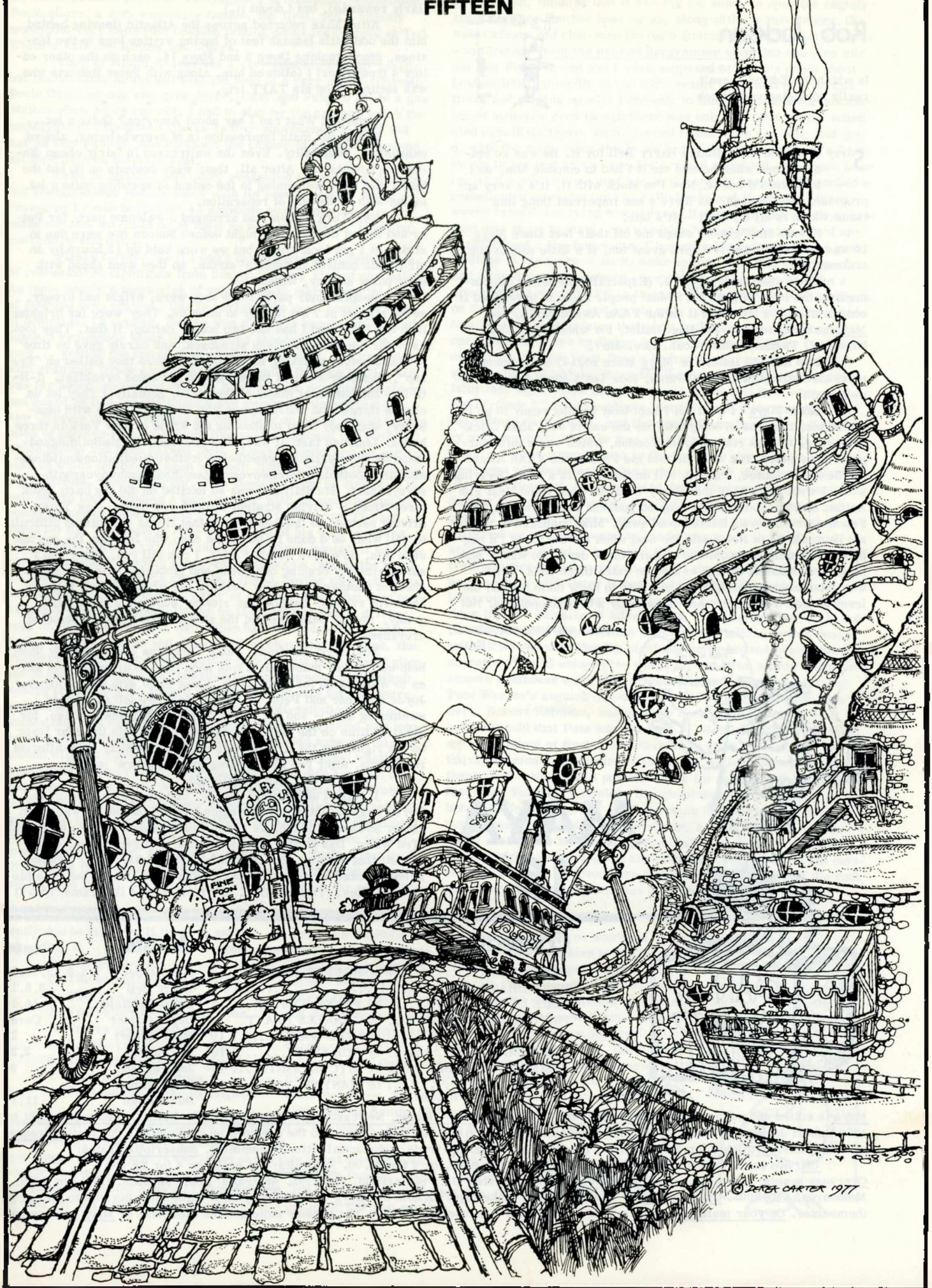
MAYA

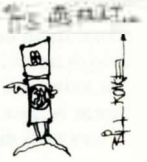
FIFTEEN



MAYA CULPA

Rob Jackson

In which the Editor doesn't really apologise very much



Sorry about the title. Blame Harry Bell for it. He was so embarrassed when he told me it I had to console him, so I told him I'd use it. Now I'm stuck with it. It's a very appropriate title, though, as there's one important thing this issue which is all my fault — it's late!

Events have almost swept me off their feet since Maya 14 was published, and it's been great fun, if a little exhausting at times.

Let's start with Maya 14. (Especially the letter of comment on the right of page 24.) Most people seem to have liked it: enough liked it a lot to put it on the FAAn Award ballot, and Maya as a fanzine onto the Hugo ballot, for which I feel duly honoured. Thanks, folks. Gosh. Gee. Me?!

I've had 182 letters on Maya since no.14, which shows it must have stimulated a few brains, too. Let's see if I can do as well again!

After Maya 14 went out I kept busy getting ready to go to the States; then one evening towards the end of July Mike Glicksohn rang. He was ringing from London, which was a mild surprise for a start. But when he told me I'd won the FAAn Award for Best Fan Editor, I nearly fell on the floor in a heap. Swaying a bit, I went on to hear that Harry Bell had been voted Best Fan Artist, and Gannetfandom's adopted godhead Bob Shaw was Best Fan Writer. Before I fainted dead away, Mike managed to inform me he would be in Newcastle the next week for the party I'd organised for him, and would be up here three days. He was — and he enjoyed himself enough to stay an extra three days. Often when one meets fannish ghods and gets to know them beyond the level of their reputation, one is secretly a bit disappointed. Not with Mike. His sharp, urbane wit (marred only by the usual nauseating puns) and his tact made him a superb guest. (I only hope that those who later entertained me in the States were similarly rewarded, but I doubt it.)

After Mike returned across the Atlantic (leaving behind him the odd little fannish feat of having written locs to two fanzines, Stop Breaking Down 5 and Maya 14, each on the other editor's typewriter) I followed him, along with Peter Roberts who was setting off on his TAFF trip.

* * * * * *

America! What can I say about America? Quite a lot...

I think my main impression is of overwhelming, almost exhausting, hospitality. Even the waitresses in fairly cheap diners are hospitable. After all, their wage depends on it; but the fans I met were welcoming to the extent of spending quite a lot on me with no thought of reparation.

New York fandom had arranged a welcome party for Peter and me on the Saturday night before Suncon (we were due to arrive at 7 pm local time); but we were held up 12 hours by an air traffic control assistants' strike, so they went ahead with their party anyway, without us.

Despite their party there they were, bright and breezy, at the airport at 7 am Sunday to meet us. They were far brighter than us; Peter and I had had two hours' catnap, if that. They took us to the Kaufman-Shiffman slanshack, and barely gave us time to shave before whisking us off to somewhere they called an "Eye hop", whatever a one of those was, to get some breakfast. (I-H-O-P — International House of Pancakes, actually.) They let us choose things with weird names like cheese blintzes with blueberry, then they tried to show us the whole of New York in three hours. Lighning fast, it was. ThatstheEmpireStateBuildingandthatstheChryslerBuildingandthosewereTheUnitedNationsbuildingsandthisisapotholeofwhichwevegotlotsandthatsasubwaycarwithspraycanart. Stu Shiffman was so excited he did his party trick three times — driving straight through red lights. New York driving seemed so lawless anyway that it was sometimes difficult to tell when he'd done it; but if the chap who lent him the car had seen him, he'd have worried a bit, I can tell you. Peter and I sat alternately craning our necks and gibbering with fear as Stu shot yet another light. New Yorkers are proud of their tall city, and with reason, despite the rickety subways and the dank, grimy, sweaty buildings and the streets like littered, potholed crevasses.

Stu, Jerry Kaufman, Suzle Tompkins and everybody didn't help us recover much; but it was soon time to drive the 200 miles to Washington for some of us. I was to go with Gary Farber, Joyce Scrivner and Peter in Joyce's car. We left at 1 pm in sweltering heat — and for 100 of those miles I was to drive, for the first time on the right, for the first time with the gear lever on the right, for the first time in a foreign country with different road signs, after two hours' sleep and six hours' jet-lag.

I enjoyed it; I like a challenge.

It wasn't surprising, though, that as soon as we got to Terry Hughes' place in Washington I flaked out on his waterbed; rather antisocial of me, as Terry had arranged for lots of friends (Ted White, Dan Steffan, Avedon Carol, Colleen Brown, et al) to visit that evening. But they didn't mind; later, after I awoke, Avedon picked my brains on psychology, and Dan let me rifle his artwork files. (Thanks, Dan. Any more where that came from?)

(Stu's caption, not mine. — Ed.)

MAYA 15

Contents:

Artists:

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Other Washington highlights... the National Aerospace Museum, especially Ron Miller's paintings and McCall's stupendous mural, which no photos can do justice to, especially not mine; my unadulterated greed at Washington's sf bookshop, Moonstone Bookcellars; a very expensive fondue, my first; and a slightly woozy but very enjoyable session talking about rock music at Ted White's with Jay Kinney and others.

Then to Miami Beach, via a very typical, slightly plastic but comfortable motel and with the help of a very chatty, friendly South Carolina cop who gave Joyce, Gary and Peter a lift to a gas station when Joyce ran out. I had to stay by the car and watch the headlights of thunderous trucks as they approached to rock the car as they passed, and I missed the chance to ask the cop about all the rifles on his back seat.

Once in Miami I was oddly reassured by my first sight of the Fontainebleau Hotel's lobby with its seedy, chintzy decor — "twenties French bordello" as someone accurately put it — it made me feel we could do at least as well in England. Then the convention started...

Please forgive me if I don't disentangle the jumbled mass of remembered highlights from Suncon into any kind of chronology. As most people's memories of cons seem to merge into this kind of jumbled heap anyway, this is perhaps the most accurate mode of depiction. Of course, Suncon was a time to become exhausted again; I remember more than anything else being busy, busy, busy... getting the voting desk ready, manning it, and realising with gratitude (from comments people made) that the British bid was far better supported than the New Orleans one (previously we had heard an odd, unattributable and worrying rumour that the New Orleans bid was running us very close on postal votes); buying piles of goodies in a book room like an underground car park in which tables had been parked (hell, it was an underground car park in which tables had been parked); finding helpful friends — the Luttrells, Joanne Burger, Tim Daniels, Charlie Brown — to sell Mayas there; finding a local printer with an amazing and incomprehensible Cuban accent who printed the Seacon '79 Fact Sheet for us, and scaring Pete Weston out of his wits by taking him there in Joyce's car (it wasn't my driving, honest; it was the car, particularly the way it revved up without a foot on the throttle because the automatic choke had stuck); buying so much booze for the Britain in '79 bidding party at a liquor store that they were willing to stay open specially for us if we wanted more; driving over to Miami in Friday's incredible hurricane conditions with Taral, Victoria Vayne and others in search of Mexican food, the windscreen wipers so totally unable to cope that only a brief glimpse of the car in front was possible between sweeps of the wiper; looking frantically for Peters Weston and Roberts for two hours on Thursday, only to have them appear, self-satisfied, and announce they had been to see Star Wars (then they rubbed salt into the wound by saying they were a bit disappointed anyway); sitting around with Gil Gaier's clique of friendly fanzine fans; wasting lots of film because most of my flashgun bulbs didn't go off; the manic excitement of the Britain in '79 party, where Pete Weston worked himself up into a frenzy of euphoria and infected the audience (most of it, anyway) with enthusiasm and delight; the almost anticlimactic feeling, a sort of mental exhaustion, when the bid result was announced, resulting perhaps from a feeling that we'd climbed the first mountain (the bid) but now had to climb a bigger one (the con itself); the differing levels of applause for our different Guests of Honour (masses for Fritz Leiber, almost as much for Brian Aldiss and rather less for Harry Bell, of whom only the fanzine fans had really heard); relaxing on the beach after we had won our bid, thinking that it was far too sunny to open the registration desk for another hour or so, along with the two Peters: the New Orleans bid chairman buying a Britain in '79 T-shirt after we won; seeing, from the printed programme sheet (no one else told us) that Pete Weston and I were supposed to be on a panel about fandom internationally in the 2000-seater main hall at a certain time, and turning up with Pete only to find that panellists outnumbered audience even though there was only one other of the scheduled panellists there, so we turned round again and left, and got on with the many other things we had to do; Gay Haldeman's first words to me just as she and Joe arrived being "Hi, I've been hearing what a marvellous cook you are," simply because I'd cooked a complicated omelette for Mike Glicksohn and Harry Bell three weeks before; worrying where Peter Roberts was as the Hugo banquet was about to start, and watching him stumble in — he'd apparently had a few Interesting Cigarettes that afternoon and gone to sleep in his room — so he woke up just as it was about to start, and when Robert Silverberg unexpectedly asked him to make a short speech about TAFF in front of 1500 people, he was really in no fit state to speak, and people only really noticed his incredible DayGlo orange suit; later that night I was a bit croggled by the open attitude shown by Peggy Rae Pavlat when she saw Pete Weston and me emerge from Pete's bedroom after quickly dumping some bottles of whisky there for the Britain in '79 victory party later that night — she asked Pete: "Are you and Rob — er, very good friends?"; more euphoric loonery from Pete that night at the victory party itself, and the crowd there barracking Tom Perry unnecessarily when he was explaining some British foibles to them — I think some twerps in the audience saw a chance to show their own wit(lessness); being woken up later that night, after the party had finished, by an agitated Joyce Scrivner who reported a Suncon committee member was having kittens, hysterics and general tantrums because we hadn't cleared up after it (we hadn't gathered we were supposed to, and I was much abashed); so I stumbled out of bed to help with the clearing up and soothe ruffled feathers; tiredly appearing on a panel about British fandom the next morning with Peter Roberts and Graham Poole and being interrupted by a walking headache with red eyes shaped something like the remains of Mike Meara, who had drunk a whole bottle of something very evil the night before; talking to Ben Jason and Rik Newman on Monday night and being invited to somewhere secret — "You'll enjoy it" — which proved to be a pros' party in a smooth penthouse suite with private bar and balcony; observing Pete Weston's anguish on being told by Joe Haldeman that Pete's hero, Robert Heinlein, had actually been asking to meet Pete, but had been told that Pete was too busy — Heinlein had left by then; my uncertainty at first over where to go after Suncon, and my tentative decision to go towards Cincinnati, as Bill Bowers lived there, and it was also a potential base for meeting other Midwest fans; Lou Tabakow's tireless thoughtfulness and generosity on my behalf (in fact, on behalf of most people he meets), including his putting me in touch with Brad Balfour, a Cincinnati fan with a spare seat in his MG; meeting Brad in the penthouse suite party Monday night, observing the smoothness and intensity of his manner and deciding he fitted very well onto the periphery of the rock music world; realising this has got to be the longest sentence

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rently due to receive. If there is an "X", or there is a BLODGE in these brackets, then you won't get Maya 16 unless you respond or subscribe: (( )) The other letters mean that you received Maya for the reasons indicated in the list below:

A You've sent me artwork
C You've contributed to Maya
F This is a free issue
L You've written letters to me
M You're mentioned within
R I'd like you to review Maya
S You've subscribed to Maya
T We trade publications
? Perhaps you'd like to respond

Collating last issue: Last issue was an even more mammoth job than usual, because of the number of copies there were. My thanks to all of you for helping: Ian Williams, Harry Bell, Robert Day, Dave Cockfield, Greg Birchall, Ritchie Smith, Annie Mullins, Kev Williams and Sue Pearson (as she was then — now Sue Williams, of course; belated congrats etc).

Contributors' addresses: Jim Barker (at a new address), 113 Windsor Rd., Falkirk, Central Scotland FK1 5DB. Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln St., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear NE8 4EE. Charles Platt, PO Box 556, New Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011, USA. Bob Shaw, 3 Braddyll Tce., Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0DH. Ritchie Smith, 69 King John St., Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5XR. Peter Weston, 72 Beeches Dr., Erdington, Birmingham B24 0DT. Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

Next issue: I've got one or two irons in the fire — not just articles by Dave Langford and Brian Stableford already on file as well as covers by D. West and Alan Hunter, but also the idea of whipping Gannetfandom into shape to produce a Special Gannet Issue. I'll remind them that what they produce had better be good — not just any old rubbish goes into Maya: it's got to be the best rubbish.

ever in Maya (I won't write one like this again, and if someone sends me one I'll reject it); and finally, bidding a specially affectionate farewell to my first Worldcon simply for being the first, despite its faults.

I hope that one-sentence Suncon report wasn't too tiring for you to read; I know it's unconventional, but I wanted to give an impression of ceaseless, sometimes breathless activity — because, after all, that's what cons are like!

* * * * * *

But the activity didn't stop at Suncon. Joyce Scrivner and Peter Roberts and I drove to Disney World (yeah, fascinating... but seriously folks, it's a helluva lot of fun if you'll let it get to you). We spent Tuesday afternoon hurriedly looking round it (far too short a time; Joyce and Peter went back on Wednesday). Brad Balfour was due to pick me up there Tuesday evening. He arrived three-quarters of an hour late after some trouble with his car, but we still drove off to Cincinnati, leaving at 10 pm to drive nonstop through the night apart from a two-hour catnap — and all this after a six-night con.

The epic tale of that journey, with exhaustion, endurance in the face of manifold problems (it was an exhaust manifold, you see), and drama with police cars (no, we didn't get booked), is one I've already told elsewhere, in Gannetscrapbook. (If any American faned wants to reprint that article, I'd be happy to let you; please write and ask.) Suffice it to say that we got to within half a mile of our destination before Brad's car finally gave up the ghost, and we walked the rest of the way.

After a journey like that, thank God Bill Bowers put me up (with amazing generosity, and at incredibly short notice — like, about half an hour) and I was able to rest somewhat for a couple of days. Even quietness is relative, though. It was still quite an active time, thanks to Lou Tabakow, who showed me Cincinnati (and Star Wars) for two days, would hardly let me pay for a thing, and was marvellous, entertaining company all the way.

I had to leave Cincinnati, much to my regret as I'd met many other good people as well (Bea Mahaffey, the Resnicks, Al & Tanya Curry, Stephen Leigh, Bill Cavin), in time to be in New York by Saturday, though: reluctantly I looked out timetables and prices. Greyhound: 16 hours, $54. Leave Friday and travel bumpily overnight. Air: 1½ hours, only $72. A quick hop Saturday morning.

I chose the air, of course. (I was feeling extravagant.) (And I wanted another night in Cincinnati!)

So to another New York welcome, and a farewell party that night for British fans at Brian Burley's, memorable chiefly for expected and unexpected behaviour. Mike Meara drank a lot and looked very bleary-eyed, Stu Shiffman drew a cartoon (see p.2), and Arnie and Joyce Katz and Andy Porter and Ross Chamberlain gently bemoaned the state of fandom, which were all to be expected: but Graham Poole behaved in a way for which he has no reputation among British fans (does CEOTFK spell 'close encounters of the female kind,' Graham?), Andy Porter sent us Over Here a polite message, with thumbs in ears, tongue out, and a falsetto BIBBLEBIBBLEBIBBLE... all specially for my camera; and I lost my brother's flashgun. (Oh well. It didn't work very well anyway.) None of these are usual. I also drank very little alcohol apart from some Newcastle Brown. I don't usually drink that stuff. It must have been a funny evening.

Next day Brian and someone else (either Jerry Kaufman or Stu Shiffman: my memory is fuzzy because I was totally shattered) gave me a lift to the airport via Moshe Feder's house, where we packed four FAAn Awards up in plastic bags stuffed with dry popcorn. (Yes, popcorn. Amazingly good, light packing material, actually.) Also, I received my reward for contributing to the Feder collection of CocaColabilia — a look at it. It's a roomful of Coke bottles and cans. Great stuff.

So they all said goodbye to me at Kennedy Airport, and I sat there waiting and waiting for the plane as I had done at Gatwick on the way out: only then I had had Peter Roberts to wait with. This time I was suddenly left lonely amidst the throng after all the hospitality that had been heaped on me: it was precipitately withdrawn, and although I've never used any drugs in my life (except medicinal ones, caffeine and alcohol) I think I know now what total withdrawal must be like. I was suddenly shattered: the experiential overload hit me, all the unprocessed memories giving me a sort of mental indigestion. It was a thoroughly weary journey home, not made any easier by the fact that I had three suitcases and a shoulderbag, all full (you try carrying that lot from plane to train to taxi to train to train to home, even when you're fit and rested). I had brought a folding suitcase so I'd have room for the FAAns. My journey home was almost automatic: I was like a weary pigeon homing on Newcastle.

I got home at 2 pm on the Monday, rang my boss's secretary and told her I wanted the next two days off as further holiday, and spent them almost entirely asleep.

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It took much longer than that to recover my mental energy completely, and even more time still to return to fan activity. When I got back, there were Problems waiting for me.

Before leaving for America I'd left my seven-year-old Austin 1300 with Kev Williams who had a friend I hoped would perform some repairs and get it through its M.O.T. (For American readers, I'd better explain that the M.O.T. is a yearly test all British cars over three years old have to take to ensure there are no dangerous mechanical faults.) It emerged that I'd have to spend more on the car than it was worth, and therefore wasn't worth much as a trade-in, either.

Oh dear. New car needed.

Money all gone: just been to America.

Please, Mr. Bank Manager, can I have a personal loan for a car?

The answer was yes, but a third of it had to be paid as an overdraft, which had to be paid back within two months. Which meant no spare pay for Maya printing bills for a while.

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When I came back from America there was another unfinished project lying around waiting to be completed: Ian Williams's and my joint novel. (Remember my promise in Maya 10 that I would definitely have it finished by Easter 1976? Ha ha ha ha...) I was doing an extensive rewrite of Ian's second draft, and with further revisions to Ian's satisfaction it was eventually finished by the end of October, with no Maya work at all in that period. (That meant no Maya work between the beginning of June and the end of October.)

Then, at last, I got started on camera copy in November, with Pete Weston's and Bob Shaw's pieces, and the Charles Platt/Ted White debate; I expected then to get Maya 15 out in January or February, well before my Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists part I exams in April this year. At that stage I was keen on turning Maya into a more frequent, smaller magazine with greater immediacy and a fair amount of stfnal and fannish news, airmailed to the States, and I actually told quite a lot of people I was going to do this. But then I changed my mind somewhat when I realised that there was too much work involved in very regular mailings, that the finances of the zine would have to be carefully controlled (far fewer freebies in the form of trade and loc copies than now), and above all I realised there was too much good in the format I've developed for Maya over the years just to let it go.

So I decided to continue as I have been, with an intended frequency of three issues a year.

And then I was interrupted again, far more significantly, when Coral Clarke sent me a postcard from a scientific meeting she was attending in France.

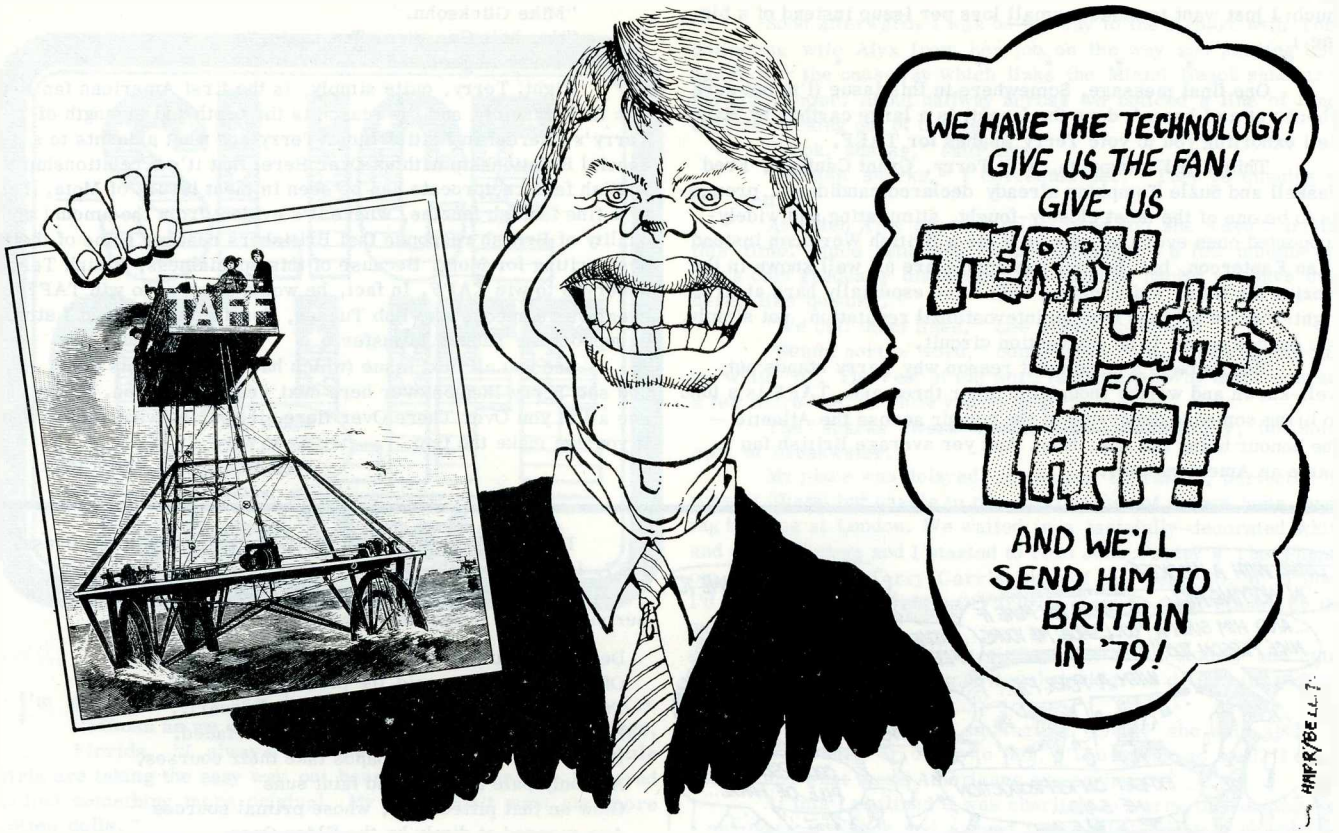
I realised, very belatedly, she was definitely trying to tell me something... and we started seeing as much as we possibly could of each other — er, I'd better rephrase that — seeing each other as often as we possibly could, and for as long as possible; so for a few months all other things took a back seat. As Greg Pickersgill very aptly put it in Stop Breaking Down 6,

> "there is no truth whatever in the rumour that Maya has folded. It is merely coincidence that cheery Robert Jackson has taken to playing Doctor and Nursie with sweet young Coral Clarke; Jackson has not forsaken his lust for a Hugo for other diversions, he just, well, hasn't the energy to type out 367 LoCs right now...."

My energy's back now — well, who wouldn't be motivated by a Hugo nomination and by the very nice things Brian Aldiss said in his review in the New Statesman?

The application of the energy had to wait a bit even after February, though — there were Rather A Lot of books and lecture notes to be read as revision for my Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists part I exam, and I only felt recovered from that once I'd heard a month later, in early May, that I'd passed.

It's much more than "playing Doctor and Nursie" now,



though; pardon me while I go and comb my hair and put my best suit on to type this bit, as it's rather important...

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Coral and I are engaged — whoopiee! During the next few months I expect to move down south to Surrey; exactly when I move depends on my job and the completion of our house purchase negotiations.

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I'll let you know of my change of address in the next Maya, if not before in a separate COA notice. I'll obviously continue publishing as often as I can within the confines of finance and other demands on my/our spare time such as all the responsibilities I'm accruing (and largely sharing with Coral) for Seacon '79 (Masquerade, Banquet, function rooms — is that enough?)

Obviously during the past year I've had various different opinions on what the future of Maya is going to be; I've hinted as much above. I think there are relatively few changes in format I want to make, but I have fairly consistently felt that the fanzine has taken itself over somewhat and told me what should be in it, either as if it's a runaway horse which I'm astride and can't control, or else like a dead weight hanging from my neck, inert, a millstone or an albatross I can't shift.

How to regain complete control? There are three steps I can take.

One is to adopt an editorial policy based more purely on personal preference. I know I should publish what I want anyway, but we all know that's not the way it always works out. In future I'm going to concentrate more on what pleases me than on what I feel Ought To Be Published. I've made a fair-sized step in this direction by allowing myself this long, personal editorial. Whether or not everybody enjoys reading this, in general I like stuff which quite a number of other people also enjoy, so those who aren't too well versed in fannish nuances and injokes needn't worry about feeling left out; for example, I have this odd habit of actually enjoying articles about science fiction, provided they aren't too esoteric or inconsequential, and such articles will continue to find their way into Maya.

The second step I can take is that I mustn't feel too committed to publish by a certain date — the unkept promise to publish by the end of 1977 was like a lump of lead contributing heavily to the millstone Maya had become before I really started to get on with this issue, and added to the sense of external compulsion rather than inner ambition which has driven this issue into being. So Maya will in future appear fairly often — I still hope to keep close to three times a year, as I still want response, and frequency generates interest and hence response — but if it doesn't appear like clockwork every four months, don't write enquiring why it's late.

Finally, there's the financial millstone of publishing a fanzine with the majority of copies distributed free. I have 100 subscribers this issue out of a total mailing list of 470, and the other 370 have to be supported either by the kind subscribers (upon whom blessings be heaped, for they contribute by providing money in as important a way as the responders who get the magazine free contribute by motivating me and providing material for me to print) — but the trouble is, the balance between publishable material and money is getting out of hand. I can only publish so many locs an issue. This is why I'd like to encourage people to subscribe rather more, and to write letters rather less (though if you're a brilliant writer — or even a competent one, and that covers most of the people who write — who's been incensed or excited by something in this issue, don't let me stop you writing!), and to do this I'm going to be slightly stricter about what gets you further issues of Maya free. Here's what counts towards future issues:

* A loc I publish quite a lot of — two issues
* A loc interesting enough to publish (even if I don't publish it) — one issue
* A published contribution (written or art) — from one to quite a lot of issues, depending on what it is
* A zine in trade — from none to two issues, depending on how substantial and interesting the zine is
* Hospitality while I was in the States — lots of issues (especially if you live in Cincinnati or Seattle New York)

All this means I'm going to be much stricter over cutting people off my mailing list in future, so if you get the dreaded BLODGE — I mean it! The BLODGE will appear oftener, too. And if you don't think you've got anything very special to say, remember after you've written you loc that I may very well agree — so the most reliable way of ensuring you get Maya 16 is to subscribe.

But please don't subscribe more than four issues in advance; I don't want to return vast sums of money to people should I decide to fold the zine.

All of which is a very longwinded way of saying I can't afford to subsidise Maya as heavily as I have been doing — I've got a brand-new mortgage to support, and believe you me, it's a big bouncy baby; so I'd like a little help from everybody. (Not too

much: I just want to make a small loss per issue instead of a big one.)

* * * * * *

One final message. Somewhere in this issue (I'm not sure where yet as I haven't done the layout) is a large cartoon by Harry Bell exhorting you to vote Terry Hughes for TAFF.

This TAFF campaign, with Terry, Grant Canfield, Fred Haskell and Suzle Tompkins already declared candidates, promises to be one of the most closely-fought, stimulating and widely-supported ones ever; not only is it for a British Worldcon instead of an Eastercon, but the four candidates are all well known in the fanzine fan field, which makes the choice especially hard at first sight: they're all fans with an international reputation, not simply one earned on the U.S. convention circuit.

But there is a paramount reason why Terry stands out, well-known and worthy though the other three are. TAFF is a fund to bring someone deserving of the honour across the Atlantic — the honour being the trip. Now. Ask yer average British fan to name an American fan...

"Mike Glicksohn."

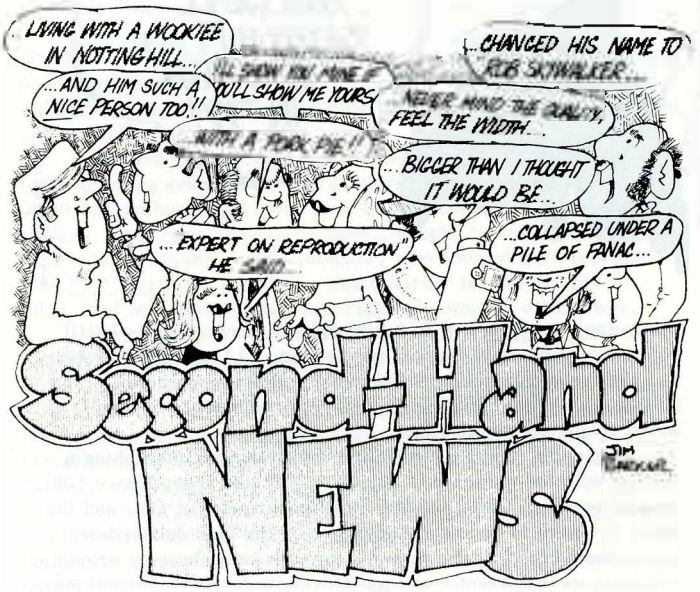
"No, he's Canadian. Try again."

"Terry Hughes."

Right! Terry, quite simply, is the first American fan British fans think of, and the reason is the depth and strength of Terry's interest in British fans. Terry has what amounts to a Special Relationship with us Over Here: that it's a relationship the British fans reciprocate can be seen in most issues of Mota, Terry's fine fannish fanzine, where it's evident from the amount and quality of British response that Britishers reserve some of their best writing for Mota. Because of this specialness, I think Terry deserves to win TAFF. In fact, he would deserve to win TAFF even over someone like Bob Tucker, despite the fact that I strongly support the Tucker Transfer.

See you all next issue (which had better be this year) — and see Terry Hughes over here next year for Seacon. In fact, see all of you Over There Over Here, if you see what I mean and if you can make the trip.

Rob Jackson, June 1978.



If we're lucky, we may eventually get to see a huge series of SF films specially made for TV from classic hard sf books with special effects of near-Star Wars quality. Harry Harrison visited Newcastle recently to talk to the North East SF Group, and during a typically quiet, shy, retiring, monotone talk (look, let's put it this way — everybody had to sit at the back of the room to avoid being deafened) he told of his plans for his then-forthcoming visit to Paris. He was jetting off there to meet a gaggle of French film producers who were intending to produce 23 made-for-TV sf films. As story editor, Harry was soliciting ideas for books to be filmed, especially ones involving space hardware. The Forever War, A Fall of Moondust, The Caves of Steel and The Stainless Steel Rat were among the titles suggested. (Others? — how about Tau Zero, Between Planets, Childhood's End, Five Gold Bands, to name but a few?) The titles have to have space hardware, because they have the equipment to produce Star Wars-quality special effects for $10,000 an hour, and they don't want to waste it. Although they'd be French financed and produced, the films would be aimed at the English-speaking market, with top English-speaking actors and directors. Well, Harry, it sounded superb. I only hope the plans see concrete fruition. The film business is notoriously fickle, and it's the graveyard of many good ideas. I've got my fingers crossed.

A couple of months back Walt Willis sent me a copy of a cutting from the Belfast Telegraph which is not only fun, but shows that the sf habit is spreading:

> "A case at a court somewhere in Ulster recently was drawing to a close and the magistrate sternly asked the defendant if he had anything to say for himself. Your man must have been a Star Trek fan. He produced a match box, flicked it open and said: 'Beam me up, Scotty. I'm in trouble down here.'"

Review: Antarktos by H.P. Lovecraft. (Fantome Press, 1977. 12 pp (6" x 4½"), $3.95.)

I am going to quote a short segment of this work, as is permissible for purposes of review:

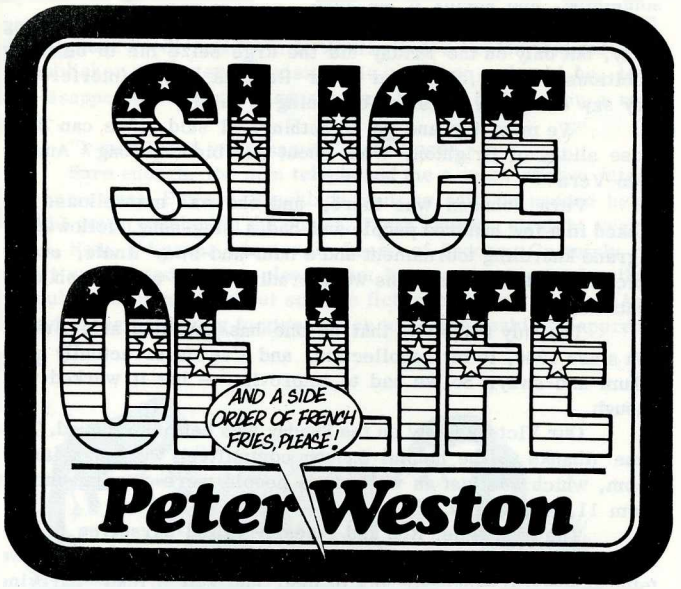
> Deep in my dream the great bird whispered queerly
> Of the black cone amid the polar wast: ((sic))
> Pushing above the ice-sheet lone and drearly,
> By storm-crazed aeons battered and defaced.
> Hither no living earth-shapes take their courses,
> And only pale auroras and faint suns
> Glow on that pitted rock, whose primal sources
> Are guessed at dimly by the Elder Ones.
>
> If men should glimpse it, they would merely wonder
> What tricky mound of Nature's build they spied;
> But the bird told of vaster parts, that under
> The mile-deep ice shroud crouch and brood and hide.
> God help the dreamer whose mad visions show
> Those dead eyes set in crystal gulfs below!

Ooops! I seem to have quoted the entire literary content of this booklet. Sorry about that. There is also a very abstract illustration in red and yellow.

Mr. C.M. James of 720 North Park Avenue, Warren, Ohio 44483, U.S.A. has printed 14 or more booklets of similar content to the above in editions ranging from 50 to 150 copies, with literary content of up to 200 words each and prices starting at $2.00 or so. Mr. Lovecraft, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and E.A. Poe are the only authors I have heard of. The others appear to be contemporary, and include Mr. James himself. If he sells all his booklets I reckon Mr. James will gross $4,000 or more. It seems to me that he may be on to a Good Thing.

Which well-known (balding, overweight, bland) fanzine editor was quixotically foolish enough to pay £17 for a rather good D. West illustration inspired by Ursula LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness? He was rewarded with life membership of the Astral Leauge for his efforts — but then the brazenly avaricious D. actually asked if more money would be forthcoming for the reproduction rights to the illo! The editor replied that to pay for the right to use the illo on the cover (or elsewhere) of his fanzine would be compromising his fannish principles, and anyway he'd already paid enough for the illo itself. Quite right too. See if you think the illo was worth it on the cover of the next issue of Maya.

Recently Pete Weston was somewhat put out to read in an issue of SF Review that the Andromeda original anthology series was to be discontinued. He was put out because it was news to him — and he should have known, because he's the editor. In fact, it's very much alive, and the delay to no.3 was simply because of Pete's refusal to go to print with what he considered stories of anything less than the highest quality. It's due out in the autumn, now, though, with stories by Niven, Priest, Leiber, Watson, Schweitzer, Langford, Redd, Allen and Wu. And he's already starting to fill the fourth volume. So Andromeda is alive and well, and in need of your stories, people — send them to his address as in the colophon.



"I'm glad I haven't just bought them a doll," I said to Lee Hoffman as we came out of the toy shop in Coral Springs, Florida. "I always think people who buy dolls for little girls are taking the easy way out because they can't be bothered to find something more original. My girls don't want any more rotten dolls."

I concluded my diatribe and with a perfectly straight face Lee handed me a beautiful Apache Indian doll.

Oof! It was the mid-point of a fairly strange day, my last in the United States. Earlier, I'd emptied a huge pile of money on to Tom Perry's kitchen table, the takings from our successful Worldcon bid. And I do mean huge, with hundred-dollar notes mixed in with the mound of fifties, twenties and smaller denominations.

"This one's ripped," announced Tom's son, Mark.

"Throw it away," said Tom. "It's only a ten."

"There's nearly as much here as you earn in a week, Tom," I said, playing up to his reputation in British fandom as a Rich American.

"Yeah," he replied with an expression which seemed to say "I should be so lucky".

"We could go a long way on this money," Lee remarked thoughtfully.

Eventually we finished counting, finding 24 uncashable cheques made out to "Mercury Services" by people who clearly hadn't read the instructions on the Suncon site ballots, and a Scottish pound note which, by the look of it, had been in somebody's wallet for the last thousand years. (When I finally arrived back in Birmingham that note was to save my life — being the only item of British currency remaining in my pocket and just sufficient to pay a reluctant taxi-driver, with a handful of nickels and dimes for a tip!)

The cashier at the Bank of Coral Springs was bewildered by the mad foreigner with the sack of money and his request to transfer it to an account in London. The Americans don't seem to have the banking system we're accustomed to — instead of our "Big 4" clearing banks and their myriad branches, every small U.S. town has its own bank, and this one was a bit out of its depth.

"Where's the nearest branch of Barclays International?" I asked.

"I think there's one in Boston," they offered helpfully.

The doll incident happened just afterward, but I don't think Lee took offence. What I meant, of course, were those cheap, nasty identikit plastic dolls of which we already have a cupboardful at home, sans limbs. Lee's doll was an "ethnic" representation of the authentic costume of the Indian tribe, more of a collector's display item than something to be dismembered by young children.

I'll have to wait until 1981 to see whether she sends me the next issue of her fanzine, I suppose.

Soon afterwards I was on my way to the airport with Tom, collecting wife Alyx from her job on the way and passing once again over the causeway which links the Miami Beach sandbar to the city proper. About halfway across we noticed a line of black objects sticking out of the water.

"Look, sharks," said Alyx.

"British sharks," I corrected her. "They're queuing-up for victims."

At which Alyx creased up — good job she wasn't driving this time! Since returning from Southampton a few months ago she's only gradually discarding the strange habits we have over here, like queuing.

"We call them lines," Lee wisely observed.

"Stupid sort of word," commented Tom. "In computer-talk we write "q". The rest of the word is useless. Why don't you add a few more "ue"'s while you're at it?"

The "sharks" were wooden piles, incidentally, for some sort of breakwater.

My plane was delayed, of course. Or rather, perfectly on time at Miami but unable to take-off because of a four hour landing backlog at London. We waited in a tastefully-decorated white and purple lounge and I started to read John Varley's The Phantom of Kansas in Terry Carr's Best of the Year No. 6, a book I'd bought at the convention. Varley's story is first-class, by the way.

Trouble was, I was sitting next to an elderly and quite charming Swedish lady who obviously took great delight in perfecting her languages.

"How nice to hear an English voice," she said as I explained something or other to her. "You speak so well. I can't understand what these Americans are saying."

At this I realised it was churlish to carry on reading, so I put down my book and agreed that yes, I couldn't understand them either, particularly the women. And I wished Peggy Rae Pavlat had been listening.

On the Saturday evening I had a meal with Peggy Rae and with Alex and Phyllis Eisenstein, both old friends. It was the only time I ate in the hotel's posh restaurant, because the prices were fairly high — but for the whole meal the two women teased me about my accent.

I was less concerned about that than with the food. Now, maybe I'm a creature of habit but I had a lot of trouble with American food. Like with the Eisensteins, when the waiter asked me out of the blue how I'd like my salad.

"Salad?" I asked wonderingly. No salad was mentioned on the menu. "Just salad. Nothing special."

"He means what dressing do you want," they explained.

"I'll have Thousand Islands," said Alex, as to the manner born.

"Blue cheese," said Peggy Rae.

"Just salad," I maintained. In England, "dressing" usually means the kitchen staff will pour olive oil all over the lettuce.

The salad came in big bowls which we were supposed to eat before the main course. Now that may be all right for Peter Roberts but I preferred to wait until the meat arrived; but then we had hot veg., too, a separate pot of minced-up spinach.

Things were as bewildering in the cafeteria downstairs. I mean, when you order a sandwich in England you expect something between two square pieces of white bread, and the only variation is how far up the corners are curling. American sandwiches are an art-form. Spectacular — but a lot of trouble to organise when you're not used to them.

Corned beef isn't corned beef, but a sort of thinly sliced inner tube. Half the things on the menu were unidentifiable. On the last day my patience snapped and I asked the waitress for my usual convention staple.

"Sausage and chips."

"Qui?"

"Franks and a side-order of fries," translated my native guide.

I enjoyed it, too.

However, while in Miami I was initiated into the pleasures of ice-cream, something I oddly seem to have missed out on during my previous visit although back home I'm considered something of an ice-cream fan.

(Last Easter I sat next to the GoH's wife, Sheila Bush, for most of an evening without discovering, until I saw her on TV

the following day, that she is some sort of national authority on ice-cream recipes.)

The way my conversion happened was like this.

At 5.00 am on the Sunday morning we were sitting in the lounge when Ron Bounds and Bobbi Armbruster started to talk about the view from the penthouse balcony.

"The full moon was so bright," said Bobbi, "that it reminded us of that Larry Niven story —"

"Inconstant Moon," said Ron.

— where the hero thinks the sun has gone nova on the other side of the earth, and he and his girlfriend go for their last hot-fudge sundae."

"I've never had a hot-fudge sundae," I said wistfully.

"WHAT!!" Amazed, well-fed American faces clearly didn't believe it. "We'll get one now."

I didn't resist, and that's how we came to be scoffing this delicacy at such a ridiculous hour in the morning. I explained how in England, ice-cream nearly always comes in little hard squares. I also made a mental note to make sure that in 1979 the hotel's catering manager realises our transatlantic guests will expect service at slightly later hours than he's probably normally used to observing.

I had two more hot-fudge sundaes the following day. And a 3-scoop banana split which defeated even me. Funny I hadn't noticed that page in the menu before.

The penthouse rooms were the location for several of the secret professional parties, which I didn't find until quite late in the convention. On Saturday night, for instance, the Berkley party had closed down by the time I found it, though by tagging on to Charlie Brown I found Dave Hartwell and a few others still going strong several floors below.

The following evening was a bit heavy going, what with the banquet and then our British Victory Party at midnight, and as a result I don't quite remember how I got into the exclusive "Hugo Losers'" party (although in retrospect I realise I qualify). But for me, that was one of the best times of the entire convention, not for the sycophantic pleasure of meeting "The Professionals" but because it seemed a genuinely relaxed, friendly, yet stimulating gathering.

The following night in the Peirces' party Joe Haldeman called across:

"Robert Heinlein asked me if you were here. He said he'd like to meet you."

After being picked up from the floor I asked him to say that again, louder. But it was too late for me, of course: Heinlein had gone by then and I never did meet him. In all fairness it was my own fault — a certain diffidence to go chasing after one of the great names in science fiction along with all the autograph brigade, together with a reluctance to get mixed up in the blood drive Heinlein was promoting.

I didn't think I could spare a pint of my blood, although I'd have been prepared to donate seven or eight pints of Charles Platt's.

My best times at Suncon of course were at the two British parties. Not just because the parties were fun — though I hope they were — but through the sheer satisfaction of organising something, and seeing it succeed.

We'd planned all along to hold some sort of Seacon bidding party, but only on the Friday did the urge seize me to be more ambitious. Wisely, Rob and Peter Roberts didn't interfere as they saw one of my fantasies beginning to build.

"We must try and do something," I said. "We can show those slides of Brighton. What about our bidding song? Anyone seen Vera?"

Vera Johnson was there, and she was marvellous. We packed in a few hundred people and had a sing-song, followed by a grand knurdling tournament and a hum-and-sway finale, events which we told the Americans were traditional at all British conventions.

The only trouble is that no one has knurdled at a British con since 1966, to my recollection, and I've never actually seen a hum-and-sway. So we had to improvise — but it worked well enough.

Our Victory Party on the Sunday was better prepared. This time (thanks to the helpful Suncon committee) we had a larger room, which was just as well since people were queuing outside from 11.40 onwards.

The first time, Rob and I nearly killed ourselves in borrowing Joyce Scrivner's car and four suitcases with which we fetched several hundred cans of beer and soft drinks, carrying them nonchalantly through the foyer with only an occasional clink and rattle to betray the contraband within. (We were avoiding an exorbitant corkage fee levied by the hotel on outside drink.)

For the second performance Tom and Alyx assisted with their usual efficiency and directness, simply bribing a porter to bring up the crates to our room.

Surprising how many Americans seemed to know our National Anthem, with which the party began. Then Vera delivered the bidding song, followed by a composition about English food, with a refrain of "and chips!", which I thought particularly appropriate.

Tom Perry gave some off-the-cuff remarks about the zany differences between the two countries, and Kathy Sanders performed a splendid belly-dance routine. The last item was a piece of pure luck; not planned, but earlier in the evening we'd exchanged a ew words prior to the Banquet and Kathy had asked hesitantly if we'd like her to appear. As U.S. con-goers will know, she and husband Drew (like Mike & Carol Resnick) are among the small number of individuals who most years make a really major effort for the Masquerade — and their costume Golden Apples of the Sun this time was really incredible.

The party ended with another hum-and-sway, much more of a success this time. For a few brief moments in the darkness it almost seemed to me that we'd succeeded in evoking some cosmic guiding principle of fandom.

"May you all produce the Perfect Fanzine," I intoned, "Unlimited corflu for all!" And similar nonsense. After all, if L. Ron Hubbard can do it, I don't see why we shouldn't have a try!

And that was really my convention. Oh, plenty of other bright spots stand out in memory — lying on the golden beach, for instance, watching Peter Roberts emerge from the waves like Neptune awakened (and yes, when wet it can be seen that he does have ears); or Robert Silverberg as Toastmaster, "I enjoyed your hurricane. Next time you come to California I hope you enjoy our earthquakes." Many, many more — but enough is enough, here anyway.

* * * * * *

A number of people have asked me what the situation is regarding the British professional magazine, Vortex, with which my name was for a while linked, earlier in the year. This may be a good place to explain the story.

My first encounter with Vortex was at the last Novacon (6), when I noticed Roger Peyton's book stall had acquired a pre-production "dummy" of a proposed new British prozine. I was vaguely interested, since after selling a few articles on science fiction to the late SF Monthly I wondered whether this might be a possible replacement market.

One look told me to forget it. Vortex had a well-printed colour cover but was clearly oriented much more towards fantasy and the macabre than suited my taste, while the interior illustrations and layout were crude in the extreme. I dismissed the project as just another in the long line of bungles which have

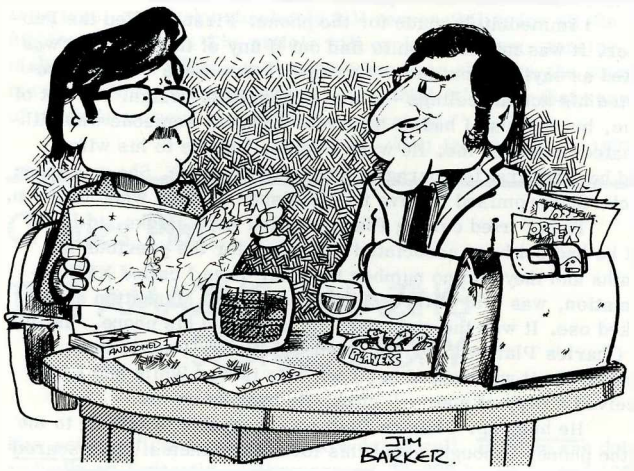
dogged publishing in the U.K. whenever anyone tries to produce any sort of sf magazine.

The first two issues confirmed my opinion. They made SF Monthly look good! And then, in April, Roger Peyton told me that the publisher of Vortex had visited his bookshop and said he, too, was disappointed with the magazine and he was looking for a new editor.

"I mentioned your name," said Roger.

Sure enough, the man telephoned me a week or two later. His name was Edward Shacklady and he said he needed help. Would I get in touch with the editor, Keith Seddon, straight away?

Now, I'd never previously heard of Seddon. Certainly he wasn't a fan, and it was clear from his two issues so far that he couldn't know much about science fiction or about editing. And I'd had enough of trying to give advice to people unable to appreciate it; I said as much.



"I'd heard you were looking for a new editor, Mr. Shacklady," I said. "That's how I'd prefer to be involved."

"All right," he said. "Work out your budget for editing the magazine and call me back on Friday."

Now immediately I was a bit nonplussed. I mean, budgets are important and all that, but at such an early stage I'd have thought there were a few more important things to discuss first. From his point of view, what were my qualifications to run a magazine? From mine, who was he and what was it all about, anyway?

But still, it was his money and that gave him some privileges. And so I tried to estimate how much time would be needed to edit a monthly magazine on a free-lance basis, costed it out, and dutifully rang him up and gave him a figure.

"That wouldn't pay for a cover painting," he said scornfully. "I don't think you know what you are talking about, Mr. Weston."

Fighting back a strong feeling that maybe he was the idiot, I asked for clarification.

"What exactly did you want me to include?" I asked. "This is my fee for doing the editorial work."

"Oh no," he replied. "I told you I want a complete price for everything: stories, artwork, layout, the lot. I just want to print it."

I asked a few other questions, like, what was he paying authors and artists at the moment, but he wouldn't say.

"You tell me, Mr. Weston," he said slyly.

I must admit to having second thoughts about the whole business. I mean, it was starting to snowball a bit. But then I discovered I'd developed an itch to get my fingers on Vortex — I knew I couldn't possibly do worse than the present incumbent and after all, didn't I once produce a big fanzine every couple of months? With actual money available, surely I could easily find a few willing artists; and I knew a fellow who would help on layouts. Realistically, I knew it wouldn't last for very long; but what the heck, press onward!

So I shopped around, took advice from a few agents, and from SFM days established a wordage rate which didn't look too unreasonable. I called him back with a new figure.

"All right," he said. "Now where can we meet?"

Feeling quite excited, I made my way to our rendezvous. We'd arranged to meet in the bar at the Charing Cross Hotel, on the night I was coming down to London for a One Tun meeting. This could be it, I thought — and so with some care I'd packed my "references" in my bag — issues of Speculation with some of the big names inside, Andromeda 1, and a few issues of SFM containing my articles.

Meeting Shacklady was a let-down.

He was a small, drowned-rat sort of figure with a cold gleam in his eyes.

"Nasty Man" I instinctively decided, but pressed on, secure in the belief that he obviously had money to spend and owning a publishing company, he must have some idea of what he was doing.

"Now then, Mr. Weston, when can you start?" he asked, ignoring social preliminaries and not even glancing at my credentials. Once more the overwhelming feeling swept over me that we were approaching this thing from the wrong direction. I tried to explain my conception of how a magazine should be run – more-or-less straight science fiction with articles and interviews and news-features — in fact I'd even prepared tentative contents pages for a couple of issues.

But he wasn't interested in that sort of thing.

"Look at these," he said proudly, withdrawing colour proofs of the third and fourth issues from his case.

I looked. "Er... I've never been very keen on running illustrations in single process-colours," I said. "I mean, the blue isn't too bad but the magenta's a bit vile and you can hardly see the yellow."

"I think it looks good," he snapped.

Anyway, we talked a bit more and I said I would want three things. I was taking full responsibility for assembling the package, so I would want a schedule, a mutually-binding contract for a minimum number of issues, and money for the first number in advance.

We agreed I could take over with the seventh issue, in July, and Mr. Seddon would be given his marching orders by Shacklady. Triumphant, I took a taxi rather than the tube to the Tun.

Only — it didn't happen. After a few weeks I rang to enquire about progress.

"Having a few problems," he said. "Can't talk now. Get on with it."

"But what about the contract?"

"You don't need to worry about that. You can trust us."

I wouldn't trust him with a piece of cheese!

Another few weeks and I told him that if he wanted a July issue, time was running out fast.

"We're having a big meeting up here next week," he said, revealing for the first time that he wasn't exclusively in control of the company. "Keith Seddon's father doesn't want me to change editors."

Ah! That's where Seddon — and Vortex — came from! His father was a director.

Finally it was obvious the whole thing was a dead loss and I withdrew from the mess with a certain feeling of relief — mixed with disappointment, of course, and regret that a few other people like Jim Barker, Alan Hunter, and yes, Larry Niven, had taken some trouble which had all been in vain.

There is an epilogue.

Some months later I had a mystery telephone call at my office.

"Keith Seddon here," he said.

Embarrassed, I didn't know what to say. After all, though I wished him no personal ill-will, I had nearly taken his job.

"What do you know about Vortex?" he queried. He was the editor, and he was asking me!

Apparently the poor chap hadn't tied things up contractually and now the magazine had gone defunct with its fifth issue and he was out of pocket. I couldn't help him and said so. But what a shambles! And what a terrible waste — for Vortex, in its limited life, had excellent mechanical reproduction and first-class distribution. What could have been done with that opportunity.

Peter Weston, October 1977.

The Ultimate Debate

Charles Platt — Ted White

Back in Maya 12/13 I published Peter Weston's Slice of Life column in which he reminisced and commented at length on the fannish activities of Charles Platt in the 1960's, among other things. This prompted a letter from Ted White in which he commented on his relationship with Charles both in the sixties and more recently. As part of the letter was not directly relevant to the period Peter was discussing, I edited it out: but then well after Ted's letter was published I received an article by Charles Platt on his experiences with Ted White and Amazing Stories. The unpublished part of Ted's letter was very germane to Charles's article, so I am publishing it here as a preface to Charles's article, along with a further reply by Ted.

Rob Jackson, Dec. '77.

My own awareness of Charles Platt was less than acute in the 1960's, but I do recall the unpleasantness in Zenith...

Events in recent years forced me to pay somewhat more attention to Platt, since apparently Platt has seized upon me as an object for his jealousies.

In late 1974 I wrote an editorial for Amazing which the Publisher refused to publish. Feeling that this was the last straw in a series of differences between myself and the Publisher (which the Publisher constantly won), I quit. And immediately after I hung up on him I told Terry Hughes, who was working on a Mota in my basement, and then I phoned my ex-wife to tell her (I was pretty upset and required an audience familiar with the background). After I got off the phone it rang again: the Publisher. We talked, we reconciled. Subsequently I gave the unpublished editorial, prefaced by a description of what had happened and why it was unpublished to Geis as a column for what was then either Alien Critic or SFR again, and it was published in early 1975.

A month or less later I received in the mail from Geis a copy of a piece by Platt, which Platt called "Some Facts About Amazing Stories" or somesuch. It was an incredible manuscript.

The main thrust of Platt's piece was that I was a total liar. I had never resigned Amazing — I had made it all up. What was more, I had ruined Amazing and was cordially hated by everyone who did business with me, the Publisher first in line. "Sub-human" was one of the kinder epithets.

The story Platt offered in justification for this series of charges was even more incredible. It seems that but for my malevolent control over the helpless Publisher one Charles Platt would now be Amazing's editor! Yes, and as a matter of fact it had all been worked out how Platt would succeed me: a public firing (read: humiliation) at the DC Worldcon, followed by a raid on my house by Platt and the Publisher to recover the inventory which, it was assumed, I'd otherwise hold hostage for unstated purposes (just natural meanness on my part, I guess).

There was only one hitch with Platt's story: none of it happened. Although the Publisher shipped me a box of new (advance copies) Amazings for distribution to subscribers and a couple more boxes of current Amazings and Fantastics to give away to all concerned — neither Platt nor the Publisher actually showed up at the Discon. Nor was I fired, either privately or publicly. If in fact the plot ever existed outside Platt's fevered imagination, it had been abandoned.

It was Platt's point that inasmuch as the Publisher hated and feared me, and refrained from firing me only because of his fear of what I'd do if he fired me, he'd accept my resignation eagerly. Ergo, I hadn't quit, I'd lied about that. And if I'd lied about that, I'd lie about anything. "Sub-human," remember?

Well, I was a bit upset by the piece, which went into greater detail than I have here and which thoroughly and totally libelled me, both professionally and personally, addressing itself as it did to the rest of prodom (via Geis' zine).

I immediately made for the phone. First I called the Publisher. It was my intention to find out if any of the things he was quoted as saying about me were true. If they were — if they reflected his actual feelings — I was prepared to resign. Not out of pique, but because I had no desire to work for someone who either hated or feared me. He wasn't home. I spoke to his wife. I read her the first few paragraphs of Platt's piece. She was taken aback. She promised to have the Publisher call me when he got in.

Then I tried calling Platt. I called Avon Books, to learn that he had not been associated with them for the previous six months and they had no number for him. Then I called NYC information, was told of three Charles Platts in Manhattan and picked one. It was the right one. He answered his phone. "Is this the Charles Platt who writes science fiction?" I asked him. He assured me it was indeed he. "Ah, this is Ted White and I just received a copy of your —" click. He hung up on me.

He hung up. Charles Platt was incapable of talking to me on the phone. I thought about this for a few minutes. He's scared of me. About three minutes later I called again. The phone was answered by a machine. I left a short message in which I called him "chickenshit."

Then, that evening, the Publisher called. He found another copy of the piece in his mail when he got home. He was upset. He assured me it was totally untrue. He said he met Platt for the first time in November, 1974, at the annual SFWA Meet the Publishers/Editors get-together in NYC to which he had gone. I got the impression that there was some smoke in Platt's story but little fire. The Publisher assured me that as long as he was Publisher I could remain editor — a vote of confidence.

Thus armed, I sat down to write a reply to Platt — the reason Geis had sent me the piece. My first draft was eight or ten pages long (double-spaced), and dealt specifically with the points Platt raised. After I had written it and gotten that out of my system I wrote a second reply which ran, if I remember correctly, only three pages (double-spaced) and which made no attempt to answer Platt point for point but did recount my reaction to the receipt of his piece and what I did about it — essentially what I've written above. I concluded by saying that I regarded the article as libellous and that I intended to sue Platt after its publication.

I reached this conclusion reluctantly. I've felt for many years that fandom's disputes have no business being dragged into the courts — and my own experience with a $75,000 libel suit being filed against me in 1961 (and dropped later) did nothing to alter that opinion. But where does "fandom" stop and "the professional world" begin? Platt's attack was not on me as a fan, but on me as a professional editor. The only genuinely fannish connection was the fact that we'd both known each other as fans. So I decided to sue.

Geis' response was to drop his plans for publishing the piece. Returning my reply to me he said that he felt the thing was more serious than he'd originally considered it, and Platt's reaction to my phone call bothered him too.

And, for a year, that was that. I went to that year's Lunacon (in NYC) rather hoping I might run into Platt there: I was still angry enough to enjoy a confrontation. But if Platt was there he took care to avoid me. I never saw him.

The 1976 Lunacon was another story — and one which has already been told. It had me "pie-killed" twice — once on Friday night and once on Sunday afternoon.

I regard the pie attacks as the least offensive thing Platt

has done to me. They are, at heart, harmless and even funny if you're not the object...

I haven't heard anything more of Platt since then, but I have no doubt that sooner or later I will.

Ted White, March 1977.

After other parts of the above letter were published in Maya 14 in June, I received the article below from Charles. In view of Ted's feelings about Charles's similar earlier article, I felt I should carefully check Ted's feelings about the later, less outspoken version Charles sent me. At Suncon Ted told me he was quite happy for me to publish it; at a later stage he wrote the reply which follows Charles's article.

Of his article, Charles says:

"I realise that I have a reputation for practical jokes. But I do assure you that every single statement in the enclosed article is true, and I take absolutely full responsibility for all the statements of fact. The article will explain my long-standing dislike for Ted White, and at the same time clarifies the situation about White's magazines. I really think it's time that some of these facts were more widely understood."

Rob Jackson, Dec. 1977.

Charles Platt

THE AMAZING AMAZING STORIES STORY

Few science fiction magazines are doing well. But few are doing as badly as Fantastic, selling around 20,000 (as of August 1977) and perhaps dead by the time you read this. It hasn't exactly flourished under editor White. Nor has Amazing. White's flair for editorial mediocrity must be a factor; also, these items in his record:

- Involved in more frequent, more vitriolic disputes with writers than any other science fiction editor
- Consistently placed fifth or lower in "best magazine" and "best editor" polls
- More notorious even than Roger Elwood for slow response times, lost manuscripts, and unanswered mail
- Boycotted more than once, in different ways, by the SFWA, largely because of his dilatory habits and carelessness

Logically, Ted White should have been fired years ago. How has he kept his job?

In May 1972 publisher Sol Cohen was talking privately to some people including (to my personal knowledge) an SFWA officer about finding a replacement editor. In June 1972, a couple of intermediaries suggested to Cohen that he could hire me as a replacement for White. I had had experience editing a low-budget magazine (New Worlds) and the new job I had begun at Avon Books still left me enough free time to take on Amazing and Fantastic as well.

I talked to Cohen. He was interested but indecisive. He had three reasons for hesitating to fire White: 1) White worked for only $200 a month (a salary so low that he qualified for Welfare benefits). Who else would accept this pay? 2) Cohen felt sorry for White: "The magazines are all he's got, you know." 3) Cohen was afraid of what White might do. He suggested White might refuse to hand over editorial inventory, might deliberately withhold manuscripts and artwork, or even destroy them in a fit of pique if he were fired. And Cohen doubted a new editor could untangle the confusion of unread manuscripts and unanswered mail that (Cohen admitted) White had created.

Eventually, after several long phone calls, I concluded that Cohen did want a new editor, but could not, finally, risk firing White.

In the summer of 1974, Cohen telephoned me unexpectedly and launched into the same general complaints about Ted White that he had voiced two years previously. Now, however, he sounded more desperate. He described White as "unreliable," "uncommunicative," "an egomaniac," and "impossible to work with." "He's ruining the magazines." Cohen alleged White was buying material from a coterie of sycophantic amateurs, rather than from professionals. (Example: a well-known artist who earned $500 per paperback book cover was willing to do covers for Amazing for one-tenth the price; but White refused to use the artist, preferring to employ one of his fan-friends instead.)

After more than half an hour of complaints, Cohen asked me if I were still willing to take over if Ted White were fired. I said I was. Cohen said he would call me back as soon as it was definite.

He called me a week later, but it was still not definite. All he had to tell me was the same half-hour list of White's transgressions. More than once he told me Ted White was "subhuman" (interesting editor-publisher relationship).

The next day, another phone call. Cohen was still afraid to fire his editor, but had a new plan. He wanted me to chauffeur him to the 1974 World Science Fiction Convention in Washington DC. There, he would fire White publicly (he feared that if he did it privately, White would circulate distortions of what had really happened). Then, I would drive Cohen on from Washington to White's home, where we would forcibly repossess every last manuscript and illustration that White was hoarding. Having grabbed the inventory, we'd return to New York, and I would take over as editor.

I agreed to the plan. But, two days later, in another phone call, Cohen decided he couldn't go through with it. He referred to his heart condition. He said he couldn't risk the tension of firing White in public. He confessed he was actually afraid of being physically assaulted by his editor. So, he had decided on yet another plan. He told me he would withhold as much material from White as possible, in future, so that White could not maintain such a backlog of inventory. In a few months' time, Cohen reasoned, the inventory that White already had would be diminished by natural attrition, as it was published in the magazine. As soon as White had virtually no important material left stashed in his home, it would be safe to get rid of him, without fear of "reprisals."

Bizarre, but it made a vague kind of sense. So I waited. Months passed. Cohen called occasionally with the usual half-hour of complaints about White ("I'm at my wits' end," "I've got to do something because it just can't go on like this,") but would always have an excuse for delaying the moment of truth just a little longer:

— People were negotiating to buy the magazines (this

deal fell through)
- Cohen's partner in Ultimate Publishing either wanted to buy him out, or be bought out (the details were unclear; I think this deal fell through too)
- Cohen was looking for anyone who'd pay $25,000 for both magazines including a complete set of file copies thrown in free (he failed to find a buyer)
- Cohen was in the process of shifting to a new distributor.

In November 1974 I met Sol Cohen at a publishing party at the Americana Hotel in New York. I asked him frankly if he was ever, ever going to do anything about Ted White. After the usual list of complaints he said, finally, he had decided to live with the situation.

It was around then, incidentally, that White published one of his pompous columns (in The Alien Critic number 12), claiming he had grown weary of his self-sacrificing editorial toil for the sake of science fiction and had begged to resign; but (he claimed) Sol Cohen had begged him to stay on. I estimate this column's gross self-serving distortions of the truth must have been written more or less at the same time that Cohen was telling me White was "sub-human" and was "ruining the magazines."

Had Cohen lied to me about the situation? Was White lying in his column? It doesn't ultimately matter; what matters is that two of our last surviving science fiction magazines are tottering towards final ruin under the mismanagement of a publisher incapable of making a decision, employing an editor whom he openly despises.

I used to wonder how anyone as incompetent as Ted White managed to get his job in the first place. Then Cohen told me. After Harry Harrison and Barry Malzberg had briefly served as editors, Cohen was looking for someone who'd take on the job and really stick with it. Thomas M. Disch let it be known (via his literary agency) that he was available. But Cohen happened to ask Robert Silverberg for advice, and it seems Silverberg recommended Ted White, and Cohen took that advice, ignoring Disch. Sure enough, White has really stuck with the job ever since ("The magazines are all he's got, you know"); and Cohen, and the rest of us, have been stuck with White.

Of course, White disclaims responsibility for the steady decline in sales of Fantastic and Amazing. He blames bad distribution. But Cohen himself told me more than once that "bad distribution is just an excuse," used by editors (such as White) to distract from their own poor performance. The image, identity, and contents of a magazine are factors that count more than distribution, in Cohen's experience, and in mine. And these are the qualities that White has been incompetent to achieve, in addition to his many other failings.

My own interest in editing the magazines died a couple of years ago. But I retain an interest in science fiction, and I retain an angry contempt for Ted White's destruction of two science fiction markets. Amazing and Fantastic are now virtually dead. To save them at this point, either someone will have to buy and recapitalise the operation, or White will have to be pressured into resigning. Science fiction readers who care about the genre might consider how the latter option could be realised.

Charles Platt, August 1977.

Ted White

TOO AMAZING TO BE TRUE

Charles Platt, who —
- has been involved in more frequent, more vitriolic disputes with fans, writers and people of good will than anyone I can think of
- has never been nominated for any awards as a science fiction author or editor
- is so afraid of confrontation from those he attacks that he goes out of his way to avoid them at social gatherings and hangs up his phone on them
- and who three years ago trotted out a remarkably similar piece attacking me (on largely the same grounds, using most of the same material) which Richard Geis ultimately refused to publish

... is a good example of a person so consumed by jealousy that he is apparently unable to distinguish fact from fantasy. Most of his writings about me fall in the latter category.

But I do want to concern myself with one of his charges: that due to my "mediocrity" as an editor "Amazing and Fantastic are now virtually dead."

Platt knows quite well that this is not true and in fact has never been true, although he would like it to be true, and seems to feel that its repetition will make it true. The fact is that under my editorship the magazines were saved from certain extinction and turned from magazines largely devoted to reprints to magazines which have published a significant number of important new stories and have not had a single reprint within their pages for better than five years.

This is a matter of record. It is obvious to anyone who actually reads the magazines. I think it's an obvious inference that Platt does not read the magazines and probably never has.

Platt feels that "bad distribution is just an excuse" for "the steady decline in sales of Fantastic and Amazing." But in fact there has been no "steady decline" in the sales of either magazine. A careful check of the sales and circulation figures will show that both magazines have been hovering in the same range (plus or minus less than 5,000 copies) for more than five years. The big fall in circulation occurred when the price was raised from 60¢ a copy to 75¢ a copy — we lost about 10,000 in sales. Since then Amazing has maintained itself in the 25,000 range and Fantastic in the 20,000 range. The difference in the sales of the two magazines has been a consistent 5,000 to 10,000 since the Ziff-Davis days — years before my association with the magazines.

As I pointed out in the January, 1978 issue of Amazing, the difference in the sales figures for Amazing vs. Galaxy, say, is an illusion. In 1976 (the most recent figures on hand) Galaxy put 67,719 copies of each issue on the stands, and actually sold 26,668. Amazing put 65,500 copies on the stands and sold 23,000. The figures for F&SF are in the same neighbourhood. (Even Analog, with a vastly superior budget and distribution system, sold only 60,361 copies out of 122,042 placed on display — or a slightly poorer percentage despite a much better market penetration.) (Fantastic's figures are lower: of 66,680 copies on the stands only 18,130 sold.)

So why are there much higher total sales figures for Analog, Galaxy and F&SF? In a word, subscriptions. The publishers of those magazines are aggressively pursuing subscriptions, and actually sell more copies by subscription than they do by newsstand distribution. Amazing and Fantastic do not. Why not? The publisher, Sol Cohen, steadfastly maintains that there is no profit in subscriptions and too much work involved. (His wife handles the subscription department.)

Is this indeed "just an excuse" to "distract from (my) poor performance?" I will leave that to those less biased than Platt to decide. But from where I sit, I am:
- hampered by the lowest rates of payment in the field (not under my control)
- additionally hampered by the publisher's decision to publish only four issues a year of each magazine
- further hampered by retail distribution so spotty that I can't depend on finding copies of either magazine in the same retail outlets for two issues running

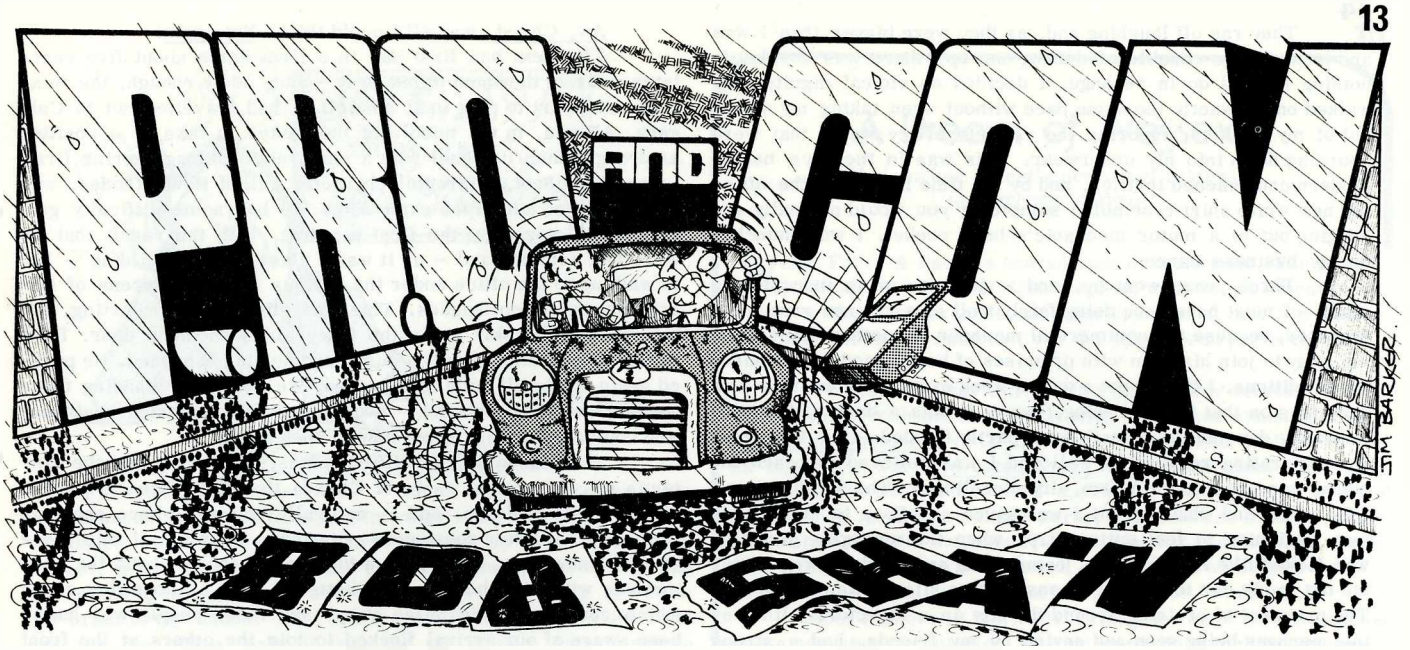
... and yet my magazines do about as well as all but one of the competition on the open market (newsstand sales). Additionally, there are authors like Gordon Eklund, F.M. Busby, Jack Dann, David Bunch, James Sallis, and a good many others, who have continued to support me and the magazines in many tangible ways.

I must be doing something right.

Oh, and speaking of "bad distribution" being "just an excuse," I wonder if Platt would care to try that line out on Norman Goldfind, who is having a hard time establishing Cosmos (a superior package for a magazine whose contents are paid for with a budget five times mine) — and can't even get copies put on display in Washington, D.C. (nor, I've heard, much of New York City). Maybe Platt could tell him that it's just editor Dave Hartwell's "poor performance." With luck, he might find himself hired to do the job Dave "couldn't" do — if Cosmos survives that long.

In the meantime, if I use one word to describe Platt and his pronouncements, it would be a word he once used in the title of his first sf novel: garbage.

Ted White, Oct. 1977.



It was Easter Monday, 1973, and the Bristol convention had just ended. I was driving north on the M5, accompanied by Vic Hallett — who was getting a lift as far as Chester — and the weather was perfectly in accord with my post-con blues. Storm after storm came sweeping out of the dark west, creating a feeling that the motorway was under attack, and the windscreen wipers were labouring to cope with the downpour. For the first hour Vic and I had conversed in a fairly animated fashion, mainly about childhood reading, and we had been pleased to discover that, although interested in stamp collecting, neither of us had ever dared to send away for the approvals advertised in the Dandy, simply because we didn't know what an approval meant. Now, however, exhaustion was catching up with us and conversation had stopped. Vic was lost in his own thoughts, and I was silently brooding about the new PR job I had to start in the morning with Vickers in Barrow. As the lines of car and coach tail-lights formed crazy computer patterns on the rain-spattered glass ahead of me, I tightened my grip on the steering wheel and thought back over the years to other occasions when I had been facing the first day in a new job...

Actually, to be perfectly truthful, I did nothing of the sort. If I remember rightly, I was praying to be saved from the motorway maniacs in their company-owned Cortinas who were merrily aquaplaning past us at seventy and eighty miles an hour. Years of writing for aviation journals have got me into the bad habit of using what I call the Smithers-thought-back ploy when I'm starting articles. It's a well-tried technique which aviation journalists in particular are fond of because they are often required to write the life stories of individuals who have led extremely boring lives until getting into a single hair-raising scrape. Faced with this daunting task the journalist usually tries to start and end with the good bit, by writing something like: "Wind howled through the shattered canopy of the Stirling bomber, and as he watched the grey waves of the North Sea swirling up to meet him, Sq. Ldr. Ted Smithers clutched his shrapnel-torn left arm and thought back to that peaceful summer of 1934 when he had joined the RAF..." It's a downright lie, of course, but all the Smithers of this world happily go along with it for the sake of the egoboo, and a whole generation of young aero enthusiasts are growing up brainwashed into believing that when he is facing a gory death the average airman responds by rehearsing his memoirs for the sake of posterity.

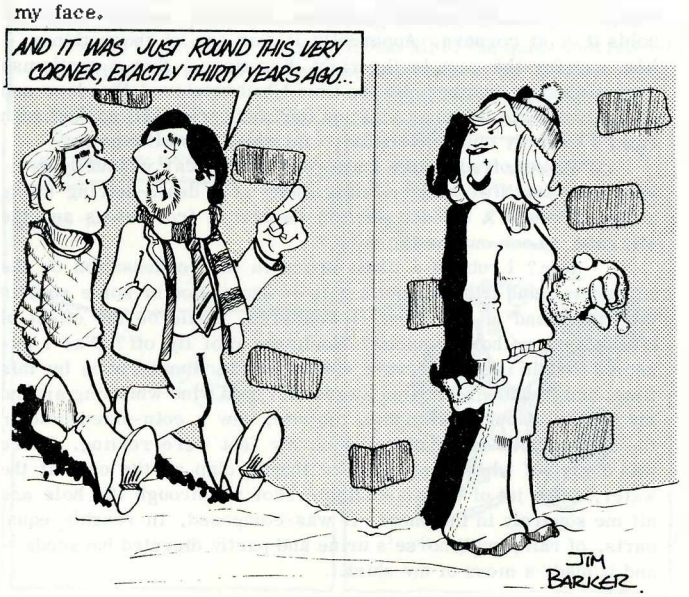
Starting a new job is no joke, though. There's the necessity of looking your best; of trying to appear alert, intelligent and enthusiastic; of going through that first encounter with strangers who will gradually cease to be strangers, some of whom you will grow to like, and others to hate. And on the day I was talking about it was just beginning to dawn on me that I had made a ghastly mistake in planning the whole operation. Vickers were paying my fare from Belfast to England, and by arranging to join them on the day after Easter I had fixed it that they would, as a by-product, pay my way to the convention. It had seemed like a brilliant wheeze beforehand, but I had enjoyed the Bristol convention — which meant three days of boozing and three nights almost without sleep — and had begun the eight-hour drive north feeling like a zombie. I had serious doubts about even being able to reach Barrow, let alone impress a new set of bosses first thing in the morning. As the night of storms grew darker and the wind howled through chinks in the door seals, I turned the radio up to help me stay awake, and my thoughts went back over the years to the time when I went through the ordeal of starting my very first job...

Jehovah's jockstrap! I've done it again! Ah, hell — here goes... more dots to denote a change of time and place...

The weather was bad that morning, too. A heavy fall of snow had jammed up Belfast's transport system so much that I had to walk most of the way to the office where I was due to begin work as an apprentice draughtsman. My feet were cold and wet, and I was as nervous as any sixteen-year-old could be, and I was acutely aware that my principal qualification — the ability to recite long tracts of BRE Astoundings from memory — was not the sort of thing that engineering employers usually looked for. The only thing that cheered me up was that I was wearing a natty new tie and my first white shirt, an ensemble I fancied gave me an air of thoughtful maturity suggestive of a budding I.K. Brunel.

Somewhat warmed by that notion, I turned into a long mean street, so typical of Belfast's industrial areas, and trudged along it through the soot-greying snow. Two girls about my age were proceeding along it in the opposite direction, but I was too busy with dreams of the future to pay them any heed. We met about halfway along the street and the girls obligingly parted to let me pass between them. It must be the executive-type shirt and tie, I thought, pleased by their considerateness. Perhaps I really do look like a young man on his way to the top.

At that instant they both made stiff-armed lateral swings and each of them slammed a pound-and-a-half of filthy slush into my face.



They ran off laughing and, as they were bigger than I was and looked quite capable of duffing me up, there was absolutely nothing I could do in revenge, I decided on stoical dignity, and walked on at exactly the same pace without even taking my hands out of my pockets, ignoring the rivulets of icy water that were coursing down into my underwear. This was in the days before modern convenience textiles, and by the time I reached the office my new white shirt resembled something you would normally see hanging out of a motor mechanic's back pocket. I was launched on my business career.

Three years went by, and — in spite of an inauspicious start — I must have been doing fairly well as a trainee structural engineer, because the commercial manager of another outfit lured me away to join his firm with promises of better money and working conditions. I think I got a quid a week extra. The weather was atrocious on that first morning, too — it was a dark and dismal February day and the streets were partly flooded — but the buses were operating reasonably well and I was relieved to reach the works in a condition of warm, dry cleanliness. The building itself was small and shabby, but I was given an office to myself and was beginning to feel quite chirpy when the managing director, who looked like Arthur Lowe, came along and said he was taking me out in his car to inspect a construction site. Better and better! The prospect of cruising around the city in a directorial limousine, perhaps being seen and envied by my friends, had a strong appeal. This was definitely more like it.

It was still pouring when we went out and I was hardly able to believe my eyes when I saw the MD's car. It was the most disreputable and clapped-out Morris 8 I had ever seen in a city where, in the late 1940s, cars often tended to resemble mobile junk heaps. We got into it, somehow he persuaded the engine to fire, and the vehicle chugged off in the direction of a busy main road. Almost fifty yards from the corner he began turning the steering wheel, but the car — seemingly unaware of what he was doing to it — continued squelching along in a straight line. The corner drew nearer at an alarming rate and it seemed we had no option but to drive headlong into a cross-stream of lorries and horse-drawn carts. Nothing daunted, the MD went on winding the steering wheel and, just as I sensed the car was beginning to turn a little, he pointed at my side of the vehicle and shouted, "The door! The door!"

I stared at him, slack-jawed in astonishment. Was he ordering me to bale out? Was he telling me to save my own skin while he gamely went to his death doing battle with a wayward Morris 8?

"The door!" he bellowed. "The door!"

Still baffled, I gave a faint bleat of terror as the car — as though trying to make amends for its spell of cussedness — abruptly swerved into a three-G turn and shot out into the main road. The door on my side promptly detached itself, bounced along the squaresets a short distance and came to rest in a large puddle. Only by gripping my seat, and clinging to it like a fruit bat, did I manage to avert a similar fate.

The MD brought the car to a halt, gave me a perfect Arthur Lowe look of exasperation and contempt, and said, "Why didn't you hold the door?" He acted as though anybody who knows anything at all about motoring always grabs the nearest door and holds it on at corners. Apparently it was one of those things — like passing the port in the right direction — that a gentleman does almost by instinct. By the time I had retrieved the door and slid it back onto its hinge pins my feet and back were soaked with rain. I had only one consolation — my shirt was all right.

We set off along the main road and the car gradually gathered speed until we were rattling along at a death-defying thirty miles an hour. A flooded section loomed in front of us and the MD said, "Look out for the hole."

Hole? I rubbed a clear space in the condensation on the windscreen and tried to spot a hole or excavation of some sort in the road ahead of us. What, I wondered, would be the effect of hitting a big pothole at speed? Would the roof fly off? Was I expected to hold it on? We were almost at the flooded area by this time, and I suddenly became aware of a cold wind whistling around my ankles. I looked down and, too late, saw a coin-sized hole in the sloping bulkhead against which my feet were resting. There was a sort of whooshing metallic thunderclap as the car hit the water, and a jet of brownish liquid shot up through the hole and hit me squarely in the chest. It was composed, in roughly equal parts, of rain, mud, horse's urine and partly digested hayseeds — and it made a mess of my shirt.

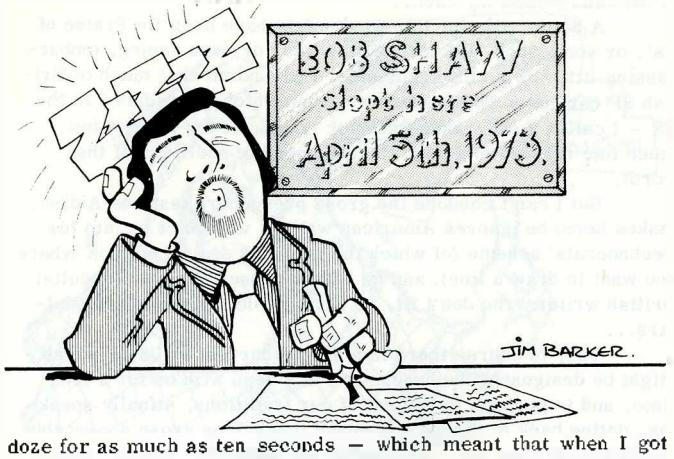
Aw, Christ, was all I could think. Not again!

The next bad first day in a firm came about five years later and five thousand miles away — but, oddly enough, the weather had a part to play in it as well. I had travelled out to Calgary, Alberta, in the middle of the winter to take up a position as draughtsman/designer with a constructional engineering firm. I was with a Scot, a forceful character called Dave Rhodes, who had journeyed out on the same ship. We had some difficulty getting to the works on the first morning, with the result that we were late arriving and — as it was a glass-fronted building — had to walk up to the office under the curious gazes of dozens of future bosses and colleagues. This was slightly disconcerting, but we marched briskly up to the fancy glass entrance door. Dave turned the handle, gave it a push, and nothing happened. He pushed again, and still nothing happened. We were left standing there in full view of everybody — two expensively imported engineers who couldn't even figure out how to open a door.

The reason for our difficulty was, of course, that the winter is so cold in most parts of Canada that all offices are fitted with two sets of doors. And — naturally enough, where space is limited — the outer door opens outwards. Unaware of this piece of local knowledge, Dave gave a tut of annoyance and hit the door inwards with his shoulder. It shattered with an appalling crash which could be heard miles away, and those people who hadn't been aware of our arrival flocked to join the others at the front of the building. Dave, who still hadn't thought of pulling the door handle instead of pushing it, climbed in through the denuded door frame and — apparently quite unconcerned — crunched his way over the shards and into the office. I followed behind him, cringing apologetically, and even though I opened the remains of the door correctly I never managed to live down a reputation for being one of a gang of dangerous vandals. I would almost have preferred a muddy shirt.

Memories like those were flickering in my mind as I reached the Barrow turn-off on the A6 and swung my crippled Stirling bomber... sorry — travel-stained Ford Escort... onto a course which would take me down the Furness peninsula. The job I was going to, Publicity Officer for the whole shipbuilding group, was probably the most senior of my career, and no matter how tired I was I knew I had to make a good start. I already knew there was resentment in the firm at an aviation man being brought in from the outside to handle a shipbuilding appointment, and it was vital that I should show up looking... what was it?... alert, intelligent and enthusiastic. The convention and the nightmarish marathon drive had almost wiped me out, but five or six hours of deep sleep lay ahead, and that should be enough to put the old body to rights for the next day. Remember, I told myself, be alert, intelligent and enthusiastic.

I got to my hotel in Barrow at about one in the morning, asked to be called at 6.30, went straight to bed and commanded myself to sleep. It was really weird how — with all my experience — I managed to make a mistake like that. When I'm going to sleep I have to pretend I'm going to do something else, like lie there and read some of the science fiction works of Captain S. P. Meek, and the next thing I know it is morning. But when I tell myself I have to sleep, when I try to capture it like a prize of war, a cold and uncompromising wakefulness descends over me. And on that first night in Barrow I didn't even manage to



doze for as much as ten seconds — which meant that when I got up for breakfast on the following morning I had had something like six hours' sleep in five days. My surroundings were distant and unreal; it was hard to formulate even the simplest sentence; and it seemed to take about ten seconds for nerve signals to get from my brain to my hands. That's the condition I was in when I set out for the office, pale of face and red of eye, determined to appear alert, intelligent and enthusiastic.

Somehow I got through the first thirty minutes of introductions to spruce ex-naval officers and keen-eyed department heads — then I was roped in on my first job.

Now, there are quite a few jobs I could have coped with that morning. I could have typed up a Press release, or laid out a page or two for a house magazine. I could even have undertaken a tour of the shipyards — but the thing I was called upon to do was to sit in on the editing of some video tapes. These tapes had been shot by a camera mounted on a midget submarine which was "flying" along an oil pipeline in the murky depths of the North Sea, and there is no way I can convey to you just how boring they are to watch. By comparison, they make an average Look at Life seem like a cross between Star Wars and The Exorcist. They have been known to put rooms full of hard-headed oil company executives into instantaneous hypnotic trances.

And I — blearily muttering, "alert, intelligent and what-was-it?" — was taken into a small, dark, warm, stuffy room, put into a comfortable chair and told to watch a tiny flickering image.

I was fast asleep within thirty seconds.

The editing session went on all morning. At times I would struggle into consciousness, look around me with total incomprehension at the groups of dimly-seen figures who were whispering and nodding in my direction, then I would float away again. I was told afterwards that people who weren't even connected with the department got wind of what had happened and came in to see the live-wire aviation journalist who had been drafted in to shake the Barrow lot out of their sleepy ways. Apparently I became a legend throughout the company before lunch break on my first day.

I didn't care. The wind was howling through the shattered canopy of my Stirling bomber, and I was clutching my shrapnel-torn left arm and trying to pull the aircraft's nose up before it plunged into the North Sea and turned into a miniature submarine and started flying along that accursed, dreary pipeline which went on and on for ever...

Bob Shaw, October 1977.

A Dream of Wessex

Christopher Priest's new novel reviewed
by RITCHIE SMITH

Weigh Faber & Faber's new volume: it feels good. The cover illustration is Paul Nash's spare, even bleak evocation of a West Dorset landscape: that looks good. And I'm glad to say that, with a few quibbles, the 199 pages read perfectly well too.

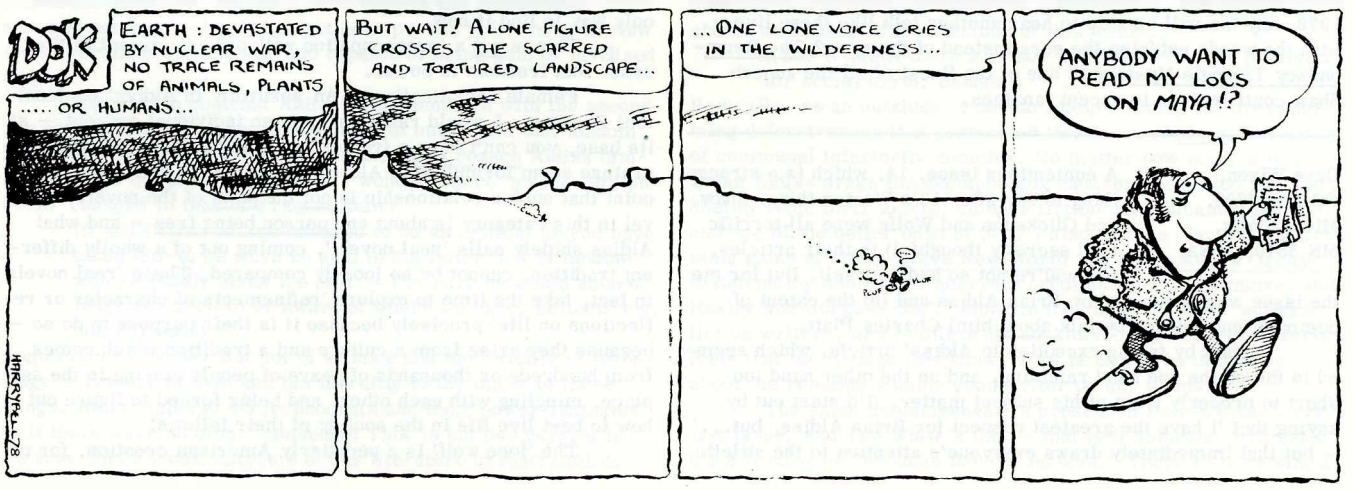
It's arguable that Christopher Priest only reached 'literary maturity' with the excellently witty, light and amusing novel The Space Machine, even if it was too reminiscent of John Fowles' equivalent work. Inverted World was a naked attempt at traditional sf, the old 'idea as hero' approach, and seemingly tailored to please an American palate: perhaps its success in such things as award ballots is sufficient justification for such a work. Certainly, the hyperboloid world itself was created with some force and density of detail. Its characters, however, were not.

Most readers of Maya will I imagine recall the protagonist of the adventure in question, one Helward Mann. In the course of a not uncheerful book he married and broke up with his wife: she never became more than a cipher, and the relations between them reached a nadir of puzzled, respectable dullness. In A Dream of Wessex a couple in similar circumstances are thrown together again (pp. 105 to 110), and star in an electric piece of very painful psychological dramatisation. The 'malign consciousness' of Paul Mason is effectively done indeed.

The novel's back-cloth is the England of the 1980s, and that part of Dorset around the Maiden Castle area, where the computerised futurological research of the Wessex Foundation has created a means of mental travel to what amounts to the future of the world: this 22nd century landscape (in the fashion of J.G. Ballard) is in a literal sense a reflection of its creators' mental states. Or, of course, is it, really?

By 2135 the Sovietisation of England is entirely credible: the Arabisation of most of the rest of the world is not, topical though the idea may be. And of course the project itself is neatly summed up in a sceptical newspaper headline, 'MAIDEN CASTLE — AN EXPENSIVE DREAM?' Unfortunately Mr. Priest has chosen to make most of the project-members weaklings with a taste for escapist fantasy (I would say Julia Stretton is the paradigm case of this) and so the moral choices of the characters — and readers, as we explore both these fictional future worlds — are made so much less authoritative. Nevertheless, this is a book to think about, and good in its use of sensuous detail, extrapolation, and a quiet but impressive imagination. I regret a certain looseness of construction as we are introduced to the more distant of the imaginary futures, as well as the fact that the entire novel works in the traditional, complacent framework of English middle-class life, even in 2135. Within its boundaries, though, this dream of Wessex is, if hardly as significant to literature as Thomas Hardy's, likely to be among an elite of European sf novels for 1977, precisely because it has all of the quiet understated virtues that the assembly-lines of American sf so rarely produce.

Ritchie Smith, October 1977.



Circulation

Harry Warner Jr.,
423 Summit Ave.,
Hagerstown,
MD 21740, U.S.A.

This 14th Maya was another splendid one. I was struck by the way your cover illustration immediately attracted attention with its preview of one of the climactic things in the letter section, Ted White's description of the pie-throwing. To be honest, I mistook the object in the robot's hand for the tray of a rotary slide projector until I read the locs and realised that Angus McKie had stylised the pastry.

I wonder if the special character of so much British science fiction, which Brian Aldiss writes about (and I thought "British" was a bad word these days, but if he can use it, maybe I can, too) has a simpler cause than anything he mentions. Couldn't it come from the fact that you've not had over there the market for science fiction in many magazines specialising in that kind of story? Writers in the United Kingdom who wanted to sell to the folks at home have rarely had more than one or two homegrown prozines at any given time. The result has been a greater emphasis on science fiction written specifically for book publication. There's a greater opportunity for a writer to sell a thoughtful story to a book publisher than to a magazine. There is the secondary circumstance that the book-oriented market must have encouraged British writers to specialise in longer fiction, where it's easier to build a well worked out background and convincing characters than in a short story or a novelette.

I feel certain that your Seacon bid will be successful next month, and I suspect that one major reason for this probable success will be these Bob Shaw talks whose transcripts have been appearing in fanzines. After reading one or two of those, what fan would even think of voting against Seacon, when there's a good chance that by attending a worldcon in the United Kingdom in 1979, any fan will be able to hear another talk like these live, with the words entering the ears instead of the eyes? The Bermondsey Triangle Mystery is one of the finest of all the superb Shaw contributions in recent fanzines.

Dave Wixon,
PO Box 8600,
Minneapolis,
MN 55408, USA.

A contentious issue, 14, which is a strange thing to say after 13's Weston thing. Shaw and Glicksohn and Wolfe were all terrific (and secretly thoughful) in their articles, and you're not so bad yourself. But for me the issue was dominated by Brian Aldiss and (to the extent of comment engendered by talk about him) Charles Platt.

I start by taking exception to Aldiss' article, which seemed to me on the one hand rambling, and on the other hand too short to properly treat of his subject matter. (I'd start out by saying that 'I have the greatest respect for Brian Aldiss, but...' — but that immediately draws everyone's attention to the stiletto in the hand behind my back.)

A better title for this work might have been 'In Praise of Us', or some such. I detest getting into, or even seeing, embarrassing little US v. UK arguments. I will admit that much of British SF carries a difference from much which is produced in the US — I call it a difference in flavor (and don't try to read too much into my choice among the two possible spellings of that word).

But I can't condone the gross overgeneralisations Aldiss makes here: he ignores American writers who don't fit into his 'technocrats' scheme (of which the numbers depend only on where you want to draw a line); and he lightly passes over (and insults) British writers who don't fit, as having sold their souls for dollars...

Yes, of course there is a strong current in US SF which might be designated 'technocratic'. It's been with us for a long time, and is perhaps the oldest of our traditions, stfnally speaking, dating back to the days when SF magazines arose among the strata which were also discovering the wonderful new techniques and technologies of the crystal receiver in the basement, the backyard rocket experiments, the latest advances in aeroplane design...

I cannot believe that 12-year-olds who play with ham radios are merely sublimating their instinct to rape. And I was not relieving that sort of repressed desire when, at nine years old, I lay on the ground in the country to just stare with a great joy at the starscape above me.

In these experiences there are horizons expanding, there are minds learning to look up, out, and away. We learned there is more to life than one's own feelings, more in the cosmos than one's own grand self. Here was the wonder of the discovery of the Other.

SF in the US reflected this for a long time, painting fabulous pictures of the wonders of the cosmos, utterly convinced that technology, which had opened the eyes of the soul in the first place, was the key to it all.

I don't believe Aldiss recognises this wondering at all.

Then, too, there is Aldiss' talk of 'tradition' in British SF — but he completely ignores an American tradition which may run as deep — the 'frontier effect'. (Others have talked of this before, I know. But I find it interesting that Aldiss has drawn this synthesis out of me...)

I see two elements which go to make up a 'frontier effect'. One is the 'wonder of the unknown', the 'pull' of the horizon — I skirted this concept a moment ago. The other is the very 'escapism' Aldiss is so profoundly glad not to find in UK SF.

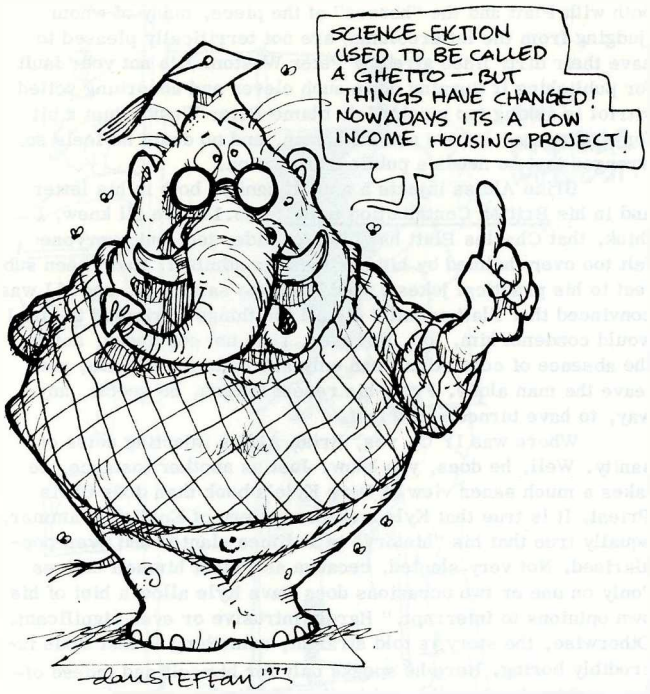
Escapism, yes — because American culture has been escaping since the days of the Pilgrims. They were escaping from something, and that mode of coping has been a predominant theme in the culture of North America ever since. The frontier concept has always been big here. For most it meant freedom — and freedom has always been defined as freedom from something: oppression, whether religious, social or political; poverty; even the mere presence of others. (One may perhaps venture to suggest that, having rebounded off the farther wall of the world after our swift westward race, we may well turn inward and begin to develop more toward a European — particularly UK — pattern, unless some new frontier can be found...)

Why should it be surprising that US literature deals in escapism fantasies? Escaping is our tradition, and fantasy is the only way to find it now.

This is not a 'preoccupation with power', except in the sense that freedom is power.

Female complications? An absurdity in Aldiss' explanation! Freedom, I would rather say, is an individual concept — at its base, you can't have a free group. Relationships in such a literature seem formulaic to Aldiss, yes — but he has missed the point that such a relationship is not the point of the novel! The novel in this category is about one person being free — and what Aldiss snidely calls 'real novels', coming out of a wholly different tradition, cannot be so loosely compared. These 'real novels' in fact, take the time to explore 'refinements of character or reflections on life' precisely because it is their purpose to do so — because they arise from a culture and a tradition which comes from hundreds or thousands of years of people staying in the same place, mingling with each other, and being forced to figure out how to best live life in the society of their fellows!

The 'lone wolf' is a peculiarly American creation, for pre



cisely this reason, and almost never occurs in British or European literature. But US libraries are filled with him, in the 'hard-boiled' detective stories, and in SF — and note that even our 'detective' novels are different from the British — ours, many of them, are of the Spillane/Chandler/MacDonald variety, whereas the British writers present puzzles, exercises in deduction and character evaluation.

These all represent (to get back to the loner story) an intense emphasis on the character of the individual hero, the man by himself — thoughts which began to arise when men began to realise that they could just walk into the forest and be totally on their own, responsible to and for no other... We've been fascinated with the idea ever since.

Let's amend Aldiss' statement: 'British sf...clings closer to British reality.' (True enough, maybe it is our reality now — but we still dream of the good old days...)

I would not be dogmatic about it, but I suspect that this is a better explanation than his — in fact, much stronger than his depiction of us as aliens in an alien land. And where Aldiss is praising UK SF for its introspection, he is blind to the fact that there is more than one meaningful direction. In terms that smack of oriental mysticism (another tradition arising in a crowded social setting) he praises British SF for concerning itself 'with perennial questions of the good and evil within us...' He opts for the passive-observer (which two words he in fact uses) culture, the introspection of the navel-contemplator. He would have men be so insignificant (see his very preoccupation with landscapes, upon which humans pass, strut their brief hour, and vanish...) as to be incapable of looking at, much less understanding, the Universe. This is of course a valid view of the relationship of man and not-man — but it has not been proved to be the true view and is certainly not the only one capable of being held by civilised men!

How odd to contrast Aldiss' first sentence with the second line of his letter — someone should point out to him that fandom might just be reviewing its past for the same reason Aldiss himself reviews the past of UK SF... I wonder where 'awe... for the world' changed to fear of Frankenstein?

((I don't think Aldiss intended to be as critical as you have taken him to be when he said in his letter that sf fandom was decidedly about the past — I'm sure he would acknowledge our need to be aware of where we have, collectively, come from.))

Scepticism? I agree. But not of science and the benefits of technology — rather, of man and his morality in the midst of these things. Aldiss talks of US technocrats and their power-fantasies as if there were no other: nonsense! This is but one current in the flow; and a small extreme of our literature at that! (Aldiss may be concluding that use of cardboard plots in many stories implies a total lack of concern for such considerations: nonsense, again!) (And to characterise the US versions as represented by Perry Rhodan ((which is German)) is downright insulting!)

Lettercol: seems to include much comment on the previous article by Weston on Platt, and I guess it's all beyond me: I wasn't there and that probably means I'll never have the truth of it for sure. But one thing does strike (out at) me: going through the letters of the defenders of Platt, I note they all display certain similar tones, nuances. There's Hall, who admires practical jokes and then accuses fandom of being immature. Moorcock is worse, throwing Weston beyond the pale as unsalvageable, then snidely attacking anyone who happens to like fandom for longer than a few years — and anyone inane enough to like Heinlein better than a good writer like — say — Moorcock.

((He didn't say that last bit!))

To both of these fandom is a cosy haven for neurotics, for the insecure and afraid — and Real Men forsooth go out into the world and are Great though Unrecognised...

Should it be surprising if a lot of us find haven in fandom — were we not after all led there by the literature which is, more than any other, called 'escapist'? Where is the blame if fans seek to build a crypto-society in this little world they have escaped into? Where is it written that Escaping is Wrong?

Ah, yes — but Platt — beg pardon, his defenders, at least — have escaped from escapism. One can hope they have indeed found growth and courage and happiness. But one is left wondering then, why they must be so savage and bitter in their attacks on the life they left behind? One notes that the man who is at his destination seldom reviles the train, whereas the man who was left behind frequently does so in the most vituperative of terms.

((Growing up isn't that simple, Dave. People do things for many, many reasons they themselves don't recognise; and rejecting an earlier phase of one's life is one of the things that must often be done with hate. It's well known among psychiatrists that the irrational hatred many men feel for homosexuals is there largely because they feel threatened by memories of homosexual feelings they have experienced themselves as adolescents, and don't realise either where their attitude springs from or how common, nay usual, their adolescent feelings were. And the more precarious the adjustment of the individual, the more likely these unconscious defence mechanisms are to come into play... Ooops; sorry about that, folks. I don't want to turn Maya into a psychiatric textbook too often!))

Graham Hall,
695 Cordova #4,
Pasadena,
CA 91101, USA.

It says a lot about fandom that a minor dispute between two teenagers ten years and more ago can still arouse interest and even tempers. Must be the big-fish-in-a-little-pool syndrome.

((That puts the whole thing into perspective!))

I suspect you personally are involved in fandom as some part of an obscure postgraduate project, studying the psychology of minor cults. If so, I can hardly wait to read your conclusions. I've just been reading The Voices of Guns, the history of the Symbionese Liberation Army, and was struck by the similarities to fandom: the same gobbledygook language, fuzzy thinking, megalomania. Maybe all such cults are similar; some psychologist should do a study of the Westons of this world.

((You'll admit there's rather a difference in the potential for social harm, though!))

Basically, as an outsider, I couldn't help noticing the overwhelming defensiveness that permeated this issue of Maya, the sense of communal inferiority complex. No matter how many times Brian Aldiss drags the decomposing cadavers of Milton and Mary Shelley from their tombs, science fiction will remain a genre — and one of the better ones at that. I also used to play the legitimising game of citing Brave New World and A Clockwork Orange to defend my adolescent aberrant predilections in literature. But Huxley and Burgess don't belong in the ranks of "real" science fiction writers, and I believe Brian Aldiss in his heart of hearts feels that too (though God knows what he has to be defensive about; he remains a damn good writer on any terms).

The same defensiveness is present in Pete Weston's cry last issue, and Ted White's this — that is if someone criticises them it must be "because they're jealous." There is not a single

aspect of the lives or careers of Weston and White that is worthy of a moment's passing envy. They may be happy marching to their different drummers, and good luck to them. But if others point out they don't like that particular tune, it isn't necessarily from jealousy.

(However, I suppose — now that the truth can be revealed — Ted White has cause for being paranoid; Charles Platt not only paid Rex Weiner $50 a throw, to coin a phrase, but managed to raise the necessary cash from voluntary contributions within 48 hours of conceiving of the coup.)

Apart from that, I have little to quibble with. Mike Glicksohn's letter makes admirable sense — to be expected, I guess, from someone who seems to spend most of his life drinking; but Rick Sneary's typically senescent comments on the same (Angus Taylor) letter seem to be off the point. People don't gafiate because they don't find what they want in fandom; people who don't find what they want in fandom don't get involved with fandom. Gafiates found what they were looking for in fandom, then transplanted it to more fertile ground.

Bruce Townley,
2323 Sibley St.,
Alexandria,
VA 22311, U.S.A.

Unfortunately I lack Brett Cox's doubtlessly useful facility of trusting one written report of one person's view of past events as concrete fact so I cannot comment very well on most of Charles Platt's past exploits. (So that's why, if you were wondering, I didn't say nothin' about it last ish.) I can, however, quite easily comment on Ted White's comments on his double pie kill at the '76 Lunacon (ah yes, the Bicentennial, a year famous for overindulgence). Seems to me that Ted realises deep down that Charles Platt perpetrated an incredible outrage of marvellous pointless hostility (hello John) but he can't quite bring himself to accept the fact that such is true, hence all this careful tabulation of the "points" he supposedly earned while bearing the brunt of this surreal attack any way he could. Come on Ted! Loosen up! The guy clobbered you! The fact that Ted feels he has to be so exhaustive in his description of the way he was such a swell guy about it all proves how burned up he was and how absolutely successful Charles Platt was. I will say that Ted seems to have taken it better than I would have (likewise the Harry Harrison debacle that I was unfortunately a witness to several Balticons ago).

Also, Ted's argument that the pie kill is "fannish" (thus shaming Platt for using such a base method) is somewhat specious. As far as I know, the folks who developed the outfit Pie-Kill have nothing at all to do with sf fandom. Of course, this in itself proves nothing of the quality of the fannishness of the act (sheesh, I'm starting to sound like Peter Roberts); the people who developed the mimeograph probably knew nothing of Hugo Gernsback yet it would be hard to say that mimeos aren't fannish. The weak part of Ted's most telling argument against Platt's actions is his apparently a priori assumption that pie-kills are fannish, necessarily, because they're harmless yet clever and droll. If such were the case then we'd have to accept Mauser replicas, Salvador Dali paintings, Scrabble, and Star Wars (much as it would grate on Ted's sensibilities Star Wars is really the only truly fannish thing of the four) all as essentially fannish. Seems to me that we have a case of impressing one's own sensibilities on the outside world, where they don't apply at all. I don't think that Ted is that fanatic a fan, and I hope to the god I don't believe in I never meet anybody that's so obsessive about their hobby that they start seeing it all around them, where it was never meant to be.

> ((I don't think Ted was entirely arguing against Charles. Seemed to me he was partly expressing relief that the act was harmless, and complimenting Platt for that (in a backhanded way, perhaps, in that he was also hinting Platt's methods were somehow self-demeaning).))

Peter Mandler,
Magdalen College,
Oxford OX1 4AU.

Of course, there is a lot of rubbish ((in Maya)). I use the word "rubbish" advisedly: I do not blame you as editor, nor do I criticise the quality of what you publish. I do think that the revival of the Platt Question qualifies as rubbish. Admittedly I enjoyed reading every word — fannish feuds are nothing if they are not funny — but I would rather be deprived of my fun if ancient wounds could be allowed to close: I sympathise both with Platt and the "heroes" of the piece, many of whom (judging from the lettercolumn) are not terrifically pleased to have their dirty linen aired by Peter Weston. It's not your fault for publishing it (turning down such clever and absorbing veiled vitriol is asking too much); I do blame Peter Weston just a bit for writing it — but we are all human, and no doubt he feels so wronged that he needs a public exoneration.

Brian Aldiss injects a note of sanity, both in his letter and in his British Contribution to SF in no.14. We all knew, I think, that Charles Platt has his nice side, too, but everyone felt too overwhelmed by his nastiness to admit it. Had I been subject to his practical jokes I would feel the same way, and if I was convinced that Platt actually did all the things attributed to him I would condemn him, too. However, I am not convinced, and in the absence of conviction I can only ask that, for a while, you leave the man alone. From his recent letters, he seems, anyway, to have turned a new leaf.

Where was I? Oh yes, Brian Aldiss injecting notes of sanity. Well, he does, you know. Just as another instance, he takes a much saner view of Dave Kyle's book than does Chris Priest. It is true that Kyle lacks a mastery of English grammar, equally true that his "history" is at times slanted and over-popularised. Not very slanted, because as Priest himself notices "only on one or two occasions does Dave Kyle allow a hint of his own opinions to interrupt." Hardly intrusive or even significant. Otherwise, the story is told straight, something Priest finds incredibly boring. Here he speaks only for himself and indeed offers nothing but horribly subjective insults for support.

Chris Priest,
1 Ortygia House,
6 Lower Rd.,
Harrow,
Middlesex HA2 0DA.

Two postscripts to the reaction to my review of Dave Kyle's book:

Firstly, I'm grateful to Rick Sneary for pointing out Dave's ponderous joke about Claude Degler/Don Rogers. Mea culpa. Gosh, I wonder how many more insider jokes I missed! Still, it probably gave good old Dave a laugh at my expense. (Although, being the gentleman he is, he didn't rub it in.)

Secondly, Dave's own letter, being angry at me, Dave probably won't see why, but it's always a mistake for an author wounded by a review to write in and complain. Still, I'm glad he did: it was a glorious discovery that he writes letters in the same clodhopper style as he writes his books! On the subject of objectivity (the lack of which in my review was one of Dave's main complaints): during a conversation I had with Dave at the Eastercon, he went out of his way to tell me that he is writing a sequel to the first book. This will deal with "modern" science fiction. I assumed that this meant it would go up to the outbreak of the Great War... but no, it seems that I am mentioned! Well... I used to be mentioned, because Dave, ever conscious of objective values, and the need to keep personal feelings out of professional work, decided I'd been too naughty, and so went through his manuscript and deleted every mention of me and my work.

That's me put in my rightful place... but do let me urge everyone else to buy the second book. You can be sure that if I ever write a review of it, I'll have nothing but praise for it. After all, I can't run the risk of being missed out of the third.

> ((I should point out here, for the information of those (e. g. in the States) who don't get Foundation or Vector, that Peter Nicholls and Brian Stableford respectively expressed very similar opinions to Chris Priest's views of Dave Kyle's book, so Chris was not alone in being very disappointed with the book. For me, this confirms that Chris held no personal animosity towards Dave when he wrote the review. Whether he feels personal animosity now, in view of the above, I don't know; but I do know that anybody missed out of a supposed work of reference simply in apparent revenge for a bad review has every right to feel rather sore, and would be uncommonly big-hearted not to feel some animosity. I have also heard, from unattributable but very reliable and well-informed sources, that Brian Stableford's review would have been phrased in much stronger language than it was had Dave Kyle not been Vice-Chairman of the BSFA at the time, and therefore nominally in authority over Vector.))

I thought Brian Aldiss's essay on British sf was excellent, and much too short. For a variety of reasons, I have nothing to say

about it... except to pass the hope that Brian will write more in the same vein (and that you will publish it).

((He has. There is an expansion of the Maya 14 essay in press at the moment; but unfortunately for me, it's being published in F&SF in a special British issue. The British habit is catching...))

It strikes me that Maya is an almost perfect blend of fannishness and seriousness about science fiction. I sometimes find that too much of one or the other is a bit off-putting. I think you're right not to publish reviews of sf... there are too many bloody reviews coming out these days. Without any discordancy, you have Brian's perfectly serious essay virtually next door to Bob Shaw's article about underpants, and neither seems out of place. By the way, I hope Bob's article provokes more reminiscences from other people, about how they met each other. One day, I'll tell you how I met Charles Platt (he was carrying a copy of Analog... that's something no fan historian knows) or how I met Pete Weston, and learnt the truth about Burton suits and bad teeth.

((I'm looking forward to it greatly... it'd be interesting to read someone reminiscing about Pete Weston for a change!))

Bruce Pelz,
15931 Kalisher St.,
Granada Hills,
CA 91344, USA.

Just in case it matters at all, I am more than delighted that such an excellent zine is very short on Lit Crit articles. I have been getting a surfeit of such stuff from other zines, and not one article in a carload has had anything useful or important to say. They range from the short review designed to get the editor and/or reviewer more free books from the publisher at least effort, to the In-Depth Critical Survey which attempts to crawl around inside the author's head and describe all the marvellous/tedious/repulsive things found there. And in the last few years, the volume of such stuff, plus the unreadability of it, has almost set up an automatic rejection mechanism that operates when I read fanzines. I greatly appreciate Maya's blend of material.

((I keep on saying to people who offer me reviews, or demand more of them, that I'd rather see the science-fictional wood than grub about examining individual trees in minute detail with such preoccupation that the wood as a whole is forgotten.))

John Prenis,
161 W. Penn St.,
Philadelphia,
PA 19144, USA.

The other night Joyce Scrivner was driving me back from a collating session at Linda Bushyager's and prevailed upon me to buy three issues of Maya. I'm very glad I did. It's a pleasure to read a zine that prints substantial articles about SF. Not that the fannish stuff isn't a pleasure too.

((Listen! Will you & Bruce Pelz kindly agree on how much stuff about SF I really do print? I'm getting kinda confused in the middle here!))

The prize was the comments on the Charles Platt piece. What could have been a very nasty piece of business was handled very well by all concerned. Everyone had his fair say and any ill feelings were soothed rather than aggravated. Ditto for the comments on the Kyle review. A superb example of a well-balanced lettercol. After that, I bet you can dance on the head of a pin.

((After Charles Platt and Ted White this issue, there's a chance I may have to.))

Brian Earl Brown,
16711 Burt Rd., #207,
Detroit,
MI 48219, U.S.A.

The first 2½ pages of your lettercol seem to have been put together with the interlocking (pun unintended, which is a pity as I'd never have thought of it if I were trying) discipline of the writer of Perry Rhodan. I can see Platt speaking, with a German accent of course, in front of a small circle of typewriters. "Brian, you vill write about der würdrobe, undt Graham, you vill refer to it ein passink. Herr Moorcock vill mention Fearn undt I vill expand on it. Little Mal vill mention Brosnan undt fice fersa. You haf feif minutes! " Undt — er, and — with the crash of a riding crop all fall to it. My friends tell me I've been reading Illuminatus too much, but I suspect "they" are behind it. Conspiracies are everywhere.

((It's known as thoughtful editing, actually.))

I think you should have stuck the heading of Write On on the outside columns of each page. Otherwise the curved, enclosing border gives the impression that the article starts in the middle of a sentence. Overlooked in your comments is that much of the best fannish writing is done by published authors or would-be authors, which I think is a bigger point than you've made of it. They're much more conscious of writing as an art.

((True. Re curved borders: I'd thought of that, but the benefits of symmetry and the way I start articles with an inset Letraset letter, which should after all be clear enough, outweighed it.))

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

Maya is a visual treat with neat art and good layout and blah blah blather mumble etc etc etc just like all the other locs I've written you on previous issues. Think of all the time you could save just by keeping that paragraph and inserting it into each subsequent loc. In fact, I think I'll spend some time developing the Loc-i-Kit with hundreds of brilliant compliments and insults on the five or six subjects that seem to form the basis of most fanzines so it would just be a matter of selecting the appropriate sentences and piecing together a perfect loc on every fanzine. ("I think I'll start with a 'Cover: Bell: Excellent' followed by an 'Editorial: Insightful' and a 'Book Reviews: Ignored from Lack of Familiarity'. Yes, that's shaping up nicely... now where's the 'Loc: Glicksohn: Banal...?")

((Here! *boom, boom* Do I detect a touch of jadedness in your attitude, Glicksohn? Shape up, lad! Mind you, I can't talk... one issue in a year...))

The recently announced FAAn Awards — wherein Britain won in four of the six categories — should make it clear to Americans that something pretty exciting is happening in the British fanzine scene. In fact, I was only saying to my dear friend Greg Pickersgill the other day that I don't think I'll bother supporting the FAAn Awards any more because it's obvious that the overwhelming disparities between our respective fandoms will make it impossible for a mere North American to win an award...

Bob's annual extravaganza of puns, innuendo, wit and drolliery may be slightly less awe-inspiring than last year's brilliant effort but it still rates as one of the most amusing articles of the year. His seemingly rambling introduction is a real delight to read and I'd tell you how many atrocious puns he worked into it if I hadn't run out of toes to count them on by the end of the first page. The very same Mr. Pickersgill I've previously mentioned is concerned that an over-dependence on the Shavian resources of humour may be a weakness in English conventions but Bob doesn't seem to realise this and continues to create his per-

ennial masterpieces which Maya is kind enough to bring to an appreciative North American audience. If there were any justice Bob Shaw would be on the Hugo ballot instead of Dick Geis but it's well known that justice is blind: it behooves the rest of us who aren't to also avoid dumbness and let Bob know how much we appreciate his craftsmanship and skill.

((Indeed. The same applies to the '78 Hugo ballot as well as the '77 one Mike was writing about. By the way, some of you may be wondering where Bob's '78 Eastercon speech is: well, when they asked him if he'd like to give it again, Dave Langford and Kev Smith told him it was a condition of his acceptance that they be allowed to publish it in their fanzine, Drilkjis. So those of you who want to read it are urged to write to Dave Langford at 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW, and ask when the next issue of Drilkjis is coming out... There. That'll fix those scheming so-and-sos for pinching Bob's speech...))

You're undoubtedly correct that an understanding of the personnel involved in active British fanzine fandom adds to one's enjoyment of their fanzines but not everyone will have either the time or the interest to involve themselves as closely with the British scene as people like Terry Hughes and I have. But the very quotations you so excellently chose for this column point out something that I most admire about British fanzines: the sheer quality of the writing is so high that it really doesn't matter if you know the people involved or not! My own favourite recent example is D. West's line from Stop Breaking Down wherein he wrote "Despite trying too hard he doesn't seem to have got the hang of managing his insults so that they do more damage to the target than to himself. The Easthope method consists of chopping off both your own legs then waiting for the enemy to faint at the sight of blood." One doesn't need to have any sort of awareness of who Easthope is to appreciate a line like that!

Mike Moorcock,
London WC2.

I enjoyed Maya pretty much from cover to cover. Tempted as I am to continue discussing Charles Platt (or to enlighten Ted White as to the Truth behind the Pie Kill Hit), to straighten out a few details in Brian's account of the Great Yarmouth Tomato Ketchup Fight (a new and expensive suede jacket which cost me so much and was so saturated with ketchup that I had to live on it for a month) or to take issue with him about what is and what isn't snobbery in sf criticism (Clute, the champion of Tubb and E.E. Smith a literary snob?) or to reiterate that to admire the best examples of a form does not necessarily mean one has to love the form for its own sake (I shouldn't carp, anyway, because I thought Brian's article and letter both redolent of his usual goodhearted generosity and intelligence) I'll pass over all these topics to say how much I enjoyed the two Bob Shaw pieces which were excellent, a delight to read and a further reinforcement to the familiar argument that the only good English writers are Irish (I shall plug here the unjustly neglected Irish writer of the 19th century, Charles Lever, and recommend everyone to get something by him next time they're in a second hand shop).

One last remark to Pete Weston: Some of us react badly at conventions not because we are purely wicked but because of the snobbery and elitism to be found there (I hate private room parties and won't attend them, even at American conventions, Mike Glicksohn). I used to enjoy conventions because they were easy-going and democratic. As they became less so, for a variety of reasons, I stopped attending them. Pete's reference to a 'nonentity' says it all. On top of that, I suppose, some of us just naturally can't be club types and tend to react with bewilderment to assumptions that to recruit members to the ranks of fandom is somehow a good thing in itself. This displays the messianic, quasi-religious element of fandom for which I, personally, feel a strong distaste. When an element of authoritarianism sometimes creeps in, all my anarchistic instincts come to the fore. It's what has made me where sf's concerned primarily a polemicist. I've a horror of concensus. Which is my problem, I know.

Anyway, thanks for Maya, even if I received it indirectly. It's an excellent fanzine. One of the very best I've seen for ages.

((Thanks! I hope you eventually got the one sent to your old address, too.

And talking of polemicists, here's...))

Joseph Nicholas,
2 Wilmot Way,
Camberley,
Surrey GU15 1JA.

Many thanks for Maya 14. An excellent — nay, superb! — ish, in response to which this letter will likely turn out to be something of an utter shambles. Basically because the genius of yourself and your contributors has struck deep into the centre of my mental processes, dealing out death and destruction among the synapses, rendering me virtually incapable of stringing words together in any meaningful fashion. Incoherency rools.

((Yes.))

Somewhere towards the end of his letter, Ted White remarks on the shortness of people's memories in connection with the burgeoning size of fandom. No disagreements there. Mike Glicksohn makes some comment somewhere about how much more interesting UK fandom has become to American fans of late. The two tie up, don't they? Fannish fandom survives as ever, but because fandom Over There is so huge, fannish fans have to turn their attention in this direction to have anyone to talk to. (I think.)

((I don't. See Alan Bostick's letter.))

After all, we're a fairly fannish lot, aren't we?

At least, it looks that way. But look at the vast influx of new fans that's happening every time we look around. I remember Roy Tackett, in the fanzine discussion at Mancon, remarking that the reason why US fans were now so interested in what was happening Over Here was the sudden decline into rampant serconism apparent in all the newer US fanzines. And look at the more recent stuff over here — SF Arena, A For Antares, Bar Trek (despite its rather promising title), even Ghas (which I'd expect to be very fannish indeed, considering the links the Harveys have developed with the Rats in recent months) — all of it concentrating on sf, with fannish and fan-related material pushed very much into the background. (And we all know the views of someone like Ian Garbutt, for example — if a fanzine doesn't deal exclusively with sf, then it's not worth all the time and money involved.)

((I don't think that's quite a fair summary of Ian's views.))

All this serconism does have its drawbacks. Never mind the fact that it isolates the fannish fans from everyone else — it also tends to popularise sf as the sole concern of fandom. After all, fannish fandom isn't all that cliquish; it depends on the interests of the individual fan. But the initial interests of any fan are sf-oriented; it's the only thing of which he has any knowledge when he first enters fandom. So... he spends his first convention in the company of those who are similarly inclined — and unless he gets a chance to suck up some mild fannish material through a handy straw, he will be lost to us for ever and anon. And if there is this great big mass of sercon fans infesting a con hall to such an extent that all other types of fans are virtually obscured... why, then our neofan is never even going to find out about those other types of fanac, much less the fannish fandom that we would like him to be interested in at some time or other (preferably when we're all dead and gone and won't have to put up with him, I'll bet).

((That's rather an elitist attitude, Joe... or are we really sure we want to attract more people? What's so great about fannish fandom that we have to attract more people to it? See Mike Moorcock's letter for a statement of the other point of view. And what's wrong, after all, with a science fiction convention being full of people actually discussing science fiction? Isn't that what they're there for? Aren't we in danger of losing sight of some of our basic objectives here? Even supposed arch-faan Greg Pickersgill sits in auctions of old prozines and rabidly lusts after issues he hasn't got and wonders how he can afford them!))

In other words, the traditions of tomorrow turn out to be those of the sercon community. And it's not because fannish fans are snobbish that those neos are excluded from the inner circles and have to fall back on serconism to see them along, it's because fandom has suddenly grown so big, so fast, that we're all in danger of being overwhelmed by the growth. We have to become

cliquish in order to maintain some shred of our identity, but becoming cliquish only helps reinforce the principle of exclusiveness that I was trying to outline here. And even if we're not cliquish — as I would be inclined to say that we're not, or at least not as much as we're made out to be by our detractors, we at least give the impression of being so. After all, we don't talk about sf, do we?

((Yes we do. Even Wrinkled Shrew and SBD have had articles in them by Rob Holdstock with definite stfnal interest, let alone Maya.))

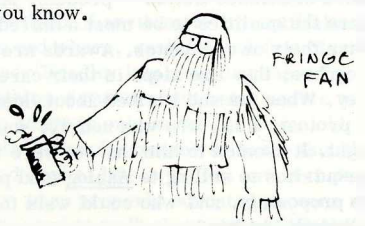
We talk about ourselves, and that's not science fiction (it may be invention, but it sure as eggs is eggs ain't science fiction), so we must be some sort of exotic fringe-fans that are unworthy of their attention.

Heavy philosophical stuff... but don't you get the impression that the serconists are in the process of taking over the world fandom? Bit by bit, inch by inexorable inch, they creep forward, gaining ground a few square centimetres at a time... here an unwary neofan, there an abandoned mailing list, over there an advert in the BSFA Yearbook... After all, if the BSFA has anything to do with fandom, then it's in providing some sort of entry point for all those new fans that keep flooding in before we can rally to close the gates against them. And look at the kind of fandom the BSFA pushes — sercon, sf-oriented, devoid of human interest, ultimately devoid of anything that anyone could find in even the mildest fashion warming.

((You're really awfully scared of "serconists," aren't you? We must remember that there's nothing wrong with talking about sf; it's only when it is done in a lifeless, overly serious sort of way that it becomes off-putting. Bar Trek and Ghas may have stfnal discussion in them, but neither is lifeless; I do agree with you, though, that there are a lot of fanzines around which seem to discuss sf with an excessive seriousness which makes the subject of sf seem duller than it deserves. On that subject, I'm delighted that Dave Wingrove, now he's Vector editor, is doing things like reprinting Roy Kettle's How Not to be a Writer from Maya 12/13 (along with his marvellous account of his failed Interview with Thomas M. Disch from Parker's Patch and Mota), as this is exactly the sort of instructive yet fascinating and unserious stuff that Vector needs to revitalise it.))

Alan Bostick,
46 Arboles,
Irvine,
CA 92715, USA.

Some of the things Ted White says in his letter go somewhat against the grain. I am one of the many people brought into fandom through Ted's revival of The Clubhouse and the lettercolumn of Amazing, but I've failed to notice any great conflict between generations of fandom, or any major breakdown of communication between generations. While the semi-prozine approach to fanzines is far too common, it is nowhere near the point where it is "the rule rather than the exception." (I would be inclined to attribute their prominence to Andy Porter's success with Algol, and Andy is hardly a member of the new crop of neofans.) Ted, you may be in the backwaters of fandom, but if so, it's because you just haven't been very active in recent years, not because you've been forgotten by the fickle fannish rabble. Is Void known only as an Australian prozine? Not by me it ain't: one of the prizes of my meagre fanzine collection is a copy of Void 28. Is there a dearth of fannish fanzines? I hadn't noticed. Of course, I've been too busy reading zines like Mota, The Spanish Inquisition, Scientifriction, Alvega, Spicy Rat Tails, Kratophany, and Simulacrum recently to have really paid any attention. I must stop wasting my time with such foolishness and try to get back into the mainstream of fandom: one mustn't lose touch, you know.



((Possibly Ted gets sent lots of the awful-imitation-prozines because he is, after all, editing two of the awful prozines they're imitating, and want to be noticed by.))

Darrell Schweitzer,
113 Deepdale Rd.,
Strafford,
PA 19087, USA.

It seems to me the lack of tradition Ted White is talking about is attributable to the non-availability of oldtime fanzines. Of course more people know about Void as an Australian prozine, because it is available. (From me, by the way. $1.45 a copy. Stories by Wodhams, Chandler, me, William Morris, anonymous, etc., etc.) I have been in fandom for ten years, have read hundreds of fanzines, even bought old fanzines (I have random stuff from the 1950's, Inside, Operation Fantast, and a lot of Orions) but I have never laid eyes on a copy of Ted's fanzine, even though I've known of its existence for a while. The oldtime great fanzines are simply not to be had, so if these traditions are to be passed down to younger generations of fen, the material in the old zines must be constantly reprinted. It would be nice if there were a specialty book publisher willing to publish hardcover anthologies of best fan writings, and keep them in print. Otherwise, with fandom turning over a vast percentage of its membership every three or so years, and with the majority of convention attendees only marginally interested in fanzines and fannish tradition or not at all, it's no surprise that fannish fanzine fandom is a distinct minority. I've been to cons where all the fanzine fans present ended up in one room (usually Linda Bushyager's) and out of 800 people attending there were maybe 25 fannish fans, who are aware of fan-history and tradition. Now that's what I call a minority.

((I thoroughly agree with you about the desirability of keeping fannish writings in print and available. But... hardcover? That's a bit like wishing for Twiltone and duplicators to be provided free by the Government as a service to mental health — desirable, but impractical. Better to run the service as a small-press operation producing chapbook-size reprint publications which can be reprinted every so often; this is more within fannish fans' grasp financially. Hence Gannetfandom's project to reprint Bob Shaw's best works as well as other fan classics and historical works... watch this space, folks.))

Darroll Pardoe,
Flat 2,
38 Sandown Lane,
Liverpool L15 4HU.

Mike Glicksohn makes some good points about the difference between British and American conventions, but I think those differences are lessening as time goes on. American room parties may be partly "closed" now, but most of them were like that ten years ago too. The contrast with Britain here is largely that the room party at British conventions is virtually dead anyway, for reasons which remain a mystery to me.

((I disagree on two points there — first, I don't think the British room party is entirely dead at all, though I admit they're not as common over here; and I think the reason is easily identifiable — the cheaper bar prices, which keep everybody in the bar longer.))

With the larger size and increasing number of British conventions, I think we're going to see them a lot more closely resembling US conventions in the future. Fanzine fandom is greatly outnumbered at British conventions even at the present day, and it's going to be even more outnumbered in future years.

It is a heartening thing that female fans in the States are reacting against the blatant sexism of many male fans; this is, as Mike points out, connected with the larger ratio of female fans in US fandom now (especially since Star Trek). But he must be joking when he suggests a similar thing could happen here. The number of active female fans in this country can be practically counted on one hand; numbers are against them since the average chauvinist male fan can happily ignore such a handful of people. Over the Atlantic there are more of the female fans, and they are better organised (witness the Women's APA, which appears to be a great success). I'd like to think British fandom could be shaken out of its attitudes to women, but I fear that it's unlikely to happen.

((I think a more important question is whether British women can be shaken out of their attitudes to taking active part in fandom. It's important, and sad, that British women, especially the sort who get involved with such sociable organisations as sf fandom, seem much less inclined to campaign in a cause than American women, who are more used to forming pressure groups.))

And I have to disagree with you, Rob, on your assessment of the

relative merit of British and US fanzines at the present time. True, there are some very good British fanzines. But there are also some horrible ones. And there are also some very good US fansines around, too. It's just the usual curate's egg routine all round. The special characteristic of the British fanzines, which you rightly mention, is thay they concern a small circle of people who keep getting mentioned in each other's fanzines. US fandom has got far past the stage where that was possible, but the size of our island and our fandom is such that we are still a pretty tight group over here. It adds a special flavour to our fmz, but I don't support the further deduction that ours are on the whole better fanzines than theirs. There are lots of good fanzines, good fannish fanzines even, in the States: it's just that you have to look a little bit harder, on account of numbers, to find what you personally like.

I think we may be in danger of creating a myth, the myth that all British fanzines are all super-good and fannish. Just imagine the disillusion when those American fans, with their expectations all built up, get to see the lower orders of our fanzine scene.

I notice Bob Shaw carefully manipulating his data to fit the Bermondsey Triangle Mystery to his theory. He has carefully omitted Great Yarmouth from his map a convention, moreover, where all manner of strange things occurred, as witness Brian Aldiss's letter. (And what about the feared and hated Under-Manager?)

Allyn Cadogan,
28 Atalaya Tce.,
San Francisco,
CA 94117, USA.

Uh — we dedicated Genre Plat to you (and it's the entire zine forever, not just #1, we dedicated) because yours is our very favourite zine, and even tho' Maya and GP aren't all that much alike, we felt you were our main inspiration. We didn't want our zine to be the same as yours, but we hope eventually to be as good. We really like Maya!!

((*blush* It really is an extraordinary feeling, to know that something one has created can inspire such enthusiasm. It feels so good it's almost embarrassing... But I think I can take it, just about...

And Genre Plat is pretty good anyway, people, apart from the fact that it's dedicated to Maya. Among many other things, it's got Susan Wood giving the lie to the silly idea that she never does any fanwriting any more or that what she does is no good any more. Read it.))

Jeff Frane,
PO Box 1923,
Seattle,
WA 98111, USA.

You have no idea how good you've made me feel. For months now, I've been hearing, "You don't get Maya? Pity." And fannish backs are turned on me in shame. Susan Wood fixes me with a pitying gaze and tells me, "You really should do something about that, you know, Jeff." Susan is awfully sweet, and on the lookout for my fannish welfare, so I will be relieved to be able to tell her that IT'S FINALLY ARRIVED! Now all I have to do is respond with something brilliant and witty... oh shit. Would you settle for a little grovelling to keep me on your mailing list? Otherwise, I shall have to yok it up with the gang about Bob Shaw's latest puns without knowing what the hell I'm talking about.

I enjoyed your comments and advice on British fanzines. What you say about their "insider" nature is true, I think, of fannish fmz in general. I had occasion recently to look at the first couple of issues of Frank Denton's Ashwing, from 1968. In his editorial, he complained about those kinds of fanzines, people nattering about obscure incidents, etc. He would only countenance talk about sf and fantasy. Ha! Famous last words. Like you and Gannetfandom, so many of us get into fandom because we love sf and want to talk about it, and end up involved with fandom as a circle of friends with whom we can talk about all sorts of things. The sort of thing that Ted White is talking about, though, fanhistory and traditions, etc., may or may not be of interest at all, and generally that interest takes even longer to develop. Mostly, I think, it's because of the size of fandom now; it's gotten so huge, with so many facets, that it's quite possible now to miss out totally on meeting the sorts of people that would introduce one to fannish legend and lore. I was fortunate enough to be around people like John D. Berry and Loren MacGregor, who insisted on providing me with ancient fannish texts, so that I am beginning to get some faint idea of what fandom was like twenty or thirty years ago. I think there's a problem, also, in that we don't seem to be doing much towards creating our own traditions. The "awful imitation prozine" approach seems to be mostly an attempt for recognition in the form of awards; it has become virtually impossible for any fan to get a Hugo, for instance, unless his/her work is being seen or read by several thousand people, most of whom don't seem to be much interested in faanish writing. Everything operates on name-recognition. And as Mike Glicksohn points out rather tellingly in a letter to Dick Geis, a faned virtually has to work full-time on a fanzine for it to be within shooting range of a Hugo. My own feeling is that some sort of limit should be put on how many Hugos a person can receive, other than for specific work (like a novel or short story), although name-recognition has a tendency to work there, too.

((What you say about name-recognition has a lot of truth in it, though I don't think there ought to be a ban on people receiving more than a certain number of Hugos — bear in mind that the awards are supposed to be for work published during the previous year. I don't think there's any way round this one except for there to be a very strict admonition on the nomination ballot asking nominators to consider only work published during the previous year, and to try to avoid thinking about reputations — though "Buggins's turn" tends to operate: for example it's my strong belief that because he hasn't had one yet and is head-and-shoulders over other people also on the ballot who aren't past winners, Grant Canfield deserves this year's fanartist Hugo. (But then the only fanartist nominee whose work I've seen much of this year is Alexis Gilliland.)))

Taral/
Wayne Macdonald,
415 Willowdale Ave. #1812,
Willowdale, Ontario,
Canada M2N 5B4.

Since Ted White wrote that Phil Foglio campaigned for and nearly won a Hugo, the worst has happened. He won it. But the story is longer and more complicated than that, and deserves telling, for Foglio's sake. Phil is a bit shy, and is usually surrounded by a personal set of groupies much as a king is surrounded by housecarls in battle. So while he means well, he has a very distorted idea of what fandom is about. Star Trek cons and success have spoiled him, yet not distorted his ideas so much that he felt it was acceptable to campaign for a Hugo. His hangers-on, various impure fen from the Chicago area, Trekkies and Dorsai campaigned for him, and he's admitted — to me, at least — that he had nothing to do with it, and was rather embarrassed but didn't think he should stop them. At the same time this particular circle was also pushing The Capture, which Foglio had illustrated. Buttons were printed, and, I believe, paid plugs inserted into con program books by them. There was no concerted effort to push Foglio the year after ('77), but nevertheless he won the award at Suncon. The ironic thing was that, a few short hours before, he was sitting in the fanartists' panel with Dan Steffan, Stu Shiffman, me and one or two others. Dan brought up the question "Do you think you deserve a Hugo, and why?" I got the first chance to answer and set the tone by stating a resounding "No," and explaining why not. Phil and all the others thought about the same of themselves. And hours later Phil had the Hugo thrust into his hands... He was speechless, but I think I'm the only one who realised why... I think he remembered his earlier words at that moment.

Phil could not have turned the award down. The notion is alien to his thinking. Like many emerging names in some circles of fandom, the ultimate goal is to join what they see as a higher echelon of science fiction — prodom. Money and professional status are the qualities to be most admired. Groupies' ambitions are to have their own groupies. Awards are not simply peer approval and egoboo, they are steps in their career and the promise of money. When Stu and I talked about Hugos and turning them down as a protest, Phil, who was nearly, was struck dumb by the thought. It seemed to him that we were turning down necessary prerequisites to selling to Analog (and perhaps that's just what we were proposing), and who could want to stay a fanartist and unfulfilled all his life?

Phil wants to be a realistic artist, did you know that?

((I wouldn't have guessed from his piece in the Suncon programme book — miaaow....))

He goes to art schools to learn everything he can to help him in his career, and works very hard at improving the realism in his work. He believes that 'agents' of the prozines have been watching his work for some time, and that they have approached to say he is being watched, and that someday when he is good enough the gods at Conde Nast will beckon, and he will answer the call.

I don't know, maybe that's the way the big prozines do work. But I doubt it. It sounds perfectly disgusting. But Phil believes it, and I think the fault lies with the company he keeps, since it fits their mentality like a mould.

The annoying thing about Phil's Hugo was not that he won it, but that the memory of the planned campaign the year before still burned, and that Phil's work is little seen in sf zines. His main exposure is in Trekcon program books and the like. It was one section of fandom, with fringe-ish connections, triumphing while the rest went "huh?"

((Exactly. At the next English con I heard the leading British Trekzine editor, Ann Looker, say "We won the fanartist Hugo!" – to which my mental reply was "You and who else, dear?" But I doubt that she and others like her even realised there was a possibility that someone like Grant Canfield deserved the Hugo far, far more, both for doing more artwork for a wider range of sf fanzines over a longer period, and also for being a far slicker, more accomplished artist even before he broke into prodom. If we're going to be allowed to start campaigns, how about "Grant Canfield for a Hugo!" (Substitute your own preference — Harry Bell? — but Grant's my pick of this year's nominees.)

It all goes to show that the Hugos will never be completely fair until all the voters are equally familiar on average with each of the nominees in the final ballot in all categories. And how do we achieve such fairness? Distribute free copies of everything nominated to all the voters? Don't be silly. Alternatively those whose works are less widely available must have their maniacal – sorry, knowledgeable – supporters. Which is difficult to tell from block voting. So it rather seems we're left with the Hugos as they are, and any attempt to rectify inherent unfairnesses in the system is doomed to failure. All we can do is to ask each individual voter to search his or her own conscience and ask himself if he/she is truly familiar with all the nominees in that category, and not to vote if he isn't. But even that is pie in the sky...

On scaling the dizzy heights of prodom in Analog: I'm sure it doesn't work like that. Phil's feeling of being Watched, as you report it, makes me think he's waiting for an encounter of the third kind rather than a prozine sale. Anyone who wants to sell to a prozine is surely best advised to assemble a portfoglio (sorry) of their best work to hawk around; no one will get anywhere just by sitting there waiting for The Call to come. I see that Phil's sold a piece to Isaac Asimov's, and, incidentally, that it's in the fluid cartoon style that is Phil's forte in my opinion; so he must have done something about selling himself. But I don't think winning a Hugo had anything to do with that; remember, Marc Schirmeister had some pieces in IA's a little while ago, and he's never even had a sniff at the Hugo ballot as far as I know. After all, Grant Canfield broke into prodom outside the sf field — and he didn't need a Hugo to do it. All he needed were some well-drawn, funny cartoons, the nous to know who to send them to, and the courage to try his luck.))

Mark Adlard,
Nr. Hartlepool,
Cleveland.

I can't think of anything to say until almost at the end where, gratefully, I find Marion Zimmer Bradley implying that there is something virtuous about being unable to stop writing. This Romantic adage is only about 150 years old, so I suppose we must regretfully reconcile ourselves to the fact that there is probably still a good deal of life in it. But how it makes one long for the 18th century when properly educated persons who felt the urge to write a poem used to walk about until the feeling went away. After all, people with running noses or loose bowels try to keep quiet about it, and furtively use nasal sprays or dose themselves with kaolin and cheese until they are again fit to appear in company. People who can't stop writing, instead of talking about it, should be locked up without ink or paper, and told to reflect upon the fact that Jane Austen wrote only five novels in her entire life, until they regain control of themselves. Under no circumstances should they be visited by agents or publishers: nor should they see such folk afterwards in case of a relapse.

I am sure the world in general, and sf in particular, would be so much nicer if we had more people who merely wanted to be Writers and fewer people who can't stop Writing.

((I gather you feel that motivation actually to write is no guarantee of quality... but if your Nirvana full of non-writing Writers were to eventuate, how could one judge the quality of all those unwritten novels? All writers know how marvellous their next novel is going to be, and in your world who would there be to gainsay them?))

Paul Kincaid,
20 Sherborne Rd.,
Middleton,
Manchester,
M24 3EH.

It may be coincidence; but Leroy Kettle's article, your own The Real Illusion (an excellent piece), and the letters of, for instance, Angus Taylor, Lynne Holdom and myself all seem to have given Maya 12/13 a central theme, which I suppose you might call writing and inspiration. For myself I still ardently believe in my own statement: "... in the end a writer turns to his own resources...", but I would never, indeed could never go as far in this as does Angus Taylor. This letter, in fact, would have taken the form of an answer to Mr. Taylor if you, damn you, hadn't given him exactly the right answer far more concisely than I ever could.

By the devious and egotistical meanderings of my mind this brings me back to your comments on my letter, and I must confess that you do me a greater justice than I deserve. You imply that I am concerned with the real world, and particularly with other people. If my writing gives this impression then I am pleased, but, truth to tell, I am the most egocentric person I know.

((Ah, but you know it! It's those who don't who can't compensate for it.))

I suppose, in a way, I am the typical fan described by Angus Taylor. An only child, early desire from independence from the crowd resulting in a small circle of friends during childhood and a distance from the majority of my contemporaries brought about by a lack of interest in their interests (I cannot stand football), school to A level, four years of university, and now eighteen months of unemployment. However I depart from the pattern in two significant ways. I first encountered sf in any serious way when I was deeply involved with several groups of people at my first university, and my first encounter with fandom happened at a time when I'd just got over a period of loneliness and was getting into the swing of things at my second university; and both of these encounters, if anything, contributed to the alienation that, if Angus Taylor is correct, I should have been seeking to end. In all, then, I do not see fandom as anything like the surrogate childhood Mr. Taylor suggests it is.

Furthermore this adds up to over twenty-four years (with allowances for sleep) of inescapable experience of the outside world. In that time I have visited most parts of Britain, I have been to Austria twice, to Bavaria and to Greece, and I've spent three years in Northern Ireland at the beginning of the present troubles (1971-4). But despite all this my experience has been pretty circumscribed, and if that was all I had to go on I'm sure I'd be writing Ms. Holdom's "pointless books that philosophise about the pointlessness and unfairness of existence," perhaps particularly so since my degree is in philosophy. But, and this is the vital point, my experience is not limited to that, no-one's is; and I would hazard a guess that such "pointless books" are not the result of any lack of experience, but more likely of a lack of imagination, or of a pretentious desire on the part of a new writer to make his mark with a significant masterpiece.

Why is my experience not so limited? Not because I am any great shakes at observing the people and minor dramas that I do experience; I'm not, that is an actor's or journalist's skill rather than a writer's, at least it isn't mine. The answer is that I bury myself in books; histories, biographies, mythologies, poetry, science and philosophy, and, of course, fiction. And despite what Angus Taylor may think I am not running away from reality by so doing. I am, in fact, augmenting my experience. Now I admit that a book also entertains, enlightens, amuses,

delights and passes the time etc.; but none of these make it any the less valid an experience, on the contrary it provides the irreplaceable experience of having these particular feelings.

There are a couple of truisms that should be dealt with here. First, quantitatively reading a book is as much an experience of the real world as seeing a film of a public execution on television, or watching the end of the world first hand. A simple fact that seems to have escaped Mr. Taylor, though it is perhaps a minor point. Second, to a writer in particular the experience of reading a book is as vital as it would be to a young filmmaker to watch Hitchcock at work, or a young painter watch Da Vinci. But these points are not my concern.

My point is that a book provides an outlook upon the real world that it might otherwise be impossible to acquire, as the author's experiences are distilled upon the page. This grist is picked up by the reader and fed through the mill of his dreams, imaginings, ambitions, beliefs, and (yes) experiences. During this process new outlooks are acquired that the reader is then able to turn into a book of his own, and depending upon how small the mill grinds the resultant book is to be considered more or less original. This process is ever growing, as the input of new experiences — both of the real world and from books, a valid but essentially unimportant distinction — accretes about the grindstone, explaining the improvement in quality generally to be found taking an overall view of a writer's output. On a broader scale this theory predicts a spiralling advance in literature, which I think is a valid view.

To give a particular example of the experiential importance of reading, my own stories frequently involve female characters, often in a central role. Now owing to my unwillingness to undergo a certain operation I'm afraid I'll never have first hand experience to draw upon. Nor have I been able to draw upon those girls I've known, because I knew none of them well enough to get down to the sort of thing I wanted (e.g. in one case the emotional reaction to a rape). The answer was to read up what others, both men and women, have written about women and forge a synthesis tempered by my own experiences (I presume women are not so different that they feel pain differently, for instance). This, incidentally, is a typically Kantian progression: thesis and antithesis create synthesis which in turn becomes a new thesis, which is all I've been talking about.

But, I repeat, you've said all this already, and more succinctly than I've managed: "Could this be because as I read a letter from somebody, I am actually assimilating experience from him as I read it?... we take our experience from all available sources, if we are wise... It is this personal wellspring of experience drawn from all sources that gives each of us our attitudes. It gives writers both the subject matter they examine, and the stance from which they examine it." I make no apology for quoting your own words back at you, it is exactly what I want to say.

How right you are too about the hidden experiences that become ensbrined in a piece of writing. I have recently completed the first draft of my first attempt at a novel, yet it was only upon re-reading it for the third time that I realised that the structure of the story was an expansion of Plato's allegory of the cave from The Republic. This inspiration was completely unconscious, yet without it I would have been unable to write the book I did write.

Like you I share the "failing" of being able to see everybody else's point of view, which is great when it comes to "suspension of disbelief," but makes me about as ready for the critical function as you say you are. (Then how the hell did I have the nerve to begin my fannish career writing reviews? I don't know, but it may have something to do with the fact that criticism is a necessary part of the job of writing.) However I'm not really satisfied with the conclusions you draw. There are the perennial epistemological problems of truth involved here, and not wishing to be drawn into any long winded arguments (I've gone on long enough as it is) I shall be perfunctory. You ask if it is possible to glimpse truth, as if you doubt the possibility. Yet truth, per se, is pretty much a matter of belief rather on a par with reality about which there are no problems, at least on an empirical level. I believe that my senses are showing me the real world, and once that belief is stated then the senses are evidence enough for reality. The problem is, as ever, with particular cases: is this "truth" I have conceived in fact true? Unfortunately at about this point we become entangled with the problem

of knowledge, and since the classic definition of knowledge is along the lines: I know x if (1) I believe it, (2) I am justified in that belief, and (3) x is true: it is not too difficult to see why we end up running around in circles.

Which is why I was uneasy with the ending of The Real Illusion; you've pushed yourself out onto something that it is easy enough to get started on but impossible to get to the end of. You see, you're asking about universals, and to get a satisfactory answer to any such question you need to know everything. But we can get by perfectly satisfactorily, if less ambitiously, on a Popperian level: i.e. we can safely assume we "know" any theory that we can check but not disprove. Thus we cannot say we "know" the existence of God because there is no way to test that hypothesis, but until it is proven otherwise we can say that we "know" the earth is round because we have means of testing this statement and so far it has stood up to all of them. And if we then say that anything that is "known" is "true" then we've solved the problem.

To put it in your own terms, while we are floundering in our morass of human opinion and experience we have no difficulty in reaching for the "truths" handed down by such opinion and experience. The human animal is, for 99.9% of his time at least, totally uninterested in the "depths and heights of reality," his concern is solely with that narrow belt in which he finds himself. On those rare occasions when he ventures out of that belt his concern is primarily to sample possibilities, much as we do in science fiction, to give him an idea of the theories he will have to test to arrive at the "truth" that will enable him to expand the belt slightly.

((So that's why I'm putting on weight!))

I've really enjoyed putting together this lettercolumn. There's been, as usual, an amazing amount of good stuff, and I think I've managed to make it hang together pretty well. But... do I really have to type out 180 names in thanks for your letters? All your letters are appreciated very, very much, but I really don't have room to list all of you. Particularly enjoyed, though, were letters from the following people, many of whose letters very nearly made it into print: Doug Barbour, Lester Boutillier, Coral Clarke (naturally), Ian Covell, Richard Cowper, Ed Cox, Gary Deindorfer, Alan Dorey, Norman Finlay, Ian Garbutt (whose letter was very enjoyable but to whom I'd point out that no one has the right to be printed in a lettercolumn; I only print letters of interest to a large section of the readership, or letters of very exceptional interest to a small number, particularly because of the number of letters I have to reject), Michael Harper (for rarity value), Bill Harry, Jeff Hecht, Lee Hoffman, Alan Hunter, Paul Kincaid, Lai Chin Kit, Phil Knight, John Koenig, Dave Langford, Tom Perry, Mic Rogers, Joyce Scrivner, Keith Seddon, Brian Stableford, Phil Stephensen-Payne, Mae Strelkov, Brian Tawn, Angus Taylor, Ted Tubb, Jim White, Gene Wolfe, Ben Zuhl, Anonymous of NY 10011 (who said roughly what Graham Hall says in part of his letter but in melodramatic fashion on red type ribbon), and Stan someone from San Francisco who with his friend Daniel Appel who knows Gil Gaier picked up a copy of Maya 14 in a second-hand shop, locced it but neglected to send me his surname or address. If anyone knows who or where Stan is I'd be grateful for the knowledge: he deserves another issue.

Talking of another issue, there will be one, and reasonably soon. It'll probably be from an address in Surrey, which if things go smoothly will be the one Coral and I already know about, but we're still keeping our fingers crossed that the mortgage goes OK. Exactly when the next issue is depends on how soon I can afford it, partly; so please subscribe; but please write too! See you then. Rob Jackson, June 1978.