article. Somebody once said "All knowledge is in fanzines" — and it was sf ones they were talking about. I don't call it suicide, I call it evolution.

To a certain extent we are talking about the same fanzines, yet I don't see the "in-group" image you do as characteristic of sf fandom as a whole — partly because I receive rather a lot of U.S. fanzines, and partly because I receive many new British fanzines by new British fans, to whom your name and address may not be well-known. There is an awful lot more to sf fans and fandom than just the fans' own egos. It is also close to libellous to say that sf fandom is no longer concerned with sf! — you must have been reading your fanzines with blinkered eyes to say such a thing, as articles about sf are there in profusion, large as life and just as interesting. To accuse Malcolm of that is far from the truth also; as editor of *Vector*, and contributor to *SFM*, he has done enormous amounts in the cause of sf criticism.

Your remark that the numbers of sf fans is dwindling is both snide and inaccurate, both with regard to fanzines and conventions, which are booming as never before — possibly the only thing which is dwindling is the percentage of the zines published you actually receive.))

Ben P. Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, N.J. 07666, USA. I applaud Dave Rowe's letter. I have enjoyed immensely the last six or eight years of my fairly active fan life; it has given me pleasure, entertainment, sometimes a keen alertness to something new other times a pleasant somnificence, but always it has added to my life something which my occupation sorely fails to do (and this does not detract from a family which adds its own kind of zest to my life... that is how one would spell headaches, no?) Yes, Fandom should have serious criticism; yes, it should have even controversy; but, above all, it should invite one's own curiosity and, happily, the sense of companionate warmth.

((Hooray... Any more arguments?))

Paul Skelton,  
25 Bowland Close,  
Offerton,  
Stockport,  
Cheshire SK5 7EY.

Now you've got problems, Rob. *Maya* 8 was so shit brilliant in so many aspects that now you've got to run like hell just to stay in the same place. Maybe this exercise will trim down that "too rounded character". The cover was fantastic and didn't suffer unduly

from the coarse Letratone. The layout was both adventurous (kudos) and successful (more kudos) and was very reminiscent of some of the *Outworlds* I've seen. Very wise of you to acknowledge this fact in advance. You fucking Gannets get right up my nose. You don't realise just how bloody soft you have it up there... how bloody lucky you are having Harry Bell chained up in some cellar somewhere. Nobody else has a "Harry Bell" and it's just not fair!! Do you faneds up there who keep on publishing these interminably good fanzines realise just how much of the appeal lies in the illos which Harry always seems to marry superbly to the text? Do you appreciate him properly? Do you slip him bundles of fivers and crates of Scotchky substances??

((Paul, it feels so good reading this letter, and I've read it so often, that I don't need to have it in front of me when I'm typing this — I know it off by heart.))

Ah, but yes, you do have problems with *Maya*. Rob... this sort of zine ought to be six to eight times a year. At the very minimum it ought to be quarterly. For a U.K. zine this would probably be the maximum because of the difficulty of getting enough contributions of a suitable quality. But... if you're losing £40 an issue you aren't going to be pubbing that often, are you? Not unless you have more money than sense, and you being a doctor that is obviously untrue on both counts. ((Well... I don't know...)) You're going to publish on a six-monthly schedule and it has been proven time and again that a six-monthly fanzine doesn't have the "presence" to really snowball along. Look at *Blunt*. It was a year before anybody realised it was missing.

The problem with British fanzines is the smallness of the pool. There just aren't enough of them to even out anomalies. If three zines are late and a couple fold the effect is enormous, simply because it isn't hidden by hundreds of other fanzines. The converse is also true. The U.K. zine field is just too small for statistics to be applicable. The U.S. field is a "wave" field, the U.K. one is a "quantum" field. I'm still chasing this around my head and never quite catching it. I better move on...

I wholeheartedly endorse your view that the new fan wants his fanzines to be, in the main, about sf. He either wants to read book reviews, author appreciations, or in depth analysis, author interviews, sf history, and just about any sf trivia he can find. He also wants to read the sf personalzines going on about non-sf items, stabbing each other in the back, feuding, or just rapping. Then he's into the lettercolumn, where people are discussing the things he's read, and from then on it's all downhill and he gets sucked right in. Socialising is a cumulative experience. The more you get to know folks the easier it is to socialise with them and the more pleasurable. Also, it makes it easier to socialise with people you don't know. At the very beginning though this is pretty cold water for the neo. He hasn't experienced the pleasures of socialising with other fans, so he has neither the inclination nor the experience. For him, sf is the life-preserver. It persuades them to go in, and keeps them afloat until they no longer need it. (Yes, it's "Infantile Analogies" Time again.)

I remember Mike and Pat Meara telling me about their first con. Mike talked to Pat, and Pat talked to Mike. "It's a good job we both went," said Mike, "because it's pretty hard to break into all the groups of people." It's the same in fanzines. You have to be able to relate to people on an sf basis before you can start relating to them on a fannish basis. Some of us get over this stage — and much more quickly, I feel — with local groups and acquaintances. Brian ((Robinson)) and I used to have interminable conversations, at least two evenings a week (plus weekends) about sf, by the time I came into "organised" fandom I was past the "Gee — all these people talking about sf — must join in" stage and into the "Gee, all these people talking about sf — must get to know 'em" stage. For "socialising" read "communicating". I tend to do one by doing the other, both in the flesh and in the zine medium.

((There. The perfect answer to Alan Hunter, Jon Harvey, and to a lesser extent Alan Stewart. They are the ones who (if I can pluck your analogy from its playpen again) don't like the look of the water, and don't have much use for life belts.

Like it or not, Alans and Jon: SF fandom is a body



of people who do like expressing their friendship for each other in print. It is not, whatever impression it may sometimes give, a closed body of people. Look at the speed with which Merf Adamson has got to the stage where he can write an interesting enough loc for me to give him twice as much space in the loccol as anybody else: he's only been in fandom a year, and Alan Hunter's been around for over twenty. It all boils down to your personal inclination. What Paul and I see as the talent and confidence needed to swim in the swirling yet friendly waters of fandom Alan Stewart sees as deficiencies. I don't know why. Perhaps he sees fandom as a defence, while we see it as something just as challenging as the outside world... And remember, Hall, I never said sf was the only start!!)

It beats me how anyone can complain that he hasn't got any artwork left and explain how desperately he needs some (remembering that he's got Harry Bell on tap the whole while) and then casually throw in the remark: "Grant Canfield sent some illos..." Screw you, Rob Jackson!! I'll just (sniff) go and draw (sniff) myself some illos. I didn't (sniffle) want any (sob-snurf) Canfield or Bell illos (ghrr) anyway, so there!!

(I swear, Paul, that this illo wasn't done specially. I did rather enjoy thinking the juxtaposition up, though. In fact, I wasn't sure how I was going to use it till you sent this loc.)



Dave Rowe, With a layout like Maya 8's, you should go straight 8 Park Drive, to the Marshall Cavendish Publications Offices and Wickford, jump off. My God, I'm tempted to say Keith Walker couldn't have done worse if he'd tried, but that would be a lie — just. A title interrupting a text in three columns for an article that begins before the previous one has ended is not conducive to easy reading, and doesn't look too good either. Neither do articles in the middle of pages or ones overlapping to the bottom of the next page's column.

I wouldn't mind, but there is a quite simple way round this. You just say a page's column is X mm deep, therefore if an article is Z mm long, you subtract it from the nearest greater multiple of X, or add another X or two, and you have the exact total length for your titles and illos.

(I know how to calculate areas, man! Don't teach your Granny to suck eggs! ... Actually, MB's layout was composed mainly from laziness, and a severe lack of space. I wouldn't have minded making it up to the next multiple up of X had that not added up to more than I could afford to produce; remember, Blunt didn't cost £16 per four pages. Then, there was Chris Morgan's piece that was typed up when I was still intending to produce it A5; I didn't fancy typing that up twice more. (Right justification means typing everything up twice.) As this layout meant Chris's piece was  $\frac{1}{3}$  the width of the new full page, I fitted Marsha Jones's piece round it in 3-column style, and was left with the problem of Eddie's heading (which he'd originally done for Blunt, remember?), whose shape I didn't want to disturb. I shall try to accommodate people like you who are just a little bit slow at understanding difficult things like two articles separated by black lines, next time, though. One thing I'd be pleased if you could do something about: your spelling. To coin a word, it's awful!!)

Eric Bentcliffe,  
17 Riverside Cres.,  
Holmes Chapel,  
Cheshire.

At first glance, the material does appear to have been split up unnecessarily, but I think you were right to do this to make each page seem 'interesting'. This is not an easy format to work in without the facilities and

expertise of a Bower!

((If there are two of them working under the name "Bill Bowers", that would explain how (t)he(y) manage(s) it!)) Hmmm. The choice of "The Dissecting Table" for a fnz review column is a little ominous in that things aren't usually dissected until after they are dead — or is Malcolm a Secret Vivisectionist? Naturally, I found his comments on Triode interesting, but would correct him on one point: the editor doesn't keep reminding people of the 'miraculous rebirth', that's just the kind writers of locs who are astonished that I still have the wherewithal to put out a fnz!! It's possible I may relate the genesis of its revival one issue — the real one, that is — it all depends on whether I believe fandom is ready to hear it... As to handcut artwork: most of that in the first (revived) issue, T19, the Cawthorn illos in particular, had been on stencil some 14 years, and were one of the reasons the beast got published — guilty conscience. They received so much praise that it seemed natural to continue with their usage. However, I'm not necessarily addicted to hand-cut (with Bastion, Norman Shorrocks and myself virtually pioneered electro's in U.K. fandom) and other forms of repro may well get used as time, money, and inclination allow. One thing I will promise, that each issue will not strive (deliberately) to be Bigger, Better et al... that's a syndrome that leads to an early fannish demise.

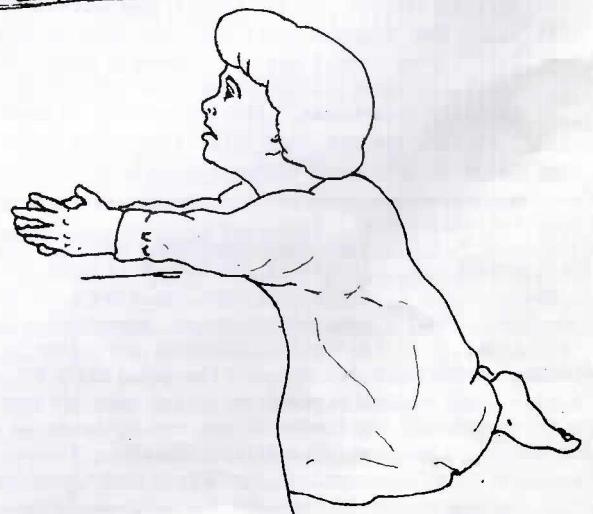
Mary Reed Legg,  
c/o 56 Kings Rd.,  
Fleet, Hants.

The Bigger and Better Syndrome strikes again! If I had been you I would merely have stated that advertising could be accepted,

Any faned, and almost any fan, knows how costly fnz are to produce; no need to justify it at all.

Philip Stephensen-Payne mentions mob violence, and the followers of Hitler during World War II. I had always put the acquiescence of the latter down as initially due to gratitude to Hitler, who had improved the country's lot, and later, control was

AND PLEASE  
BRING BILL BOWERS  
TO BRITAIN  
QUICKLY



ONLY HE CAN SAVE THIS LAYOUT



complete, due partly at least to fear. But I came across a very interesting thing the other month. I'm taking a short Open University course on "War and Society" — an odd subject for one of my beliefs, I hear you say? This actually deals more with the sociological side of war, and its influence on the arts and literature. Anyway, at summer school, my main tutorial group did War and the Mass Media, specifically propaganda. In studying this we saw several propaganda films, including the superb "Sounds of Britain". However, the particular one I want to mention was a German production of "Hitler's Triumphant Return to Berlin" — with flower-strewn streets, etc. It was all life and vigour, huge crowds (yes, easily obtained, I know), children waving flags, but particularly forceful was the music. It was incredible stuff, as many Nazi marching songs are. Comparing notes, we agreed we had all been drawn to it, the sheer power of it seemed to touch a chord in us. Knowing now what such a regime's rule meant, and at a distance of 30 years, we still felt the call to become one with the crowd. A disgusting admission, I know — but what must it have been like to have been there in the crowd that sunny day, to hear Hitler address it? It makes one respect propaganda, whilst seeing how insidious it really can be. So this is another thing to be considered when trying to see how people followed Hitler — it's not really an easy question to answer.

As a nondrinker I can't wholly endorse your claim that alcohol adds to U.K. conventions' friendliness; it's usually the nondrinkers like me who end up tending the walking wounded (as it were — the overindulged would be a better way of describing it!). But I see your point. Maybe if we laid in quantities of Tubes of Fosters we'd have the Aussies over in hordes!

Gary Hubbard, Apt. 2,  
208 Hubbard Ct.  
Westland,  
Mich. 48185, USA. This may be a bit late, but thanks for sending me a copy of *Maya 7*. Ian Williams's account of the big protest march he was in was interesting, because I was in London at about that time, and I seem to recall, if not that particular march, one very much like

it. I was staying in a boarding house off of Russell Square and recall hearing the landlord refer to the marchers as a bunch of rowdy kids who were "wanting a strapping!"

How I came to be in London is a bit interesting. I was stationed in Italy at the time — in those days I was working as a spy for the U.S. Army — and corresponding with an English fan named Chas Legg. Vacation time came up, and I talked a friend into sharing the expenses of a trip to London. So we packed up our stuff in his tiny Fiat and took off.

The trip across Switzerland and France in that glorified roller skate of his was an epic journey, but eventually we pulled into the port of Calais intending to take a boat across the Channel — there are some things that even a Fiat can't do. But we got there too late. The last ship had left, but someone said we could get the last ship out of Dunkirk if we were fast. So...

When I was a child, the local Canadian television station

used to show a lot of old British movies from the Thirties and Forties, and in these movies people were always asking other people things like, "how was your crossing, old boy?" Or else they'd say, "we had a lovely crossing, you know. Not a bit of weather." Now I knew they were talking about crossing the Channel, but I never thought much about it. I never thought much about the English Channel. I mean it doesn't look like much on the maps, and people are always swimming across it after all. Even when we sat down in the dining car (or whatever they call them on boats), and the steward warned us that we might be in for "some choppy", we didn't think much of it. There was just my friend and myself and the First Mate, who was wearing this really splendid white uniform, in the dining room when we started eating. The ship started to rock a little just as we finished. We were talking together and the First Mate, just across the way, was drinking coffee. Then the ship started to rock a little and then a little more... then it gave a sudden LURCH! and I found myself flying through the air screaming, "God Damn! What the hell's..." WHUMP!

My friend was still seated, but that was because he had grabbed onto the arms of his chair. His knuckles were white. His face was, too. The First Mate emerged from under the table where he'd been sitting. He yelled for the steward and demanded to know why his chair hadn't been bolted down. My friend said his stomach was demanding to know why IT hadn't been bolted down, and stumbled off to find the head.

I decided I needed a drink and headed for the bar. I almost made it, but then there was another lurch and I slid into a corner. I decided that if that was where the ship wanted me to be, then that's where I would stay. From there on in, the ship commenced rocking so violently that locomotion was impossible, anyway.

...and Florence Chadwick swam across this thing?

One interesting thing about being stuck in a corner by the bar, however, was that I got a chance to observe the other passengers. Most of the others, actually, had joined my friend in the head, but there was a little group by the bar who had doggedly refused to let the strange behaviour of the ship upset them... or their stomachs. One interesting thing struck me: how similar these people were to other groups of people I'd seen in those old British movies on TV.

There was a young man in a uniform (Second Mate, maybe?) trying to impress a blonde girl with how well he could walk despite the vertical antics of the floor. Then there was this elderly gentleman with white handlebar moustaches and a bald head. He was in government service, and he and his wife had lived in Jamaica most of their lives, but now they were coming back to retire on some land they had in Shropshire or maybe Brighton. I can't recall. Finally there was this guy who was unperturbedly leaning against the bar. He had short, slicked-down hair, a dark suit and a public school tie. He was the ship's wit. Making all sorts of wisecracks about the waves and the ship and the people in the head. In the movies, he was always a promoter or salesman of some sort, and, sure enough, ((CONTINUED OVERLEAF))

## EDITORIAL (Continued from page 3)

Clarke can visualise crafty, deep personalities — but only from the outside. The worldly-wise gemmologist Mandelstam, with his expertise and influential contacts, gets in touch with Duncan and sets him onto investigating a disturbing new influx of the exceedingly rare black Titanian gem titanite, and is thus the instrument of a fundamental change in Duncan's experience and attitudes; but we are never allowed a look at Duncan through Mandelstam's eyes. This is probably just as well. Someone of Mandelstam's supposed cunning would probably look affectionately down on someone of Duncan's inadequacies, and thus run the risk of destroying our belief in Duncan (assuming you're still wide-eyed enough to have any). Alternatively, our belief in Mandelstam would be jeopardised because his supposedly complex thoughts would be incompletely realised. I suspect that the very visibility and honesty of Clarke's own attitudes make the detailed creation of devious rogues and crooks foreign to his nature; if he tried, it would make Mandelstam, Duncan, or Clarke — or all three — look thoroughly silly. An insight into the problems Clarke has when trying to analyse people's mentalities can be gained from reading his descriptions of homosexual relationships in the book; Clarke's fumbings with the subject are far more embarrassing than the characters' fumbings with each other.

It's uncomfortable for me to make this next statement, as Clarke as an SF writer has been the apple of my eye ever since I started reading the stuff seriously; but we all have to outgrow our early heroes sometime: for Clarke, Truth, like Beauty, is only skin deep.

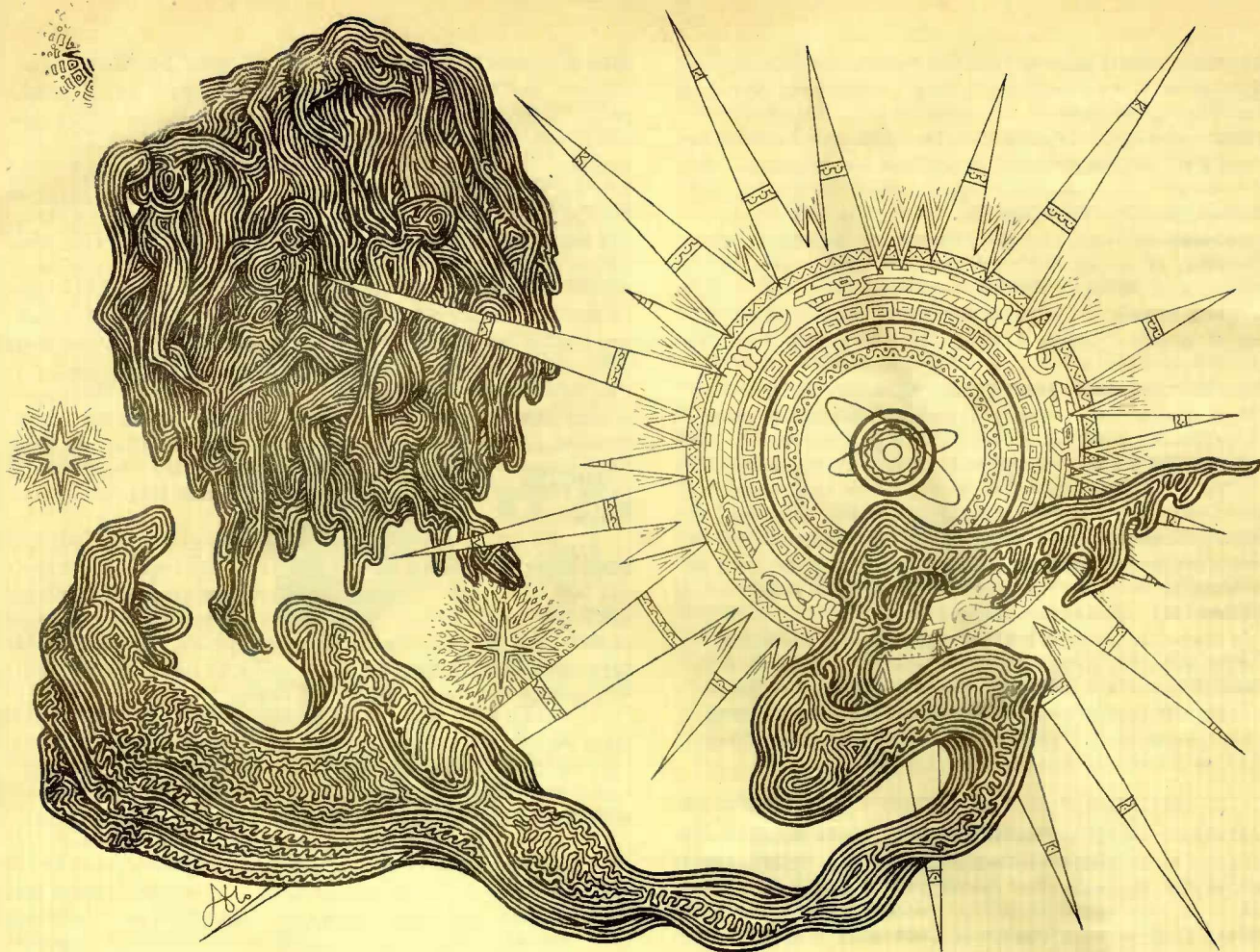
That's the substance missing from the book — human insight. Insight born of a deep study of the people you meet is the real sweetness which SF writers — any fiction writers — store up and ferment inside themselves to give their works their real potency. These truths are instilled into their works by the writers — very often subconsciously. Frequently when a critic dissects and analyses an author's work, the author's reaction must be something like this: "Wow. Yes, that's what I meant all along... I think?" — the critic can uncover truths previously unknown to the author.

If these truths are unknown to the author's conscious mind, how much more will they be unknown to the average reader, thumbing through the book to while away an hour when the film on the telly isn't much good? These truths (despite their buried situation, only accessible to the critic with his pick, shovel and greed for analysis) are still of supreme importance to the casual reader — he wants his book to ring true, and they provide the depth and resonance which make a book ring true.

Just as an author's comments on radio should ring true.

Rob Jackson, November 1975.





just before we docked in Dover, he tried to sell the elderly gent with the moustache insurance.

((Originally, this lettercolumn was rounded off with a couple of comments on Mark Adlard's review of The Coming Dark Age, by Don D'Ammassa on business practices and by Mike Gilbert on coping with emergencies, but your silly clot editor just allowed his editorial to grow and grow until it pushed the letters out, and it was too much of a unit for anything to wait till next time. My apologies, Mark, Don and Mike: next time, they'll be in, I promise.))

**HOW NOT TO MAIL OUT A FANZINE...** or, what everybody else said: / Kev Smith: "Mine arrived with more kinks than a Gay Lib convention... Now now, Kevin. Stop these illiberal similes." / Eric Batard (whose English is a hell of a lot better than my French): "Your method of mailing is rather odd and not good, I think. You try to read Maya as you got it and you remind me of my grandmother who puts her daily on the table, reads the cover and crumples it in the middle along the height and reads the two half-pages and the same until the end. Very interesting way of reading but she was always surprised not to know all the news." / Bernie Peek: "A month underneath the mattress ought to fix it." /

There were enormous piles of egoboo for Harry Turner about the cover. / Terry Hughes: "Everyone will tell you that cover for Maya 8 is beautiful. Well, let me tell you... they're right. It is an incredibly lovely wraparound cover. Some of the sections are so real that I'd believe they were photographs. Harry Turner is incredibly talented. I hope you have a copy of the cover up on your wall as a poster; I would if I were you. You are putting your offset to good use by using a cover like this. No other medium could do justice to such a work. Bravo! I still stare at it with fascination. The blue was a good colour choice to print it on." / Doug Barbour: "It works as a wraparound, it works as Mayan, it works — period." / There were very few antis, among whom was Mike Glicksohn: "The cover didn't turn me on. That's a switch, I guess." // A few people wondered why I didn't print what a Big Name Pro like Roger Zelazny had to say about Maya 7. Well, if

you want to know: "Thank you for the copy of Maya 7, just received. I particularly enjoyed Bob Shaw's piece." // Terry Hughes had a few things to say about the editorial: "Likening my fanzine to Mike Gorra's Random produced a loud yelp from me. How dare you! I consider my fanzine to be cleanly reproduced and only sparsely inhabited by typos. I can't dispute the comments about me being depraved, but my means of reproduction is most efficient — just ask my girlfriend." //

Jon Harvey buried the hatchet thus: "I'm certainly not blind towards the values of fan communication. I just cannot find interest in the level of SF fan communication that I have viewed... I stated my point of view, not the first volley of an intended battle. Everyone to their own tastes and opinions. I certainly don't put you down for yours and, I hope, you don't put me down for mine." Just as Mike Glicksohn said earlier in this loccol, Jon is now echoing Brian Parker's comments on Doing One's Own Thing last time. There is agreement somewhere, you know: it just gets coloured and obscured by those niggling things, Differing Opinions.

And a final, short word on the What-Is-Fandom controversy from Tom Willis, who independently picked the same metaphor as Paul Skelton: "After a brief immersion in the lake I am able still to report on the taste, and the outside taste too. Intelligence, wit, honourable humour, taste, sense of purpose, sensitivity, all these abound. Individually people are still quite noticeably proud of being "in sf", outwardly most people put on the sf mask and start beating drums. It could be funny."

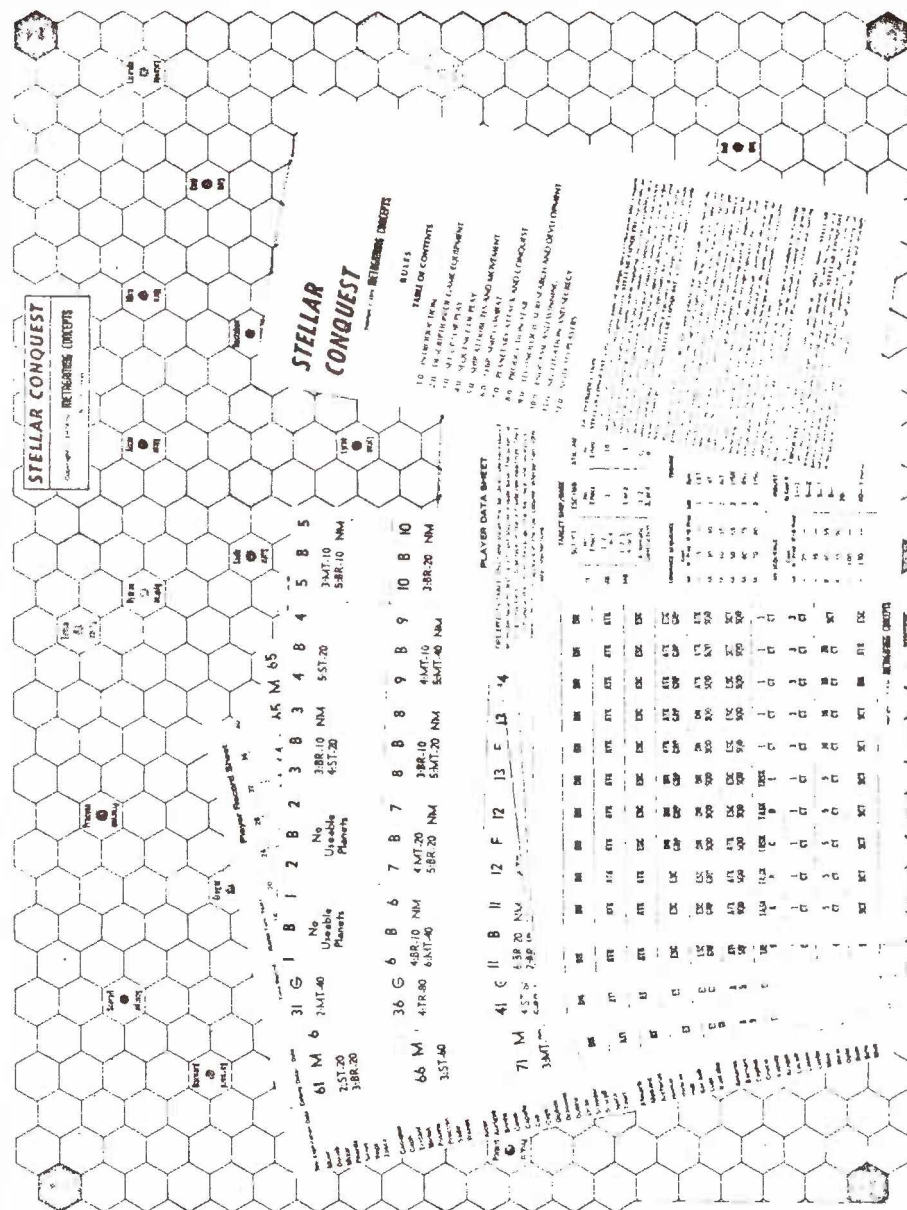
There. If you can synthesise all those comments on fandom you're a better man than I am. Au revoir till next February or so.

We also heard from Sheryl Birkhead, Pamela Boal, Syd Bounds, Ian R. Butterworth, Grant Canfield, Andrew Darlington, Alan Dodd, Graham England, Gil Gaier, David Griffin, Chris Harvey, Rose Hogue, Rob Holdstock, Paul Hudson, Terry Jeeves, Wendy Lindboe, Eric Lindsay, Chris Morgan, Dave Piper, Graham Poule, Mark Sharpe, Bob Shaw (Glasgow), James Shull, Steve Sneyd, Roy Tackett, Brian Tawn, Harry Turner, Paul Walker, and Elst Weinstein... Addendum sunt Jackie Franke and Brian Griffin, with a couple more excellent locs... the trouble, as usual, is not what to print but what to leave out.



# STELLAR CONQUEST

THE REALISTIC GAME OF SPACE-FARING SOCIETIES  
IN CONFLICT FOR 2-4 INTELLIGENT, IMAGINATIVE  
SCIENCE-FICTION OR WARGAME FANS, AGE 15-UP.



## WHAT IS STELLAR CONQUEST?

STELLAR CONQUEST represents an advanced, multi-factor, society-level game system featuring balanced playability in a sophisticated, challenging format. Each player controls a complete interstellar society, making decisions about exploration, technological research, industry expansion, population movements, and space fleet combat. Play occurs in a simulated 180 type open galactic cluster of 54 stars where each hex represents one-eighth of a light year. The struggle for dominance offers players infinite opportunity for exercising tactical military ability and strategic society-level planning ingenuity. If strategy, space, and a complete society challenges you, then STELLAR CONQUEST will give you many enjoyable playing hours.

## STELLAR CONQUEST COMPONENTS

- \* 18"x24" 6 color map printed on 80 lb. plastic paper. Ledgeable, more durable than paper maps, easily wiped clean. A clear step-up in game map quality.
- \* 400 5/8" ship counters in four clear colors (only yellow shown for clarity), half die-cut on 24 pt. board, color both sides. Some scissor work yields a larger, thinner-than-standard counter that stacks and handles well.
- \* 12 page rules folder fully play-tested and debugged. Use of Systems Analytic flow-charts and decision tables in design gives a very complete game.
- \* A concise data sheet for each player.
- \* 78 Star Cards for exploration results.
- \* 7 9"x12" Record Sheets printed on both sides with sample for easy learning.
- \* Pboxed. The boxing budget went into your map, the major play component.

## YOUR SEQUENCE OF PLAY

1. Ship movement in semi-secrecy, all counters face down on the map.
2. Star exploration, Star Cards determine planetary types and resources. Random result for every game played.
3. Ship/Ship combat to resolve Star-Hex control.
4. Planetary Attack resolves Warship/Planetary Defenses combat in conquest assaults on colonies.
5. Colonization consists of off-loading population and industry from transports to habitable planets.

6. Production allocation every 4th year/turn of play. Population growth, technological research, industrial expansion, ship-building, migration, etc. are determined.

\*\* You conduct all the basic operations and control all the basic factors of a complete space society and conquer a desirable cluster.....maybe.

## WHAT IS METACAMING CONCEPTS?

METACAMING CONCEPTS is a new firm completely dedicated to science-fiction gaming. Our standard is innovative, playable s-f theme games providing an active adjunct to s-f literature and a challenging change for historical game fans. Response shows tremendous interest in games like SC. Interest should increase as rapidly as good new designs become available.

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