



Shipyard
Blues

Play Me Some Shipyard Blues...

Right, here we go with the second **Shipyard Blues**, having been *hugely* encouraged by the response to number one. I suppose it was the size that did it, but locs were coming in almost within days of my posting copies. I even had locs in from the States a mere fortnight after mailing, and I send everything across the water by *surface* mail! (So I'm a cheapskate – wanna pay my postage bills?)

As well as the encouraging response, **SB1** came in right on the button as far as costs go, so my plans for doing an issue every 3-4 months are looking good. And I'm accumulating enough articles (and promises of articles) to be fairly sure I can fill the issues as they come along. What I don't have in abundance, and this is strange, is art: I'm using up back-stocks at a great rate. Is it just me or are we losing good fan-artists at a faster rate than we are gaining them? If there's anyone new out there, I'd be delighted to hear about them.

Page numbers are up this time, to accommodate the loccol (I aimed for ten pages and missed!), but I shall be trying *very* hard to keep it within the new boundary: if quality and frequency isn't enough and you all want quantity too, then tough, 'cos contrary

to popular belief, my pockets are not bottomless!

Enough waffle, time to get down to the real stuff.

Lead In The Head

I recently had my car converted to use lead-free petrol, something I had intended to do as soon as it became generally available. When my local garages put pumps up for lead-free, that was the time to change. My car (a Honda) only needed very minor timing adjustments to run with lead-free, so I had it done at a service. Most people I speak to are converting too, helped along by the small price differential that exists between lead-free and normal petrol, which essentially means they're doing the right thing for the wrong reason, but at least they are doing it.

Lead was first introduced into petrol as a means of raising the octane level (and preventing engine-shredding pre-ignition) way back in the twenties. Refining skills were not as advanced then, and the demand for higher octane, slower-burning fuel by the burgeoning aircraft industry was pushing the oil companies into unknown territory. Adding a compound called tetra-ethyl lead to the fuel

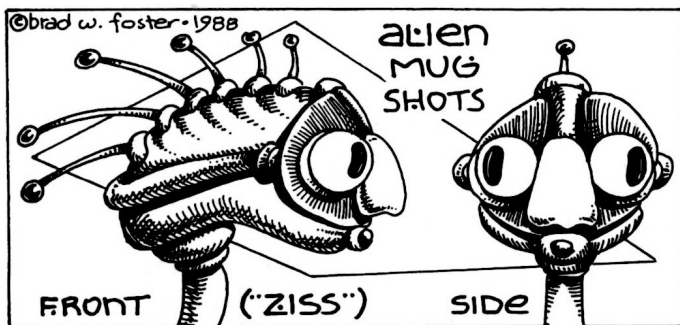
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solved their problems cheaply, and allowed the aircraft companies to build more powerful high compression engines without them blowing apart. But the oil companies also applied the same short-cut to fuels for the automobile industry, despite the needs of the motorist being substantially different. So began a long comedy of errors which may have poisoned generations of people, since we know that the lead in car exhaust gases finds its way into the human body, with toxic effect, especially on young children.

Lest it be imagined that this toxic effect was a recent discovery, I should point out that, in Britain, leaded petrol was sold pre-WW2 with a health warning on the pump. The warning was specifically aimed at the use of leaded petrol as a cleaning agent in confined spaces (petrol was frequently used as a degreaser in workshops), as there was a danger of lead poisoning from inhaling organic lead fumes. There were a number of documented cases of insanity arising from just such misuse. Granted the lead content of fuel was much higher in those days (up to 1 gram per litre, compared to the 0.15 g per litre of

modern fuel), but the central fact remains: the lead was known to cause brain damage, but the oil companies did nothing to remove it, and governments did nothing to force them. Then, in the late sixties, it was the *State* government in California that began a long series of environmental laws cutting down vehicular emissions. Since WW2, the oil companies have had the technology to produce higher octane fuel at very little extra cost, and have refused to do so, often on specious grounds. Automobile manufacturers have colluded in this, choosing not to spend the few pounds per car that would have ensured that any car could run safely without the lead additive. The only reason they are doing something about it now in Europe is because you have to remove the lead before you can get on with the business of reducing the other exhaust gases, like hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides, in line with demands from the European Community.

The net result of this is that we, as a race, have poisoned our own offspring for the last fifty years, as the prosperity of the Western world has led to more and more families owning cars. The average British motorist puts



about half-a-pound of lead into the environment every year, a total of some three thousand tons a year. Ironical really, that the very symbol of prosperity and freedom that the West venerates so greatly, may be the cause of our current state of chaos.

Think about it: if you expose a child's brain to a high level of lead in the atmosphere, much of it from the family car, then that child may grow up with a sub-normal mentality. Think of the levels of emissions encountered by any child living in a modern city, even in the suburbs, and you have to think that we have been, and are, well on the way to turning out a race of morons!

This could explain so many things: football hooliganism, increased violence, the sales figures of **The Sun**, heavy metal/thrash music, the popularity of the Costa del Sol, Sky TV, decreasing literacy, people voting Conservative, etc, etc. The wonder of it is, how the hell do we manage to raise anyone who can think at all?

Coda.

Still not convinced? Look at it another way. In order to stop lead accumulation in the engine, petrol companies add ethylene dichloride to your petrol as a lead scavenger. In the combustion process, this compound is converted to hydrochloric acid, hence its scavenging effect. When the engine's finished with it, the acid is dumped out the exhaust into the silencer, and that's the reason your exhaust system needs changing every few years. Look at it next time it needs replacing, and you'll see it has probably rusted out, not in. And I bet you thought it was

the salt on winter roads! (All information courtesy **CAR** magazine, July 1989.)

Double Coda

Pam and I have taken out our insurance policy for when the oil wells run dry: we've bought a pair of bikes! It's over twenty years since either of us rode a bike, so it was a bit of a gamble — there was a chance that one or the other of us might hate the feel of a bike. But, it's true what they say: you don't (can't?) forget how to ride a bike. Within fifteen minutes of starting again (late one evening in a deserted city park), we both found that we were still reasonably competent riders. So now we're going out for long exploratory rides around the Milton Keynes cycleway system, and enjoying the experience. The only real problem is, there's no direct cycleway leading from our house to the OU, so we'll have to wait until the oil runs out, and all the traffic clears off the road before using the bikes to get into work every day. Better keep in shape!

Shaking Down Big Blue

I get a number of computer magazines flowing through my office at the OU: various freebies come direct, others are circulated, some I even buy. The thing that has fascinated me most in them over the last year has been the battle for the future PC market, with IBM/Microsoft trying to replace the venerable old MS-DOS operating system with a new, all-singing, all-dancing version called OS/2, and meeting considerable resistance, a fact which is causing considerable anguish in both companies.

The problem that IBM and Microsoft have is that when the first IBM PC was built, it was aimed at competing with companies like Apple and Commodore, who were putting out machines running the operating system called CP/M, which used a maximum of 64 kilobytes of memory space. This was once considered a huge amount of memory, but events were catching up with it even then. So when Microsoft wrote an operating system for IBM, it allowed for future expansion. Ten times the then-current limit seemed ample, and so it was for a few years.

Then Apple struck back, introducing a series of machines that became the current Macintosh, a computer with one vital difference: whereas the MS-DOS machines were primarily number-crunchers and word-processors, the Mac was designed as a graphics-based package from the word go. This went beyond anything IBMs could do, unless equipped with vastly expensive graphics boards, fancy software, etc. The Mac Plus could also address far more memory than the IBM, came supplied with a megabyte to start with, and had a variety of 'proper' typefaces built into the system. Consistency of software was a major selling point, too, since almost any properly written Mac software could be used immediately, without referring to the manual (and in the Mac world, nobody reads manuals anymore!), such was the 'friendliness' of the Mac interface. IBM software, by comparison, was a nightmare of conflicting methods of achieving the same end within programs, and anyone who used a number of programs had to consciously re-adjust their thinking

with each package: a kind of "if this is Supercalc, I've got to do A,B and C to save, rather than X, Y and Z, which is Wordstar's method". Grown men have been known to cry over IBM operating systems.

IBM and Microsoft's answer is called OS/2: the problem is, it's been a long time coming. It uses huge amounts of memory (minimum of 2 megabytes just to run the system). It was designed for operation with Intel's 80286 central processing chip (described by some industry commentators as "brain-damaged"), instead of the later and more powerful 80386, and was launched into the market as people began to realise that the 80386 chip was by far the better bet. Allied to the new operating system was a new standard in computer architecture, called MCA, which tossed out the old IBM standard structure used in the PCs. IBM were less 'open' about the structure this time, demanding royalty payments, not only for the new architecture, but also for any alleged 'infringements' of the PC architecture in the past. Since the IBM PC had been 'cloned' by everybody and his mother-in-law, this acts as a disincentive to deal with IBM, and has prompted other microcomputer firms to try to ignore OS/2. Instead they are trying to introduce their own advanced standard (called EISA), or to work to another operating system altogether for their more powerful machines (mainly Unix), or, lately, to find ways to extend the existing MS-DOS standard (increasing useable memory size, graphic interfaces, etc).

Net result of all of this is that the uptake of IBM's new standard has

been low, much to Big Blue's chagrin, and it's a anchor chain of events that holds OS/2 back. Companies have learned that buying IBM is expensive, so they look to the 'clone' manufacturers to supply at least some of their needs: no wide selection to choose from, so no movement in that direction. There is a huge base of MS-DOS software to choose from: there is correspondingly less in OS/2, and what there is often makes minimal use of the interface, having been hurriedly (and cheaply) ported across. So why bother?

And, once you start thinking about changing the basis on which you work, then thoughts invariably stray along lines of, "well, if we're going to change anyway, let's have a look at what else is on offer." Which is often where Apple comes into the picture: invite a Mac into an office on loan, and the whole office falls in love with the thing! Combine it with a Postscript laserprinter, and PCs are relegated to use as doorstops!

So, IBM finds itself in a cleft stick: having tried abandoning its original PC concept for a new one, in order to have more control over the market it thought it 'owned', it has disrupted that market, and allowed companies like Apple to expand into former IBM (or at least PC) strongholds in the major corporations. In America last year, Apple outsold IBM in the PC market, an unprecedented feat. IBM has to keep moving forward on its new path (like a shark in the ocean), but it must wonder now whether the real market might end up going off in another direction entirely. IBM got into the personal computer market by

accident: it might just leave it the same way!

Alone In A Crowd

I've never liked to be in crowds. Not because of any fear of the crowding, of being crushed, swept off my feet, etc., but because crowds behave strangely. I was forcibly reminded of this last night, watching poet Tony Harrison's TV programme, **The Blasphemer's Banquet**, with its images of displays of grief at the funeral of Khomeini. To watch a massive crowd of Iranians mourning by striking their heads until they bleed is an awe-inspiring sight. You cannot believe that the individuals in the crowd would behave in the same way if they were alone. The crowd induced strange behaviour: men hitting their heads with razors; a father beating the head of his three-year-old son until blood flowed down the child's forehead. These are not natural acts: these are not even *religious* acts. The people are the victims of crowd psychosis, their feelings amplified and dehumanised by the crowd around them.

What is the chemistry of the crowd, that turns otherwise rational people into unfeeling morons, that afflicts pain not just on themselves, but others? The football hooligan is, perhaps, as much a victim of crowd psychosis as the person he attacks. Indeed, the hooligan may be *more* of a victim, having become addicted to the feeling of crowd psychosis. What is it about a crowd that makes it yield its will to demagogues, be they Hitlers or Mussolinis or religious demagogues? I don't know, and it scares me, and so I avoid crowds of any kind.

Whither/Wither Fanzines ?

Ken Lake

I cannot recall any period when I have ever been privileged enough to see so many fine fanzines. Equally, I cannot recall ever having had so many appallingly ill-spelt, ill-argued, prejudiced and downright ignorant zines mailed to me by people who are then incapable of accepting any kind of constructive criticism.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... and it's all true, thank heaven, for it shows the strength and health of the fannish scene more accurately than do fine cons, more SF paperbacks with bigger sales, or any other manifestation of fandom.

I shall forbear from mentioning the unmentionable crudzines, though an Irish Tommy of no fixed abode is high on that list; of the superb ones currently reaching my postbox I'll set aside the products of the John D. Owen hothouse to spare our editor's blushes, and mention just **Pulp**, **Empties**, **Critical Wave**, **Then** and **Dreamberry Wine** to show the breadth of material gathered under the banner of fannish writing.

Someone is bound to say that **Dreamberry Wine** is a booklist – true, but it has a live and challenging lettercol. **Critical Wave**, they will complain, actually charges £1.50 per issue (but

then, **Ansible** had a cover price too, and this is its linear descendant) – it's compiled by fans, it deals with fandom in many forms, and it has that fannish "feel". Then, the purists will claim, is not a fanzine but a survey of fandom – what better topic for a fanzine, pray ?

Among more traditionally "fannish" items are Hazel Ashworth's **Lip**, Dave Wood's **Xyster**, Terry Jeeves' **Erg** (the oldest living fanzine, I believe), the Twins' **This Never Happens**, and others which share three attributes: literate writing, humour, and general appeal. The first two are evident; what on earth is the meaning of the third ?

General appeal means that when you get that zine, you are certain to find something in it that you enjoy. It certainly does not mean that every good fanzine ought to appeal to every fan – the whole point about fandom is its diversity, and zines with general appeal to "people like Ken Lake" may well have less appeal to "people like Kev McVeigh" for example (though I should stress that I find much of Kev's writing interesting though I may be totally out of tune with his prejudices and conclusions).

Before looking to the future, I want to mention just one more zine – one that

I imagine few of my readers will have seen, and to my mind by far the most impressive in the world today and, by that token, the most encouraging when we look forward in time.

The Metaphysical Review comes from Bruce Gillespie in Melbourne; its #11/12/13 ran to 124 large, well printed pages featuring Brian Aldiss, John Brosnan, Tom Disch, David Lake (no relation), Dave Langford, Jo Nicholas, Andy Sawyer, Skel, Harry Warner Jr and thirty-one other named contributors. Elaine Cochrane writes on C S Lewis' Narnia books, Russell Blackford on "Sexuality versus the McCarthyites", Martin Bridgstock has some penetrating comments on John Norman's notorious Gor series... as I said recently in a fanzine review, "if ever I needed a single model to show all prospective faneds, this is it!"

Yet in no way would I suggest that their task was to copy it: the aim is to show one way to approach fanzines, and to stress that it does matter that you have adequate machinery to make it legible, adequate control of the English language to make it readable, adequate contacts with fandom to ensure that whether you are gathering contributors or doing it all "out of your own head," you can maintain that ultimate aim of "general appeal."

LOOKING BACK A MINUTE

Join Vinç Clarke's Fanzine Library and you have the whole marvellous spread of fandom's literary output from the thirties onward, available to you for no more than the cost of postage. I could not possibly boil down the vast range of topics, styles, even pro-

duction methods, fannish groups, aims or any other aspects of this mind-boggling literature – read it, and wonder at it, and learn from it.

You will find the innocence of the early days, the growing sophistication of the middle years, the world-weariness and cynicism of more recent times; you will find arguments and recollections, ideas and plans, more than enough to satisfy you for a lifetime.

But overall you will discover that the best zines have been put together carefully to appeal to a given group of fans, and that they contain living lettercols, passable artwork, and some very fine writing – articles and pieces that have a timeless appeal.

Why, then, should we want or even expect fandom in the 1990s and onward to produce any more zines at all: surely it's all been done before ?

To this there are two answers: most themes, most styles have been honed are perfected over the years until background reading in Vinç's stacks will give you a superb basis for your own writing. You can avoid silly mistakes and misjudgments – surely fandom is as capable of learning from the past as it is of imagining the future ?

But every year new events broaden our comprehension of the world around us, new political developments provide scope for reasoned argument, new discoveries provide us with the chance to reinterpret our visions of the fannishness of painstakingly gestetnered quarto with weak staples, reinterpreted – through computerised typesetting and advanced lithographic reproduc-

tion on DIN sizes of better-quality paper till we end up with **Crystal Ship**, to name but one.

Meanwhile, the electronic revolution has made non-paper-printed "zines" possible; FAX may bring the printed-in-your-bedroom zine, we may even be able to read them on our TV screens when cable and satellite systems proliferate to the point where we can buy time on them cheaply enough.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE?

Oops, I've changed the subject before changing the heading – but I've only looked at the basic technology, and we all know from experience that this is the weakest area for SFnal prophecy – our imaginations just don't seem to be as inventive as our scientists' and technologists' skills.

Will fanzines exist at all? To establish that we must consider the motivation of the faned, and that – not to put too fine a point upon it – is self-image and its improvement. S/he has things to say, feels s/he has the ability to say them interestingly, and wants the egoboo that comes from feedback. Can you honestly imagine any future world in which that drive will disappear?

I can't. Nor can I imagine a future world in which the ability to produce fanzines – samizdats, personally created packets of ideas and thoughts, whether personal or collective – will disappear. We may have no more paper, we may even have no more power sources. Then we'll damn well go back to handwriting and copying. The will to communicate cannot be

stifled even by the most appalling totalitarian dictatorships, as we have seen in Soviet Russia in the Stalin years and later.

And so long as we have people capable of following in the footsteps of Bob Shaw, Chuck Harris, Rob Hansen, Terry Jeeves, Dave Langford... insert all your own favourites... people who are not only capable of making us laugh, think and react, but are prepared to devote their time and their energies to doing so *for no profit whatsoever*, we shall have fanzines.

To me, that last italicised phrase sums up the whole of fannish writing. I write for payment in my own professional field, and sell something like a hundred articles a year. But I infuriate my wife, and provide my own true enjoyment in life, not only by buying the LPs that appeal to me, the SF paperbacks that give me pleasure and the food that excites my tastebuds, but also by sitting here at the typewriter trying to set out my own feelings on topics that have exercised my imagination.

Why do I do it? Egoboo is certainly a part of it. The urge to impart information and correct erroneous ideas is for me a very major part of it. But behind all that lies *pleasure*.

And so long as people can extract pleasure from compiling zines, they will continue to exist, thank heaven.

Whither fanzines? Onward, upward, developing any way we can make them. Wither fanzines? Not till human enterprise no longer provides pleasure for human beings. Fandom is forever.

The Nuclear Elephant

Terry Jeeves

People arguing over nuclear programmes remind me of a fairly well-known poem by J.B.Saxe called, 'The Blind Men And The Elephant'. It deals with six blind men of Hindostan who investigate an elephant purely by touching – but each man picks a different part of the animal's body for examination. As a result, their verdicts on what the elephant resembles differ widely. The first fondles its side and states that the elephant resembles a wall. The second touches the tusk and claims the elephant is a spear. The one touching the leg thinks it is a tree, the ear-toucher says it is a fan, whilst the trunk grabber believes it is a snake. The final one holding the tail opts for an elephant being a rope.

The moral, of course, is that opinions formed without all the facts may be suspect. Alternatively, don't assume that facts which apply to a part, necessarily remain true for the whole.

So what has this to do with atomic bombs, piles, reactors and soon? Well, the nuclear argument also has different parts. Despite this, some people look at only one of them and then at only some of the facts relevant to that one part. They then campaign loudly against the whole shooting match.

For openers, let's define some of the parts:- 1. Atomic weapons. 2. Atomic

power plants. 3. Nuclear waste disposal. 4. Medical atoms. 5. Industrial atoms. 6. Food preservation, etc. 7. Fusion research.

There's an awful lot of opposition to atomic weapons, and rightly so. Provided the opponent gets rid of his at the same time as 'our side', I'm totally in favour of scrapping the lot. I am not in favour of 'unilateral disarmament' where we scrap ours and hope the other bloke will do likewise. History and life in general rate this a no-no. Hitler walked all over the weaker, small countries, Russia did likewise with Finland, Italy clobbered Abyssinia. At no time did they bury their weapons because of the weakness of their opponent. Try walking down a city's meaner street after dark, whilst loudly declaiming, 'I am a weaponless zone, so leave me untouched'. I'll come and visit you in hospital.

Incidentally, Sheffield Council spent a lot of money posting 'This is a Nuclear Free Zone' signs around its perimeter, and 'This is a Litter Free Zone' in its centre. If the rubbish there is any guide, the former is not likely to have any more success than the latter.

Gas and biological weapons can be just as hideous as atomic bombs, and kill you just as effectively, so let's howl for multilateral disarmament of all

weapons, and with complete and open inspection of each other's territories. One snag here, unless you can coax China, India, and possibly Middle East States to join in you'll always be under threat from them.

Since Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, nuclear power plants have got a bad press. However, the death toll for all nuclear accidents to date is far lower than that from cars, from planes, from trains, from smoking – yet few howl for the abolition of these killers. We accept their mortality rate because we value the 'benefits' more highly.

Yes, nuclear plants can kill – but so can hundreds of other things. Even the humble domestic bath tub can be lethal if used without due care. The electricity in your home could be rendered virtually harmless if we reduced the voltage to about twenty volts – but then to get the same power down the line, we'd have to let our appliances be made to handle a much higher current, and the cost of that would be astronomical when extended to all power lines. The high voltage overhead cable would need to be several feet thick to carry even a fraction of that load – which in turn would demand many more and beefier pylons. It's an equation involving cost, demand, practicability and risk – and we know what the bottom line is there.

The answer is not to abolish such dangerous things as planes, cars, nuclear power plants, high voltage power lines and to stop taking baths, but to work harder to make such things as utterly safe as possible.

Why bother when it's cheaper (at the moment) to just stop making nuclear power plants? The answer is simple, yet all the people howling alternate energy refuse to accept it.

Fossil fuel is finite – it may (repeat, may) last another fifty or a hundred years, but even that is doubtful at the escalating rate we're using power. When it runs out, just what will replace it? The most-touted options are Tidal Power and Wind Power.

If we had found out how to build efficient tidal stations, and if we completely encircled our coast with them, they would be prohibitively costly and would only produce a fraction of our power needs. Windmills are even worse. A recent estimate called for something like 140 huge towers, on a particularly windy hill, to supply one small town. Imagine the protests at building such things in local beauty spots – and many of those protesting would also be opposers of nuclear power. Some people protest at any sign of change in what they know and have grown to accept.

Estimates show that wave plus wind power might cope with about ten percent of future needs – and that is just internal demands. There'll be no more aircraft flying and all food will have to be brought in by sailing ship (and probably distributed by horse and cart). Here again, Britain's population now far exceeds the number which can be fed in this way.

Until a better power storage system than the current battery comes along, even road transport will be severely limited. What we need is another breakthrough on the level of the tran-

sistor and solid state devices which came along in 1948 and radically transformed society in a few short years.

Another point to bear in mind is the increasing fear of a runaway greenhouse effect being caused by the burning of so much fossil fuel. Stocks may run out in time to save us from that – but it is a threat not posed by nuclear power stations.

Like it or not, the only answer right now is nuclear fission power. Yes, leakages and waste disposal pose problems, but we must lick those before our fossil fuels run out. One current solution involves vitrification of the radioactive waste followed by embedding in concrete. The problem then remains where to store it – concrete silos should solve that, provided locals don't object. Britain is studded with unsightly mining spoil heaps, but when a sub-surface waste dump is proposed, out come the signs and the pickets, yet chances of a leakage in a vitrification-plus-concrete storage system are lower than the chances of contamination from leaded petrol.

I'd venture to suggest that the biggest threat from nuclear waste storage is not from leaking pollution, but from terrorists stealing the waste and spreading it whenever they want to cause chaos.

Then there's the medical aspect of the nuclear elephant. Thousands of people are alive today thanks to radioactive tracers and treatments used in modern hospital. Radioactives are also used widely in cancer treatment and other areas, and there is even a nuclear-powered artificial replace-

ment heart on the way. Only the most rabid anti-atom nut would oppose such uses of atomic power, and I suspect his (or her) tune would change very quickly if he needed the treatment.

Machine safety devices often use weak radioactives to trigger them. Quality control testing, package filling, material thickness and many other industrial processes rely on artificial radioactives. Do you oppose quality control and safety, just because it is achieved via an atom? Radioactives are used in pest control. They are also used to irradiate and sterilise food to give it a longer life, and can also kill unwanted germs.

Hopefully, if research isn't stifled, or if the recent fusion in a test-tube works (highly unlikely), then we can have fusion power. Combining two hydrogen isotope atoms of deuterium into one helium atom will release a lot of energy, without leaving a radioactive ash. We may never get fusion-powered aircraft, but we could have huge bulk-food carriers crossing the seas.

Like emphysema, AIDS, lung cancer, cars, aircraft, polluted eggs and salmonella, atomic power exists today. Unlike them, it is needed. Instead of trying to ban it, we should be devoting our efforts to making it safe – either that or to finding a really viable alternative.

Or do you disagree?

How To Devalue Compassion

Sue Thomason

A few weeks ago, in the same post, I received mass-mailed form letters from Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Friends of the Earth (I'm a member of both) containing pleas to aid their current recruiting drive. Both mailing included multiple copies of an advert/membership form, and a request to mail these out to my friends, adding a personal message if I wished, in the hope of persuading them to join the organisation. The five CND ads were quite attractive cards in two designs, doves and the well-known symbol. At first glance they looked something like gift tags. FoE sent eight standard letters with a request that I stamp, address and post them to my friends, adding a personal message if I wished. I felt angry. I don't want to pass junk mail on to my friends. I want my friends to make up their own minds whether to join a particular organisation or not. People work differently, have different priorities; joining an organisation may not (is not, I think) the Right Thing for everyone to do... I don't like evangelism, I guess.

A couple of weeks later, I got three requests for money in the same post. Two of them (from FoE and Worldwide Fund for Wildlife) were appeals for tropical rainforest campaigns. FoE offered me a 'free' copy of *In The Rainforest* if I gave them £35 or

more. WWF offered me a 'free' copy of the *Green Consumer Guide* if I gave them £30 or more.

FoE's very emotive appeal leaflet said, among other things, "every penny we can raise now is vital". So were the books donated to the campaign by Picador, or have FoE spent vital pennies buying them? The leaflet didn't say.

WWF's action in offering the *Green Consumer Guide* as a 'free gift' is self-contradictory – surely green consuming is all about not acquiring anything unnecessary. If I really needed the book I'd buy it; otherwise I'd consult a library/friend's copy.

By offering 'green' books as freebies both organisations are devaluing the green message, encouraging people to treat it as disposable, like the free gifts in cornflake packets. They're also supporting the over-consuming lifestyle that can only conceive of a 'reward' or 'thank you' as a material possession – nothing else is valued. Both have discouraged me from giving lotsa money because I don't want to receive their wretched free gifts.

I worry when I perceive mailings from 'good causes' as 'junk mail' and as 'high-pressure advertising'. I find myself reacting to the envelopes as people are supposed to react to bills. I fantasise about throwing them away

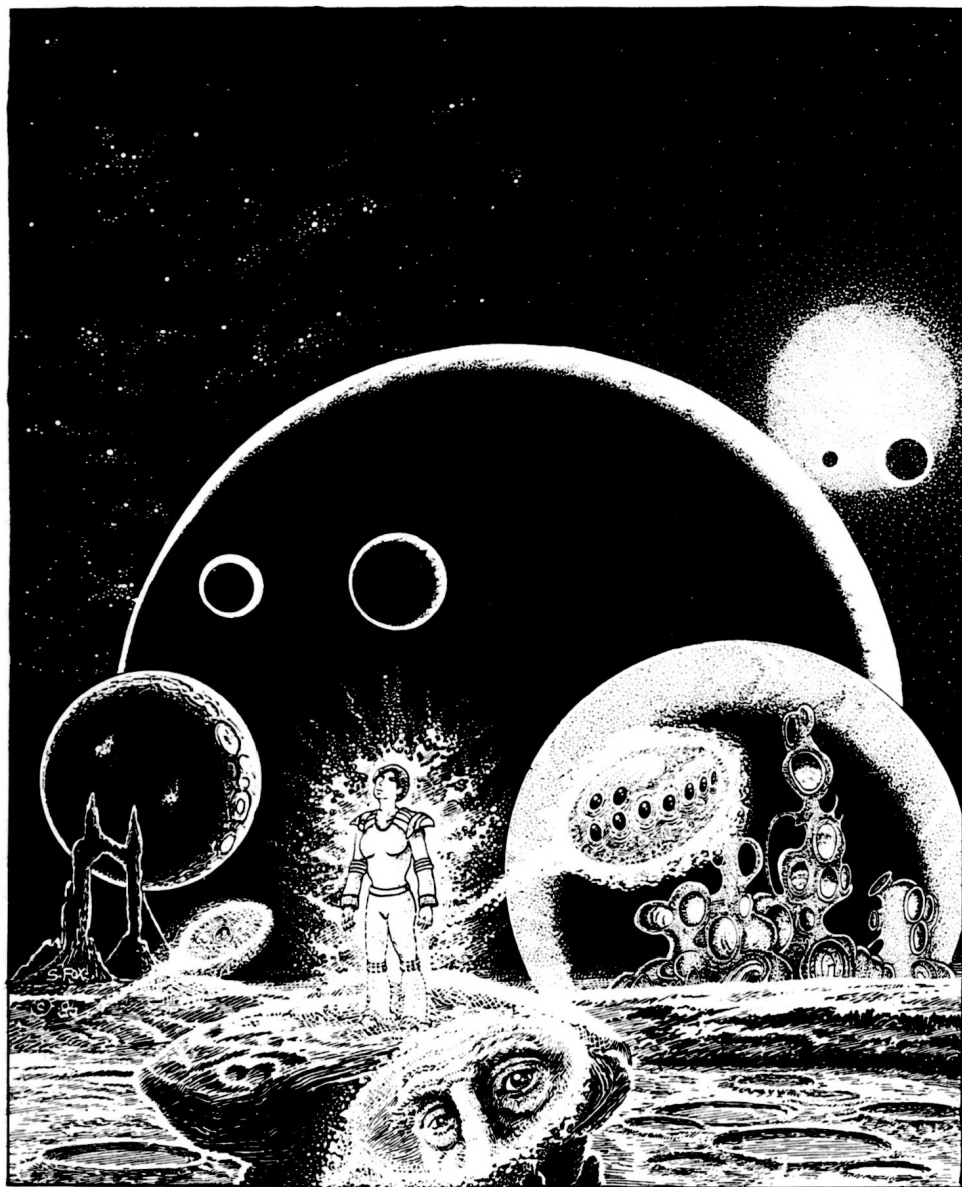
unopened, I groan and say "oh no, not more demands for money". I get turned-off towards the organisations in general, I now wince every time I pass a WWF logo in the streets... I'm very unhappy because I've deliberately opened myself to influence from these groups, trying to change my lifestyle, my perception of the world, my relation to the world... and all I get is repeated, loud, demands for money. Perhaps they seem louder than average to me because I have less than average exposure to mass media like TV/video, and automatically put other 'junk mail' unopened in the recycle box.

Another thing that worried me that WWF (who didn't get any money, because I opened their envelope second) said "Many of the crucial plant sites you will be helping to save are eligible for a matching grant from the British Government's Overseas Development Administration. This means your gift could be worth double!" FoE didn't mention this grant. Did I send my money to the right organisation? Are FoE not eligible for/interested in the ODA grant? Which sites and what kind of work does it cover? Why didn't FoE mention it? How far are FoE and WWF duplicating each other's work? Are they working in competition or together? Is either organisation aware of what the other one is doing, both the worldwide rainforest conservation, and the timing and scope of UK mailing/campaigning?

I fell particularly suspicious of WWF at the moment. I was so upset by their last mailing but three, which suggested I contribute £200 to their cur-

rent campaign, that I wrote asking to be taken off their mailing list. About a fortnight later, I got a letter thanking me for my contribution (I hadn't contributed). About a fortnight after that, I got another demand for money. All the letters were completely standard word-processed form letters. No sign of human comprehension or response. I've heard of this sort of persecution by computer-generated form letter before, but always from mail-order companies or large institutions. It's horrifying to realise that charitable institutions and 'good causes' work like this, too.

One noble exception to the pattern of 'predatory charities' is the Woodland Trust, who I feel are value for money. Sure, they ask for money, but they then tell me what they've done with it, what woods they've bought, where they're located, what sort of wood it is, a brief outline of the management plan for the wood, how to get to it (they encourage people to visit their woods). I feel my modest contributions have actually achieved something. I respond well to being set goals that I feel are achievable and well-defined. I feel much more positive about an appeal that says "if we can raise £x-thousand we can buy Bloggswood and manage it to conserve the excellent lichen populations, encourage natural regeneration, and increase its amenity value by maintaining the footpath" (with a follow-up letter four months later that says "we've now bought Bloggswood: thank you" than about an appeal that says "Save The Rainforests!" but doesn't mention how (except that it's expensive).



Confessions Of A Writing Tutor

Syd Bounds

“Writing can’t be taught.”

How many times have you heard that canard? Nobody says music can’t be taught, or art schools should be shut down. Apparently it only applies to writing.

Would-be writers read ‘How To Write Books’, join a Writers Circle to get mss criticism, attend an evening class or weekend workshop. Obviously they’re all hoping to learn something. The fact is that the basics of writing, like any other craft, can be and are taught.

For the past four years I’ve worked part-time, at home, as a tutor for a correspondence school of writing.

And, in my opinion, a course in the basic craft is the best way to start. You get the Course material, text-books and the help of a tutor who is a selling writer. Once you’ve got hold of the basics – market study, plotting and how to present your story or article – then mss criticism can be useful.

So what do I, as a tutor, get out of it besides the money?

Well, I’ve got more than forty years experience of professional writing, and it seemed time to pass on some of what I’d learned. When a student catches on to some aspect of plotting

of their writing suddenly improves (usually due to putting in some extra work), writes a thank-you letter or sells a ms, I get a nice warm glow.

And it’s an interesting job. I meet, via the postbag, a lot of fascinating people, from schoolgirls to pensioners, from bus drivers, doctors and the wives of army officers serving in Germany to the lady who puts the gravy in pork pies. All kinds of people, from Eire and Vietnam, Uganda and Sri Lanka and Yorkshire. Priestley has something to answer for – or perhaps it’s the air up there – because I get a surprisingly high number of students from Yorkshire.

And I learn too. All beginners make exactly the same mistakes, which is why the early exercises can appear stereotyped. I’ve learnt to avoid saying, “This is no good”, because the most unlikely mss sell. I’m always aware of the danger of turning out carbon copies of myself, so students with a tendency to rebel are welcome.

A student takes the Course once. A tutor takes it over and over again; whoever said the best way to learn a subject is to teach it was right.

And my hopefuls can still surprise me. One of the early exercises is to

analyse the plot of a printed story. Only recently I was asked, "Why did the author give it that title?" Nobody else had ever asked that one; I had to stop and think.

So what exactly does a tutor do? Well, the obvious things: scribble comments on their exercises, set fresh assignments and write a letter of comment. Behind that lies the real work of just sitting and thinking: what is best for this student? What can I suggest for her/his development? (Yes, the majority are women.) And some lack confidence and need to be encouraged.

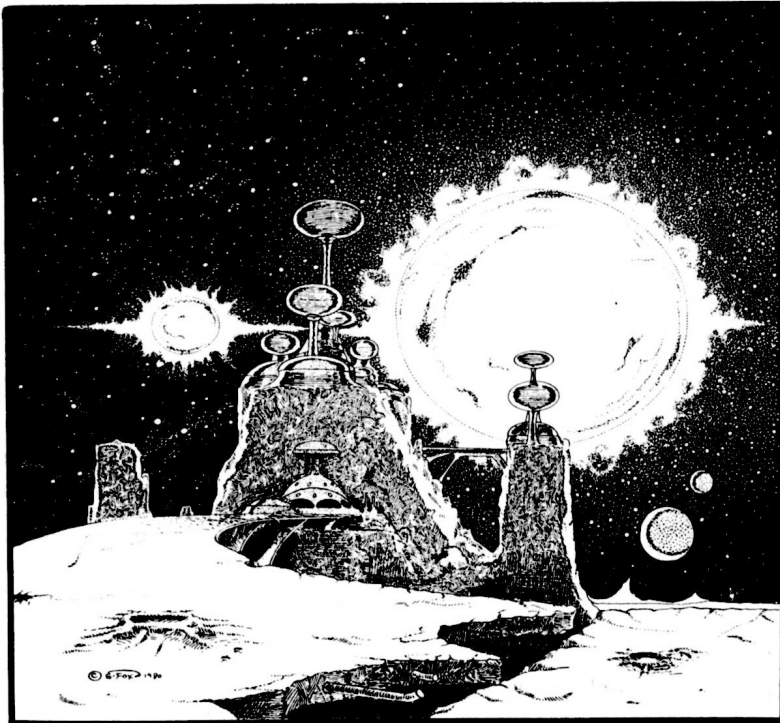
I admit there are times when I go screaming up the wall. When, for

example, I have to point out that a spelling mistake in the title will not encourage an editor to read further. Neither will sentences without a verb or full stop. Nor a short story of seven pages consisting of one paragraph.

But most of the time I enjoy my job, or I wouldn't continue.

It is fun to help people. There's a knock at the door and it's time to open this week's post bag to see what I've got to cope with. Will my heart sink? will I feel elated by another success? Probably both. As the proverb says, I live in interesting times.

One thing still puzzles me. Why, when it is claimed that people are reading less, are more people trying to write?



Loccing The Blues

(What a cracking response to SB1! I've really had to labour hard in the shipyard to get this down to size, so thanks to everyone who wrote. As with CS, contributors to the last issue get to see all of the responses to their material, not just the heavily edited stuff below. Enough waffle. Let's leap straight in to the fray.)

Chris Elliott: 24/7/89

Thanks for **Shipyard Blues**. It made rivetting reading.

(Think about it. The new title got a few lines of thought going.)

K.V.Bailey: 8/6/89

A welcome to **Shipyard Blues**. Plaudits for concept, contents, and, especially, title. From **Crystal Ship to Shipyard** is a nice bit of word-play which invites yet more. A shipyard is where things are made, and the things there made are made to range far; yet 'yard' also limits. Both the 'yard' of 'prison-yard' and the word 'orchard' are etymologically descended from 'garth' = an enclosure. In the one living things endlessly and monotonously circulate and fade: in the other living things may root, renew, and bear fruit. The former seems to be paradigmatic of the fandom depicted both in Chuck Connor's dialogue and Terry Broome's lament: the

latter of the well-springs of knowledge and delight characterising the Reading Scheme so idealistically and lyrically described by Dorothy Davies. Then each of Krischan Holl's drawings attempts iconically, and successfully, to capture both moods at once. As for 'Blues', you have said most of what there is to say about its ambivalence in the "What's in a name?" para. of the editorial. I would only add that, on the down-beat, the conclusion of Chuck Connor's dialogue chimes with that line from Ford's **The Lady's Trial**: "We can drink till all look blue"; while on the up-beat, Duke Bluebeard may have unlocked a door to, hopefully, more such lively operatic accounts and obiter dicta. (Triffids, Val de Mer, Alderney, C.I.)

Ken Lake: 5/6/89

Like Terry Broome, I dislike the title but for totally different reasons:

"Shipyard" is harsh, discordant, metallic – the wrong feel altogether for your sort of zine;

"Blues" is excellent: the Blues are infinitely variable, cathartic and honest, which should be the aim of any good zine.

I'd have recommended "Junkyard Blues" for two good reasons:

- a junkyard is where you find the detritus of everyone's existence, and
- in Hong Kong they still hand-build real ships in a junkyard, from real wood and using traditional "green" methods, surely a fine image for today? (115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY)

Roy Hill: 7/89

In **Shipyard Blues** 1 you mentioned variations on a theme as being one point of comparison between the Blues and faanish writing. Another similarity is that they both like to spend a lot of their time defining or describing themselves. A typical example of this on the Blues side is the lyrics to Duke Ellington's 'The Blues' (from **Black, Brown And Beige**, 1944):

"The Blues...

The Blues don't...

The Blues don't know nobody as a friend,

Ain't been nowhere where they're welcome back again...

Low... ugly... mean... Blues!"

On the surface, the Blues' own description makes you want to stop any further search for common ground and to agree with Terry Broome that they are too miserable a theme for a fanzine title. But to do that would be to reduce the Blues' range of emotion to a petty level of listed grievances. That would be wrong because they deal with strong, genuine feelings that visit us all at times and it is better to accept them and help them run their course than to try and deny them. This, for me, is the strength that still shines through even the various mutations of the Blues, such as R&B or Jazz and I'm sure there is strength to spare for a fanzine title. (8 Lansdown Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3JP)

(My stated aim of achieving some kind of topicality amused John Haines, with some slight justification:)

John F. Haines: 6/89

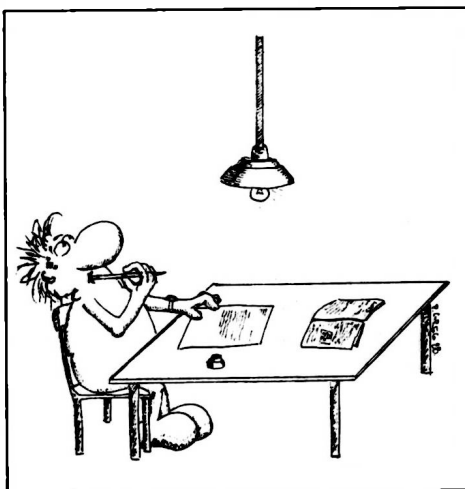
Many thanks for **Shipyard Blues**. As always, an interesting read. Can't see you maintaining topicality very easily – this week alone has been a humdinger, with the unrest in China, death of Khomeini (byeee!), victory of Solidarity in Poland – the world's going too fast for us, boy, if you've a hope of keeping up with that lot you'd better start a daily... (5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QG)

(A daily? Nah, I leave that to Eddie Shah... Meanwhile, my advocacy of 'reality programming' has upset Vinø Clarke.)

Vinø Clarke: 11/6/89

I want to take issue with you on one or two editorial points, specifically "...many fans don't like it when confronted by reality in fanzines." and "reading fanzines is sometimes like entering a fantasy world."

Well, of course we don't, and well of course it is. My own type of fan – or even faan – thinks of fandom as a



fantasy world. It should be divorced from reality as much as possible. I don't want to receive a poor imitation of **The Times** – or come to that, **The Sun** – masquerading as a fanzine. I don't even care for an intelligent survey of world affairs - I can get that elsewhere. I can rub along in mundane daily life fairly well, watching the news on TV and wishing vainly that I could do something about various government's inhumanity to humans.

But when I enter the fannish world, I want to forget the outside confusions. I want to enter a parallel world with its own history, news, characters, quotable sayings, famous people, even language, and without mundane frontiers. Why not? I don't want to be programmed for reality. At the age of 67 I've seen and experienced reality which would curl your toes. I want somewhere to relax. In fandom I can find pure escapism, amongst sf fans of all ages. Why on earth should you come blundering into my dream-world with your steenking reality? (16 Wendover Way, Kent, DA16 2BN)

(If fans don't want 'steenking reality' in their dream-world, Vinç, how come so many of them locced the 'reality programmed' CS15, with Hilary Robinson's excellent piece on Northern Ireland, and Mic Rogers' article on Honesty?)

(The 'future of the fanzine' articles naturally attracted plenty of attention. I'll run response to both Chuck and Terry's articles together.)

Andy Sawyer: 14/6/89

Two good views on the future of fanzines, though I wonder if the variety of

media, and opportunity for fanzine production is part of the problem. Time was when a fanzine was something new. Now many people produce fanzines for reasons other than 'just' communication, because its perhaps easier for young fans to meet people who share their interests. Now the word 'fanzine' is common enough to appear in dictionaries, and are produced by music and football fans as well as SF readers. You have to have one foot in the grave to remember things like 'the underground press'. Two things appear to have happened. One is that the lines between the 'quality fanzine' and the 'semi-pro' magazine have been blurred. I see, for example, that **Interzone** now has a 'magazines received' column. This is good if it gets people to realise that they do not have to have the initials 'R.M.' to become part of 'the media' and that the 'establishment' press isn't necessarily the repository of all wisdom and taste. If you can't get intelligent general interest articles in the Sunday newspapers, well, the Owen Shipyard will always come up with the goods! The other thing is that, while amateur magazines may be produced still, they go round to interest groups which aren't necessarily 'fandom' – a school, college or locality, a local society or workplace, and I suspect that the 'fannish' elements, people who enjoy the communication rather than the SF, will be less and less visible in the SF world because they'll find other support groups. What I quite definitely see the lack of (and of course he wouldn't have said it himself, the shy retiring little posy that he is!) is someone of the

nature and enthusiasm of Chuck Connor, whose **IDOMO** managed to link together – and, I think, inspire – disparate areas of the fanzine/music/small press 'n' poetry scenes. Unfortunately, I don't see how the hell anyone could afford to play that role nowadays. (1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 4BT)

Roy Hill: 7/89

The format of Chuck Connor's 'A Champagne Glass, Bearing Lipstick Traces' reminded me of **The Compleat Angler** by Isaac Walton, being an instructive discourse between knowledgeable enthusiasts. Perhaps Chuck should have included (as Isaac did on eels) that fanzines could also be created by the action of sunlight on early morning raindrops.

Skel: 6/89

...I thought both Chuck and Terry were a bit on the wordy side, but interesting enough despite that. My own opinion of the Nova award is that I don't have one....it being far too trivial a thing to warrant anyone forming an opinion about it. It does however throw up (sic) the occasional Cosmic Jest, and I suppose it should be valued for that, if for no other reason. I note for instance that there has been some excellent and fascinating fanwriting in response to Mike Ashley's winning the Nova last year, fanwriting that fanzine fandom is the better for.

I hope Michael's enthusiasm has been boosted by his winning the award, and that he will produce large amounts of material, so that the people who appreciate it can read lots

and lots and lots of it. (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5NW)

Vinc Clarke: 11/6/89

Chuck Connor seems to have found a new and brilliant lease of life as an author of well-written fan articles. The form of this piece was very good indeed – a perfect example of jazzing up what might have seemed, from the fannish viewpoint, a mundane subject. And the content? I can agree with most of it, including the remarks on these semi-secret APAs. When OMPA started in mediaeval times, it had about 90% of the then-current British faneds – yes, in those video-less days we had time to publish APAzines and ordinary fanzines. Nowadays, you have to dig hard to find out the ordinary details of joining an APA.

And although I would agree that apathy killed OMPA, it still took 20 years to die. Stand by for statistics never before published. In its first 5 years, OMPA members published approx. 5,800 quarto pages of material. In its second five years, there were approx. 5576 ditto pages. In its 3rd x 5 years, 3292. In its 4th x 5 years, something like 2681. What does this prove? Firstly, that I've successfully repaired my calculator. Secondly, it helps to have a time scale when one talks of apathy.

Buck Coulson: 25/6/89

I disagree with Terry Broome that receiving a strange fanzine without an accompanying note as to why you're getting it makes it more difficult to respond. The legendary British reserve, perhaps. You get a strange fanzine, you read it and if you like it,

you send them a loc, and if you don't, you do nothing. If they send a second issue and you still don't like it, you tell them to quit wasting postage. Nothing hard about that, is there? (2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA)

Harry Andruschak: 3/7/89

Terry Broome's article... makes me wonder why I continue pubbing. Well, I do enjoy the fanzines I get in trade. That is #1. And after all these years I have no problems with my ditto machine, and in fact enjoy the process of printing off the 100 copies or so, even if I have to feed the paper in piece by piece, as I can no longer find good feed rollers. I doubt if many fans would call my efforts a "true" fanzine, due to its many limitations.

Of course, ditto is C*H*E*A*P !!

Postage is another problem altogether, and probably the reason I get so few UK zines for trade. I see no hope for improvement, from my vantage point as a worker in the US Post Office.

By the way, I note that Terry Broome states on page 17 that the newer fans cannot afford duplicators. Does this imply that they are still available in the UK? Here in the USA a lot of second-hand mimeo and ditto machines are for sale, but supplies for these machines is drying up, and the quality and variety available is diminishing.

And in the case of most USA fans, they simply do not want to bother with the scut work of cranking out copies on a mimeo or ditto. Getting a mimeo or ditto to work correctly, to

print readable copies, is not as easy as some fans think, especially those who have never tried it. (P.O. Box 5309 Torrance, CA USA 90510-5309)

Chuck Connor: 24/7/89

...One thing that Terry doesn't take into consideration in his analysis is the amount of time it takes to get a zine together. I can still remember doing speed typing at 2 or 3am, and getting out an issue of IDOMO in under ten days. But I had two weeks leave, and so could devote 90% of my time to it and sod the repairs on the house, sod the socialising, sod the existence of anything other than the zine itself. And, after doing a bulk mailing, I would sit back and wait for the reaction to it all. Come the final issue I got three letters from a mailing of 200. I blew the fucker's brains out there and then, and said that I would never do anything like it again until the fun had come back into the scene. It still hasn't, and that's another bloody troof...

...Terry also talks of a lack of design and layout evident in so many of the zines today. Part of that is, I suspect, due to the fact that with the old style of production (ie, stencil) you had to spend a little time and thought on the thing. Now any fool can get hold of a typewriter and knock out a zebra-zine, all black and white stripes of type, no lettraset, no paragraph planning, no style, and no concept of package... Again, computers are taking a large role in production, but as far as I know few people are prepared to experiment with any DTP package, unless, of course, it's the PCW crowd (and that's not meant to be deroga-

tory, either, as the PCW is a damn fine 8-bit machine....). The problem in this area is that fans are *not* prepared to experiment and play around. They see other finished pieces, and think they can go from point A to point B without going through any form of learning process whatsoever. Such is not the case, as well we know, but it goes on and is perpetuated... (Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, nr Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF)

Sheryl Birkhead: 29/6/89

Whew – Chuch C is really on a roll – I don't have many specific comments to make, but, about the Hugos being too Americanized, I agree, statement of fact, now what? How about the editors (any and all zines eligible – perhaps some guidelines as to frequency of pubbing to qualify) providing mailing lists and the selected eligible voters come from that. Then, anyone on the list is 'qualified' to vote, but must ante up (some amount to be specified) to be able to actually cast a vote. Just an idea. That would obviously be much more wieldy an idea for the Novas, not the Hugos.(23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA)

(And now for a little stirring stuff)

Terry Broome: 7/6/89

Where I disagree with Chuck is with his comments about new talent. I think there would be more new talent given the right circumstances – like the price of producing fanzines falling... The size of fandom means that it's also harder to come across talent these days, even though it's there. He thinks the next step is fragmentation, whereas I think that's already hap-

pened. It happened probably as long as ten years ago, as fandom was already fragmented when I joined it in 1981/82. Rising costs mean a reduction in the number of copies of a circulated fanzine, so a smaller percentage of fandom receives any one zine. It is quite possible to get little or no overlap of fanzines received with other fans outside your immediate social circle. That sounds like fragmentation to me. The different philosophies/outlooks of fans from various groups bear me out. There's a very good example of this in Harry Bond's zine review column for **Pulp 13** In it he states "Skel's feels [a feeling of community in current fanzines] is gone. I'm not so sure. One thing that certainly exists at the moment, in certain UK fanzines at least, is a species of sub-community...fans whom Caroline Mullan recently referred to as 'alternative fandom'... These zines are generally of the second rank... every fannish era has such zines."

His remarks were condescending, insulting and misrepresentational, from my point of view. God knows where Harry got this ghetto-perception from, of fans like myself, Kev McVeigh and Jenny Glover (a few of the fans he mentions), and I wonder how he decided we were a passing phase, something not to be taken seriously? As for second rank... Okay, the fans he mentions, including myself, still need to improve our styles, but in no way is second-rate (I presume he means this) writing exclusive to the fans he mentions, the so-called 'sub-community'. I notice he doesn't include himself in this group, but aligns himself to what I presume

he regards as the 'larger community' ... (which makes a nonsense of his comments). This 'larger community' produces mediocre fanzines, too. **Pulp** is one of them. The writing is usually of a better standard purely because the writers have had greater experience. Harry implies us 'second-raters' will give up within the next few years, and thus denies us the possibility of gaining the experience the 'first-raters' have. I get the feeling from all of this that he regards himself as somehow superior to the fans he mentions in his short and inconsistent list (trying to make some special connection between those names is ludicrous), and has counted himself among a group he considers superior to other fans. This is amazingly elitist. This is how I see it: Harry has simply aligned himself with one fragment of fandom, the fragment which largely ignores or dismisses out of hand the fragment of fandom he talks about. From my point of view, Caroline Mullan, Avedon Carol and Harry belong to 'alternative fandom' except, of course, that Harry and I have communicated together, so this isn't entirely true. There is no alternative fandom, in the manner of another group which is somehow less significant. But the very fact that Harry and I have different perceptions about the structure of fandom (Harry acknowledging a hierarchy where I do not), indicates the fragmentation of fandom already exists. (101 Malham Drive, Lakeside Park, Lincoln, LN6 0XD)

(It's interesting to note the effect talking about fannish futures has on the newer fans.)

Cecil Nurse: 5/6/89

Well, I don't know. Being a mail-junkie I can comprehend, so I'll make an effort to be compassionate in a harsh and uncaring world. The rest of it, all about fandom and fanzines, well, I can't say that I have any real idea what it's supposed to be about. You want to stir up 'the moribund British fanzine scene' with something that isn't wholly fannish? It sounds familiar, fans wanting to be more than fans, or something, but what is it to be 'fannish'? Where and what is 'the scene'?

My impression, as a newcomer, is this: that fannishness is 100% nostalgia. Calling oneself a fan was something that people who discovered sf two, three, four decades ago, used to do. Back then, being a fan meant something; now, being a fan means you were there, and you spend half your time remembering how it was and wishing for those times again, and the other half complaining about how it is now. I have this vague image of a disgruntled sf diaspora, to a large extent in middle age, which does very little beyond pass judgement upon what its few active members attempt to do. They know a fan when they smell one, and that's about it. As a newcomer, then, I don't really know who these people are, and 'the scene' seems akin to a War Veterans reunion, each year slightly fewer in number. (49 Station Road Haxby, York YO3 8LU)

Hilary Robinson: 6/6/89

I learned a lot from Terry Broome's article. I learned why I'm not, and probably never will be, a fan – I mean

a Faan. I used to wonder why that was, why established fans went out of their way to be unpleasant and rude to new fans and to deliberately speak some form of patois that was clearly designed to make newcomers feel uncomfortable and out-of-place, and too embarrassed to ask for a translation. I remember having to ask "What does gafiate mean?" and "What's skiffy?" At least I *asked*, there must be lots of others who didn't bother, just left.

I was particularly taken aback by the rudeness of fans, in particular a well-known fan who came over here as a guest at NICON and was as deliberately rude to the organisers and the other Ulster folk as it was possible to be. Another who talked loudly at the back of the hall through a panel discussion. Look at me I'm a Big Name Fan. Fanzines seem to be full of fans backbiting and sneering at each other. Who'd want to join that? Terry mentions zines that are full of vitriolic letter columns and not much else. I've been sent some. Who'd want to read those? As Terry describes, I didn't know what I was supposed to do with unsolicited zines. Nobody told me I was supposed to 'pay' for them by writing a controversial letter... (Is this controversial enough John?)

I have met, on paper, a few really nice fans but they tend to be on the periphery of fandom... It is only since I've joined comic fandom that I realise not all fan-groups are as unpleasant as SF fandom. Comics fans are as bright, zany, nutty, serious, wild as any others but *nice* with it. *Welcoming* to new fans. Nice to see you, sit down, what's your favourite comic? Gosh. How

pleasant to feel welcome for a change.

One point I'd like to make, Terry. You say on page 18 that if confans "don't automatically receive the new fans' zines, the zines don't exist". True. On page 20 you say, "The recent interest in comics should, rightfully, lead to a fanzine-length comic-strip or two, but I suppose there is little hope of this ever coming about..." Could this mean that because you "don't automatically receive the (comic-strip) zines, the zines don't exist."? Without even stirring the grey cells I can think of four strip-zines in Northern Ireland alone, and any comics equivalent of **Interzone** (**Deadline** or **Escape** for example) will have reviews of stripzines. The publishing quality tends to be higher in that you can't duplicate a comic-strip very well, so strip-zines have to be photocopied or printed and are therefore more expensive. As a result they are not fired out willy-nilly to all and sundry as text zines tend to be. Of course they are not produced by Faans, they are produced by fans.

Maybe it would help SF fans to be nicer to other people if they stop trying to hijack the language and accept that they are not Fans with a capital letter, they are just fans, like comics fans or model railway enthusiasts or plane-spotters. A fan is only a fan. He, she or it is not a Faan. They are not fen. Women are not femmefen. Aaghhhhhh....I can't stand the pretentiousness of it all....gafiate, gafiate...

(That should give us all something to think on. Now a change of subject, the Dorothy Davies' article on writing for Reading Schemes.)

Andy Sawyer: 14/6/89

I thought Dorothy Davies' piece on her educational writing was interesting, particularly as she stresses the sheer hard work involved in writing for children. It's not often that I see comments from people involved in Reading Scheme preparation (most of the writers I see articles by or come into contact with at talks or school workshops are more what you might call 'independent' writers who write books which will be bought through choice by children, parents and librarians, rather than as part of a package by schools). One of the current debates in the fields concerns the fact that many children have their first view of books through a reading scheme, and it's encouraging that there are people with the care and responsibility of Dorothy engaged in writing the books children will be given in the classroom.

Buck Coulson: 25/6/89

Enjoyed the Dorothy Davies article. Based on my own childhood reading, I wonder if the modern worries about offending anyone at all doesn't 'water down' (I don't want to say 'emasculate' to a woman writer) the books and make them too bland? Perhaps not, at the very early ages; my own early books were innocent enough. But the book that made an impression on me and converted me to a history fan at age eight was Kenneth Roberts' **Northwest Passage**, with its tale of assault on an Indian village, the gory results of an exploding powder keg, starvation in the wilderness and eventual cannibalism. Maybe I was bloodier-minded than most boys of

that age, but I doubt it. Nobody worried about sexism then, but I've managed to stay married to a feminist for 35 years. (Of course, I've learned a lot in that time...) It's not that I object to children's books that teach religious, racial and sexual tolerance, but I wonder if it's really necessary to do it by carefully balancing the characters by race, sex and creed. (And in my cynical moments, I suspect that anything at all that starts a child reading does as much good as anything else, balanced or not. Bigots are generally not great readers of anything.)

Ian Covell: 6/89

Dorothy Davies: why did I feel a bit disturbed when I read para 2, page 25, when a boy is turned into a girl just to balance the sexes more towards the girls? Aside from my instinctive feeling that no character can change sex so readily unless it's thinly written, I find myself believing that tailoring a book to a market for whatever reason must dilute the work, and its impact. I've already said, "This is the first decade when sf has been told what it cannot write about" (naturally macho societies), but enforcing non-sexist thought on everything so seemingly brutally...(121 Homerton Road, Pallister Park, Middlebrough, Cleveland, TS3 8PN. *Ed. Note COA*)

Ken Cheslin: 24/6/89

Dorothy Davies evokes several differing responses (one of which is "good luck, more power to your elbow" and other expressions like that)... What did surprise me a bit, especially, about the Reading Scheme mentioned is the...er...unscientific way, relatively speaking, it seems to have been set

about. What I mean is some RSs I've come across are planned so that Book 1, for instance, is for the children with the simplest vocabulary, knowledge of words, and the order of difficulty gets harder as you proceed through books 2, 3, 4...34, 35, etc. This is done by having a selected vocabulary for each book, selected by what words, by national survey, the average child of a certain age should be able to cope with. Mind you, I'm not saying DD and her publishers' way won't work/ doesn't work... just observing.

I wonder how many fans, after leaving school, ever read mainstream childrens literature... My job made me feel I ought to read a fair amount of childrens literature... though it seems to me that too many of my colleagues hardly ever read owt, never mind childrens book, but relied on book catalogue reviews for choosing books. This, to my mind, is not the best way to find good/appropriate material. (By the way, several teachers I know use and like the Roald Dahl books **Charlie & the Chocolate Factory**, etc, but I find these very 'plasticity'. That is, I am uneasy about some of the values implied in them.)

Re 'Ring A Ring O Roses': this is not the only error persistently promulgated. King Harold 'shot-in-the-eye' is still going strong. Mind you, I find much ignorance in some teachers. The LEA produces its own publications for educational purposes, not all of them 100% factually correct. For instance, I found one teacher telling her class, nay, *teaching* her class that the commander of a Roman Legion was a legionnaire... and when I tried to tactfully correct her, she waved a LEA

publication at me, the one from which she had got the information, and there it was in black and white, wholly incorrect. And there are others...(10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 1LA)

(And now for the traditional ego-boost for the artists on SB1), starting off with :)

Mic Rogers: 7/89

Once again some superb artwork: the cover is most striking, and set the standard for the rest of the zine. How 'woody' the woodwork of the wheel is, and how subtly clever the galleon/space ship connection. Krischan Holl's are a joy to look at too. What clever hatching he uses to get the required effects. I feel there ought to be stories attached to them. The same for Steven Fox's effort on p.27. How well he has done the clouds – I find them difficult to do to look opaque without looking stone solid – and the contrasting smoke. As usual Martin Helsdon's requires careful perusal as there's always more to his than meets the eye at first glance... ('Pohutukawas', 22 Campfield Road, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 5JA)

Terry Jeeves: 6/89

Loved the layout and artwork of SB1. Krischan Holl's work is superb. Yes, I know people will say 'evocative of Finlay or Fabian', but so what, a good style is a good style whoever uses it. Helsdon also excellent, so twist his arm for more. Shep and Foster admirably add variety (and life) to the zine... so not a single complaint over the art.. except why not MORE? (56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, YO12 5RQ)

Ted Hughes: 6/7/89.

The art work was good to excellent. Particularly Shep's cover. I liked his galieon with the two mizzens. I'm sure that's an authentic rig. Altogether a lovely, balanced composition, which must have taken him some considerable time to produce. Martin Helsdon on the back page drew a very soignee lady for you, too. Both those lads should go a long way.(10 Kenmore Road, Whitefield, Manchester, N25 6ER.)*(Er... how far, Ted?)*

Sue Thomason: 7/6/89

[Krischan Holl's illo on p.14]... I'd believe this screaming tree slightly more if it didn't have a Barbara Cartland hairdo, one of those whiter-than-white slightly sparkling powder-puff jobs. Perhaps it's yawning. Perhaps it's a bouffant gay tree in drag. Perhaps it *is* Barbara Cartland, getting back to her Rasta roots...

[Martin Helsdon's illo on p.28]... I really like a lot, and I'm not sure why. I like a lot of Helsdon's work, which always seems to depend on a subtle combination of strength, clarity and delicacy. I'm not absolutely convinced that shoulder-joints go as far back as this person's do, but what the hell, she's splendid anyway. So is the raven. (111 Albemarle Road, York, North Yorks. YO2 1EP)

(Now we're into the oddz'n'sodz, starting off with response to my casual cursing of Ayatollah Khomeini.)

Kev Rattan: 5/6/89

How couldn't I write to someone with such an effective power to curse? Please, please don't threaten to rot my socks.

Seriously though, I went looking for the street parties when the old AK snuffed it, and I couldn't find them anywhere. I was even willing to bring my own Koran (and matches). Oh frabjous day. With any luck it'll be the Pope next (who's actually done more harm than any of them I should think, telling the third world that contraception is an Imperialist conspiracy and whatever). Persecute the religious, that's what I say: good for testing their faith so they should be pleased, and it stops the rest of us being bothered by the dangerous, anti-human bastards.

Getting moderate in my old age, aren't I?(23 Waingate Close, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs. BB4 7SQ)

(I doubt that James Parker would think so, Kev!)

James Parker: 24/7/89

Rastus Muses: ho hum, I see you're taking the conventional line on the Rushdie affair. I'm afraid I do not agree that Salman Rushdie should be allowed to insult the Muslim religion with impunity. Many Muslims have been deeply hurt and offended by Rushdie's ill-considered and often purely sensationalist words. I think it is also significant that so many of the so-called literary establishment – names that one would normally associate with good solid liberal values – reveal themselves to be closet racists (they are racist by definition anyway, being English). The Muslim community in this coutry is a minority under constant threat of intimidation and physical attack. They have never – to my knowledge – made attacks upon the Christian church. Rushdie, angli-

cised and alienated, displays all the intellectual arrogance of the white liberal intelligentsia. He is perfectly entitled to his views regarding any religion, but to call the mother of Mohammed a whore is not a statement of intellectual worth or value. Even if **The Satanic Verses** is regarded as a satire, it is satire on the tawdry and juvenile level of the pathetic **Spitting Images** variety.

I personally am an Atheist, but I have great respect for all religions and beliefs if sincerely held. I do not respect people – writers – who attack religion out of some childish need to be noticed or applauded by hostile forces who prefer to hide their true natures.

I find it significant that while Rushdie is held up as some kind of hero (even **The Sun**, that well known newspaper that takes such a consistent interest in modern literature and thoughts, supports him) whose freedom to attack the deeply held beliefs of a minority is held as sacrosanct, Peter Wright's **Spycatcher** book, with its potentially embarrassing revelations about British espionage was banned for a long time... I think further comment would be superfluous. (18 King William St., Old Town, Swindon, Wilts SN1 3LB)

(I should think there are a few bones there for people to pick over! I'm an atheist too, James, but I'm far less tolerant of fundamentalism whatever its colour or creed. Bearing in mind that the underlying reason for the whole Rushdie affair from the start was a smokescreen put up by the Iranian mullahs to 'refresh' their failing

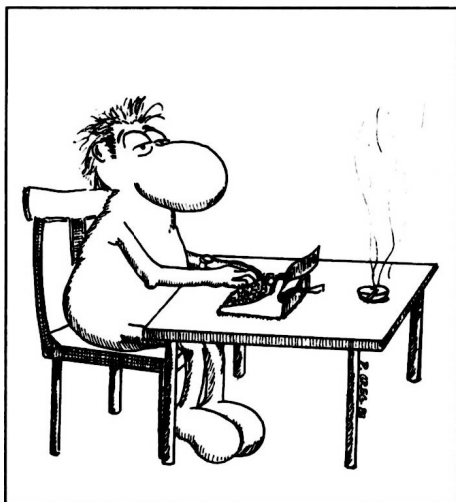
*revolution, one should feel very much less sympathy for Islamic feelings. What reason, after all, is there for non-Shi'ite Moslems to take any notice of Iran? I don't see Rushdie as a hero, merely as a victim. After all, without the publicity of the Ayatollah's order for Rushdie's murder, **The Satanic Verses** would not have achieved anywhere near the sales it has, so it has been Islam itself which has made the 'blasphemy' more widespread.)*

Judy Buffery: 10/6/89

I also thought Walt Willis' analogy between closed-minded people and computers unable to accept strange programs was very good. What a relief it would be to all those tortured minds struggling with theological and philosophical concepts if we could only rationalise good and evil in the terms of different computer programs. (16 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 8DG)

Chris Elliott: 24/7/89

...The quote from Mary Gentle's letter... hit a few buttons. The idea that



there is some fundamental incompatibility between computers and the written word, and that we are headed for an age in which mass literacy is redundant strikes me as a pernicious error which has already gained far too much currency, and is based on a serious misunderstanding of the way in which human communication and information technologies work. (Nothing personal, Mary!) It's something I have strong feelings about, since if it is correct, eighteen months of my life have been spent in a futile waste of time. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, I wish I could dig up Marshall McLuhan and throw stones at him. The man has a lot to answer for. (87 Wanstead Park Ave, London E12 5EE)

Terry Jeeves: 6/89

I'm a bit wary of these all-singing, all-dancing, just blow a whistle car key systems. I remember Murphy's Law only too well – what can go wrong, will go wrong. Eventually, some little electron will fail to tunnel through its quantum leap in a tunnel diode and the car will stay locked. Yes, I know ordinary keys can break, but in 66 years, I've only had that happen to me once, whereas I couldn't start to count the number of times electronics widgets have gone kaput. Similarly, car handbooks no longer give wiring diagrams for you to service your own electrical faults. All the black boxes and integrated circuitry make such line-tracing a no-no without specialised equipment.

Roy Hill: 7/89

Finally, you mentioned underfunding of the Open University. Wasn't it

Jennie Lee who helped create the OU in the 1960s? If so, Maggie is undermining both Jennie's OU and her husband, Nye Bevin's, Health Service. Talk about keeping it in the family!

(It was indeed Jennie Lee who masterminded the founding of the OU: our library is named in her honour.)

Ken Cheslin: 24/6/89

OU and underfunding is the usual story. Easy to say this, that and the other is to be done, but then Baker says, "no more money or resources will be made available"... like Pharoah saying to the Israelites, "make more bricks, but find your own straw". Sad thing is that most teachers will bust a gut trying to carry out the DES commands, at the expense of their own time and money. Money? Of course. Very few teachers I know have not at some time or other bought things they need for their work out of their own pockets... I don't know if this is as common now as it used to be when I started twenty years ago...for one thing, since 1974, the real pay of teachers has fallen. If the Houghton agreement had not been murdered the average teacher would be getting 40%, maybe 50%, more salary than they get today.

Wahfs & Strays

George Airey, Mike Ashley, Pamela Boal, Sydney Bounds, Ned Brooks, Tony Chester, Jonathan Colelough, Brian Haunton, Shep Kirkbride, Ethel Lindsay, David Redd, Alan Sullivan, Sue Walker, Lesley Ward, Arild Waerness.

(Phew, just made it!)

Rastus Muses

All the signs about Billy Graham's L.I.F.E. campaign have been irritating me over the past month or so. So much so that I've come to the conclusion that 'L.I.F.E.' stands for 'Life-Intrusive Foreign Evangelists'.

Quote from an Ian Covell letter, May 1989: "This is the first decade in which science fiction has been told what it can't write about!"

And if anyone is puzzled about that, they should read the Charles Platt column in **Thrust 31** (Fall 1988), which details problems Sam Delany has been having with the big American bookstores over his **Neveryon** books, mainly because of the books' homosexual content, which have effectively cut his sales from the 200,000 copies range down into the 80,000 midlist class. And that hits hard at an author's pocket!

Recent reading of a collection of Raymond Chandler letters has come up with some excellent quotes. For example: "Good critical writing is measured by the perception and evaluation of the subject; bad critical writing by the necessity of maintaining the professional standing of the critic..."

Now that's a quote that out to be nailed on every critics' door! Or there's this one: "The people who God or nature intended to be writers find their own answers, and those who have to ask are impossible to help. They are merely people who want to be writers."

What do you think of that, Sydney?

I never thought I'd live to see the day: someone (a fan) has some perspective on Jimmy Carter. This is from David E. Romm's 'Impressions' in **Rune 79** (January 1989): "Carter was a classic conservative. He raised military spending, came in under budget, decreased the National Debt, stared down the Russians, made peace in the Middle East, streamlined the federal government, coped well with economic forces not under his control and did exceptionally well in foreign policy. His major problem was that he was a statesman not a politician. He succeeded and accomplished more than any modern president, but didn't know how to convince a public waiting for the press to bring down another administration. The intricacies of economics don't make good headlines. Carter tried to do quite a lot; most of it succeeded superbly. He was easily our best president since Teddy Roosevelt."

Could it be that the last incumbent of the Oval office was so bad that Americans are finally starting to value one of the few decent men to have sat in the presidential chair?

Credits

On the writing front, Ken Lake starts p.7, Terry Jeeves on p.10, Sue Thomason on p.13, and Syd Bounds on p.16. You lot get your say between pages 18 and 30.

Illustrations: Krischan Holl contributed the cover and bacover, Brad Foster p.3, Steve Fox p.15 & 17, and Pavel Gregoric p.19 and 29.

That's all, folks, next issue sometime around November, with luck.



