

Shipyard Blues



Play Me Some Shipyard Blues...

Sunday, 19th November, my wife's birthday, and I'm in the doghouse. Oh, not because I forgot her birthday, but I did rather spoil it for her by sneezing all over the place all day, the first time I've suffered this allergic reaction in six months or more. Quite what has set me off today is anyone's guess: put it down to an excess of Christmas shopping, moving in and out of over-heated and over-crowded shops. Whatever the reason, it's left me distinctly not one hundred percent on a day when I both wanted to be bright and cheerful for Pam, and when I wanted to finish off this issue of **Shipyard Blues**, in order to get it in the mails well before Christmas. I dunno, maybe that's the problem. Maybe it's the tension of hauling these issues out so frequently, the inhuman pressure of quarterly production. No wonder **Pulp** operates the way it does, with a triumvirate of revolving editors — that way they only have an issue every nine months.

You think I'm kidding? Let me tell you, the last ten days have been hell, because I've been editing down the letter column.

I've consciously chosen to pin the loccol down to a third of the length of the

zine, to stop it overpowering the rest of the zine. That means for this issue, twelve pages was the limit. Only trouble was, I was starting with a forty-three page file of locs! And that's locs that have been winnowed down a bit to start with, since I only type in fully comments on contributors' material (so I can send them full print-outs of comments received). Naturally enough, the first third is easy to lose, chopping out the weakest locs, those that repeat other people's arguments, etc. Then you start to sweat as the loccol starts to take shape, and various locs are weeded out as the line of argument on the column emerges. That gets you down to, say, twenty-four pages, and loses the fat. Slimming it down from then on is real blood'n'guts editing, as you weigh good locs against each other, and lose every second one, while trying to retain a range of comment on a given topic and choose locs that represent all the sides of an argument.

That gets you down to sixteen pages or so, and you agonise as to whether the budget will stretch to another four pages this issue. Having decided that the easy route is impossible, it's time to tear the bleeding hearts out of half-

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a-dozen good locs, to add to the charnel house floor around my desk. The last four pages are like murdering children, accompanied by great sighs and groans, and covetous glances at the pages occupied by articles that could be left until next issue if I really wanted. Finally the deed is done, and I stand surveying the corpses of gutted locs, and wonder, "Did I win this time?". Only you can answer that.

Tumblin' Down

Did I really say I wanted a topical fanzine? I must have been out of my raving little braincell! How the hell can I keep up with events in the outside world when even the daily news broadcasts are turning themselves inside out trying to keep up with the speed of change. And such change! Where does one start to comment on events in Eastern Europe, which have already made whole swathes of Western foreign policy redundant, and which demand that we get our minds round a situation that many of us have never seen before in our lives.

The central tenet of the West's foreign policy over the years of my life has had one aim, the containment of Communism within its Warsaw Pact borders. Suddenly, Communism is crumbling throughout Eastern Europe, collapsing under the weight of its own failure to supply basic needs for its people. And it is obvious that the Western governments have not got the foggiest notion how to deal with these new developments. The question is, is it really time to be cautious, to hold onto the final vestiges of the Cold War period, or should we be bold, and weigh in with massive aid to help these ex-enemies convert to at least

semi-capitalist democratic societies?

One thing I do believe is that all the crowing over the "Death of Socialism" is misplaced: we are seeing the death of the one-party totalitarian states, who were over-centralised to the point of stagnation. The people may now want to implement real Socialism, to protect the good points of their system, in a form of mixed economy. Somehow I doubt that states like East Germany and Poland are going to be converted to Thatcherism, especially with the tarnished example displayed by our own less-than-glorious Leadereene.)

The danger, of course, is that out of the chaos will come a leader or party with less than wonderful aims, just as the chaos of the Weimar Republic helped establish the Nazi Party in Germany. That is something we will all have to look out for. We certainly live in interesting times, and I suspect the image of the eighties is going to be the picture of that first bite out of the Berlin Wall.

Be-Macced

It's finally happened! I am now totally in hock to the Apple Macintosh, having replaced my faithful Amstrad PC1512 with a Mac Plus and a Western Digital 20 megabyte hard disk, which means I can run all of the software that I use to produce **Shipyard Blues** at home, and print it out on the laser printers at work, all without having to go through a tiresome conversion process. Of course, nothing in life is ever easy, as the first hard disk I had collapsed after a fortnights work, but was replaced quite speedily, so it's now all systems Mac-Go!



How to become a werewolf

Ingredients:

Chalk, or string.

One iron vessel, one iron tripod.

Any three of the following:

Asafoetida, Parsley, Opium, Henbane, Saffron, Allow, Poppy Seeds or Solanum.

One freshly killed cat.

Aniseed.

Camphor

One wolfskin girdle.

Preparation:

Go to a solitary place at midnight when the moon is new and strong — preferably a desert, the woods, or a mountain top. On perfectly level ground mark off with the chalk or string a circle with a radius of at least seven feet. And inside this a circle with a radius of three feet. In the centre boil water in an iron vessel on the iron tripod. As the water boils, throw in handfuls of the three spices, meanwhile intoning:

Spirits from the deep, who never sleep, be kind to me

Spirits from the grave, without a soul to save, be kind to me

Spirits of the trees, that grow upon the lees, be kind to me

Spirits of the air, foul and black, not fair, be kind to me

Water spirit hateful to ships and bathers fateful, be kind to me

Spirits of the earthbound dead that glide with noiseless tread, be kind to me

Spirits of heat and fire, destructive in your ire be kind to me

Spirits of cold and ice — patrons of crime and vice — be kind to me

Wolves, vampires, satyrs, ghosts, elect of all the devilish hosts

I prey you send hither, send hither, send hither, the great grey shape that makes men shiver!

Removing your upper garments, smear your body with the fat from the freshly killed cat, mixed with aniseed, camphor and opium. Bind your loins with the wolfskin and kneel down in the middle of the smallest circle to await the unknown. The unknown will appear, or make its presence felt, when the fire burns blue and quickly dies out.

And that, in theory, is how you create a werewolf.

That wasn't quite where my interest in werewolves started. It came from late Saturday night horror double-bills served in glorious Black and White from the studios of RKO, Universal, and American International Pictures — Universal can claim to have started the film craze with their **Werewolf Of London**, which they released in 1935, and AIP can claim to have killed it with their **I Was A Teenage Werewolf** released in 1957, and sold as a double bill with **Invasion Of The Saucer Men**.

But, like most things in childhood, and with BBC2 running out of aging old movies, interest waned and declined, and was finally forgotten.

It wasn't until 1981 and the release of John Landis' **An American Werewolf In London** and Joe Dante's **The Howling** (a beautifully crafted spoof of the Wolfman movies) that my interest got revived, aided and abetted by some of the most spectacular

on-screen transformations to grace the silver screen, and was hardened into research when Angela Carter's **The Company Of Wolves** gave a more serious and thought-provoking side to what I had previously just taken for cheap late-night entertainment.

As soon as I started to dig around I was amazed by the fact that it wasn't all just a Hollywood make-believe, and that there really was a background and a history to this poor soul called, for better or worse, a werewolf.

The place to start should be, ideally, to define the word 'werewolf'. And here we have our first problem in the form of the entry in **Brewer's Dictionary Of Phrase And Fable** (revised 1935), which tells us firstly that it should be spelt 'werwolf', or 'werwulf', and that belief in the myth, or truth, has spread throughout Europe, from France (the infamous 'loup-garou') to White Russia, and even still exists in the remote rural areas of Italy and Brittany.

In fact, so powerful is the imagery and aura rooted in the name that, during the Second World War the Germans used it to describe the bands of fanatical saboteurs who carried on harassing tactics against the Allies after the defeat of Germany. The name in this context implied the duality of the person and the fact that they spread fear and destruction

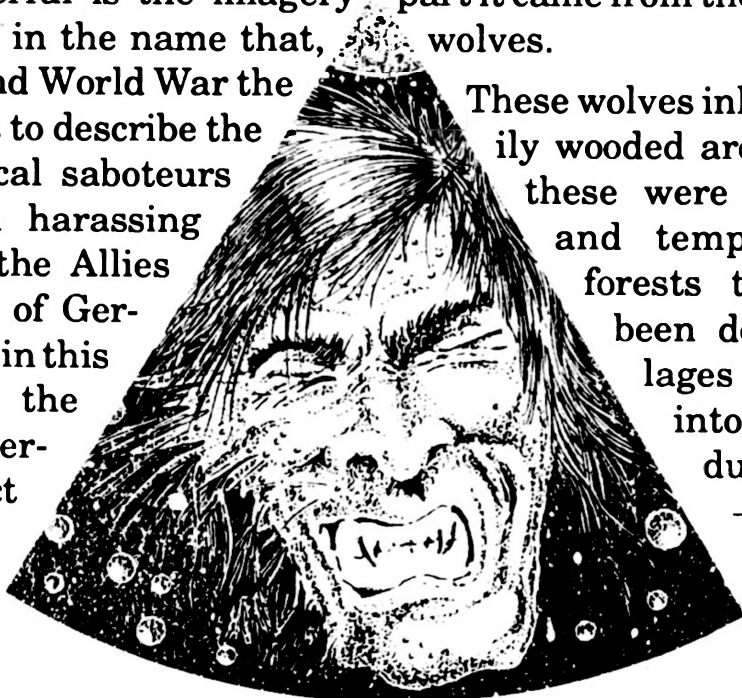
in their wake.

That brings me back to the origins which go back to the depths of darkest Scandinavia and the mythological wolf — the prefix 'wer-' is ancient Scandinavian for 'man' and is normally added to whatever the man is capable of changing into. So, in theory, you could have werecats, weresnakes and were-tins-of-McEwans.

But, back to the wolf.

During the early period of European development, the small communities were based around self-contained units — enclosed villages, normally protected by either an overlord, or by a council of village elders. Agriculture not being what it is today, and meat farming not planned to appear on the scene until the final few centuries, the main source of meat was still wild game, and hunting parties were the suppliers of fresh and/or dried meat. Any competition was, quite naturally, frowned upon. Part of that competition came from the European Black and Brown bears, but for the most part it came from the Grey, or Timber wolves.

These wolves inhabited the heavily wooded areas of Europe — these were both coniferous and temperate-deciduous forests that have since been decimated as villages have expanded into the massive industrial megacities — and were the most effective carnivorous animals owing to



their not only hunting in packs, but also because they had adapted to hunting at night. This is where the myths and legends start cropping up. Ghosts, ghoulies, witches, zombies, vampires — creatures of the night — all stem from Man's fear of the dark — a fear of the unknown or unseen — and with a lack of diversions or entertainment, the imagination runs riot. Even children automatically create things under the bed, even if they never come across a scary story — and with pre-Christian society it was really no different, especially with wolfpacks hunting by moonlight, calling to other members of the pack when on the move, and the human urge to embellish stories told around fires.

Even the poor wolf's looks have been used against him.

Considered a creature of cunning, deceit, and slyness — hence such expressions as "A wolf in sheep's clothing", a saying which comes from one of Aesop's fables — the wolf was considered to be either a tool of the devil, or the devil himself, normally said to appear in the form of a black wolf (as opposed to the more modernly acceptable horned man/man-goat) at the height of successful covenant rituals in witchcraft — that's black magic, as opposed to white. It was even said that, should you be in the woods on your own and you see a wolf before the wolf sees you, then you would be temporarily struck dumb — people would say that "He has seen a wolf". This later became altered to mean that someone had been given an unexpected fright. The anomaly is also

here that to see a wolf was also a good sign inasmuch as the the wolf was dedicated to the old god, Odin, the giver of victories. Another anomaly is that Odin is also referred to as Woden, the God of Agriculture — Woden's day being Wednesday, supposedly the best day for planting.

Actually, for every piece of bad press, there is also a piece of good press with wolves laying down their lives for children, shepherds and more saints than you can fit on a Papal calendar. But, as we are talking about Werewolves, I'll just stick to the gory bits.

In that respect the destructive wolf was always a creature of the Gods, or caused by the Gods themselves. Fenrir was the wolf of Loki, the God of Mischief. The King of Acadia was turned into a wolf by the God Jupiter after the King had attempted to test his divinity (the test was feeding Jupiter human stew, so I suppose you could say that there was a bit of provocation). A tribe known as the Neuri, according to the Greek historian Herodotus, had the power to assume the form of wolves once a year, on which night they went on the rampage. The Roman historians Pliny and Petronius relate several tales, Pliny about the family Anaeus, one of which was chosen each year by a kind of family raffle to become a wolf, a transformation which lasted for nine years, and Petronius tells of a night when a Roman nobleman decided to slip out from a banquet for a swift one with his mistress and, deciding he would like a little company on the short journey, he asked a young Centurion to accompany him. Halfway

along the road the poor man realises that the Centurion is no longer jogging by his side, so he turns round in time to see the soldier tearing off the last of his garb, let out a howl, and then leap across the field in the form of a large wolf, the transformation apparently happening in the blink of an eye. The nobleman makes rapid tracks to his mistress's place, whereupon he discovers that her livestock has been attacked by a wolf, but that the animal had been beaten off with several spear wounds. Of course the Roman makes the mental connection, dashes back home — on the way seeing a pool of blood where the Centurion had thrown off his clothes — and finds that the soldier has been put to bed with a deep spear wound in his neck.

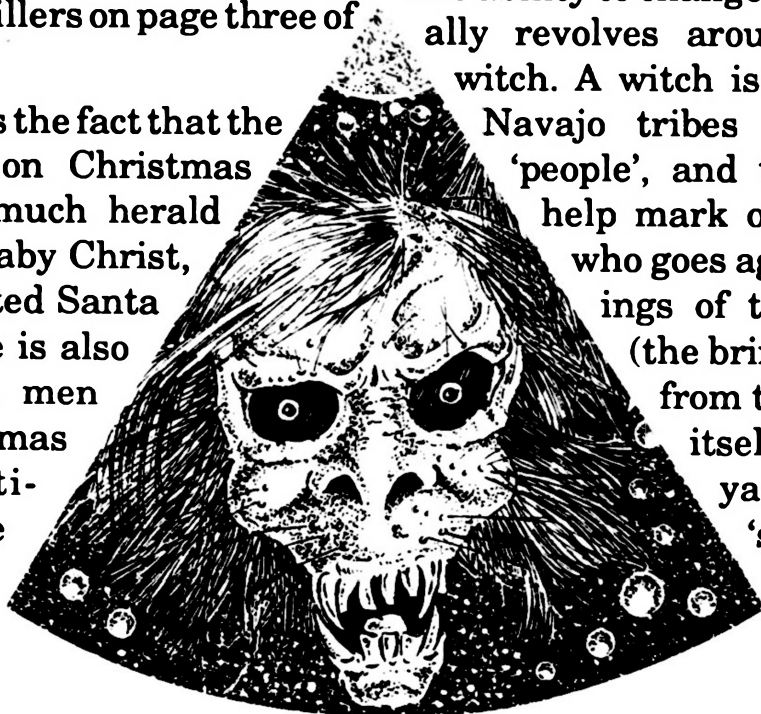
That last one may seem fairly detailed — though it is a very rough and ready translation — but it has to be said that where Pliny can be considered as the Roman version of the **Financial Times**, Petronius is considered somewhat akin to the person who writes the fillers on page three of **The Sun**.

And then there's the fact that the patter of feet on Christmas Eve didn't so much herald the coming of baby Christ, or a nimble-footed Santa Claus, for there is also the belief that men born on Christmas Eve automatically became werewolves. There's no corresponding

belief that the month of March is automatically the month of Family Planning, but maybe such things have not been correlated.

Tony Chester, in his piece on werewolfery ('Bad Moon Rising', which appeared in **Free Lunch** issue 3) rather offhandedly dismissed the Amerind/Native American connection, saying that wolf spirits were the base, and as such did not deserve to be classified as werewolves. But, according to several sources, such is not really the case, and I quote from Peter Underwood's **Dictionary Of The Supernatural** (Harrap & Co, 1978), in which he states that the werewolf was "said to have been a common occurrence among North American Indians". This, coupled with information about the Navajo, and the separate clans of the Dinee (**People Of Darkness** by Tony Hillerman — which also involves the peyote-based church with connection with Dine'etse-tle, but that's a sidetrack), prove rather the opposite to be the case.

The ability to change into a wolf actually revolves around the Navajo witch. A witch is someone of the Navajo tribes ('Dinee' means 'people', and the clan names help mark out family lines) who goes against the teachings of the Holy People (the bringers of the Law from the dawn of time itself), upheld by the yataalii (who were 'shaman' rather than the Hollywoodesque 'witchdoctor', which



is a contradiction in terms), and goes against 'yo'zho'.

There is no word for 'yo'zho' in English. It's a sort of combination of beauty/harmony, being in tune, going with the flow, feeling peaceful, all wrapped up in a single concept. Witchcraft is the reverse of this concept, basically. There's a mythology built up around it, of course. You get to be a witch by violating the basic taboos — killing a relative, incest, rape, and so forth. And you get certain powers. You can turn yourself into a dog or a wolf. You can fly. And you have the power to make people sick. That's the opposite of the good power the Holy People gave, to cure people by getting them back into yo'zho.

So, you see, it's not as insubstantial as Tony made out, in that it is, as in the cases that abound throughout Europe, a physical change brought on by 'evil' (and no, at this point I'm not going to attempt to define what is, or is not, 'evil'. I leave that sort of thing to the experts, after all they do get paid for it, don't they...)

Having thus shown that the werewolf has his own real historical roots, albeit in the form of myths and legends, and that the original werewolves were creations of either witchcraft or sorcery, I think it's time to have a look at what the werewolf got out of life.

Well, for the most part, power and immortality... though there were one or two little setbacks, such as only normally being active during the hours of sunset to sunrise, a voracious appetite for little children, virgins, and the odd exhumed corpse, and a penchant for sex with other wolves

(though this has nothing to do with Queen Isabella, who was dubbed 'the She-Wolf of France', who married Edward II, and murdered him by "thrusting a hot iron into his bowels").

The power came in the form of creating fear in others, as well as the ability for the destruction of property and human life, and immortality due to the fact that the body's soul had been sold — either in the form of a Christian type of soul, or as a placement/position in the hierarchy of the After-life.

This immortality was incredibly good up to around the 11th or 12th Century. In some areas it was said that the werewolf's skin was proof against steel and bullets, unless the weapon had been blessed by Saint Hubert — the patron saint of huntsmen, who died in 727 AD, and whose descendants were said to possess the power to cure the bites of mad dogs. In other areas it was said that the only way to kill a werewolf was to decapitate the beast with an iron axe (or just simply stove in its head with an iron hammer, *a la* the god Thor). Iron was the metal of magic and mysticism — and being magnetic had a fair amount to do with it — the magician's lodestone was a piece of magnetic iron.

Then, as Christianity started to sanitise Europe, all sorts of things started to get mixed into the mythos. Silver bullets were one addition, supposedly created by smelting crucifixes, though I would tend to question the retention of any 'powers' when you consider you are in effect destroying a divine artifact. Holy water was also supposed to be totally effective

against these things of the devil, but there again, the same claims were also made about Carter's Little Liver Pills...

And once Christianity got in on the act the whole show went downhill rapidly, especially when, in the 15th Century, Emperor Sigismund brought together a council of theologians who finally decided that the werewolf was a reality.

At this point I would like to point out that, despite the council's 'rulings', and despite the definite differences between werewolfery and lycanthropy, the most famous reporting of a werewolf is not a werewolf at all, but a rather odd case of lycanthropy. Here I'm talking about Jean Grenier, the thirteen-year-old French boy, who died in 1610, aged approximately twenty years old.

According to reports, he had unkempt, long red hair, dark olive complexion, small, deep-set "and cruel-looking" eyes. His teeth were strong and canine in appearance, protruding over his lower lip even when his mouth was closed, while his hands were large and powerful, with the nails "black and pointed like talons".

But it was Grenier's own claims that set people against him, because he would, according to local reports, tell girls that he sometimes

wore a wolf-skin, and when he did he became a werewolf — he even described killing and eating dogs, sheep, and little girls. Among his claims was that he had sold himself to the Devil, who "appeared as a black man in the depths of the forest; a man who had 'signed' him with his nail on each thigh, given him a salve and a wolf's pelt". There-after, whenever he used the unguent and the wolf-skin, he seemed to be transformed into a wolf, and in this shape had attacked and eaten animals and children.

This all led, in 1603, to president Dassis ordering Grenier to be imprisoned perpetually in the strict Franciscan friary of Saint Michael Archangel, at Bordeaux. There, it is reported, no sooner had he been admitted than he dropped to all fours and ran frantically about the cloisters and gardens until, finding a heap of bloody, raw offal, he quickly consumed it.

Grenier died seven years later, during which time there were several independent accounts of his case written up.

Yet, and this I feel has to be stressed here, this is just a rather sad case of lycanthropy, for never once was any transformation reported or recorded either by the independent investigators, or by the Franciscan monks themselves. Having said that, I feel



it's time to get back to werewolfery.

With the Church making the werewolf a reality, they were then able to go ahead and persecute it into the ground. So much so that, even in the 18th and 19th Centuries, people were being charged with the crime of being a werewolf — a crime which carried with it the death penalty — notably it was the French and the Germans (or the principalities that were later to become Germany, that is). This was considered quite a handy way of disposing of your enemies, especially if all else has failed.

Sadly, around this time the Industrial Revolution came along, Science took over from Superstition and if you couldn't offer hard evidence then it just didn't exist in the New Order of things. The forests that had provided a home for the wolf had also been decimated, used for fuel and building materials, and the poor wolf driven to extinction.

And, with the root source cut away, it was left up to technology and the early European cinema to re-establish civilisation's need for fear and horror — and, with the films and the scriptwriters being imported into Hollywood, it didn't take them too long to revive the mythos — Universal Studios created the first werewolf movie in 1913, calling it simply **The Werewolf**, and then left the subject alone for a further 20-plus years before creating the movie fad for the wolfmen with their **Werewolf Of London**. And with the introduction of Hollywood, it wasn't long before the myths were expanded and added to as the cameramen and directors saw fit.

Yet, today, the original beliefs still live on in the more remote regions of Europe — the birthplace of most of our superstitions and fears. So much so that one Doctor Michael Aquino, the high priest of the Temple of Set since 1976, is going through Europe in search of new members for his 'Church', as well as going to France specifically in search of the Loup Garou.

The Temple of Set, by the way, is based in San Francisco, has two hundred dedicated members, all of whom can recite the Lord's Prayer backwards, and is the only one, out of the two Satanist Churches, to claim (and get) tax exemption from the US Government as it has declared itself to be a non-profit organisation.

As to whether or not werewolves exist — well, they say that seeing is believing, and as yet there are no first-hand reports, or even personal interviews, to examine. But you can balance that with the fact that there has always been a belief in were-animals, every age-established world religion has them. And there's never smoke without fire...



Real Writers Don't Write "Blam!" And "Argh!"

*by
Hilary Robinson*

I've been writing Science Fiction and Fantasy short stories for about eight years now (with varying degrees of success) and I realise that writers of other genres quite often don't regard writers of SF as Real Writers. It was quite a shock to be therefore, to discover that writers of SF don't regard writers of comic strip as Real Writers. A touch of the Captain shouting at the Lieutenant, who therefore shouts at the Sergeant, who shouts at the Corporal, who shouts at the Private, who kicks the dog. Right? Everyone needs someone to look down on

Now don't get me wrong, the standard of writing in most teen/adult comic strips is low, due to the fact that a lot of comics writers have read nothing but comics all their lives and the medium is seriously inbred. I personally find American superhero stuff unreadable. Alan Moore, the one comics writer that non-comics readers may have heard of, said in an article on the subject: "Comics writers have no idea of how Tennessee Williams managed to write **A Streetcar Named Desire** without ever once using the phrase "What the...?""

But if "90% of everything is crap" (including SF and F and Comics) then there is 10% that's at least all right. Comics suffer from their name. Comic implies funny, and while there is a lot of humorous stuff around, there are also serious issues to be discussed. I know that the majority of readers of this article are not comics readers so relax, this is not lecture time. I don't see myself as a crusader for comics. This is one person's experience in changing, not so much genre (I still consider I write SF albeit of the soap-opera type) but medium. I've swopped text-only for heavily illustrated words.

Writing is a solitary occupation, and in text fiction there's only you, your editor/publisher (if you're lucky) and your readers. If you succeed you get all the glory. In comics there's an extra character in this scenario, the artist. And if you succeed, he gets most of the glory...

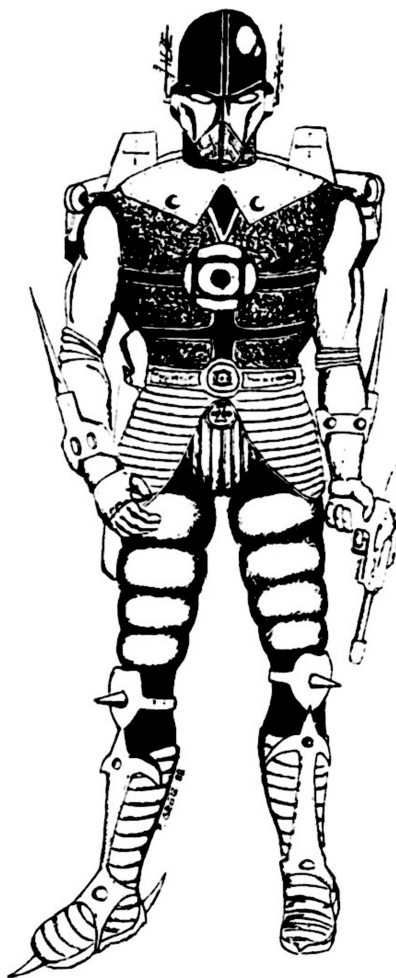
OK that sounds like sour grapes. I don't mean it, but the artist can make or break your story in a way that nobody but a typesetter can ruin a text story. If you happen to strike up a

good collaborative relationship with your artist it's helpful, but often you just get paired up at random with whoever happens to be available. It's the luck of the draw. Someday, I'd love to present the same script to half a dozen artists and just look at the difference in interpretation.

There's a lot less hard slog in a comic strip. A short story is roughly in the region of 3,000-5,000 words. A five page episode in a comic is approx 250-300 words. A twelve episode story may end up at 3,500 approx, compared with 60-80,000 for a novel. We are talking late nights here for anyone trying to bash out a novel in his/her spare time, I know, I've done it. But in those 60,000 words you have time to deal in loving detail with the nuance of a single glance or the colours of a sunset. An artist will barely spare you one frame for a meaningful glance and the sunset is going to be black and white anyway in British comics.

As a short story writer I've never had more than "I saw your story in **Auguries**" or "Did you write that story in **Imagine?**", whereas as a **2000AD** scriptdroid I get "Are you really Hilary Robinson? Would you sign my comic?" Occasionally I get "Are you Hilary Robinson??" meaning "I thought you were just somebody's

Mum..." My ten year old son got fed up with his friends in Donaghadee Primary School refusing to believe that H Robinson was his mother, until I set one of the **Tales From The Doghouse**, which normally take place on some other planet, in Donaghadee Harbour. And we'll have no jokes about Northern Ireland being on another planet, thank you!



Was I a Real Writer when I wrote short stories and if so, why am I not one now? I was disappointed to find Harry Harrison and Terry Pratchett being so holier-than-thou about comics. Mind you Terry Pratchett did try and comfort me by saying there were worse things to be than a comics writer (I think he meant unemployed, or dead...). All I would say is that comics people are more open-handed and generous in their support to newcomers than I ever found in SF fandom. Come on folks, we're all in this together. Maybe I'm writing for a particular audience, a different audience, but I'm just a

writer (I must be, I have to pay tax on it) and I think I'm Real even if I do write:

Frame 20

Jenarit and Foskar Marines open fire on each other

FX (Jenarit): ZZAK! EEE!

FX (Marines): BLAM! ARGGHHH!

TO PROBE OR NOT TO PROBE?

by
Mic Rogers

I recently saw a programme on T.V. about intrusive investigative journalism and still couldn't make up my mind after the the programme ended. Basically what was being asked was: are journalists too intrusive of private lives? I have to say that I don't read a lot of newspapers and I don't watch a lot of T.V. interviews so I confess that my knowledge of journalism and reporters is somewhat limited. (And since when has such a thing stopped anyone from having opinions?)

From the impression that I have gathered I think that all too often reporters *are* too intrusive at times of stress and misery; they pester their victims cruelly with no consideration as to what they might be suffering. Perhaps I'm odd, but that sort of thing *does not* interest me.

Suppose, for example that "Mrs. A" has lost her son through a tragic accident. I want to know what happened and why he died (was it preventable, was he careless? that sort of thing): what I *don't* want to know is how she's feeling, how much she misses him, what he was like as a baby, child or whatever. I assume she's sufficiently human to feel grief and misery (and so

am I) so I don't need to have it spelled out for me. Do other people need it? I wonder: are there really so many people – capable of reading a newspaper – who cannot imagine for themselves something of what she is going through? What I don't understand is that, as some interviews on that programme showed, that treatment of misery is *not* needed, is *not* liked – but is read avidly! People are willing to go on reading what they don't approve of rather than change their regular newspaper. It seems they don't even complain to the Editor if there is something they don't like.

I realise that people like us (fen) will write a letter at the drop of an aitch and that others find it a major undertaking – so will comment and complain to their mates but do nothing constructive about it; but I find it hard to accept that they won't stop buying their usual paper, even for only a week, so that the Editor knows that something has displeased his customers. Surely people buy a particular paper for more than the crossword or the cartoons it contains? Or am I being naive and people really do enjoy reading about others' emotions but

say what they think is expected of them when interviewed?

However, having said all that, there is still the investigative side of journalism, which I think is a vital necessity for our way of living. We need someone to ask awkward questions, dig deep and if necessary pester, where there is a suggestion of wrongdoing. And that I think is the pivot of the matter. Investigating wrongdoing. The reporters should check that Mrs. A's son *did* die accidentally and was not killed, but once that is established they should leave her alone. On the other hand, suppose it wasn't an accident, that is was really, say, a gang-killing, what then? Then, while still feeling very sorry for Mrs. A, who may be severely shocked to find out her son was mixed up with gangs at all, I think investigation should go ahead about his death, the circumstances and reasons and so forth. Not, you'll notice, about Mrs. A's feelings and misery, but about her son himself. Not instead of a police investigation, but with it. Perhaps, however painful, about Mrs. A herself, to establish her non-involvement if that's the case. There should be accurate reporting of what is discovered, not fiction or supposition the reporters have made up from snippets of information they have garnered, which may be wrong in the first place, but which will "sell".

I think many journalists do a good job of exposing minor and major illegalities and they are to be supported and encouraged. Yet I hesitate at the means by which they make their discoveries. I realise that much of what they do can't be handled with kid

gloves – from Watergate to Rachmanism much of their investigating is nasty and I suppose you have to fight fire with fire to a certain extent. They can't handle foulness without getting their hands dirty so have to be pretty tough and persistent – and, of course, within the law.

Adding to the difficulties of investigating, or even just reporting, must be the aspect of "private lives": where to draw the line? I can't help feeling that people who get themselves into the public eye as a means of earning a living are more or less setting themselves up for all that the journalists do and say about them.

And yet....and yet... Surely there must be some limit as to what is "permissible reportage" and what isn't? Surely there should be some few shreds of privacy left about anyone. I haven't wanted to know what they like for breakfast or what they wear (or do) in bed, so I find it easier to let their private lives be private. I find I can't imagine what it's like to want to know every detail about an idol. So I have little patience with the "papparizzi" photographers and reporters. I keep putting myself in "the idol's" shoes and of course they don't fit! Can someone tell me if they really do enjoy all the coverage they get? (Forget about how good it is for business.) I sometimes wonder if there is too much exposure so that the subject begins to lose its appeal and becomes boring. Yet I know there are magazines that sell solely on what is virtually gossip about well-known people.... (and how did they become well-known, I whisper to myself...) so

there must be a ready market for them, however little they appeal to me. Do the reporters have to be intrusive to get their information? Is it really such a competitive market that anything extra a reporter can dig up is welcomed? I would like to know. I think here, of the **Daily Express** magazine supplement, **DX**, which I find is the most boring waste of paper that I've ever read (the few times I've looked at it!). I gather there are many others to be had.

So we're back, almost, to where we

started: intrusive or investigative journalism? I'm not sure how much the final responsibility lies with each individual Editor: how he instructs or guides his reporters on the sort of information he wants and whether he is interested in how it is obtained. How much should he decide I should know? I want factual information: correct as far as possible and not too personal. I want to make up my own mind based on that and not rely on someone else's judgement or supposition.



Rote And Wrotten Books

by
A. None, Reader

In the past few years, there have been a number of Best fantasy and SF booklists; this essay is intended to redress them, though it is not the obvious Worst, which is too subjective. It is a series of comments on authors I admire and collect, but who have on occasion produced a work which (in my view) gives a wrong impression of their talents and capabilities. I have not included those authors I have never liked, because typing out everything they wrote took too long. So, for those authors I like, but who prove perfection isn't possible:

Aldiss, Brian W: *Life In The West*. A flat stilted construct, full of Aldiss motives and motifs. At moments it reads like a travelogue done from a street-map, and its emotional content is strictly angst and adultery. His dedication for **Helliconia Spring** says of **Life**: "My partial success left me ambitious and dissatisfied". Good editing would leave only the last word.

Anthony, Piers: *Neq The Sword*. Anthony's brutality can resemble sadism at times, but this book comes closest. Reminiscent of those 1950s magazines with articles like "Nude Lovelies For Hitler's Crazy Dwarf", this farrago of mutilation, endless

violence and despair, is a poor end to a clever trilogy.

Benford, Gregory: *Timescape*. Seldom has the end of the world seemed so dull. Benford, so determined to keep verisimilitude that he used himself and twin brother as characters, and then amused himself with petty betrayals and death, wrote a book at no point of which did I feel the slightest tension, stretching of intellect, or interest. Greg 124C41+ explicating a theory... and didn't anyone else die in the 1960s to form a parallel world?

Bester, Alfred: *Golem-100*. The book which prompted this article. The one Bester thought nobody understood but which many understood too well. Based on a superb novella, this segues into a loopy multi-approach narrative that doesn't ring true for an instant, and culminates in an appallingly vicious (and impossible) act having nothing to do with the rest of the book. Bester spitting — but who at?

Bradley, Marion Zimmer: *The Shattered Chain*. Darkover accreted rather than grew, and exotics like the Free Amazons could exist without real explanation. When Bradley gave

them detail, including their charter, they and Darkover fell to pieces — given the absolute chauvinism of Darkovan males, the aims of the charter would have seen the Amazons dead within the first two generations, without progeny. Yet the series insisted they'd existed for centuries in her increasingly biased tales.

Brunner, John: *Stand On Zanzibar*. I know, and it's not the only award winner in this list. Aside from its time-dislocation (which makes nonsense of its supposed verisimilitude), the book has no gradations of emotion, no proof that affection or love or trust ever existed in the world.

Carter, Lin: *The Warrior Of World's End*. Carter had written a fairly powerful work called **The Giant At World's End**, and his fans eagerly awaited a sequel. They got this *prequel*, starting a series meant to lead up to and beyond **Giant**. *Warrior* was so thin, and the series is so spectacularly unfunny, that it completely stopped any chance of the real sequel.

Cherryh, C J: *The Faded Sun: Shon'jir*. Admiring her **The Gate Of Ivrel**, I stayed with Cherryh until this book, when, putting it down, I was suddenly aware that I hadn't understood a single word, a single reason behind the plot, hadn't conjured up any images, couldn't care — and didn't *know* — if the series ended with this book.

Davidson, Avram: *The Island Under The Earth*. There are shock endings, and twist endings, and unexpected endings... and **The Island Under The Earth**; maybe he ran out of manuscript paper.

De Camp, L Sprague *The Unbeheaded King*. Third of an unguessed trilogy, this was written a dozen years after the second, and though its characters shouldn't have radically changed, De Camp had. Totally different in tone and intent, **King** proves three books don't constitute a trilogy.

Delany, Samuel R: *Triton*. The excesses of **Dhalgren** were followed by this droplet of poison. Subtitled "Some Informal Remarks Towards The Modular Calculus Part 1" (Part 2 was an appendix article inside), it turned out that 'Modular Calculus is a set of algorithms that can be applied to any fitting grammar to adjust it into a guiding grammar'. Unaware of that, it was obvious **Triton** was a lecture, held at screaming pitch, a bullying and pushy diatribe to make me care about a crisis of sexual identity that turned out to be as boringly inconclusive as **Dhalgren**. Once Delany learned he didn't need endings, he went after middles and then openings...

Dickson, Gordon R: *Pro*. Dickson has produced many more excellent novels than is realised or admitted, and this book doesn't add to or subtract from the others. It just reads like the plan for an incomplete work, and sadly doesn't make its themes or characters seem real.

Elgin, Suzette Haden: *Native Tongue*. About now you suspect I'm anti-feminist, and this book's theme of women breaking free of male conditioning seems another candidate for ire. I was more concerned by the dispassionate judgement of Elgin's aliens that women are immature super-

beings, and human males — *by virtue of being male* — are irredeemably violent and intellectually cauterised. Pity the poor hermaphrodites, say I.

Farmer, Philip Jose: *The Gods Of Riverworld*. This series was going wrong through the third book, and wildly wrong in the fourth, but by this one the change in characters from people to golems acting out impossible scenarios was complete. Clearly, Farmer had been away from the series too long and was trying to surprise himself. (Runner up was **Dark Is The Sun**.)

Foster, M A: *Transformer*. Second of a trilogy. Foster's brilliant early books, about *ler* and language, suggested this later series (presumably written when he'd learned more of writing) would be excellent too. However, to make this book exist at all, Foster had to rewrite the plot, background and motive of the first book in the series. He hasn't published any work since the third volume.

Haldeman, Joe: *All My Sins Remembered*. A fix-up from three stories, marketed as a novel. Read in one sitting, they fail to maintain any impact. Not awful, just not a necessary book.

Harrison, Harry: *Rebel In Time*. Scholarship without heart, from idea but not character. (Close runners-up were **Invasion: Earth** and **Star Smashers Of The Galaxy Rangers**.)

Heinlein, Robert: *I Will Fear No Evil*. 'Everything since 1960' was too simple, and most do have merit when they don't end up with the Lazarus Long family. However, *Evil* is not a

novel, and is surely didactic Heinlein at his peak. It is not the lack of settings or colour (see *Eunice*, though few did), or narrative flow — it's that everyone sounds exactly the same, endlessly arguing, cosily agreeing. Never have so many readers expended so much effort to so little reward. Heinlein was opposed to revision; I am only opposed to boredom. (I don't condemn books purely on political viewpoint, so such are excluded from this list — thus, no **Farnham's Freehold**, John Norman or Joanna Russ.)

Herbert, Frank: *Man Of Two Worlds*. A collaboration, but still, why he gave his name, let alone aid, to this nonsense...

Koontz, Dean R: *Anti-Man*. Koontz is so dissatisfied with some of his early works that he brought their rights and refuses to re-publish; this is my own nomination.

Le Guin, Ursula K: *Malafrena*. I bow to few in my appreciation of **The Lathe Of Heaven**, **The Dispossessed**, and others. Yet with character so important to her work, it was disheartening to find a work without any — and possibly no plot.

Lupoff, Richard A: *Countersolar!* Sequel to the popular **Counterpo-lar!** this continuation led nowhere and contained nobody; Lupoff has proved he doesn't like to write the same thing twice, so don't try reading...

Niven, Larry: *Ringworld Engineers*. I'm sure all the seeds were sown in the first book, and Teela's savage fate is logical. However, there is no excuse for the vandalism at the start of this,

when Horloprillar is casually murdered just to leave Wu free. (Runners-up were the Buck Rogers series planned by Niven and Pournelle, which showed Buck as hating and fearing his wife Wilma, and glad she died.)

Panshin, Alexei: *Earth Magic*. Panshin and wife Cory are an insightful couple who attempted here to create a universal myth, but somehow, even with their usual rite-of-passage plot, the book is neither memorable nor saved by moments of beauty.

Piper, H Beam: *First Cycle*. Piper is noted for his subtlety of background, political expertise, and hardnosed outlook. Supposedly fleshed out from explicit notes left by Piper, the normally good Mike Kurland has created a simplistic and petty book which, by Piper alone, *might* have formed a small section of a novel, or been used as background to a larger adventure, but he would certainly never have written it at this length and without a counterplot. (And where, pray, is the reprint of his *Crisis in 2140*, hm?)

Pohl, Frederik: *Man Plus*. Award winner, acclaimed, successful. A nonsensical bore. The abrupt drafting of a man into the space programme, the alteration of his body — up to and including castration — without carrying out tests or informing him beforehand, the book's general air of this-is-gritty-realism-ignore-the-lapses conspired to make me stop reading.

Saberhagen, Fred: *The First Book Of Swords*. *Empire of the East*, even with its unnecessary revisions from the original three books, should have been the end of this story; Saber-

hagen has continued it far beyond its life with stiff and predictable results.

Shaw, Bob: *One Millions Tomorrows*. While all fiction requires conflict, this is surely amongst the crudest and least likely. Shaw thought of it in the early 1950s, and unfortunately remembered it. An immortality drug that makes men impotent (nothing so simple as sterile), and yet women 'glow' with their own retained sexuality. Now, take a married couple with problems... (Runner up was *Orbitsville Departure*).

Smith, E E (Doc): *The Lord Tedric Series*. Plea to publishers: if an author dies leaving a fairly good idea among his papers, at least do him the courtesy of choosing an author to continue the story who has *some* regard or agreement with the world-view, optimism, or values of the original author. Specifically, don't choose a Gordon Eklund to expand an E E (Doc) Smith series; what you get is an insult, and so did we.

Sturgeon, Theodore: *The Cosmic Rape*. I don't *know* why. I can read even those of his works that hurt like knives, and are so unfair they require health warnings; but this one just fails, fails.

Vance, Jack: *A Quest For Simbilis* by Michael Shea. Work that one out. The authorised sequel to *Eyes Of The Overworld*, this book missed its target so completely that Vance was able to totally ignore it and write the real sequel later.

Van Vogt, A E: *Null-A Three*. Possibly the most eagerly awaited sequel ever, this appeared and then vanished. It undercut the first two books,

added nothing of wit or invention or even complication. (Runner up was **Renaissance**, which was delightfully announced as **The Indian Summer Of A Pair Of Spectacles**.)

Varley, John: *Titan, Wizard, Demon*. No apologies. If writers like Charnas, Russ and McIntyre can turn out feminist tracts masquerading as fiction, so can Varley. In this work, every man is an idiot or a brute, every woman is a hero or capable of it — reverse the sexes and this would never have got past the planning stage.

Vinge, Vernor: *Grimm's World*. First novel by the now-praised author. The first half is the original short story, witty, colourful and fun. The second is an unforeseen blast of icy wind to demolish that first half. It's interesting that when Vinge expanded the work as **Tatja Grimm's World**, he wrote a new *first* section, rather than continuation, proving rather bluntly that the ending is a dead one.

Williamson, Jack: *The Power Of Blackness*. That is, Black Power. In an attempt to balance the possible racism of some SF and fantasy, this book becomes so coy and cloying it defeats its own purpose, finally reducing integration to an impossible dream of supernal love transcending barriers that turn out to have no height.

Zelazny, Roger: *Creatures Of Light And Darkness*. Twenty years ago Zelazny experimented: he wrote a series of books, each of which lacked one of the writing talents he possessed. (I'm sure buyers were duly grateful.) This one eliminated involvement, or care. It is thus, quite deliberately, a thunderously heartless book — types out rather than thought out. (Runner up was **Bridge Of Ashes**, whose last word I am continually tempted to misspell.)

Hit List Of The '80s

Seeing as this is the last Shipyard product of the 1980s, I'll climb upon the list bandwagon with my best rock/folk albums of the 1980s.

- 1: Bruce Springsteen: Live 1975-85
- 2: REM: Murmur
- 3: U2: The Unforgettable Fire
- 4: Paul Simon: Graceland
- 5: Sting: The Dream Of the Blue Turtles
- 6: Joe Ely: Lord Of The Highway
- 7: Van Morrison: A Common One
- 8: Robert Cray: Bad Influence
- 9: Richard Thompson: Daring Adventures

- 10: John Fogerty: Centrefield
- 11: Oyster Band: Step Outside
- 12: Los Lobos: How Will The Wolf Survive?
- 13: Robbie Robertson: Robbie Robertson
- 14: Pretenders: Get Close
- 15: Eurythmics: Sweet Dreams...
- 16: Neil Young: Freedom
- 17: Lou Reed: New York
- 18: Ry Cooder: The Slide Area
- 19: Bryan Adams: Reckless
- 20: John Hiatt: Bring The Family

Hmm! Must be the first time in three decades that I could make a list like that containing no Dylan albums.



Loccing the Blues

(No time for chit-chat on this one. When there is as much blood on the cutting room floor as on this column, it ill-behoves me to take up too much space.)

Pamela Boal: (12/9/89).

The rhythm of the 'yard' seems to be establishing itself fairly quickly with the first class presentation I have come to expect from your good self. I have been enjoying the art work of Brad Foster and Steve Fox for some time but both Krischan Holl and Pavel Gregoric are new to me. Krischan's work is a visual delight, with charm, humour, good composition and fine drawing. (4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 7EW)

Chuck Connor: (17/9/89)

...Your opening comments about the dwindling of fanartists in fandom is something that has always gotten to me — hence my use of found & stolen art. It seemed to come in fits and starts, there will be several new artists for a while, they'll slowly drop out, and we're back into the famine stage. There again, like many people, artists also wear out their sensawunda, so why shouldn't they drop out? I think it was Shep talking about the lack of artistic criticism that put a bit of a point to it, and I also have to agree that a lot of the mediums used in fanzine production are not really conducive to barrier-stretching when it comes to artwork. It has to be said that some artists are too concerned with high-grade repro, and seem unable to go back to the basics of effective line drawing. (Sildan House, Cheston Road, Wissett, Nr Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0NF)

Lead-Free World

Andy Sawyer: (20/9/89)

...I was amazed that leaded petrol actually used to be sold with a health warning

and that concern over the well-documented effects of lead poisoning is not new. It just shows the power of profit and convenience over safety. One hopeful point, however, is illustrated by the fact that when my wife went to visit her sister, shortly after we got our new car, the first question our nephews asked about it was not "How fast does it go?", or "What's the stereo system like?" but "Does it take lead-free petrol?" (1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral, L64 4BT)

Crowding The Issue

K.V.Bailey: (17/9/89)

The editorial piece 'Alone in a Crowd' calls to mind a film sequence I saw years ago which showed in accelerated motion people streaming along some south European or South American street. Inset in a wall was a shrine of some sort. Every so often an individual would swerve towards it and briefly halt to pay respect. Immediately a host of others would do so. Then the stream would straighten out until the next such incident. The speeded-up frames made the pedestrian flow to appear as one linear animal from time to time contorting itself. The message, the impulse, passing from individual to individual was peripherally or subliminally conveyed but amounted to a compulsion. I believe a theory of the wheeling of flocks of starlings or schools of fish is that each individual follows automatically the message given by the plumage or scale 'flock-mark' of a moving individual adjacent to it, the result being a formation manoeuvre which looks like the antic of a single organism.

Science fiction writers have exploited various aspects and theories of crowd behaviour when modelling composite or collective entities. Olaf Stapledon, for example did so in *Starmaker* when he described

discrete super-intelligent animals composed of thousands of bird-like creatures activated by one consciousness, via a not very clearly defined form of electro-magnetic communication (not telepathy, he says): fascinating, if fanciful. He later applies some not dissimilar concept – even more fantastically but with awesome descriptive brilliance, to ‘the dance of the stars’. The completely alien clouds of microscopic crystalline ‘insect’ machines of Lem’s **The Invincible**, are a bizarre variation on the theme. Their central ‘control’, too, is a ‘brain’ or ‘memory’ operating in an electro-magnetic field, but in this instance inorganic in nature.

Where human crowds are concerned, what does seem to function in a mysterious but effective way to heighten and weld emotions (and reinforce concomitant action) is rhythmic sound – corroborates, pop festivals, football finals, the pseudo-patriotic euphoria of ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ at a Prom. There’s no doubt about its power to move mountains of people – ‘macropersons’ such as that depicted on the original titleplate of Hobbes’s **Leviathan**. Like you, however, I personally find myself uncomfortable whenever prospects arise of being an atomy so incorporated. (TRIFFIDs, Val de Mer, Alderney, Channel Islands)

Ken Lake: (9/9/89)

I love crowds – the feeling of excitement, of shared enthusiasms, of mutually enhanced appreciation that comes from sharing some great experience like a concert, a baseball game or a political rally. I love to walk the streets of London, of Manhattan and of Kowloon – what I avoid are mobs.

Mobs are crowds united to cow, to bully, to sink their common humanity in a commonly unlocked violence, be it of emotion or action. That violence lurks in us all: we should be channeling it into creativity. All crowds generate power; mobs pervert it. Get out and mingle with your fellow beings: both you and they will gain from the experience. Confusing crowd creativity like the Woodstock experience with football mobs is like confusing the students in Tiananman Square with the massed army units that

murdered them. (115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY)

Ken Lake’s Fanzine Fandango

Ken Cheslin: (7/9/89)

I must confess to a certain thrill upon glancing over Ken Lake’s opening paragraph. I have this vision in my mind’s eye of a cross between a Times art critic and Conan the Barbarian as he swings into action and starts tearing into the hapless hordes... though he, disappointingly in this instance, becomes more reasonable after the initial onslaught. Not that I’m in favour of *destructive* criticism, you understand.

In answer to Ken’s, I suppose rhetorical, question “why... produce... when it’s all been done before?”, may I suggest, humbly in case he knees me in the groin for my presumption, that a rather more basic reason is that — to take an analogy — folk have been getting born, growing into young whippersnappers who ignore their elders’ advice, raising kids, getting older, trying to advise the young whippersnappers following them along life’s road, etc... Some such phrase as “the world is created anew each time someone is born” comes to mind, so I find it quite reasonable to assume that newcomers to fandom will want to learn from experience, going their own way (more or less, especially as fannish generations whizz past faster than mundane ones, and in neither case do many people know, or want to know, what happened in the past... (10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 1LA)

Chuck Connor: (17/9/89)

I felt Kenny Lake’s ‘Whither/Wither Fanzines’ piece tended to perpetuate the Old Father Fan image. **Pulp**, **Then**, **Critical Wave**, etc are all products of old hands, as is **This Never Happens**, **Xyster**, and **Erg**. Of the newer fans, there is nothing but scorn and sharp comment (“Irish Tommy” is something that even I would have drawn the line at), which seems to indicate that darling Ken is more in favour of keeping the Old Guard no matter whatever else comes along, than anything else.

I must admit that the stance is a good one — the line that there are fanzines out there

is always a sure fire winner, especially when you come up with names, despite the fact that there has been little activity from more than a couple of the titles listed. But the undercurrents are there: "...you can maintain that ultimate aim of 'general appeal', "...read it, and wonder at it, and learn from it." "...background reading in Vince's stacks will give you a superb basis for your own writing." And Ghu created fan in its own image... All hail the great Ghu, and evermore shall be so (Ken Lake exits stage left, waving copies of **Hyphen**, and muttering "The one True Way, the one True Way I tell you!")

Terry Broome: (10/9/89)

Ken says, "And so long as we have people capable of following in the footsteps of..." naming several writers. Together with his comments about "general appeal" and appealing "to a given group of fans", I'm left with the feeling that his vision of what fandom should be is a dull one at best. It's a mistake to copy other fans (what else does "following in the footsteps" mean?), and it's a mistake to compromise your needs and talent in order to gain "general" appeal... Common ground between individuals is a very narrow spectrum, to appeal to the generality, your writing must, perforce, sacrifice a great deal of unique thought, style, approach, subject matter. In order to achieve this you end up with mediocre writing which is indistinguishable from so much else. If you let your market dictate to you to maximise the numbers you reach, you *must* sacrifice quality: a sameness, dullness, unwillingness to tackle unusual topics or experiment with styles results, everything becomes safe and familiar and 'marketable'. It's a philosophy of maximised profit/gain rather than making the most of the talent you have, and it's being reflected in the SF/fantasy publishing industry, in big-screen films, and, it is feared, by the British TV networks, where already the programmes which appeal to the lowest common denominator are the most popular. The business of writing isn't to be popular, it is to say what you want to say, not what someone else has already said before you. Your writ-

ing should define its own market in this sense.(101 Malham Drive, Lakeside Park, Lincoln, LN6 0XD)

Pamela Boal: 12/9/89.

Well done Ken. It's refreshing to discover someone who, like myself, can find enjoyment in a number of today's zines and believes in their future, what ever the actual format.

Living With Elephants

(Terry Jeeves' article on nuclear matters generated a lot of mail. Of course, it's all been rather overtaken by events, with the Government dropping nuclear power out of the electricity nationalisation programme (because the City wouldn't touch it with the proverbial barge pole), and raising strong doubts about future development of nuclear power stations. If there are to be any more, the Government will have to pay for them.)

Shep Kirkbride: (10/89)

Although I don't often agree with what Terry Jeeves has to say and find a lot of his viewpoints hard to accept, I must admit to finding his 'Nuclear Elephant' very thought provoking.

I have to be honest and say that as far as the nuclear issue is concerned I am one of those armchair conservationists who switches off at any sign of an argument. I don't want anyone to spoil my beautiful Lake District with their damned nuclear reactors, but sat in front of our gas fire on a cold night I very easily get to thinking "Aw, what the hell, Sellafield is about forty miles away in West Cumbria and I can't see it, so who cares?"

No, I'm not really *that* dismissive of the whole nuclear debate, but when you live so close to one of these so-called 'fast-breeders' and they are constantly in the local newspaper (where I work!) you sort of get used to having 'them' on your doorstep and turn a blind eye.

Speaking on the positive side *for* the nuclear establishment, I have to say here and now that you would be hard pushed to find many people in the Sellafield area who would speak out against having the plant there.

It accounts for about two-thirds of full-time employment in the Whitehaven area, and if you consider that it was once a very busy mining community then you have to realise that there are a lot of families who are grateful for the nuclear power industry. Sellafield also invests in, and sponsors, a lot of the industry in the area. It supports the local rugby team (very important around here, believe me!), and also a lot of other sporting activities. Not to mention providing local schools with sporting and other equipment. (42 Green Lane, Belle Vue, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7QA)

Ian Covell: 17/9/89

Terry Jeeves, as usual, is talking rubbish. Like all pro-nuclear fools, he betrays himself with lines like this: "...Try walking down a city's meaner streets after dark, whilst loudly proclaiming, 'I am a weaponless zone'.."

Aside from the propaganda of this view (why is the street meaner, and why should anyone shout out) Jeeves is assuming that removing nuclear weapons means removing all weapons. Now, I'm firmly against all weapons and wish the world believed the same. But it doesn't. The question is: are conventional (another propaganda term) weapons sufficient to defend any country against the nuclear attack of another country? Well, aside from wondering which country is going to use nuclear weapons while attacking another country (why should they?) I think we'd best agree that all wars from now on must and will be fought using personnel-destroying weaponry rather than country-devouring weapons. I continue to find it odd that hundreds of countries don't have nuclear weapons and aren't regularly invaded by the US or the USSR or China or Libya... Why don't we just become one of them? (121 Homerton Road, Pallister Park, Middlesbrough, Cleveland, TS3 8PN)

Martyn Taylor: (5/9/89)

If nuclear power is the answer you are asking the wrong question... Of course those tired old economic arguments need to be rehearsed now and then, even if only to ask why British nuclear power plants always

produce so very much less power than planned at so very much higher a cost (creative accountancy takes on new dimensions in the nuclear industry) and to realise that the problem is not the source of the power but the demand. No, the real horror of the nuclear question — and when you realise I have friends whose child has died of leukaemia and who live beside a plant you will understand I choose the words carefully — is the mendacity which surrounds the practice. Lying to the public may be more natural to a Thatcher government than most of recent memory but all British governments and their 'servants' have lied persistently and automatically about their nuclear dabblings. Chernobyl happened in a secretive totalitarian state and the whole world knew about it. The 'accidents' at Windscale/Sellafield are never publicised. They even lie to themselves — as Prof Black will testify concerning his 'enquiry' into the leukaemia clusters in Cumbria. BNFL police have always been armed, a private army since 1951, when the only terrorists anyone knew were those boys in the Stern gang — later to be known as Likud and the Israeli Cabinet (and strangely enough they are heavily into nuclear secrecy too...). What about those two tonnes of plutonium which went missing — two tonnes! — and were put down to accountancy error by HMG long after the Library of Congress merrily announced that those two tonnes had turned up in the USA for reconversion into warheads at a time when it was against British law to export weapons grade plutonium... Ollie North may be an American Hero but when it comes to getting the dirty work done Sir Humphrey has him beat to hell. (14 Natal Road, Cambridge, CB1 3NS)

David Palter: (12/9/89)

Terry Jeeves' article on nuclear power is very sensible. I would still like to see the eventual phasing out of nuclear power and fossil-fuel power, through the introduction of a completely new system based on the solar power satellite. Whether the SPS will ever come into use remains to be seen, and even if we began building them immediately, it would probably be several decades

before they were able to replace current power generation plants. I must agree, therefore, that nuclear power will be needed for some decades to come, at the least. There are many serious and unfortunate problems associated with nuclear power, and the anti-nuclear faction will presumably be writing in to you to explain these in excruciating detail; however, the only present alternatives to nuclear power — increased use of fossil fuels, or power shortages — are worse.. (55 Yarmouth Road, basement, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1X1, Canada)

Margaret Hall: (13/9/89)

The thing that worried me most about the nuclear industry is the way they keep assuring us that it's 'Completely Safe'. The CEGB take huge, full page adverts in our local paper to inform us of this. But nuclear power is patently *not* safe. There are still farms around here with sheep they can do nothing with because they're still too radioactive from the Chernobyl accident to sell. Cynics in the area mutter that it's strange that the heavily contaminated areas just happen to be near Trawsfynydd and Wylfa (power stations) and how convenient of the Russians to blow up a plant to provide an excuse for the high radioactivity levels. No one, of course, was measuring radioactivity in sheep before Chernobyl.

And it's no use having a nimby attitude to this. It wasn't one of our own power stations that blew up, it was a Soviet one, but it affected peoples' livelihoods thousands of miles away. A friend of mine who kept goats, being a physics teacher, raided the school lab and started monitoring his goats' milk. Despite bringing the animals in, keeping them off the grass and feeding hay instead, the radioactivity levels in the milk rose considerably. Whether the rise is in any way dangerous, who can say? (5 Maes yr Odyn, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, LL40 1UT)

Roger Waddington: (24/10/89)

...A pertinent point on the Jeeves article, that he chose not to mention, and which will probably be equally ignored in any protesting LoCs, is that nuclear power is here to stay whether we like it or not; once discovered, we can't bury all the knowledge or

technology required, even though nuclear power may be banned by one country or another; it will still be there. This particular Pandora's box might not even have hope left at the bottom; but having opened it, we have to live with it all. I do sometimes wonder, having managed to ban nuclear power, what the protesters would leave us with; oh, not quite a life that's nasty, brutish and short, but I suspect they'll expect their lives to be a good deal more comfortable than ours. (4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire, YO17 9ES)

Paint It Green

Martyn Taylor: (5/9/89)

As Sue Thomason tells us, the 'Green' bandwagon is as distasteful as any other advertising led fad in our sick and sickening society. Maggie worries about the Greenhouse Effect — she's a scientist, you know, so she understands — and promises more nuclear power stations... I place reports of the Greening of La Zuul beside my yellowing press cuttings of Adolf Hitler's barmitz-vah...

Sydney Bounds: (13/9/89)

Best article was Sue Thomason on form letters. I too have had these and now treat them as junk mail. This high pressure salesmanship is cutting their own throats. I am definitely put off by this approach. Not that I believe they do a lot of good anyway. The only thing that will now save this planet is the murder of billions of human beings; there are just too many of us. (27 Borough Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey, KT2 6BD)

Pamela Boal: 12/9/89.

I once spent many valuable hours organising a fund raising concert, hours that I would have preferred to spend on the actual work of the charity, except that the charity did not have the money to pay for the work. No matter how much you get from volunteers, how careful you are to get every thing at the least possible cost there are basic costs to be met in running a concert. I persuaded a local firm to donate £50 towards those costs, ironically when the bills were

paid and the profit counted we had made just a few pence over £50. It would have been easier to get the local firm to donate £50 directly but such a request would have been met with a polite refusal and the excuse that their charity budget was already allocated. Funding a concert can be put down to advertising.

'Fund Raising' is a growing industry and is prone to use the methods of its sister industry 'marketing'. So although I share Sue's distaste regarding the fund raising methods of some ecological charities and the ever growing number of established welfare and disability Charities who feel obliged to use professional Fund Raisers, I'm all too aware they have little choice. Charities which can not afford professional Fund Raisers have a tendency to fold up through lack of funding. If people like Sue and myself harden our hearts and bin offensive requests, maybe methods will change.

Bounding Ahead

Ian Covell: (17/9/89)

I tend to agree with Syd Bounds that a kind of authorship can be taught. What you can't teach is the imaginative will, the driving compulsion to get words down on paper, new scenes and thoughts, interesting characters. You can teach the form, but not the substance — at least perhaps you can define the substance (character, plot, subplot, background, colour) but this is like telling someone the ingredients of a recipe without defining their amounts or what the final product will be...

Ken Cheslin: (7/9/89)

I looked around for someone to help me write, but I was not lucky enough to come into contact with a Syd Bounds. The only thing going locally was what was called a Writers' Workshop. (I deliberately said "what was called".) The person who ran it, and had been doing it for years, has had some things published in minor publications, but that was poetry. In fact, most of the students were interested in poetry. There were two bods who were sort of fan-ish, or maybe I should say "of a similar spirit" to myself. One looked rather like a

younger Karl Marx and defiantly put on a show of, shall we say, crudeness, making his local accent more obvious, etc, though he betrayed a broad knowledge of writing and writers (much broader than mine). The other was a writer of stories, ah, and, yes, poems, of a wildly funny though pointed sort. Some of us met in a pub between the official meetings. To cut a long story short, I stuck it out for months but felt in the end that I was getting nothing out of the Workshop. One lady did write a SF type story, not bad in a 1930s sort of way, but the "leader" never suggested that she take the obvious step of reading some SF to see what the current field was like. Oh, the leader had *heard* of Ray Bradbury — but knew less about him than Karl Marx or Funnyman, and they knew less than me. Another thing was that I got fed up with the tuition early on and got some books on writing out of the library, which told me two things. One, they were of more benefit than the Workshop. Two, the leader must have been working from one of these books because I recognised some of the exercises from it...

Sydney Bounds: (13/9/89)

I think Raymond Chandler was a good writer but knew damn-all about teaching. The passage you quote is glib.

(27 Borough Road, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 6BD)

Forever Rushdied

Ian Covell: (17/9/89)

James Parker: "... I personally am an Atheist, but I have a great respect for all religions and beliefs if sincerely held". Scientology, anyone? Religion is dangerous when it's most sincere, because it holds at base that humanity is the product of a plan, an unseen and indefinable 'power' against which we must be judged. Religion is a sop and a lie, an escape clause for those who think this world is only a mirror or a shadow of the 'perfect world'. I've no respect at all for idiots who believe in the nonsense promulgated by pratts; I believe in power and the display of that power ("miracles") but I'm damned sure I don't believe in fairies, gods, or any other foolishness.

Andy Sawyer: (20/9/89)

James Parker adds some corrective viewpoint to the Western Liberal glorification of Saint Salman. Perhaps, but the question is whether you really believe that "satire on the tawdry and juvenile level of the pathetic **Spitting Image** variety" should be rewarded by the death penalty. The real dilemma for the liberal is nothing to do with being "closet racists" (though it's certainly true that support for Rushdie is coming from some odd places) but in discovering that while you disassociate yourself from attacks on religions and cultures not your own, you find there are elements therein which you cannot support. One Muslim leader made the perfectly sensible comment, "What if a major figure in the Christian religion, such as Mary, were attacked in this way?" But my reaction to that would be somewhere between "So what?" and "But you don't call out the death squads for that", and that's the gulf between us, I'm afraid. James has to ask himself how far his "great respect" (as an atheist)"for all religions and beliefs if sincerely held" is mirrored by people who sincerely believe that atheists are evil beings not worth considering as human, and how far his dislike for what he perceives Rushdie has done goes with respect to any sanction which has been suggested for him.

Harry Bond: (15/9/89)

James Parker is provocative... His gratuitous line "they are racist by definition anyway, being English" doesn't show up his argument in a good light; I am English; I am also (by birth, not persuasion) of enough Jewish blood to get myself whacked into the gas oven by Adolf Hitler. Many, many black, and Jewish, and Oriental, people are English by birth. Is he trying to say that everyone is racist, no matter what their race? If so, fair enough; but I wish he'd be less ambiguous. If he is saying what he seems to be, I disagree with that statement right down the line. (64 Paramount Court, University Street, Euston, London, WC1E 6JP)

John F. Haines: (8/9/89)

So the Rushdie affair *still* lingers on — I watched Tony Harrison's **Banquet** — good, yet it still doesn't attack the fundamental

problem that the whole shebang throws up. Writers have freedom of expression — now, take this to its logical conclusion and this means that *anything*, no matter how vile or offensive to someone else, can be written. This means that all the filth the Nazis brought out about the Jews, pornography, libel. As a writer, my gut reaction to this is to say yes, of course we must have freedom of expression... Then the brain starts to take over and says hey, hold on mate — you can't churn *that* kind of stuff out and expect folk to lie back and accept it without a murmur.

There is a good case to be made that Rushdie brought it all on himself, and tough mate, you should have thought of that before you published your book. If you write something which causes great distress to people, then you have to expect a few brickbats — OK, death threats are carrying criticism just a wee bit too far, but knowing the kind of nutter he was prodding with his stick, perhaps it was a bit naive of him to be so surprised by the reaction.

As a devout 'baffled' I'm not sure about the blasphemy angle — yes, it sounds daft in the 20th Century, but Shi'ite Muslims seem to be hardly out of the middle ages yet so far as this kind of thing goes, so perhaps a little caution might not be a bad idea? I'm sure that if anyone wrote a book which seriously insulted fans in such a way as to imply that they were all child-molesting perverts who ought to be locked up and the key chucked away there would be an outcry from said fans. No doubt the outcry would be merely verbal and stop short of firebombing bookshops or stoning anyone who didn't know what 'skiffy' was... (5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington, WA2 0QG)

Lesley Ward: (10/89)

I was rather confused by James Parker's words: "They are racist by definition, anyway, being English". Most intriguing. This raises several questions: is this racism hereditary in nature or geographical? Presumably it applies to those of ethnic minorities who were born in England, continue to live in England and have British citizenship? Would an English person emigrating to Australia take their racism with them, or

could they leave it at Customs? Do Americans, Asians, Africans, etc, who come to take up residence in England also become racist by definition? ("Pick up your racism in the red channel, sir. Plenty to spare today, a lot of our mob have pissed off to Australia....") What of fellow Britons, the Scots, Irish and Welsh? If a Scot should come and settle permanently in England, they don't apply for citizenship (presumably they're still Scottish)... so maybe they don't need to become "racist by definition" either. Just as well — without a stop-off point like Customs to get it from, they might not know where they're supposed to go to acquire the obligatory racism.

Leaving this odd phrase aside, the argument of the rest of the letter seems to be that Rushdie should not be allowed to offend Muslims because (a) their views are deeply held, and (b) they are a minority group (in this country anyway). There are other minority groups with deeply held views — neo-fascists like the National Front, for example — should such other groups have legal protection from insult in print because criteria (a) and (b) could also apply to them? I find this reasoning rather shaky. (71 Branksome Road, Southend, Essex, SS2 4HG)

Bewitched, Bothered and Delaneyed

Ian Covell: (17/9/89)

Thanks for quoting me in "Rastus Muses", though I would add a caveat to your mention of Delany's *Neveryon* to say that Delany himself bears the responsibility of pretending his hard-reality sections were somehow 'SF' simply because he pretended they mirrored events in his fantasy worlds (worlds he took care to undermine by laughingly informing his readers it was all unreal, and not to be believed for a minute). So in many ways I would have refused to publish Delany as 'fantasy', homosexual or not.

Ken Lake: (9/9/89)

Few things bug me more than sheer ignorance expressed as fact: how can Ian Covell say, and you quote with approval, such a blatant lie as "this is the first decade in which science fiction has been told what it can't write about"?

Sure, Delany's sales have been cut from 200,000 to 80,000 copies because some US bookstores object to his homosexual writing. So ? In the seventies, Michael Moorcock almost had *New Worlds* fold on him because W.H. Smut's banned issues serialising Spinrad's **Bug Jack Barron** — not for homosexuality but for simple sex fun.

Spinrad and Delany both find publishers: in the decades prior to our own, homosexuality in a story meant it didn't get published at all. Furthermore, it didn't even get into the magazines: ask any oldtimer about the morality codes operated by every editor of every magazine not just SF, either, but everything from westerns to true confessions were all heavily censored.

Joy Hibbert: (29/9/89)

As for "this is the first decade when SF has been told what it cannot write about", the immediate question is "by who?" SF has variously been told that it cannot write about explicit sex, protagonists of the wrong race or species, acceptance of lifestyles other than heterosexual monogamy, woman only societies, or female protagonists. The people who wanted to write about these things went ahead and did it anyway, and eventually such things became acceptable to publishers. (Remember Charnas was told, by a publisher, re *Motherlines* that it would be really good if it was about men). It would appear that people who prefer to churn out macho SF (whatever that means) are whining because they are receiving a little light criticism. Besides, I suspect that what Covell actually means is "glorify macho societies" rather than merely "write about". After all, the men's cultures in *Walk To The End Of The World*, *The Wanderground*, *The Female Man*, *The Two Of Them*, *Native Tongue*, and *The Judas Rose*, just to list a few off the top of my head, are probably, to varying degrees, what he thinks of as macho (based on misogyny, and tending towards aggression and glorification of the body). So is the dominant society and the secret society in *Lythande*, the Dry Towns in the Darkover series, and to a lesser extent, the subculture of the brown, green and blue riders on Pern. Come to that, the most

macho protagonist I can think of is Joanna Russ' Alyx. But none of these stories advocate macho as a good way for a society to be. (11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 5JG)

Fanning the flames of reality

Mike Glicksohn: (24/8/89)

Does it surprise you that fans don't spend very much time "finding ways to relate fandom to the real world"? It really shouldn't. Most fans are painfully aware of what's happening in the real world (although few of them are of the crusading type who try to get things changed) and to many fans fandom is an escapist hobby where they can have fun, be creative and perhaps feel the world isn't such a bad place after all. If you seriously expect to change that, I think you'll be disappointed. Not all fanzines avoid confronting reality (*Fosfax* is a fine example, with its lengthy, packed lettercol which deals as much with politics and social problems as with SF or fannish topics) but fans need the escapist aspects of fandom, probably more than they need to be told they're running away from reality. By all means inject some serious material in your fanzine, but if you want to get feedback be somewhat diplomatic in the way you do it. (508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M6S 3L6, Canada)

Eric Bentcliffe: (10/9/89)

...Like Vinç on p.19 of SB2 I find what I can best describe as a current-affairs fanzine not really my thing. Yes, I know, Vinç and self are a couple of ancients and mebbe not too compatible with current fannish trends. I too always stuck with fandom because it provided an amusing, often offbeat, wry look at itself and its interests, the best of which was done with considerable imagination and insight. That it rarely does that these days is the main reason I don't involve myself too much in it. (I've found other uses for my creative urge — mainly in the field of video but that's another story.) Most of the topics touched upon in these two issues are interesting ones but they are also mainly current cause celebres which are being done to death by the media;

I am interested in them (and that which you print is usually worth reading and valid comment) but they come up daily in my converse with the mundane world — I don't need a fanzine on the same mundane lines! Of course, there is always the odd skewed Skel article that tells me all is not lost yet... and if more fanwriters took a similar misdirection I might be tempted back into activity. (17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire)

[Time for a little diatribe of my own, I think. SB is not wholly a current affairs fanzine. The contents of SB1 were largely material left over from Crystal Ship, with my own new pieces lacing it together. Because SB was going to be on a regular schedule, I wanted it to be seen as a forum for writing on topical subjects, be they fannish or 'current affairs', in a way that CS never was or could be. SB1 attracted Terry and Sue's articles, which pointed up the topicality nicely. But, big but, at the same time I see no reason why there should not be fannish, or SF sercon pieces in here at the same time (as in this issue). I follow my nose, editorially, and produce the kind of zine I would like to read. It seems to be finding its audience, and that's all any editor can ask for, isn't it?]

First Contact

Harry Bond: (15/9/89)

This is going to sound horribly patronising, but I think both Cecil Nurse and Hilary Robinson will modify their attitudes as they come to know more about fandom in general; which, seeing that they are both literate and take enough interest in the subject to write letters to your fanzine, may come sooner than they imagine. (Though I was rather taken with Cecil's description of fandom as an old comrades' society, actually.) Hilary in particular seems to have struck unlucky in her first contacts with fandom. Yes, several individuals are very rude/unpleasant/un-interested in people they don't know: the fan who was a guest at the NIcon she mentions is a prime example: but equally there is a large number of people who will happily welcome a newcomer in, answer his/her questions and generally

make them feel at home in the way she mentions comics fans do. (Has she considered that she may have been lucky in avoiding, so far, the nastier comics fans, who doubtless exist somewhere?) I don't think that fannish jargon/slang is designed to confuse newcomers; it has just developed over the years, as is the case with all special interest groups. If she thinks fannish jargon is confusing, she should try to fathom CB radio slang!

Joy Hibbert: (29/9/89)

Hilary's letter: all subcultures, professional or social, develop a dialect to some extent. Almost invariably, these words develop to save time, rather than to exclude anyone. Ok, there are a few exceptions in fan speak, notably "neo" with its double meaning, and "skiffy", with its contempt for gosh-wow types, but on the whole I think she is seeing malice where none exists. I would have been much happier about her letter if I didn't suspect I am the Nikon FGoH she mentions. My reason for suspecting this is because, as far as I know, there have been two Nikon FGohs and the other didn't do his bit until after her letter was written. As far as my shyness allowed, I made myself available for talking to at NiCon 2. No-one else complained, committee or attendees. Ok, I was late for my guest interview, but this was unintentional.

There's an interesting part of her letter, referring to "backbiting and sneering at each other". Like her remarks on this nameless NiCon FGoH? Or like her remarks in her zine about my apazine, which she seemed to think offensive because in it I chat about a lifestyle that's different from hers.

Another interesting bit "on the periphery of fandom". Looks like Broome is outvoted: it would appear that even someone situated where Hilary is on the mental map of fandom sees somewhere else as the centre.

The immediate problem, of course, with fans in Hilary's position seeing fandom the way she does is that it reinforces the idea that the small minority of fans who are actively unwelcoming to neos (as opposed to those who are busy, shy, etc) are actually a majority, or at least the opinion formers and

generally people who matter. Perhaps as more fanzines are produced by "alternative fandom" types, this perception will decrease.

Computer Wars

Mike Ashley: (16/9/89)

Your news on the OS war between IBM and others doesn't cheer me... It took me years to make up my mind to buy a PC because everything was changing so rapidly and I knew as soon as I bought something it would be superseded. Finally in January of this year I bought an Amstrad PC1640 because I felt the progress on PCs had stabilised sufficiently that I could at least get a good few years out of this before progress would force me on and up. Your news only seems to emphasise that this progress may mean bigger changes even sooner.

Both of these issues bring home to me the fact that although I am basically a child of the scientific age and love to see progress and changes, I'm less keen if I find it ethically unsatisfying or it's likely to hurt my bank balance. (4 Thistlebank, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent, ME5 8AD)

[You'll still get your 'good few years' out of your Amstrad, Mike, as long as you accept that it is technology that does the job for you, rather than some consumable that you change regularly. Many people get good service out of the Amstrad PCW computers, despite them using 8-bit chips and CP/M, and others, of course, get by on manual typewriters.]

Roger Waddington: (24/10/89)

Interesting sidelight on the computer wars; it makes me wonder whether there's ever been any co-operation in technology's advance, whether it's always been a fight between different systems to come out on top. I'm tempted to go right back into history and take an example from the longbow/crossbow battle, but nearer the present day there was the wide gauge/narrow gauge controversy in the development of the railway, and further up to date, the VHS/Beta-max rivalry in video recorders. I'm tempted to say that we wouldn't have been able to get so far, if we hadn't had such rivalry.

Bonding the Broome

Harry Bond: (15/9/89)

I've had a long correspondence with Terry Broome about my remarks in "The Poor Man's Picture Gallery" (**Pulp 13**), but since he has communicated the gist of his arguments to you, I may as well do likewise. As Terry now knows, by 'second rank' I did not mean 'second rate', and in fact I was trying to avoid the risk of having that read into my remarks. On a metaphorical ladder, there are an infinite number of steps; there is the first rank, and the second rank, and the third, and the fourth... Mike Glicksohn makes exactly this point on page 18 of **The Last Ripples**, where his views coincide so exactly with mine that I need merely refer Terry to his letter. Whereas I do consider many of the fans of the sub-community I mentioned to be second rank writers, I would also place several of the fans who I perceive as ultra-faanish in this class — Martin Tudor is an example — and some of the sub-community — Cardinal Cox is a case in point — simply aren't even second rank. And, with all respect, bollocks to aligning myself with any one fragment of fandom; I'm not about to settle down in any "ghetto" (his word, not mine!). If we take as read (I think Terry and I agreed on this) that fandom is, to use Sue Thomason's expression, a series of inter-locking cliques, my attitude is to try and sample as many of these cliques as possible so that I may be able to decide which ones I like and which I don't. I would list myself as a member of at least three different 'sub-communities'.

Joy Hibbert: (29/9/89)

...I wonder if Terry would have taken offense if Harry had said the same thing in a less condescending manner. It has always seemed to me that there is an "alternative fandom", consisting of those outside the faanish pale, and that it has been growing over the past few years. Whether these zines are "second rate/rank", well, that depends on what you look for in a zine. New 'alternative fandom' faneds have less experience in writing and editing, and also tend to write more about serious matters. This will tend to make them less interesting, at first

glance, that zines by more polished writers about "witty", shallow subjects. Like most fannish issues, the difference is difficult to put one's finger on, but **Pulp** is definitely faanish, **Shipyard Blues** is definitely old alternative, and **Maverick** is definitely new alternative ("Knew Mutant", as they prefer to be known). It's an interesting time to be getting fanzines.

For the lack of IDOMO...

Chuck Connor: (17/9/89)

I don't think that Andy Sawyer is right when he says that my old mag did any inspiring. The funny thing was that Cyril Simsa and I, independently of each other, decided to run some reviews of the then budding punkzines (he managed to get his **Amanita** out a couple of weeks before I got my issue out), so there was an impetus there to diversify, at that time, if people were prepared to pick it up and run with it. The fact that few did could stand as a testament to it being an evolutionary dead end.

Joy Hibbert: (29/9/89)

Re Andy Sawyer: the lack of an **IDOMO** substitute is a problem for British fandom, but a reasonable substitute can be had from Mike Gunderloy, in USAmerica. His reviewzine, **Factsheet 5** covers a wider range than **IDOMO** ever did (because he is prepared to review zines that he doesn't have a personal interest in or commitment to, I think), and it's a shame that more British faneds of all types aren't prepared to help him make the zine more international.

Other Bits

Terry Broome: (10/9/89)

Now I've read the various interpretations of **Shipyard Blues**, I like the title. ...I didn't view my article (in **SB1**) as a lament. Accompanying notes (with a fanzine) help you decide whether the fanzine editor is interested in making friend, or simply wants a loc, but I was speaking about my entry into fandom, past tense, not my current perception of fanzines, which is close to Buck Coulson's. Duplication is cheap if you already have the equipment... if you don't, can you afford the transportation costs? Now

that supplies *are* drying up, is it worth getting the equipment? Unless you have a machine already or know someone who'll let you use theirs, duplication is not cheap. My comments in regards them were based on *relative* cheapness, *and availability*. What I meant by comic-strip zines were not amateur comics, but fanzines *about* fandom, SF, personal experiences, non-fictional events done in comic-strip formats.

Sheryl Birkhead: (18/9/89)

One comment to Harry Andruschak... I tried for a while to get information on mimeos... prices, availability, etc. I checked local papers for at least 6 months and never saw one listed.. No solid supply places were listed *locally* for them in the phone book. I went to several print shops to see if they had any idea where I might locate one — their response: "Mimeograph? What's that?" *Sigh* The only mimeos (or dittos) I found were for sale from the Board of Education, take as is, all broken to some extent and priced from \$75-\$150. No guarantees and no ideas where to find a repairman. So, once again, I tucked the pursuit back into the steamer trunk and forgot about it. (23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, Maryland, 20882, USA)

Skel: (24/9/89).

No cycleway system ? Oh, diddums!

For the past mumble-mumble years I've worked in central Manchester, and cycled there from Stockport down the A6, almost ten miles each way, on a route which could be described as Juggernauts-on-a-stick. Terrifying at first true, but a piece of piss really. However, now they've moved the computer department out to Head Office, which is a bit further away still. I reckon I'm now doing about 130-140 miles a week. The route is much nicer, but in an attempt to keep the cycling time to a minimum I'm having to give it more stick than heretofore. Whilst the distance in traveling has gone up nearly 50%, my traveling time is only up between 25-30%....and as a result I'm feeling every one of those additional miles in my legs this weekend.

I figure if I keep on keeping on, I'll build up sufficient stamina to make the journey at

my current rate, but easier. My best time is currently 47 minutes, but I cheat by setting off to work at about 6 a.m. At this time I don't have to stop at traffic lights, just slow down and verify that no other cretin is abroad at that hour. and then choogle on across. Needless to say, I can't do that on the way back after 4 p.m., and that coupled with a tremendous headwind coming off the Trafford Park Industrial Estate means my best time on the return leg is 54 minutes.

So, after this first week I'm feeling every one of those extra miles down the front of my thighs this weekend, which means you shouldn't expect much sympathy from me when you nancy-fied proto-greens can't tootle into work for a mile or two because you don't have some namby-pamby cycleway system.

Cycling to work should be encouraged. I arrive at work well steamed, it's true, but within twenty minutes I'm feeling so good I could leap tall buildings with a single bound. My blood is pumping so good no problem would dare get in its way. (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SR2 5NW.)

Dave Redd: (14/9/89)

Keith Brooke has lost DHSS money through writing for long hours without selling? The idiot DHSS has misclassified him — he is clearly still learning his craft, and his hours are properly 'study' rather than 'work'. Can't he enrol in Syd Bounds' writing course? Or if broke, he could enrol at the Triptych SF Writing School and Ship Construction Co, where perhaps you and I could devise a 'curriculum' ("read SF") and 'exercises' ("write stories") which would get fans out of this particular poverty trap. The risk of a few red-pencil comments from 'tutors' such as you and I is surely outweighed by the chance of Income Support being restored. I wonder what happens if he sells an 'exercise' — should TSFWSASCC then charge a fee to maintain legality? (Plas-hyfyrd, 48 Cardigan Road, Haverfordwest, Dyfed, SA61 2QN)

Ken Lake: (9/9/89)

I must take issue with Buck Coulson's claim that "bigots are generally not great

readers of anything." My Ghod, has he never read religious works, political tomes, sociological surveys, daily newspapers or fanzines all written by bigots, for bigots?

Bigots are probably the people most driven to write, since they have an overwhelming desire to show others the error of their ways. Bigots fill every niche in society, proliferating especially in Parliament, Trade Unions and writers' circles. Without bigotry life would be dull and uninspiring; without bigotry nothing would ever get done.

Most people's first steps in public writing are the vitriolic notes they scribble in the margins of other bigots' books – does this bespeak their being poor readers? Of course, the precise application of the word "bigot" depends, as does so much else in this world, on where you stand, but the conjugation usually goes something like this:

I am a reasonable man/woman

Thou art ill-advised

He, she or it is bigoted

Our esteemed editor's zines bulge with bigotry and appeal more to bigots than to those tepid, colourless people who eschew controversy and absorb statistics and romantic novels.

Chuck Connor: (17/9/89)

Sheryl Birkhead comes up with an interesting thing. Not that the Hugos are too Americanified, mainly as that goes without saying, but the concept of running money into the awards themselves. Is such a thing really necessary to make it work in the fan world? Maybe I'm being old fashioned, but for something that is part of fannish/faanish tradition surely the need for money shouldn't creep into it (apart from the travelling funds, that is). The workings should be easy enough to get going, though it obviously depends on the good will of others (in short supply after certain recent events, but that could be construed as a conspiracy....)

Provided fanzines are prepared to run a small form, either as part of the zine itself (not such a good idea, mainly as it would lead to damaging the zines themselves) or as an insert into the mailings (hell, make them colour coded to try and circumvent any kind of stuffing by photocopied entries). Given

that, and the acceptance of it (a) by the fan community, and (b) by a major convention as a regular event — though I would be careful there and make sure it didn't clash with the programme running, and also careful in the planning so that it didn't take too much time (I mean, one would hate to sully the air of a convention with such things as fanzines, wouldn't one?).

Steve Sneyd: (6/9/89)

Re Ken Cheslin: he mentions the "Harold shot in the eye" thing. There are a lot of folk tales where it seems most sensible to just accept that "the verdict of folk singers is irreversible" and leave it there. But there are also a surprising number of cases where, when you dig deep enough, the folk belief turns out to be a lot nearer than the experts, simply because oral transmission received at a very young age has an enormous potential historical lifespan tight back to contemporary 'eyewitnesses' (sic). Grandad tells grandson, and the process goes back and back, and so you get situations like "the castle of Doncaster" of folk myth. Historians pooh-poohed it, then lo and behold, they're doing some ring-roading and the damn thing turned up in the excavation, clear as a bell, and "who's a fool now", the knowledge of the damn punters who just tell their grandsons stories they themselves heard as kids. So who knows, when Harold's skull turns up, just maybe there may be clear evidence of arrow impact in the ocular region after all. (4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD5 8PB)

Wahfs:

Harry Andruschak: John Berry: Brian Earl Brown: Judy Buffery: David Castle: Tony Chester: Jonathon Coleclough: Buck Coulson: Mat Coward: Pete Crump: Chester Cuthbert: Dorothy Davies: Bernard Earp: Brad Foster: Teddy Harvia: David Haugh: Martin Helsdon: David Hughes: Jason Jarvis: Terry Jeeves: Eric Mayer: John Miller: David Mooring: Mark Nelson: Cecil Nurse: Marc Ortlieb: Lloyd Penney: Marie Rengstorfe: Alan Sullivan: Sue Thomason: Arthur Thomson: Harry Warner: Bert Warnes: Owen Whiteoak. That's complete and accurate to 21/11/89, folks.

Rastus Muse

What's It All About, A.L.F?

Judging by the local activities of the Animal Liberation Front, the organisation seems to have been infiltrated by a bunch of radical firebugs. Whenever you hear of the organisation around Milton Keynes, it seems to be in relation to some blaze or other. I know of three such incidents: earlier this year they managed to gut the Dickins & Jones store in the Central MK shopping mall, and a little later set a firebomb in the mall's MacDonalds, which was fortunately spotted before it could do much damage. (Chrissie Hinds of the Pretenders got the blame for encouraging that one!). A while ago, these intrepid terrorists even went so far as to firebomb a cupboard in the OU Science Deanery, destroying tens of pounds worth of stationery, a mighty blow for the cause. Such actions do great harm to their sometimes praise-worthy campaign. Around here, the general feeling is that the group's acronym actually stands for Arsonists Liberation Front!

Nice quote from Robert Shelton's biography of Bob Dylan, **No Direction Home**: "Folklore ain't nothing but history born out of wedlock." Shame it's unattributed in the book.

Shake, Rattle and Rue

Interesting to read in an article in **The Guardian** (26/10/89) about the way the San Francisco earthquake effected computer hardware in the city. The cutting off of electricity (short-lived in many places), and of telephone lines (a lengthy delay), meant that people, in the words of Wendy Woods, "might as well have been at the remotest corner of the globe in some Tibetan village". Driving in the city became hazardous, not because of fallen buildings, but because all the traffic lights were out. And you couldn't get at your own money in the bank because the teller machines were out, and the bank's computers down. Credit cards similarly couldn't be used as there was no way of checking them. It's only when something

knocks the electronics out that you realise how essential they've become in the urban environment!

Cleft Sticks In Politics

What is it about politicians that makes them accept being made to appear stupid rather than dishonest? Nigel Lawson's resignation succeeded in putting Mrs T. on the hotspot, from which she emerged with no credit at all. She accepted being made to look stupid (first by not sacking Prof Walters in order to keep Lawson as Chancellor, then secondly by giving the impression that she couldn't believe Lawson when he said it was a resigning matter), rather than admit that she had fibbed in her interview with Brian Walden, when she said she did not know why Lawson resigned. And yet, the single most publicly-accepted thing about politicians is that they lie a lot! She would have done better to tell the truth in the first place, of course, that she would not submit to having her own bullying tactics used against her! (But that would have proved beyond doubt that the Cabinet was merely a mouthpiece for Mrs T.)

Strange Things you find in computer mags, like this quote from Adlai Stevenson: "While adding daily to our physical ease, technology throws daily another loop of fine wire around our souls".

Neat One-liner on the **Saturday Night Clive** show, spoken in a Thatcher voice: "Hypocrisy is the vaseline of political intercourse". How true!

Contents & Credits

Writers contributing to this issue are:

Chuck Connor (pp 4-11), Hilary Robinson (pp 12-13), Mic Rogers (pp 14-16).

Artists contributing are:

Krischan Holl (cover and pp 22), Shep Kirkbride (pps 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 16), Pavel Gregoric (pp 13).

And that's it for this issue. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Next issue due out February/March 1990.

