



CAPRICE

editorial column
by Irwin Hirsh

JUNK MAIL Ever since I first took
 out a subscription to
 TIME I have become a
regular recipient of junk mail. I
used to be bothered that my name and
address was being passed on to mail
order companies as a possible
sucker, but now I'm used to the
idea. And besides, I'm now getting
my own back. Most of the junk mail
I receive come equipped with Business
Reply Post envelopes whereby I don't
have to pay for the postage of my
order, should I wish to send off for
whatever they are trying to sell.

It used to be a quick trip to the
rubbish bin for any junk mail; now I put it through a slight detour. I
take that Business Reply Post envelope, rip off some of the advertising
literature, stuff the latter into the former and put it back into the
postal system. And wonder about who is now receiving the junk mail; I
know it is junk mail as soon as I see the envelope but they don't know
it is junk mail until after the envelope is open. I'd like to think
they have to pay to receive this junk mail but I imagine they have an
arrangement with the post office to pay one large, yearly sum no matter
how large the volume of mail.

Recently the amount of junk mail I receive has increased. With this I
noticed that the vast majority came from the same address. So I decided
to collect the reply envelopes until I get about 30 and send them all
off on the same day. I hope the student taken on for the handling of
these envelopes has a chuckle when he or she realises that part of the
work he or she is paid for doesn't add to the company's profits.

If a dog bites a man it is not news.
If a man bites a dog it is news.

If a dog bites a man it is not news.
But if it is live, it could be.

RELATIVITY My mother's car has a dashboard clock that is always fast.
Whenever I drive the car I set it back to the 'real' time.
My parents have recently been overseas, so for six weeks I
was the only person driving the car. After a while I noticed that I
didn't have to turn the clock back as much as when my mother had also
been using the car. Instead of turning it back 15 minutes I might have
to turn it back only 4.

The thing is that I was using the car about as frequently as when my
mother is home. Which is to say that the car was being used a lot less

than usual. It therefore follows that the less the car is used the slower the clock goes. Does this mean that the less the car is used the less time it takes to travel somewhere?

This space reserved for the obligatory
explanation of Why This Issue Is Late.

A REVIEW: "THREE IMAGINARY BOYS #1, June 1981. Edited by Robert Anderson, Eric Parkhill and Alan Smith, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. I feel partly to blame for this little fanzine, as its three editors are friends of mine from college and I am the one person who introduced them to fandom and fanzines. I also feel embarrassed for this fanzine as it commits nearly all the sins of fanzine production. Not only is printing on one side of the page and double spacing a waste of money, it is a bad layout trick. Add to this the lack of typing continuity, where things like the margin sizes change almost from page to page, and the use of horrible art, and you don't get an attractive looking fanzine. And the written contents doesn't fare much better. The title of the fanzine comes from the first album of The Cure, one of today's better rock groups, and all three editors devote some space in their columns to praising this group. But it is not enough to describe a group's music as "atmospheric" and leave it at that. You have to go on to tell us how they build up that atmosphere, what it achieves and what it effects in the listener. And after reading Alan's expectations of the forthcoming Australian tour by The Cure I can only expect him to be disappointed. He comes out expecting the greatest concert ever rather than the more mature expectation of a good concert, and if it is excellent that is a nice bonus. Alan reads like a 12 year old tenny-bopper who uncritically loves anything that appears on Countdown, rather than the thoughtful music connoisseur I know him to be. Then there are the anecdotes the editors present, which are not funny, uninsightful and just of the "then I did..." variety. In all, this fanzine shows that unless you are extremely talented or extremely lucky it is not a good idea to rush into publishing fanzines upon discovering the beast. It is far more advisable to spend a year or two receiving as many fanzines as there are, locating those that you enjoy, maybe contributing to them, and generally absorbing as much as there is in the field of fanzines. The only good thing about this fanzine is that not many copies were printed due to the expensive method of reproduction, the use of a college photocopier. And then, somehow, knowing the editors, I doubt we'll ever see a 2nd issue, which in itself, could be said to be the best thing about this fanzine."

- Irwin Hirsh, THYME, July 1981.

Not the start you would expect for a fanzine that was to become one of Australia's best ever. But that is the way things started for THREE IMAGINARY BOYS, and it did develop into such a great fanzine. It lived for only 9 issues, published over a 8 month period, and never had a print run of more than 60, but by its final 4 or 5 issues it had reached the status of a true focal point for its readership. Its editors were receiving more than 30 letters-of-comment per issue and had a large group of people offering unsolicited articles and regular columns. THREE IMAGINARY BOYS was a fanzine that people wanted to appear in, rather than just praise, and there was a tremendous feeling of comradeship among its readers. In February of 1982 the three editors killed the fanzine as they felt they had done as much with it as they could. Andrew Brown and I made that the lead item in the March issue of THYME and devoted much space to a description of its achievements. (We were helped by the fact that in the same issue we announced the results of the ThymePoll, in which TIB came in first in the best fanzine category.) Our description of the fanzine ended off with the prediction of a Ditmar nomination.

By now I imagine I've totally lost you, as none of this is true. There never was a fanzine called THREE IMAGINARY BOYS, and Andrew and I never reported any of this in THYME. Though, we very nearly could have.

Hoaxes and Awards.

It all had to do with Hoaxes and Awards. One Sunday in mid 1981, while working on an issue of THYME, Andrew and my conversation seemed to be stuck on two topics. Hoaxes and Awards. Andrew had just read my copy of Harry Warner Jr's A WEALTH OF FABLE, and we were most impressed with the chapter on fannish hoaxes. We spent a while discussing those hoaxes and generally marvelled at the energy people put into bringing them to fruition. After a while our topic of conversation turned to awards, particularly fan awards. Both Andrew and I aren't great fans of awards, and I was outlining my plan for an editorial in SIKANDER on the subject. I was using this discussion to test the reasons for my contempt.

They are: 1) I'd noticed that there are a number of people who aren't active in fanzines but support the idea of awards. They quite seriously nominate and vote for the best that they see. However, due to their lack of activity they don't get all fanzines, and probably not even a majority of them. Therefore they can't give a highly informed opinion. 2) I don't believe anyone is involved in fanzine fanac with the sole aim of winning an award, and that the winning of an award is just incidental to the fanac. The absence of such an award would not result in the reduction of the quality or quantity of any fanzine fanac. But take away the egoboo and creativity aspects and the attraction towards activity in fanzines just would not be there. As an analogy I take you back to the evening of 24th September, 1979. Peter Moore had just been announced the winner of the Brownlow Medal as the Best and Fairest player in the 1979 Victorian Football League season. Moments later he was telling a live TV audience that he would gladly give up the medal if

it guaranteed a Collingwood win in the Grand Final. He plays football with the aim of being a member of a premiership team, and in his efforts to achieve that aim he played so well that he was judged the best individual player in a team competition. The following Saturday Collingwood lost the Grand Final. 3) The presence of the award can be a distraction to providing the recipient of the award with the egoboo and encouragement in some more effective way. A fan editor could put out a fanzine in January or February, and due to the general lack of direct response, not put out another issue for the rest of the year. However, that issue may be of sufficient quality to gain a Ditmar nomination - which, I guess, requires 12-15 nominations. Now, if those 12-15 people had written a really good letter-of-comment within about a month of the publication of the fanzine, the fan-ed would very easily have received the impetus to find the energy to publish frequently and strive for an even higher level of excellence. An issue of a fanzine that receives excellent letters-of-comment from 15 Australians are few and far between. I can't imagine any fanzine editor that would rather see 15 people anonymously nominate his/her fanzine for an award, quite a while after publication instead of write excellent locs immediately after publication. It is a lot easier to list your 5 favourite fanzines for nomination for an award than it is to write each fanzine one extra loc per year, and given the choice it is easy to see what people would do. And I believe people do, unconsciously, make that choice. (My indecision towards fan awards started in 1979 with the release of the Ditmar nominations for work in 1978. In the Best Fanzine category I could name 5 fanzines that were better than the 5 that were nominated. I mentioned this in a distribution of Applesauce (a Sydney based apa) and in response received a list of reasons why my 5 didn't make the list. Only one issue published or not widely distributed or the name-changes caused confusion; all of which are the true reasons those fanzines were not nominated, but aren't acceptable in award that is supposed to be honouring excellence, and go a long way towards cheapening such an award.)

So, Andrew and I were sitting there, discussing these points, when it occurred to us that it is possible to have a non-existent item or person make the final ballot of the Hugo or Ditmar awards. If there was the Best Fanwriter Hugo in 1958 would Carl Brandon have been nominated? From the accounts I've read of Carl's popularity it sounds like he would have won such an award. For sure, at the time the only people who knew of the non-existence of Brandon were the small group who had created him, but then, as recently as 1981 we've had the Denvention II committee wonder aloud along the lines of "what is this WARHOOF 23, and why is it getting so many nominations for the Best Non-sf Book and Best Fanzine Hugos?" As far as Andrew and I could see just because an awards sub-committee has never heard of an item is no reason to exclude it from the final ballot should it receive the requisite number of nominations. And if such an item receives those nominations that, in itself, is proof of that item's existence. Andrew and I decided to arrange for a non-existent fanzine to make the final ballot of the 1982 Ditmars. We figured that 20 nominations would be more than enough, and we started to

think of 20 people who probably shared our contempt. Within 3 minutes we had come up with 15 names, and we were on our way.

But then we decided to go one step further and have people anticipate this fanzine appear on the ballot. And via a series of asking questions, discussing logistics and anticipating problems, we came up with a blue print outlining our six month plan of attack.

The review I 'reprinted' earlier was the first step in that plan. It may strike you as odd that the fanzine we wanted to champion as one of Australia's best ever we give such a bad review. It was designed to have no-one want to get onto the TIB mailing list. We didn't want to have anyone calling us out on the existence of this fanzine prior to our timely announcement of the hoax. From here on none of the fanzine's improvement was to be reported in THYME, apart from the occasional oblique reference, until we reported that its editors had decided to kill off the fanzine. As I mentioned earlier we were to report this in the same issue as the results of the ThymePoll. Our reason for conducting the Poll were to help out over the hoax. It seemed reasonable to us to use a poll/award to show up another poll/award.

And as I sit back, here and now, I still marvel at the energy those people put into their hoaxes back in the '50s. The only reason Andrew and I never carried out this hoax is because of a distinct lack of energy. Before we were to commit a word to the stencils of THYME we wanted to write to the people we needed as our partners in crime. We were to explain what we were doing, why we were doing it, and ask for their co-operation - which was to nominate TIB for the Ditmar and drop an occasional oblique line about it in their written fanac of Jan and Feb, 1982. Andrew and I never got around to writing one of those letters. I look back at our lack of energy as systematic of Australian fanzine fanac of the last few years: a place of little life where things get done out of a matter of course rather than a matter of creative urgency, a place where apologising for a lack of excellence takes an unhealthy precedence over striving for that excellence. And I also look over our blueprint and I realise that, at least, I managed to write my SIKANDER editorial discussing my contempt for awards and award systems.

- Irwin Hirsh

Spent most of 1976 trying, unsuccessfully, to break into the film industry as a script writer. First my agent's husband Peter and I wrote a script called JAW MAN, which was about this scientist who injects himself with shark antibodies (he's trying to find a cure for cancer) and turns into a shark man. Before you can twitch a fin he's going berserk in a fish restaurant and attacking people in public swimming pools. Finally he kills a girl in her own bathtub. 'Gee!' I hear you ejaculate, 'What a great film that would have made!' And I agree. A film producer even bought an option on it, but he's making a film about the Wombles instead. That's show biz.

- John Brosnan, letter in John Bangsund's PARERAGON PAPERS 1

David Grigg's
MUTTERINGS

RATS! It was 1973, and I was out of work. Times were much better then for employment than they are today, but I had quit the job I had without any idea of how I was going to get another, and to say the least I was then hardly the most employable person in Australia.

Two years before, I had dropped out of University by catastrophically failing in my second year. I had been studying to become a metallurgist, but things had gone wrong. Besides, I wasn't really sure that I wanted to spend the rest of my life working at Mount Tom Price or at Broken Hill. Since then, I'd been a tram conductor, an unemployed bum for eight months, and I had even spent a week working for Space Age Books.

Finally, I got a job as a base-grade clerk in the Public Service. However, I had luckily been saved from that fate worse than death when I was offered a job at the beginning of 1972 by Carey Handfield's father, who ran a public relations consultancy. That job gave me my first real experience in writing and in dealing with printers and graphic designers. One day, many years from now, I shall write about the year and a half I spent in that job, but this is not the time. Suffice it to say that I found it difficult to get on with the boss, and that, to be perfectly honest, I was almost totally incompetent at the administrative side of the work. By a series of careless blunders, I had almost managed to lose the firm two valuable accounts. But I was young and inexperienced, and had been rather thrown in at the deep end.

The end result of a year of increasing misery was that I decided that, for my own good, I had to quit.

So there I was, without a job again. I had no qualifications worth a damn (I understand that in India, people are quite happy to list B.Sc.(failed) at the end of their name, but it doesn't go down well here). My experience was in a limited field, and in a field that I was in no real hurry to get back into. And my self-confidence was at an extremely low ebb.

It was in this state of despair that I spoke one day to Paul Stevens. Now, before I go much further, I have to say that one thing I am not good at doing is remembering names. Therefore the following narrative will be liberally sprinkled with made-up names to fill in for my deficient memory.

Paul said "You still looking for a job?" "Yeah," I said. "Well, I was talking to Piotr O-----, the guy who runs RATS magazine. He's looking for someone to sell advertising for it. I suggested you." "Hey, great," I said, "thanks a lot!".

Now, RATS was a wierd monthly magazine that had been running by then for about four months. It was full of satirical cartoon strips, written by Piotr and drawn by his wife, or by other people. A lot of fans had something to do with the magazine, and Lee Harding had a number of his science fiction stories published in it, but it wasn't a science fiction magazine by any stretch of the imagination, nor was Piotr a fan. He became hostile when people called RATS a fanzine. And indeed he was right. RATS had a circulation of about 4000, was produced by web offset printing, and ran threes colours on the cover.

So, as you may imagine, I was wrapt in the idea of working for the magazine. I didn't really know much about it at that stage, though I had seen one issue, and I didn't know Piotr or his wife, Laurel(?) at all. But Paul gave me the details, and I rang up Poitr. He seemed very keen, and we arranged to meet.

My financial situation comes into the picture here a little. I had saved about \$500, a reasonable amount in those days, but I was still paying off my car, a Ford Escort I nicknamed the Purple Pollutomobile. I was still living at home with my parents, but Bruce Gillespie, who was leaving to go overseas for an extended trip in three months, had suggested that I might like to take over his flat in Carlton Street while he was away, and I was very enthusiastic about this. But of course, that would mean starting to pay rent.

RATS was run from an old two-storey building in North Carlton on the corner of a road that becomes Lygon Street in Carlton proper. I drove there one afternoon. It looked very dilapidated. There was a door with peeling paint in a side street, with the RATS logo on it (a grinning, mean-faced rat). I knocked. Piotr came down and let me in.

Piotr was a short guy with light-brown hair and an untidy but relatively short beard. I had worn my suit, and the moment I saw Piotr I knew that RATS was really no place for people in suits. That was okay with me. I hate wearing suits. But Piotr seemed to emanate a disreputable air. I suppose I should have expected that. RATS was a disreputable magazine.

Piotr lead me up a set of steep stairs. Apart from the loo, there were thre rooms upstairs: Piotr and Lorel's bedroom, their workroom where RATS was actually put together, and a lounge room full of wierd objects

like a tailor's dummy dressed up in an old military uniform. And lots of records.

Piotr lead me into the workroom, where there wereaa couple of desks covered in bits of artwork, photographs and pieces of typesetting. We discussed terms. I was to be paid a retainer of \$25 a week, and to get a 10% commission on all of the advertising I sold. Piotr was very happy to get hold of me, he said, because he felt it would be a step towards putting the magazine on a more professional footing, and would move it towards breaking even in costs.

I discovered that RATS at present was being funded by a young man who apparently had lots of money, who I shall call Bob. Bob had been on the lookout for a good investment when Piotr had got onto him, and persuaded him that RATS was that investment. Piotr had cautioned him, though, that it would take a couple of months for the magazine to start making a profit.

And so I started work for RATS.

Now, there were a couple of inherent problems about selling advertising space in RATS. One was the magazine's rather disreputable nature. The satirical articles were hilarious, but often verging on the obscene, especially as interpreted in 1973. For example, in a wonderful section satirising the women's magazine "New Idea", a knitting pattern was given for a penis mitten, to keep hubby's privates warm (Laurel had carefully worked it out and knitted a sample for photography). Then there was the t-shirt design which had its origin in an election campaign for Rubert (Dick) Hamer for Premier of Victoria - "I'm a Dickie Bird!" - with appropriate literal graphics. Or the cartoon strip called "The Revenge of the Sperm". All of these things made RATS the amazing and very funny magazine that it was, but it also put off some potential advertisers, even some of those selling goods for the teenage market.

The other problem in trying to convince large companies to place ads in RATS was the distribution and circulation of the magazine. Four thousand copies was very few, and the magazine, like almost any other new and unusual magazine, had horrendous problems with distribution. Gordon and Gotch have almost a monopoly over magazine distribution in Australia, and THEY tell YOU how many copies they are going to take from you for distribution. And they had told Piotr they didn't want any copies of RATS - presumably because of the disreputable nature of the magazine.

Piotr had fought hard against the problem this caused him. He had managed to get distribution by Collins into some newsagencies in Victoria, and for the rest, he ran around in his battered old Combi dropping copies off at various milk bars here and there which had agreed to take them. Although innovative, this solution did not help encourage potential advertisers that they were getting value for money.

The third problem, I suppose, was me. I found out by working for RATS

that although I may have a number of talents, selling things is not among them. I find it extremely hard to persuade people to buy something they don't want, or are suspicious of. I even find it hard to get people to buy something which they feel relatively neutral about. But I tried hard.

One of the things I did while at RATS was to organise a mailing campaign out to potential advertisers, giving them information on RATS and the rates, and so on. I am much happier with writing to people in this kind of situation rather than facing them. We sent out a lot of mailers, but I think in the long run it was wasted effort.

The easier part of selling advertising space was trying to fill a page of very small ads, which were available for \$10 a time. The main market for these was small shops or other businesses. It involved me trailing around to all sorts of "head" shops around Carlton and Prahran. There were a lot of such shops then, trying to make a living for their owners by selling Indian gear, paraphenalia for smoking marijuana, underground comics, imported records, that sort of thing. But going around to some of these places, I often wondered how they kept in business at all. Many of them claimed, quite sincerely, that they couldn't really afford a \$10 ad. Most of them didn't open for business until 10 or 11 in the morning, closed at 3 in the afternoon, and weren't open on weekends. This allowed their owners the relaxed, self-employed lifestyle they no doubt sought, but it wasn't very good for making a profit.

I also spent a lot of time visiting record companies, particularly those bringing out Australian artists. In 1973, putting out records by Australians was still a bit of a risk. The record companies were really quite co-operative in placing ads, as Piotr made a practice of reviewing records in the magazine - the great benefit to him was that this meant he got free review copies of records.

But I was still rapidly becoming disheartened. I wasn't selling anywhere near as much space as I needed to, or as Piotr had expected to. I got sick of hunting around for new people to try.

When I returned to RATS each day, I went into a kind of temporary office downstairs. What in fact I had was desk space on the desk of a sign-writing guy who rented the lower floor of the building, and who was away most of the time. So I sat there, surrounded by old signs and by odd pieces of papier-mache sculptures, telephoning around, introducing myself, and trying to get my foot in the door for an interview to try and sell space. It was a wierd environment to work in. And somehow, as soon as I had made clear to many people that the name of the magazine I was trying to sell space in was RATS, they lost interest. "Rats?" they said, "Oh dear, no."

Not everything was rosy in my relationship with Piotr, either. On one hand, he wasn't very pleased with my performance. On the other hand, I had begun to realise that Piotr wasn't very forthcoming with either my

agreed retainer, or the commission for the ads I had sold. He kept saying he had to get the money from Bob, his financier - and I gathered Bob was starting to realise that his investment wasn't going to be making any quick profits for him, and was therefore becoming reluctant to hand over more cash.

The other thing I had begun to notice was that Piotr, in a very quiet, undemanding sort of way, was monopolising any perks that came along. For example, not only did he retain all of the review records, which was perhaps reasonable, but also any other records that were given to me as gifts on my trips around to the companies (they were quite generous this way). When I was given a complimentary book when I visited a publisher, Piotr "borrowed" it and I never saw it again. Then, the people at Hoyts offered me two free tickets to see "Soylent Green". Somehow, Piotr convinced me that he had decided to start film reviews, and that he would therefore see the film. There was never any review, I might say, and what happened to the other spare ticket, I don't know. This didn't annoy me so much. After all, it was Piotr's magazine, and he and Laurel lived on a shoestring trying to run it. But it was the manner in which Piotr always contrived to get hold of the perk without ever being explicit about it that I began to find annoying.

Meanwhile, my savings were rapidly vanishing. I still had to find the payment for my car every fortnight, and it was becoming clear I couldn't possibly hope to make enough to pay rent too, even if Piotr had been more forthcoming with the money I was owed.

Finally, I realised I couldn't go on much further. My savings were exhausted. I told Piotr I had to quit.

His reaction was annoyance and alarm. He hadn't realised I needed to pay off my car, he told me, I should have realised I couldn't expect to make a lot of money this way. (A lot? I was receiving almost nothing). Things were going to improve, he said. He was meeting with Bob the next day, and he'd be getting a big cheque. Could I wait for that? I supposed I could.

The next day, the big meeting with Bob came along. And it was a bigger shock to Piotr than my wanting to quit. Bob was pulling out. No more money. It was the end for RATS. It was the end, too, of my hopes of getting paid what I was due.

And so I left RATS, as they say, "a sadder and wiser person". RATS closed down, and Piotr and Laurel went on to do other things. He was a good copywriter, and she a good layout artist, and so they made a good team. A few years later, I saw articles by Piotr in "Bottom Line", a much more serious, radical magazine. And some time after that, Piotr was publishing a magazine promoting the legalisation of marijuana. Indeed, it was he who stood for the Senate, I think in 1977, as J.J. Roach of the Marijuana Party.

Good old Piotr. Disreputable as ever. R.I.P, RATS.

- David Grigg

 Christmas is cancelled: they've found the father.

Ethnocentric items - those having a 'cultural proximity' to the viewer - are favoured in news broadcasts. Or as one pupil expressed it, "In the credit sequence "Nine O'Clock News" is printed on a picture of the world. This symbolises that the news is world wide, but as far as I can see it is mainly about politics from this country." The further away an event is from the experience of the viewer the more cataclysmic it must be to become news. There is almost a kind of gruesome mathematics to the formula as a journalist in one of Michael Frayn's novels suggests:

A rail crash on the Continent made the grade provided there were at least five dead. If it was in the United States the minimum number of dead rose to twenty; in South America 100; in Africa 200; in China 500.

And who could forget Claud Cockburn's headline expressly designed to be as unsensational as possible: "Small Earthquake in Chile: Not Many Dead".

- Len Masterman, "Teaching About Television"

Since I last did CHEAP CHAMPERS, I have: been back to Berkeley, where I delivered my paper, saw Ursula Le Guin, and had dinner with her, Lizzy Lynn and Terry Carr. Also got to see Dignified Ursula (sitting cross-legged in a Thai restaurant, all of us a little giddy after a day of Academic Serconity) using the skewer from her barbecued beef to flick grains of rice at Saintly Terry Carr. (You wondered what Pros do when they aren't signing autographs?) The nadir of the sercon-academic Stuff came when an earnest and rather dense Jungian critic, the young man (she said, patronizingly) who organized the seminar, tried to get Ursula to pin down the Meaningful Symbolism of her work. "Trees, you use a lot of trees. They seem to represent Good." "Well, yes," said Ursula, with her usual tact, "I do like trees, yes." "And rocks, now, Rocks are Bad." Ursula, straight-faced, "Why, no. I never met a pebble I didn't like." Academic, undeterred, asked her how she celebrated the Verbal Equinox; did she strip and dance on the lawn to the fertility goddesses, or what. Ursula, still deadpan, left a meaningful pause, then replied, sweetly, "That's none of your business."

I giggled, clutching Lizzy (an ex-English-M.A.), and we both pretended we'd never been near an Academic.

- Susan Wood, Warm Champagne #9, ANZAPA 59, December 1973

 Life is a sexually transmitted disease.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Eric Lindsay once made me a cheese sandwich, out of ingredients he had rounded up himself somewhere in the wilds of New Mexico. I asked him why, given his well-known views on the subject of people fending for themselves, he was performing this good deed. His answer was, "Because I don't have to."

I am no nearer now than I was then to understanding how an inherently virtuous act can be rendered less virtuous when it is performed under duress. I suspect that the concept is basically religious in origin, but that in any case is not what I want to discuss. What I want to discuss is the nature of compulsion and the effect of compulsion upon responsibility.

You don't have to do anything in this life. You don't have to pay taxes, vote, work, drive a car or brush your teeth. However, whatever you do, or don't do, there will be certain consequences. It is knowledge of the consequences of actions that guides us in choosing whether or not we should perform those actions. Sometimes the consequences are so overwhelming that we feel, incorrectly, that we have no choice.

Children have a lot of decisions made for them because they have little knowledge and less understanding of consequences. Unless his mother coaxes him to try something else a three-year-old will go on ordering sausages and ice-cream for every meal until he dies of malnutrition. As a child's knowledge of the world increases he is able to make more decisions, within the limits of his understanding. If I may quote a personal example: when I was eleven I chose my own hairstyle, clothing and reading matter. I was not, however, consulted about what school I was going to attend, for the very good reason that if I had been allowed to follow my own inclinations to remain where I was I would have received a fourth-rate education and been rendered useless for all practical purposes. Six years later my parents made no attempt even to influence, much less dictate, my plans for further study. I was taken (correctly) to know more about the matter than they did.

Life is a mass of forking paths, and whatever you do you could have done something else. Some decisions are made calmly, after a good deal of rational consideration; others are made in haste, or in the heat of emotion. Either way, a sane adult still has to take responsibility for his actions. It is a sign of immaturity to claim

Christine Ashby

that you are not responsible for something because you were compelled to do it by social pressures or the law or your old mother's tears. "Now look what you made me do!" is a quintessentially childish exclamation.

I do not wish it to be thought that I am confusing responsibility for an action with responsibility for its consequences. The consequences of an action performed under duress will often be mitigated in proportion to the degree of duress, at least where those consequences are dictated by the decisions of other human beings. This can lead to some curious results. A drunken driver who cannot even remember killing a pedestrian will not be convicted of murder for the reason that he was too intoxicated to have formed an intention to kill; the killing is seen as too remote from his action in getting drunk to be a consequence for which he can be held responsible.

Whilst I am of the opinion that you cannot be compelled to do anything, I would not argue with the proposition that you can in some circumstances be prevented from doing something. At first blush the most obvious cases of prevention involve brute force, but they are perilously close to the hard cases of compulsion under threat of violence. Cases not involving physical duress are even less susceptible to analysis - if you don't marry someone because your father threatens to disinherit you, is your father compelling you to break it off, or preventing you from marrying? And what about a situation in which a person's behaviour is constrained by more subtle pressures? If, for example, a person does not repeat something told to him in confidence, does the confidential relationship with the informant compel him to remain silent or prevent him from speaking?

Surely the most unambiguous cases of prevention are those in which other people set conditions which cannot be met. Thus no woman can become a member of the Melbourne Club (and no man can become a member of the Lycaean Club); no person may hold a university degree, saving a purely honorary degree, without passing the prescribed examinations; no-one under the age of eighteen can enrol as a voter. As long as the conditions stand no effort of will by an ineligible person can overcome the limitations imposed. On the other hand the ineligible person is relieved of any responsibility for the consequences. Thus in time of war even the most rabid patriot will not attack a one-legged man for having failed to enlist.

All this is rather a long way from cheese sandwiches in the middle of nowhere. I didn't write it because I had to, whatever Irwin might think, but because I felt like it. I am rather hoping that the consequences will be an exciting boots 'n all free-for-all on the subject of free will, which I have always considered a much more entertaining topic than whether the table ceases to exist when I stop looking at it. Whether I get the chance to assess the consequences of publishing this article depends of course on whether Irwin actually publishes it. Perhaps if I could make him feel that he has no choice...

- Christine Ashby

 Such a boy!

News seems to arise naturally out of the world. It is almost as if most people still regard the content of news reaching them as the whole news, the only news; a direct relay somehow of the real world. It is very easy to overlook the fact that any news presentation is a tiny fraction of all the news carried by the communications systems. There is also a feeling that if this news, the only possible news, were distorted or biased it would be obvious to the receiver - the belief that bias and distortion are an addition to the truth and are therefore identifiable and separable from the truth. A very wide perspective is needed to understand that bias and distortion are closely interwoven with so-called facts from the stage of selection right through to the presentation of news, and indeed that the notion of truth and objectivity is an abstraction. Once an item of news has been selected for transmission to the public there is already bias, some selective principle, some value, quite apart from the way it is presented.

- P. Willis, 'What is news? A case study'.

'Working Papers in Cultural Studies", Spring 1971.

Having arrived late at two world wars, President Reagan wants to make sure America arrives early for the next one.

- Angela Rippon, playing Maggie Thatcher
 "The David Frost Show", 4-6-1983

My name is Mary Attard and I would like to tell you about my favorite footballer, who is Silvio Foschini. I think that Silvio is the spunkiest footballer in the League. I've liked him ever since he got his first Reserves game. I was watching the Reserves and I knew that there was a new player playing but I didn't know who it was. Then I saw him - no. 45. He was unreal and then I had a look at his face and he was a spunk. I love his little eyes, specially when he laughs and squints them - they make him look so cute. And the gap in between his two front teeth...he has got a chip and its shaped like a triangle. After a game, I go in the dressing rooms...I know I shouldn't but I can't help myself. I stay in a corner and keep my eyes on Silvio and wait till he takes his jumper off just to see his beautiful chest. It has not got one single hair on it and it's the most beautiful chest in the whole wide world. Oh! You should see me...I go bananas and my friends and the people around me think I'm nuts. I'd have him in anything, even in nothing...that's how much of a spunk he is.

- from a letter in "Australian Football Action", issue 7, 1982, in reply to an article on the best looking players in the Victorian Football League.

 When do they know it?

LOST IN OZ

INTRO: Many years ago, when I was a still-green 21, I went to New York City to become a Professional Jazz Critic. I had relatively few qualifications: I was professionally unpublished, and my knowledge of jazz rested on a collection of perhaps 500 albums and the half-dozen or so then-extant books on the subject, including works of fiction like Young Man With A Horn. I was naive, but enthusiastic. I loved jazz. I idolized many jazz musicians of that era, particularly Charles Mingus and Duke Ellington.

Amazingly, within a few months I had succeeded: I was a columnist and staff writer for METRONOME, the oldest music magazine around, and I was a columnist for JAZZ GUIDE, a magazine briefly published by Tom Wilson - the man who would later discover and record Frank Zappa's Mothers. I found myself receiving the monthly output of many record companies and visiting jazz clubs or taking in jazz concerts three or four times a week. Suddenly I was inundated with jazz.

Swell, huh? Just what I'd dreamed of, right?

Well, yes, but....

Sturgeon's Law applied to jazz, I discovered. As a jazz fan who read the reviews and paid for every record he owned and was more than once forced by that investment to give a record more than one chance (until it might eventually become a favourite no matter how little I'd thought of it on first hearing), I'd been skimming off that top 10% that was at least good and usually better than good. But as a working critic I was obliged to sit through boring twenty-minute solos and any number of decidedly off nights during which major musicians "took care of business" in the most perfunctory way. And so many of those free records were not worth hearing once, but of course I had to listen to them at least once in order not to miss the good ones now that I was writing the reviews and doing the winnowing of wheat from chaff. I was swamped with that other 90% - the stuff I'd previously managed to avoid. Eventually listening to albums for review became a real chore, and when

ted white

a look at current Australian fanzines

METRONOME folded a couple of years after I'd joined its staff I was relieved. I'd burned out on jazz. For the next year or two I listened to little but Bartok, Janacek, and Poulenc.

VERSE: "...I have one general comment on almost all Australian fanzines that I receive there days - they are almost invariably just on the decent side of boring." - Leigh Edmonds in ORNITHOPTER #10

"I was urging Irwin Hirsh to get someone to do a good critical fanzine review column for SIKANDER; not only would it do his fanzine good, but it seems to me that it would do Australian fandom good, too. Most of the fanzines I've gotten from Australia in the past couple of years have been boring - quite a change from the Aussie fandom that I first encountered." - John D. Berry, in a letter on ORNITHOPTER #10

CHORUS: I had no idea of what I was letting myself in for when I agreed with Irwin's suggestion, last September, that I write an installment of a "guest-reviewer" fanzine-review column in his fanzine.

I was then receiving very few Australian fanzines, and I was curious about current-day Aussie fandom. For much of the seventies I'd all but ignored fanzine fandom, my energies concentrated on professional editing and my fanac confined to a couple of private apas and the infrequent piece for a genzine. When it finally dawned on me that the reason for my lack of interest in most fanzines was not solely my own fault, I decided to reinvolve myself in fanzine publishing and put out the kind of fanzine I wanted to see - in hopes that in the process I'd stimulate the production of more fanzines I could enjoy.

PONG, and subsequently GAMBIT, certainly reinvolved me with fanzine fandom in a major way. In particular I found myself fascinated with British fanzines, because so many Brits seemed to embody the talents and skills I'd found missing in US fandom. Perhaps due to the very size of the British Isles, Britfandom seemed to have a concentration and intensity which I had not seen in my own country for fifteen or twenty

years. US fandom had become bloated and diffuse, and ultimately Balkanized both attitudinally and geographically. It was possible to be a BNF in one sector of US fandom and at the same time totally unknown in others. Local conventions began routinely to attract as many attendees as the largest Worldcons of only a few years earlier. There are many people in this country who consider themselves active fans, and who socialize mostly if not exclusively with other active fans, who have never seen a fanzine, or if they've seen fanzines have never developed any interest in them.

For a long-time fan -- and I've been an active fan for over thirty years now, boy and man -- this is a peculiar state of affairs. For me fanzines were always where it was at. Fanzines were the core of fandom, not only the central form of communication but also the historians and mythmakers of fandom, as well as being that part of fandom which could lead in time to one's evolution into a sf pro. Fanzines are the purest form of creative recreation. Fanzines are fun.

Or at least they ought to be.

When I confessed to Irwin that I'd seen very few Australian fanzines, he sent me some to read and review. In most cases he sent me two issues of each, so that I could better grasp the context of each zine.

I sat down to read them with initial eagerness, but soon bogged down and began skimming. Then, mindful that Irwin's deadline was more than a month away and other deadlines were more imminent, I put them aside in a pile To Be Read.

There they sat for the next month and more. In the interim other fanzines arrived, chief among them WARHOON 30 and TAPPEN 5 -- which both arrived on the same memorable day, giving me a sudden surfeit of high-quality fanzine material in which to wallow. Curiously, a leitmotif of both fanzines was D. West, that indefatigable ponderer of the whys and wherefores of fanzines and fanzine-criticism. His 1977 epic article in THE WRINKLED SEREW #7 had finally prodded forth a reaction from Patrick Neilson Hayden in the form of a column in WARHOON, which was coupled to a long letter of comment by West and responses to that letter by editor Bergeron and myself. Altogether the West material occupied the largest single chunk of WARHOON, a fat fanzine. TAPPEN was not quite so fat but half its space was taken up by West's "Performance," a tour-de-force on West's part which integrates his morose con-report-style with his equally morose intellectualizing and rationalizing of his own prejudices about fanzines and fanwriting. West has deliberately painted an unattractive picture of himself and framed it with conundrums about the necessity for, and impossibility of, complete truthfulness in himself. Bravura stuff, despite my disagreement with many of his basic posultates and my dislike of his arrogant posture.

In this same period of time -- late fall, 1982 -- I had to contend with an attack from an unexpected quarter: some of the fans who had been pooting

about with such lacklustre results in their own fanzines deeply and bitterly resented not only my own reinvolvement in fandom but all that they felt I stood for. They saw me as a teenager might see his or her parent who wanted to party with the gang: some kind of obtrusive interloper from the other side of the generation gap. I was accused of being a "Sixth Fandom Fan," of harboring nostalgic delusions about The Good Old Days, and of propounding a subversive message when I said I thought some of them needed higher standards.

Irwin's deadline came and went. I felt guilty about it, but not as guilty as I did about a paying column (for THE COMICS JOURNAL) which was also behind deadline. In both cases the basic problem was that I had to wade through stuff that didn't appeal to me before I could write the pieces. Maybe this is a character flaw in me, but over the years I've developed an increasing aversion to reading things I don't want to read, although I need to Have read them. It's like listening to all those mediocre jazz records. Starting in 1963, when I obtained a position at the bottom of the editorial totempole at F&SF which required that I read the "slush" (unsolicited submissions) for that magazine, I have had to read a lot of material which was below my own standards for readability. When I left AMAZING and FANTASTIC at the end of 1978, it was with a sense of real relief that I would never again be subjected to that experience. (And when I found myself editor of HEAVY METAL a year later the very first thing I did was to throw out the fiction and free myself from the task of reading anymore submissions of that kind.)

I have always regarded fanzines as an area in which I could stay the fan, reading only what I chose to read, reading essentially that top 10%. If an awful fanzine arrived in the day's mail, I could skim it and toss it aside, with no further obligation. Even when writing fanzine reviews, I could review what I wanted to review - whether because I liked it or because I disliked it - skipping anything I didn't want to be bothered with.

But here, for the first time, was a situation in which I could not do that. Here I had a duty, both to the piece I was to write and to the people whose fanzines I had been presented with, to fully read everything, no matter how unappealing I found it.

By now you will have figured out that my own feelings about the fanzines Irwin sent me for review are not too different from those feelings expressed by Leigh Edmonds and John Berry and quoted earlier. But what has plagued me - and made me unconscionably late in writing this - is the need I've felt to give some kind of rational, critical shape to these feelings. It's not enough to say, "This stuff overwhelmingly bores me." That alone is little more than a passing insult and hardly guaranteed to produce any worthwhile change. What is needed are specifics, coupled with some sort of overall insight, not only into the essence of the problem but into the essence of the solution.

Let's try the specifics and see what follows from them.

THE MENTOR (#s 38 & 39): This was, until I read it, the most attractive of the batch. Not, I think, for its specific artwork, but rather for its more cosy quarto size and competent interior layouts, which while uninspired have at least the virtues of consistency and neatness. But that is to be expected after forty issues. The cover art (on both issues) sets the tone for the actual contents: it is earnest, lacking in style, and typical of the mediocre entries in convention artshows, especially in theme. I note it is all (two front and two back covers) by Kerrie Hanlon, and the subjects are a pseudo-unicorn, a butterfly-winged semi-nude female, a story-telling tableau (comprising a turtle-necked macho guy holding a joint, a humanoid ET-type alien, and a male barbarian hero awkwardly brandishing a sword, all against an abstract city skyline), and a scaley merman rising from the deep. Typically, the actual execution is inconsistent both in terms of stylistic texture and in terms of rendering; the anatomies vary according to what could be copied from a picture (the pose of the butterfly-girl, derived from a pinup) and what had to be imagined; and yet, despite the naivete of the work, some of it is arresting.

Thus also the written contents of THE MENTOR. There is a musty old-fashioned earnestness to much of THE MENTOR, and that would seem to derive primarily from its editor, Ron L (no period) Clarke, who appears in an electrostencilled photo at the head of his editorial in #38 to wear an expression of bemused contempt, perhaps for the subject of his editorial, the Ditmar Awards.

I note that others, referring to this editorial in the various other zines Irwin sent me, have condemned it. Knowing nothing of the personalities and issues involved, I'll forgo comment except to note that Clarke reveals a deep antipathy for fannishness here: "These are primary fannish fanzines - and sf is but a small part of their content," Clarke says of fanzines like Q36 and WEBBERWOMANS WREVENGE whose nominations for Ditmars he objects to. "The Ditmars are supposed to be 'Australian SF Achievement Awards,'" he adds.

I find this dichotomization of fanzines into "fannish" and "sf" remarkably silly, especially when one notices that the biggest sf name in THE MENTOR, A. Bertram Chandler, is as apt to talk about canned food in his column as he is about sf, making him easily the most "fannish" contributor to the fanzine.

Reading John J. Alderson's "The Historical Basis of Myth" also made me feel I'd come into the middle of something. The piece was quite adequately criticised for its several shortcomings in the next issue, but what was remarkable to me, but perhaps unremarked upon by Alderson's critics because of their familiarity with it, was the very tone of the piece, which was that of a True Believer arguing with the Faithless, earnest almost to fanaticism. I know nothing about the man, but he reads to me like someone of limited education who has taken the effort to pursue various lines of research at a good library, thus spottily and

unevenly educating himself in certain specialities, but often ignorant of basic links well known to those more broadly informed. Alderson's piece was humorless and defensive, and appeared to confuse various well-defined concepts (primarily myths, folk-tales, and recorded history, using them interchangeably. Why does it appear in this fanzine?

The sercon nature of THE MENTOR is reinforced by pieces like Jane Brooks' "Australian Space Science at the Crossroads," which describes exactly the situation the title suggests, and reminds me of Harry J.M. Andrushak's pedantic pieces on the U.S. space program, although Brooks writes better. The article could easily have been reprinted from a mundane source, including as it does a bibliography and an exhortation at its conclusion for political action.

Into this the intrusion of Mike McGann's "Spaced Out" cartoon feature is jarringly out of character. McGann appears to be the only cartoonist in Australian fandom worthy of being called one. He at least has some sense of cartooning style, although it shines only by contrast with the unstylish cartooning mostly to be found in Aussie fanzines. I'd rank him slightly below Phil Foglio in the ranks of fancartoonists worldwide; like Foglio his ideas don't seem very inspired, or even very funny. But in THE MENTOR "Spaced Out" seems ultra-fannish.

The Julie Vaux "portfolio" in #38 comes incongruously close on the heels of "Spaced Out," and reveals Vaux to be a less accomplished Hanlon, the amateurisms in her work much more obvious.

The lettercolumn in #38 includes a naive discussion of drugs, in which Clarke reveals that his real objection to drugs is that some of them produce a "high". That is, he favors only the medical use of drugs, with "no side effects and with a totally controlled, selected use (ie, no 'high')". Ah, the puritan ethic does die hard.

In #39 the lead item is "The Empty City" by Peter Lempert. It is unreadably bad, and I wish I had left it unread. Like so many amateur attempts as sf, it is quasi-sureal, quasi-significant, and quasi-literate. I presume this is part of the "sf" Clarke feels "sf" fanzines should have within their pages. Speaking as someone who has sold every piece of sf I've finished (and some that I haven't) in the past twenty years, I must tell you that this is not the way to climb the ladder to prodom. The kind of feedback aspiring authors like Lempert get from the letter-writers in THE MENTOR is totally unsuitable, since no one does these putative authors the kindness of dissecting their stories and criticising their basic flaws. Most of the letter-writers simply say they liked or disliked the fiction in the previous issue and leave it at that, while some have such low standards that they actually encourage THE MENTOR's authors with misguided praise. This is precisely why amateur fiction has no genuine place in fanzines: THE MENTOR is as good a bad example as any I've seen, and makes of its name a bad joke.

This is compounded by contributors like Burt Libe, whose "Some Thoughts on Science Fiction" is constructed with equal parts ignorance and ego. Libe found himself initially attracted to the garish covers on the sf pulps of the late forties and early fifties, but put off by the "dryness" of the stories in those pulps. "I...found the stories very difficult to read, impossible to follow. Try as I might, story after story, I found them all dry, boring uninteresting. ... I felt cheated." The man is talking about the contents of AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES in their pulp days - not the rarified heights of Campbell's ASTOUNDING, mind you. It should come, then, as no surprise that Libe's "Thoughts" reveal no insight into sf at all. Why bother publishing them in a "sf" fanzine, then? This is surely a far cry indeed from the calibre of critical thought once published in Bangsund's AUSTRALIAN SF REVIEW and still in the once-in-a-while Gillespie SF COMMENTARY. Is Clarke aiming for a low-brow approach to sf in contrast to the erudite approach of Bangsund and Gillespie, or can he simply not tell the difference between the two?

Finishing out both issues of THE MENTOR are brief squibs on "SF Books Recieved", nicely decorated with electrostencilled miniatures of the book covers. Clarke's taste appears to be oldguard mainstream here, which hardly surprises me coming on the heels of the conservative sentiments editorily sprinkled throughout the rest of the fanzine.

In all, I thought THE MENTOR curiously parochial in its outlook, and minor league in quality. Chandler's good-natured column appears to be the best feature in the zine, far overshadowing everything else with its ease of tone and professionally smooth prose.

THE HAG AND THE HUNGRY GOBLIN (#5): This is one of the fanzines of which Irwin supplied only one issue. Pity; it was one of the more enjoyable zines.

My enjoyment was more or less in spite of the fanzine's scruffy appearance, which features some of the worst stylus work I've seen in a modern fanzine. The scratchiness of the lettering-guide work makes me wonder if editor Ashby has a proper stylus, or whether he might just be using a handy four-penny nail to cut those torn lines on the stencils.

In any case, Ashby appears to have only two lettering guides at his disposal, and to dislike using either one very much. Thus Jean Weber's "Creative Writing Class Fails", a one-page article, has her byline, "JEAN WEBER", crudely lettering-guided across the top of the page in inch-high letters, and the title simply typed in caps and underlined below. Because of the space wasted on that huge byline, the article carries over six lines to the top of the facing page, below which after a double-space is typed THE PUBSY MARSUPIAL FAN SUPPLEMENT, which turns out to be the heading for a new piece by a different author (Ashby), but looks like a new topic by Weber in an ongoing column, especially since there is no byline. I referred back to the contents page to find out what was really going on.

Actually Ashby's Fusby piece is a rather cleverly conceived conreport, presented as an alphabetically ordered guide with topics like "Art Show", "Atmosphere", etc., to "Vance, Jack". It worked reasonably well: I was able to assemble from it a moderately complete picture of the Tschalicon, at least from Ashby's point of view. I did start getting the feeling midway through that he might be winging it, on-stencil, working perhaps from a simple list of words he expected would spark commentary; references which looked as though they might develop into running jokes or better rarely actually did.

What came through most sharply - despite some effort to downplay it - was Ashby's disappointment in GoH Vance, a disappointment I have seen reported elsewhere also, and which doesn't surprise me that much since I've known Vance for years. Vance apparently didn't make much effort to involve himself in the convention, but then again he never has. Perhaps future convention organisers should make discreet inquiries in the prospective GoH's home country as to how well or how much he socializes before inviting him (or her) to make the expensive journey.

I enjoy food, and I enjoy cooking food and I even enjoy reading about food, but John J. Alderson's "Consummation of the Feast" managed to put me off nonetheless. Here again is that lecturing, almost hectoring tone: "Many years ago, as we count years in Australia, our poets and our writers founded a club - the Bread and Cheese Club." Tell me: how do you count years in Australia? Is there something in the reversed seasons of the southern hemisphere which stretches out or condenses the years as you count them? I note that if Alderson is to be believed, you don't consider your poets to be "writers"; perhaps theirs is an exclusively oral tradition?

I stumbled through Alderson's prose with a growing sense of numbness which nevertheless somehow failed to prepare me adequately for his final line: "Eat drink and be merry, not for the wrong reason (that is, that tomorrow we die) but because today we live." (All punctuation sic.) This may pass for literacy in THE MENTOR, but in the more relaxed precincts of THE HAG & THE HUNGRY GOBLIN it stands out like a bashed thumb, radiating pain.

A footnote indicates that this series on food by Alderson began in THE HAG's first issue, in 1976, and thus has now achieved the embalmed state of tradition. Too bad; I am grateful I've not had to read any of the others and I can only hope that now that I'm forewarned I can avoid those yet to come.

Christine Ashby is serializing a report on her 1976 trip to the US, "Tyre Tracks Over America", and has finally reached part two in this issue. She has me hooked: she writes smoothly and I'm a sucker for As Others See Us reports on the US. As usual I'm amazed by the things Christine encountered (like an appalling ignorance of our closest neighbor, Canada, in many non-fan Americans) and the problems she faced (like who to tip and how much; apparently this European concept has yet

to reach Australia), and I'm ready to read more. Next installment she promises the MidAmeriCon itself, and I look forward to it.

Both Ashbys write in what I would call a journeyman-level fannish prose: typically, its authors sound comfortable with their audience and there's an easy intimacy of shared thoughts and observations. While such prose rarely attains the higher levels of either wit or insight, it is not clumsy and it is usually expressive of the author's personality. Reading such prose is like sitting down to a comfortable conversation. This is the bedrock of fannish writing, and of fanzines themselves. What disturbed me about the Australian fanzines I read is just how seldom I encountered this level of writing in them - a level I take for granted in most fanzines and find exceeded in the best.

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE (vol. 2, #s 1 & 2): More neatly organized than THE HAG, but less appealingly so than THE MENTOR, this fanzine had the air of an apazine to it even before I read far enough into it to discover its apa connections.

The cover is by Allison Cowling and is a first cousin to the drawings by Hanlon and Vaux in THE MENTOR, if even more amateur. The interior art is mostly decorative and worse yet: one actually manages to depict a tiny butterfly-girl on a flower, waving to (I guess) a bug, all in a space hardly more than an inch square. Notebook doodlings: female faces surrounded by alien decoration. None of it betrays any artistic talent.

There is a terrible temptation for me to label this kind of "art" girlish - because in fact that is what it really is, reminding me forcefully of the drawings by adolescent girls in their diaries and notebooks and so often seen nowadays in the poorer art shows at local conventions where it can be classified as a genre in its own right, reflecting a preoccupation with "pretty" things and girlish fantasies of horses (unicorns) and butterfly-winged fairies - but to do so would, I am terribly certain, pitch me headlong into a confrontation with feminists like Weber who must surely object to such stereotyping. Still, there it is, and how does an avowed feminist like Jean Weber reconcile the decorations in her fanzine, cute dragons and all, with the strong feminist rhetoric she publishes? I mean, rape on the one hand, and little-girl drawings on the other?

What I get from this is that Weber occupies another position at right angles both to the oldguard sf-ism of Clarke and the more fannish positions of people like Ashby and Ortlieb. That is, she is coming from non-fannish traditions which are also non-sf. The art she uses makes this point almost subliminally; her writing underscores the point.

Reading Jean Weber is to me like reading the thoughts of a person who is literate, interesting, and intelligent, but essentially mundane in outlook. I find no awareness in her writing that the topics she is presently pursuing are not fresh and original to her; no awareness of the accumulated thought of an established community, which is what

fandom is. And her thinking (as expressed here and in the other fanzines in this batch) is essentially concerned with mundane, everyday problems: the problems of an intelligent woman coping socially with people who have probably prejudged and stereotyped her and likely are her intellectual inferiors.

A considerable amount of space is given over in these two issues to the subject of rape. Elsewhere (in THE HAG) she wrote about a mundane creative writing class, which from her disappointed description was typical of such classes. And in THE PETER PRINCIPLE #1 she coauthored "How to Handle A Woman", about which a number of fans commented that she was belaboring the obvious and that her observations better suited most non-fans.

It's hard to know how much of this is due to the Australian culture in which Weber, an American emigre, has emersed herself, and how much may be due to the circles of Australian fandom in which she moves, since I am ignorant of both to a large degree.

It does seem strange to me, though, to encounter fresh debate on whether rapists are primarily motivated by sexual needs or the need to gain power over their victims; I thought it had been pretty well established by now that for most rapists it's a power/revenge/overcoming-feelings-of-inadequacy-and-inferiority sort of thing. Most rape victims aren't of more than average attractiveness, and many are so old that the rapist must be using them as surrogates for his mother. Many rapists don't achieve orgasms (or do so prematurely before achieving penetration) and a surprising number of them maintain mundane lives in which their normal sexual needs are met. But these facts appear in WEBBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE (a strangely apt title for the forum of such discussions) as though newly discovered.

And there is a strange naivete as well on the part of some of the participants in this discussion, a naivete which Weber fails to address herself to. Thus, one rape victim wonders if "you may not even consider /it/ rape", because she was raped anally rather than vaginally, and says, "It was not the rape that is normally thought of as being rape." Legally defined (along with oral rape) as sodomy, anal rape is of course considered rape - and is a common problem for many men in prisons. The same rape victim said that "in my case there was no evidence of semen on me. This was because my attacker was impotent." I imagine she means that he failed to have an orgasm, but "impotent" means a failure to achieve (or maintain) an erection - which would have made anal rape virtually impossible. Even so, I doubt the thoroughness of her medical examination, since traces of seminal fluid should still have been found from the man rubbing his member against her or trying to force it into her; some fluid oozes out as a lubricant anyway and medical literature is full of cases of pregnancies achieved without male orgasm, due to this leakage.

I waited for Jean to comment editorially (as she does many other places

in these issues) on the ignorance, naivete and confusion revealed by some of her correspondents, even if only to reassure the victim I quoted that indeed she was raped - bad enough to endure a rape without wondering afterwards if it could really be called that, a process which can only undermine the victim further with self-doubts and confusion - but I waited in vain. Weber does nothing to untangle this confusion and abate such ignorance.

I wonder why. Is she equally ignorant? It seems unlikely, considering the sources she quotes in her original bibliography. Did she feel it was inappropriate to correct her correspondent's misunderstandings? I don't know, but I do feel that the uncorrected promulgation of misinformation and misunderstanding is hardly in keeping with the apparent purposes of the overall discussion.

But then, I may be wrong about those purposes. It seems to me that when one brings up such a large, heavy, basic topic in a fanzine it is in order to bring the discussion out of the closet of hushed private conversations, and to expose it to the forum that constitutes the fanzine's audience. What is accomplished by this? Feelings are vented, ideas are exchanged, and perhaps even consciousness may be raised. But primarily the tone of this discussion - beginning with the article, "The Politics of Rape", and continuing with reprinted apa responses and, in the next issue, fresh letters of response - appears to be didactic; informative. Thus, information known perhaps to a few is shared with many. Hopefully prejudices on all sides are displaced by factual information.

While Weber in her original article kept an intellectual distance between herself and her topic, she subsequently published two first-person accounts by rape victims of their experiences. This I thought was far more valuable, despite the noted factual shortcomings in one account, because each victim offered insight into the experience of rape and its legal postscript. I've encountered similiar reports before, most often in newspapers, but like Chris Atkinson's "Asking For It" (TAPPEN 5), these first-person accounts allow me to empathize with the victim's dilemma. Such empathy is of course crucial for any man considering the subject.

Although rape as a topic dominates both issues, there are other topics discussed in WEBER:WOMAN'S WREVELGE, including (Ron Clarke please note) sf.

In v.2 n.1 Weber has a sf story, "A Question of Ethics". I wonder if she tried it out on that creative writing class. Had it been brought to my writer's group (The Vicious Circle, a group which includes a number of professional writers), it would have been trashed, since it is essentially a static polemic set in a future world in which women run things and are arguing about giving men equality. This was not only done with a heavy hand, it perpetuates the false myth that societies principally reflect solely "male" or "female" qualities, depending on

which gender is in power.

I find it a little discouraging to think that even here in fandom, where, as we all know, we fans enjoy Broad Mental Horizons, the thinking expressed on the subject of gender and gender-based inequities is so, well, so mundane. This may be inescapable when we are discussing the attitudes we encounter in the mundane world, but must it be equally inescapable when we postulate sf futures, or when we discuss viable alternatives? Must it still come down to the everyday cliches about how insensitive and aggressive men are, and how caring and nurturing women are, and how if only the world was run by women it would be a utopia? Must it be rendered as crudely as the old children's rhyme about "What are girls made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice. What are boys made of? Snips and snails and puppydog's tails" - before we grasp the intrinsic sexism of such stereotyping?

The majority of male fans are sensitive and emphatic; the majority of female fans are independent, intelligent and at least as aggressive as the male fans. None of us fit the mundane gender-stereotypes very well, and most of us know it. Why not act like it, then?

THE PETER PRINCIPLE (#s 1 & 2): Peter Toluzzi is one of the few contemporary Aussiefen I've actually met, although we said little to each other at the Chicon (we were both inhaling gas from balloons, making it hard to converse) and didn't sit down for a conversation until one afternoon when he was passing through nearby Baltimore and we discovered we shared tastes in music, among other things. That afternoon, shortly after I'd purchased a Melbourne in 85 t-shirt from him, Peter handed me a copy of THE PETER PRINCIPLE #2, which I read when I got home.

I found it a trifle disappointing. Peter's personality seemed to translate into print only in a filtered form - no doubt a problem many fans have had. I found little indication of the interests he'd discussed with me. While I had expected his fanzine to show me another side of him or to amplify those sides of him I'd seen, what I found instead was a more limited view, a sense that he was not yet apparently comfortable with the medium of print and had not yet found an expressive voice in print. This leads me to wonder how many other Aussiefen who have struck me as wooden in print would, if I knew them personally, create a much more favorable impression on me.

Part of becoming a journeyman fan is developing an expressive in-print style, a style which may not call attention to itself but which does communicate the better aspects of the fan's personality.

In the past I've criticised the proliferation of apas in fandom because I felt they encouraged low writing standards - but surely the one style of writing which is encouraged in apas is the personally expressive style I've been talking about.

Why, then, do I find Peter's writing style so anonymous (at least in a relative sense)? My guess is that he is unconsciously adhering to the standards he observes in his fannish peers: he is writing much as they write, and he discusses the topics they discuss. The format he has adopted for THE PETER PRINCIPLE is remarkably close to that used by (among others) WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE: double-columned typing with occasional fillos on green A-4 paper. It is functional, but without beauty or warmth.

The actual art is a step up from that found in WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE - especially that by Marjorie M. M. Lenehan in #1, and John Playford's cover on #2 - but the contrast between all of the other art in these two issues and the two Rotsler fillos in #2 is stark indeed.

The subject of art - or the artist - is emphasized in Peter's leadoff article in #1, "A Thing of Beauty", in which he looks at the way science fiction has dealt with art and artists. After setting up the subject intriguingly, however, he abandons it: "I shall have to give up on the idea of a structured article, and present a checklist instead". The rest of the piece consists of precis of various sf stories, like Rotsler's Patron of the Arts, which treat with the subject. Thus Peter has copped out on the real challenge he set himself and given us instead a list of stories and his opinions of those stories. This is the apahack approach: fast, off-the-top-of-the-head opinionating substituted for a thoughtful examination of a subject. Peter's opinions are not uninteresting, but neither are they distinguished by originality of insight.

On the other hand, "Viewpoints", two reviews of the third Tom Robbins novel, is more successful. Robbins is hard to "review" and both Judith Hanna and Peter offer slightly oblique and non-linear approaches.

Jack Herman and Gregor Whiley present looks at the year that was and the year to be, respectively; Whiley's glimpse of the future is satirical while Herman's review of the past year reads like a review of the year's award nominees. This should satisfy Ron Clarke's thirst for sf in "fannish" fanzines; indeed, much of this issue concerns itself with sf, and generally on a higher level than that found in THE MENTOR. (It was annoying, though, to find Peter breaking into the middle of Herman's piece to disagree with his assessment of Varley's Wizard; editorial interjections in double-parens do not belong in articles and are a rudeness to the author who has been interrupted. It is intrusive enough to footnote one's disagreement; better yet to save it for a postscript.)

"How To Handle A Woman" by Jean Weber ("with techincal assistance from Sally Beasley") takes up the question of fannish socializing with "A Guide to Fannish Etiquette when dealing with Feminist fans". Most of the do's and don'ts offered are common sense, although several readers objected in the next issue that they insulted fans' intelligence and better applied to non-fan socializing. Coming from an era in which there were fewer women in fandom and the opportunities for sexual

encounters at conventions were correspondingly rarer, I view the current situation with some bemusement. Jean Weber's is not the only piece I've seen on the subject of male-female encounters among fans; Mike Rogers broached the same subject (from a somewhat different perspective, of course) in HARMONIC DISSONANCE #1, and the lettercol of #2 was full of fascinating responses.

The lettercol of THE PETER PRINCIPLE #2 also has considerable response - sufficient that Peter has segregated it into a section of its own following the rest of the letters - the most fascinating being from Joseph Nicholas. Nicholas has somehow reached the amazing conclusion that feminism is a peculiarly American phenomenon, having no relevance in non-sexist Britain and Europe. Despite this, he extends some charity to American fans with the assumption that they are probably less sexist than their mundane society, based as it is on "the American frontier mentality". (It's a funny thing, you know, but although I've been an American all my life, I've never actually met a cowboy! My friend rich brown does claim a fraction of Indian blood, though. But I digress...)

The bulk of #2 is comprised of letters, and letters may well become the backbone of future issues, but I found more of interest in "The Trading Post" in which Peter reviews the fanzines he's gotten.

"I've never been much of what is commonly known as a fanzine fan," Peter says in an opening statement. "To a fairly large degree, apahacking has thus far satisfied my need for written communication.... Producing THE PETER PRINCIPLE is largely a deliberate step to change this, and has already resulted in my becoming aware of the wide variety of fanzine styles in the US and UK, as well as a greater appreciation of the focus and energies going into fanzine production."

Aha! Fanzines are more than communication. For communication you write letters - or open letters, which is what most apahacking actually is - but fanzines are more than letters (even when they contain nothing but letters). Fanzines are packages, both physically and conceptually. They are vehicles which express the aggregate personality of their contributors, their readers, and especially their editor. Skilled editors appreciate this and make their fanzines artworks.

There is more to "doing" a fanzine than just typing the material up on stencils, patching in the art, and running the zine off. There is the entire aesthetic of the fanzine to be considered, both the way it looks and the way it reads (the order in which the material is presented, the style of its presentation). Not all the great faneds spent much time on these questions; some simply acted on an intuitive grasp of what could be (and thus should be) done. But one senses that Peter has turned another corner in fandom and encountered an area he'd not expected: fanzines as an artform in their own right. It is precisely the lack of such an awareness on the part of people like Jean Weber that seems to me to be the problem with her zine and with so many of the Aussie fanzines I've seen lately. The craft of doing fanzines seems to have been

forgotten, leaving us with examples of reinvention which parallel the early progress of fanzines thirty and forty years ago. There seems to be so little ambition among Aussie faneds; so much willingness to settle for mediocrity. But perhaps it's just insularity and a lack of good role models; certainly Peter Toluzzi seems to be only now discovering the possibilities inherent in a fanzine once outside the limitations of the apas. I look forward to future issues of THE PETER PRINCIPLE; I want to see how it evolves.

PARIAH (#s 1, 2, & 3): Gerald Smith's PARIAH offers a fascinating look at the evolution of a fanzine as its editor begins to develop his skills. #1 was minor stuff indeed; in #3 Anders Bellis correctly takes Smith to task for his editing, layout, blurbs and on-stencil writing, observing that "To me it is blatantly obvious that you have done nothing except apa-zines before; PARIAH 1 gives me the impression of being a somewhat bigger apazine rather than a genzine."

Most of #1 was editor-written. Of the one outside contribution - Marc Ortlieb's review of "The Revenge of Anti-Fan" - Smith says, "It is just so well written", that he felt he had to publish it despite its dated nature. In defending his position against amateur sf in PARIAH, Smith cites "my lack of confidence in my own ability to be sufficiently critical of such material. There is too much danger of really abysmal fanfic getting through. I realise I run this risk with any material I publish but somehow fanfic seems worse when it is really bad than any other sort of writing."

What Smith needs -- what any faned needs -- is a developed sense of standards, based on either a critical attitude or an intuitive approach: criteria for what is, first, worth publishing, and, second, appropriate for the fanzine in question.

Marc Ortlieb is one of Australia's better fanwriters, at least among the current generation. But his talent is more for what I've called "journeyman fanwriting" - the comfortable expression of opinion and narration of event which reveals the author's personality and evokes the feeling of a fireside conversation -- than for cleverness and wordplay. His review of the Anti-Fan movie is determinedly clever, but packed with allusions requiring both an acquaintance with the film and with local jokes. The piece is less "well-written" than it is packed with clever constructions based on resonances of the film.

More to the point, it is simply not true that the rules for writing fiction are different from those for writing good prose in any form; nor is there any reason why Gerald should find himself less capable of discerning badly written fiction. I suspect the reverse might be true: clumsy writing is more obvious in fiction than is, say, a rambling personal essay. In fiction the aim is to summon up clear images in the reader's mind - an interior "movie" - and the best prose is that which might be taken at first glance to be transparent: prose which does not call attention to itself but with economy and precision creates exactly

the images the author desires of it. Now, beyond a clear prose style fiction requires a variety of specialized skills, among them characterization, plot-motivation, pacing, lively dialogue, etc. But for beginning writers - amateur authors - a clear prose style is the first hurdle and most of them never get beyond it. (I speak here from long experience reading slush piles; I have read more bad fiction than most of you will ever be privileged to see...and I can only envy you.)

Somehow the skill of writing fiction has been mystified and made an arcane secret from the point of view of entirely too many readers. (I think it's part of the passivisation - if there exists such a word - of the masses in 20th Century culture, in which the great mass of people are taught to be passive consumers of the "product" put out by the elevated stars of our mass media. We are taught to regard creativity as a gift bestowed upon only a select few, and the creative process as something akin to alchemy, to be all but worshiped and beyond mortal understanding. This is, of course, sheer bullshit.) But surely as a reader of science fiction Gerald developed a taste for certain authors or types of writing, and certain standards by which he judged what he read. Why can he not apply these same standards to whatever amateur fiction might come his way?

I would guess that the probable answer is that he knows very well that none of the amateur sf which might be submitted to him if he allowed it into PARIAH would meet the standards he applies to professional fiction. And here is where the confusion starts. For if all amateur fiction fail fails such standards, then those standards are obviously "too harsh" or too demanding. What shall we replace them with? And here it breaks down entirely, because there are no useful standards which can be substituted once we abandon the basic standards of decent writing. It will come down to, "I liked the idea in the story", or "the author is a friend of mine", or "the author will gain something from the reader-feedback", or simply, "I wanted to give the author encouragement". This is a thorny area indeed, depending as it does purely on arbitrary decisions based on extraneous considerations.

Now as it happens I am generally against publishing amateur sf in fanzines. And I'm not trying to argue Smith into reviewing his policy. But I do want him to think about it and realize that his stated reasons do little other than to demean him. In fact, I would think that if he applied the same standards to amateur sf that he applies to non-fiction contributions he would have little difficulty.

But those standards also need improvement. In PARIAH #2 Angus Caffrey's "The Tragedy of Macbeth Revisited" sets a tone and style unmatched by most of the rest of the material. John Alderson's "Half-Seas Over" was more readable than anything else I've seen by him in these zines, but it is simply a pedantic nitpick piece in which he complains about the useage of language on TV, marred by his defense of the insertion of "and" into any spoken number greater than one hundred. In a postscript Alderson's ego prompts him to suggest Smith send a copy of this issue of

PARIAH to the A.B.C., which Alderson appears certain, will get "PARIAH slated on the ABC 'Books and Writings' programme". I'm glad Alderson has such a high opinion of his work; it saves me from feeling any guilt over my own lower regard for it.

Smith's own "The Wonder of Flight" describes his first flight in an airplane. He gives voice to the feelings many of us experienced on our first flights - those of us who didn't clutch a drink and moan, "We're going to crash, I know it!" It's decently written, but perhaps naive.

Most of the rest of the issue is taken up by the letter column, in which Smith responds conversationally to the letters, answering them at length. I like that; as anyone who has ever read any lettercolumn I've conducted knows, I'm given to long replies myself. There's a fine line between answering all a letter-writer's questions, and answering all his or her arguments. If you cross the line and rebut every argument you leave your readers less to respond to. Smith handles this well, staying for the most part on the right side of that line. (My only objection is to nitpick his typographic style: I feel he should begin each paragraph of his responses to letters with the double-parens, just as one does any paranthetical section which runs to more than one paragraph, rather than simply using the double-parens to open and close his section of : response. I point this out because Smith's responses often run two or three paragraphs and a quick scan might loose track for the hasty reader of who is speaking....)

PARIAH #3 opens dreadfully, with material worse than any in the first two issues. Harry Andruschak, an incredibly dull fellow who has yet to write anything wotth reading, offers a one-page piece called "Sierra Madre", which reads like a passage from one of his letters. It is a non-sequitur, made up of smaller non-sequiturs. Ostensibly a description of a bike ride cum travelogue (if ostensibly anything), the descriptions are stunningly flat and vague: "If you remember /Invasion of the Body Snatchers/, the hero escaped from the town and went down hill to a busy street. That was Foothill. Nowadays a lot of the traffic has been diverted to the Foothill Freeway alongside it. But if you know the film, you will know the street." And thus the piece climaxed and ended.

In some sort of vicious one-two, Andruschak's piece is followed by one by John Alderson, "Jack-in-the-Green", which sees Alderson back up on his literary high horse, translating myths for the masses, and tossing off tidbits like, "Robin Hood and his Merry Men were reputed to be a witch coven", in some sort of almost stream-of-consciousness fashion. Alderson, who only an issue earlier was lecturing us on the correct useage of English, begins his piece with this sentence: "If we had only the story of Little Red Riding Hood we may be in difficulties in arriving at the original cosmological myth from whence it sprang." There is much to savor in a sentence like that: the abysmally clumsy syntax and mixed tenses are the least of it. Consider the implications of that sentence: what it reveals about the thinking process of its

author.

Smith could hardly print amateur sf worse than this.

In "I'm No Economist But..." Alf Katz proves the correctness of the title of his two-page piece with a series of non-sequitur arguments (one example: "The working class can exist only within the work ethic. Without it, 'working class' is only a meaningless term, semantically void and belonging to a bygone era (somewhat akin to 'democracy').") leading up to the wildly original conclusion that some day "work" will be unnecessary for most of us. (Maybe someone should introduce Katz to Farmer's "Riders of the Purple Wage.")

About half of the issue consists of letters, and this is the better half. However, in response to one letter Smith offers this justification for the Alderson piece in #2: "I didn't agree with what John said but I thought it well written and likely to provoke comment". While I certainly can't object to the idea of printing pieces with which you don't agree if you think them well-written and likely to provoke comment, it seems to me that these alone are not sufficient criteria, and equally to the point that simply "provoking comment" is not enough - the nature of both the provocation and the resulting comment must also be taken into account.

From my point of view Smith's admiration of the "well written" Ortlieb and Alderson pieces is an indication of his own critical and editorial shortcomings and hints at his awe for those he thinks Bigger Named or better established than himself. I can think of no other reason for most of the pieces published in PARIAH #3 than Smith's gratitude to their authors for letting him publish them. Smith has yet to set a tone of his own for his fanzine, because he exercises so little control over the nature and quality of what he publishes.

Take that "well written" Alderson piece in #2, for example. Its subject was one of Alderson's pet peeves, but was this a topic to which many would respond with interesting letters? On the evidence in #3 I must conclude that the answer was No. At most, he earned a paragraph each from a few letter-writers, most of whom dismissed him with comments like, "he's finally running out of scope to be controversial". Jack Herman summed Alderson's piece up best: "His page and a half of pseudo-pedantic quibbles with the language demonstrates his inability to understand that his little learning leaves him on dangerous ground". Rather than "provoking comment", publication of the piece would appear to have had the effect of holding Alderson up to public ridicule. In my opinion something like that should never be done inadvertantly.

I conclude that Smith needs to develop critical standards for everything he publishes. He needs to consider whether a contribution is a) adequately written, b) has a tone compatibile with the tone of his fanzine, and c) deals with a topic appropriate to the fanzine and its audience. Until he begins doing this PARIAH will continue to be uneven

in quality and unlikely to evolve much beyond its present state.

VERSE: "Another topic which came up ... was the future of British fanzines. D. West was worried that fanzines like FELICITY were going to set an unfortunate trend for British fanzines full of soul-baring personal revelation done by people with far less ability than Jimmy Robertson and co. That British fanzines were going to become like American fanzines, in other words. What, then, would become of American fanzines? Perhaps, I ventured, they in turn might become like Australian fanzines. At this D. blanched and cringed - even he wouldn't wish that on the Americans." - Malcolm Edwards in DRUNKARDS TALK #2, January 13, 1983

VAMP: It's taken a lot of time to get this far. I've been given a new deadline by my desperate editor whom I can fob off with no more excuses: my back is against the wall. I feel the urge to react in the gonzo style of Hunter Thompson, dramatizing the event of the actual writing of this piece, taking you "behind the scenes" and into my head as I deal with these fanzines, and incorporating not only the deadline but my panicked response to it here. But that is a copout. In fact the reason I have dallied so long on this piece is that I dread finishing it.

I'm making no new friends with this. Honesty compells me to confess that I have considered this point more than once... and what purpose is there in writing a piece like this if one is less than honest? My reputation in some quarters of Oz is already low: I am seen as hard to please and cranky, if not worse. And I've yet to deal with Q36.

The whole point of writing this piece is to shine a critical light on contemporary Australian fanzines - to illumine their problems and shortcomings and perhaps arrive at an understanding of why Australian fanzines enjoy such a poor reputation elsewhere in the world. But this is by no means an easy task, especially if I am to communicate successfully with an Australian audience. I am an "outsider", and can be presumed to be ignorant of all sorts of mitigating factors, and, anyway, why listen to me if you're having fun?

Why indeed?

The sad truth is that Australia has seen better fanzines in the past, and that most current-day Aussie fanzines are dull, bland, and boring when they are not illegible or sub-literate. The artwork which adorns most of them is embarrassingly bad. This is not just a minority opinion: it is an opinion nearly universally held outside Australia.

It is my prejudiced belief that people can be educated, if they choose to be, and it seems to me that a great deal of what is wrong with the fanzines under review here is a lack of education - in fan-editing - on the part of their editors. Most of these fanzines appear to have sprung into existence because someone had the urge to "do" a fanzine, and acted

on that urge without further thought. I'd like to hope that some of you, after reading this, will entertain further thoughts on what it is that a fanzine is and how one can go about developing a fanzine. I want to provoke your thinking. But there's a real question in my mind about whether I'm more likely to provoke thought or emotion - whether I'll stimulate some rational thinking, or cause a hostile defensive reaction. My aversion to the possibility of the latter response is one of the things that has kept me from finishing this sooner.

WAHF-FULL (#s 8 & 9): Although one might expect a fanzine to be fairly established in its style of presentation - layouts, overall format - after more than half a dozen issues, there is considerable development from #3 to #9 in WAHF-FULL, especially in the way the letter-column is designed. It may seem a small thing and not worth remarking on, that Jack Herman has changed from running each letter-writer's name and address out on one full line to blocking the address under the name and effectively boxing it, but in fact it makes for a decided visual improvement. The new format looks neater and makes the authorship of each letter much clearer. Of such small format devices are good fanzines built. The way a page looks to us will strongly influence our response to what is actually written on that page. Sloppiness puts off the eye. Neatness and organization that clarifies content is inately appealing. Beyond neatness lies artfulness, but I don't ask that of every fanzine editor, because that requires specific talents. But I do think neatness is a basic requirement. By neatness I don't mean fastidiousness, mind you - just a basic respect for the readable presentation of a fanzine's contents.

Jack Herman uses what looks like an IBM Executive, with relatively large type. This is a typeface which can be attractive when used well, but can look jumbled and messy when used incorrectly. When Jack typed out the letter-writer's names and addresses across a full line, then skipped a space before starting their letters, the names seemed to get lost on the page. But once he began setting them off in a block on the left side of the page, the names began leaping out at the reader. What Jack should now consider is a change in the way he paragraphs. Presently when he reaches the end of a paragraph he drops a half-line and begins the first sentence of the next paragraph. This is called "nonstoparafraping" and was invented (or popularized) by Forrest J Ackerman in the early forties. It works moderately well for text with paragraphs of a reasonable length, but looks awful when used for fiction or any prose which uses dialogue (where paragraphs may be single short sentences). It doesn't look good in WAHF-FULL, lending the zine an air of informality which continually threatens to become plain sloppiness - and undercuts the more serious material. I would recommend that Jack tighten up the typography in his fanzine by using "normal" paragraphing, with a basic five-unit indent and no lines skipped between paragraphs. I think his typeface would look much cleaner, neater, and more readable in that format.

Editorially, WAHF-FULL is much more firmly established; the absence of

editorial control so obvious in PARIAN can be contrasted with Hermna's well-realized approach. While his choices might not be mine (and in fact most of the material on movies failed to interest me), it is clear that Jack has made choices and continues to choose what he wants in his fanzine. The range of his choices is mostly non-fannish (sf & music, near-future predictions, movies, and a "Real World Department", among others) and balanced by fannish editorial commentary and lettercol discussions. Some of the non-fannish pieces strike me as over-earnest, but all are intelligent and none approach the pedantry or egotistical exhibitionism of an Alderson piece. My basic complaint is that most of them (the predictions and Real World pieces in particular) fail to offer anything beyond that available elsewhere, in the newsmagazines. The essence of "fannish" writing has always been the specific personality of the author as revealed through his or her piece. That is not something that need be confined to purely "fannish" topics; it can be applied to any topic. When the Real World discovered this kind of writing about twenty years ago it was dubbed "personal journalism", and it has been exemplified by Hunter Thompson, who placed himself squarely in the middle of whatever event he was ostensibly writing about. What I missed in the WAHF-FULL pieces was any real sense of the author as a person talking to me about his or her feelings concerning the topics under discussion. Fanzines offer a personalized, intimate kind of communication; it is possible for us to know each other and talk directly to each other as individuals. This is the unique advantage of fanzines in our microcosm; why not take advantage of it?

But I am not saying Jack Herman should impose this (or any) specific style on his contributors; that, as they say these days, is a "judgement call", and it's his fanzine, not mine. But I think the relative depersonalization of these articles in WAHF-FULL, written in a style which apes that of large publications with faceless audiences, is one of the reasons why WAHF-FULL is not an even more successful fanzine, with greater impact on fandom.

One of the topics which comes up in the lettercolumn of WAHF-FULL is that of "media fans" and how they differ, if in fact they do differ, from "us". I think it really comes down to what is meant by the way they and we use the word "fan".

Apparently it needs to be said from time to time - mostly for the benefit of recently-arrived professionals attending their first conventions or leafing through the first fanzines they've seen - that sf fans are not a mindlessly adoring audience grovelling at the feet of the "stars" who write the stuff. Rather, we are fans of the fiction, of the science fiction medium. It is sf itself, and not the people who produce it, that fascinates us. We are, as Tony Boucher once put it, "afictionados". We may well have our favourite authors, and we may respect those authors very much, but one of the traditions of fandom has been to avoid putting our authors on pedestals, to keep a healthy perspective about them. Sf authors may sit at the head of the table, but they are family. We are united in our common affection for sf, and

many of us fans "grow up" to become sf authors: another long-established tradition. Thus, as fans we are too close to the "dirty pros" to hold many illusions about them.

In contrast, the distinguishing characteristic of the true "media fan" is that he or she is a "fan" in the same way that the fans of movie stars are "fans". Such fans think in Them & Us terms, and while their adoration of the Stars harms no one unless it is obsessive (see "The King of Comedy"), it is essentially passive and implicitly demeaning. (The "one-author" fans represent a similar case: the author is worshipped and the author's fantasy universe is taken over by the fans, who move into it lock, stock and barrell.)

Q36 (#s G, H, J, & 2): (I seem to have misplaced #I....) The questions of how media fans and we differ and yet are alike is explored in a variety of guises in Q36, and although such questions actually fall under the Whither Fandom Category (subhead: Are They Taking Us Over, or Has Everything Already Been Ruined?), I think they've been fruitful for Q36.

Marc Ortlieb and I did not exactly get off on the right feet together. When I recieved Q36 G I read it with minor fascination - I am always fascinated by As Others See Us travel-reports on the U.S. - but I found it impossible to respond to. Marc spent most of his time visiting with fans whom I either don't know or don't like too much, and attended a Worldcon which I was forced to miss, leaving us with few points of intersection. But when Q36 H arrived, I had a more "typical" issue in hand. I was rather curious to see what it would be like. The first I'd ever heard of Q36 (the fanzine, that is; I have seen the Chuck Jones cartoon several times) was when it recieved a vote for Best Fanzine in the 1982 PONG Poll. The travel-report issue was nicely designed and gave every indication, despite its obviously unique position relative to normal issues, that issues to come would be neater and more carefully crafted than most recent Australian fanzines I'd seen. Actually issue G reminded me of a whole genre of neatly (if not impeccably) mimeod fanzines, many of them Canadian in origin. It looked like something Mike Glicksohn or Victoria Vayne might have put out.

For that reason issue H was a bit of a surprise. I thought its John Packer cover was pretty poor, and the M.E. Tyrrell doodle on the contents page a waste of a good electrostencil. In my typical tactless way I said as much in a letter to Marc.

In due time issue #I arrived, and I thumbed through it looking for my letter and noted its absense. When I realized that the issue had probably been published before I'd even written my letter, the time spent crossing the Pacific having been what it was. I wrote another brief LoC (most of my LoCs to overseas fanzines are brief, restricted as they are to the space available on an airletter form) to Marc and forgot about it.

More time passed, and ORNITHOPTER #11 arrived, having made its long lonely journey around the world, and therein I found Marc Ortlieb saying (in reference to a piece in an earlier issue by Joseph Nicholas), "I hope you are sending a copy of this issue to Ted White, and the other American Joseph Nicholas knockers. (True, they'll probably only notice the bit where he pokes fun at SF in Dimension, but what the hell...)"

I thought that a bit odd, because I don't consider myself an "American Joseph Nicholas knocker", and in fact my comments on the subject in my LoC to Marc weren't anti-Nicholas (see Q36 J). But I suppose anyone who responds to Joseph may be pinned with that label (any American, that is; the Joseph Nicholas Knockers of other nationalities will have to organize themselves).

When Q36 J showed up, there were both my letters to Marc, and from Marc's rather testy responses I got the impression that things might be getting tense. Well, hell, I said to myself. If things are tense now, wait till I get to Q36 in this bloated piece. Then the shit will surely hit the fan. Which fan, I wasn't too certain, but I wasn't looking forward to it.

Today (because this epic is an event, and serendipitous circumstances inevitably surround it as I write it) the mail brought me a letter from Marc, a response to my LoC on Q36 J. In it, he said, among other things:

"Thanks for the letter. You are correct in assuming that some of your comments rubbed me a little the wrong way. Sorry for the way I flew off the handle too. Thank you for giving me the chance to be a little less fuggheaded...."

"Anyway, though I can't really see you and I agreeing on all that much, other than the fact that fandom can be a lot of fun - sometimes - I will promise to stop the offhand slinging off that I have been doing. (I was just thinking about the things we disagree on, and it seems to come down to what a fanzine is, what is good artwork, and what makes for good fan-writing.) I'd still like to disagree with you a lot, but hopefully we can do this on a friendly basis."

That at once clears the air quite a bit, and sets the stage for what I have to say about Q36. Yes, I imagine Marc is going to disagree with some of what I'm going to say, but since I want to criticise Q36 without animosity, I'm pleased by the thought that at least we can be friendly about our disagreements. That will make this much easier to write.

Marc has summed up the areas in which we disagree and on which I want to comment: what a fanzine (Q36) is, what good artwork is, and what good fan-writing is.

In my first LoC to Marc I said the following:

"In appearance Q36H is something of a paradox. You obviously put more

than average thought and care into its design and duplication - but the vast majority of the 'art' (nearly all by John Packer) is awful, and strikes me as a complete waste of electrostencilling. The occasional good pieces, of which Linda Cox Chan's is the best, and quite good, appear to be in Q36 almost by accident when they appear in proximity with something as completely awful as M.E. Tyrrell's contents-page doodle. You may state that you have 'a very definite policy on what (you) want in the way of covers', but how is such a statement reconciled with that piece of kindergarten scrawling on your actual cover?" (The cover, of course, was by Packer, whose quoted response was, "Ted White? Didn't he write Secret of the Killer Satellite?" No, John; I wrote Secret of the Marauder Satellite, a vastly superior work. Ahahaha.)

The art has improved a good deal as of #J, and I attribute this to the fact that there is less Packer and more Steven Fox and Brad Foster. Fox's work takes Q36 up to a level I consider standard for fanzine-art, which is better than that of any recent Aussie fanzine I've seen, but Foster is far better and his pieces give their respective pages a real sparkle. Des Waterman's contents-page cartoon is also above-average, and Tom Cardy's illustration on page 2 deserves notice. (On the other hand, there is one Rotsler - and it's subpar Rotsler, reminiscent of his less distinguished fifties work.) Although none of the art in Q36 J really stopped me in my tracks, it does represent a highpoint, both for the fanzine and for contemporary Australian fanzines in general.

As I said, Q36 does obviously represent more than average thought and care - and the neatly typed borders which run along the top and bottom of each page are one indication of that. The A-4 size is ugly and ungainly when compared with either U.S. letter-size or British quarto, largely because of its proportions: the page is too tall. Marc has found a very satisfying solution for this problem: the borders that run across the top and bottom of each page (boxing the page numbers within the bottom borders) act to frame the page, giving the text typed between the borders a visual proportion which is closer to that of the letter- and quarto-sizes and thus more pleasing to the eye. This is an elegant solution indeed since it also creates an overall uniformity of visual format, and neatly organizes each page. The borders create the subliminal impression of tidiness because they are neatly typer-rendered.

When I encounter a fanzine as carefully designed as this, it sets up in me certain expectations, no doubt due in part to my exposure over the years to a number of fine fanzines which were neatly designed and cleanly executed on blue paper, like WARHOOM or ENERGUEN. When, in closing my letter on issue #I, I said of that issue, "Despite its more-than-50 pages, I found little else in this issue of Q36 comment-worthy. There's a dull earnestness to much of the issue, and, of course, the usual terrible artwork", I was expressing my disappointment due to the failure of my expectations.

Q36 has been referred to by a variety of Australians as "the best fanzine in Australia", has won a Ditmar or two, and has been held up as

a shining example of how good an Australian fanzine can be. I can see where it might come as a shock to Marc, after having weathered all that praise, to get letters such as mine.

Everything is relative, and it may well be that for many Australian fans Q36 is the best fanzine to come down the pike, but I'm afraid this points to an insularity on the part of too many Aussie fan, a parochiality of viewpoint which is hurting Australian fandom.

Leigh Edmonds, in the course of reviewing Q36J, of all things, in ORNITHOPTER #12/RATAPLAN #21, offers the following thoughts on this situation: "Despite some limited input from overseas fans Australian fandom is pretty much a side issue in world events. This means that it gets the appropriate support from overseas and the foreign appearances in local fanzines is very small indeed. So, what has happened is that Australian faneds have had to depend on local resources and, over the past few years, they have become very thin on the ground."

I am not saying that Poor Provincial Australia must look north of the equator for all its fannish cultural input; the notion that Americans were supposed to look to Europe for their culture in the recent past has left me with little sympathy for such imperialistic ideas. But if Australian fandom is not to be a backwater eddy rather than a part of the mainstream of English-speaking (at least) fandom, it will have to shed its insularity. A little cross-pollination never hurts.

As it is, Aussie fandom is still sufficiently isolated - not only by geography but also by attitude - that some fans are experiencing a kind of culture shock when they start interreacting with the rest of us. Q36, the biggest frog in the Australian pond, is not recieved with universal acclaim elsewhere. Australian fanzines are laughed at, sneered at, or dismissed as boring. Why?

Everything is relative, but standards appear to be lower in Australia. A fanzine which achieves the level of merely good, in international terms, is seen as superlative. An "artist" who in fact cannot really draw and whose ideas of humor appear to be on a grade-school level wholly lacking in genuine wit is celebrated as rilly triff. (There is only one thing to be said in John Packer's favor: his work is neat; draftsmanship-neat. His lines lack all finesse and his ideas lack all subtlety, but his work is at lesst not sloppy. There is a curious parallel here with Australian fanzines in general: of them too the best that can be said for most of them is that they are neat. Not exciting, not even necessarily interesting, but relatively neat. When I find myself searching for something good to say about either an artist or a fanzine, and the best I can come up with is "it's neat", I know that I'm scraping the bottom of the barrel.)

Okay, I'm beating around the bush here: Trying to find the politic way to say that Q36 isn't that good a fanzine; trying to give hints by implication. Q36 is the best of the fanzines I've thus far examined: it

stands head and shoulders above PARIAS, for example, and it has a coherency and sense of editorial control lacking in THE PETER PRINCIPLE and WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE. And it is more attractively packaged. But that isn't saying much. Good as Q36 is on its home ground, it is pretty much a wimp when compared with even as run-of-the-mill a fanzine as HOLIER THAN THOU. Compared with WARHOON, TAPPEN, or BOONFARK, Q36 is mediocre indeed.

Why is this? I have my own opinions, but let's check out Leigh Edmonds' first: "If you don't have a clear idea of what ... a fanzine is supposed to be like, and what it's supposed to do for its editor and readers then you're going to be like a blind person trying to find their way in a swamp. ...With the Jth issue of Q36 Marc gives a very good imitation of splashing around with no real idea of where he is or where he's going. The first few issues of Q36 were almost exploratory while its editor worked out his format, took the bearings on the fannish landscape and planned where he might go. Now that he's had time to settle in he doesn't seem to know what to do next. Q36 is marking time, waiting for something exciting to happen - and for the past couple of issues nothing has. ...I don't know Marc's attitude but it comes across that even if he is concerned about his readers he really isn't too sure about what he is personally interested in. At any rate, the passion of some of those earlier issues has gone right down the drain and all we are left with is feeling rather comfortable and pleased with ourselves after having been absorbed by the current issue. But I'll say one thing for Marc: even though he may not know what's going on or what kind of material he wants to publish, the current state of affairs is quite comfortable. If I could publish a dull fanzine as good as this one I'd reckon that I'd won some kind of lottery."

Leigh has the advantage on me of having seen all the issues of Q36; I missed the "passion". If in fact Marc is looking for the Next Direction, I suggest he try making Q36 more international in scope. That isn't easy with the time lag involved in surface mail, but it's not impossible either: it would set Marc a real challenge.

When I reread the issues of Q36 in order to write this, I was struck by one thing: how much the nature of the fanzine seemed to echo the nature of its editor (as I infer it from his writings). I read the long trip-report in G first, and it set up a framework which subsequent issues' editorials filled in. I got the picture (and those of you who know Marc much better can check me out on this) of an overweight man in his late twenties (or thereabouts) who is rather shy and indecisive, somewhat uncomfortable around women who are open about their sexuality, and eager to please people. He thinks a lot, but is a little defensive about his opinions and ideas. He is above average in intelligence, but only average in his writing abilities. He is insecure about his body and male attractiveness, perhaps preferring the company of others similarly situated. He is, in other words, like the vast majority of male fans, worldwide.

Both Marc's thoughtfulness and his indecisiveness (or blandness or wishy-washiness - take your pick) are reflected in Q36. Edmonds is right that Q36 shows little sense of direction. One gets the sense that each issue is conceived and put together in much the same way that Marc's U.S. trip appeared to function: each issue is like the stopping-points on Marc's roundabout trip, complete enough in itself but neither pointing toward the next nor reflecting much upon the last. These issues are happenstance incidents more than they are milestones along a clearly directed course. And yet they are not totally happenstance, and themes which probably best reflect Marc's thinking run through them like threads of continuity. The one I noticed is the media fan vs. fanzine fan theme, remarked upon earlier. This surfaces to best effect in two pieces of interrelated fanfiction, "The Power That Clears And Dries - Fast", and "Lud Fouls Bain", written by Marc. They represent chapters one and two of his apparent addenda to The Enchanted Duplicator, and as such are valuable for the picture they give of modern fandom (seen allegorically). Marc makes his protagonist female and a Trekkie and at first leads her very gradually into the fringes of fandom, revealing both the pitfalls along the way and her own growing awareness of what lies beyond the media-fandom of which she had been a part. Unfortunately, this conception grows muddled midway into the story and the protagonist becomes a champion for Trufandom without explanation (and without her having yet actually experienced Trufandom herself, curiously enough).

Read purely for its ideas and allegorical fripperies, this set of pieces is moderately stimulating, showing as it does yet another way of looking at the complexly-faceted thing we call fandom. But read as fiction - call it "fanfiction" or not - neither piece is particularly enthralling. Ortlieb's prose plods along without excitement. He makes no obvious mistakes, but writes stolidly. (On a purely mechanical level, he does two things about his quote-marks that annoy me. The first is that he unnecessarily spaces between the quote-mark and the word it precedes. He does this with paranthesis-marks as well. Each occasion is mildly, perhaps subliminally, jarring to the scanning eye. The second thing he does is to fail to open each paragraph of a continuing quotation with quote-marks. Since he has several of his characters speak in multiple paragraphs, this is a noticeable problem and, again, subtly interrupts the flow of the story for the reader.)

Since the subject of "what is good fan-writing" has come up, and I stand in contradiction to Gerald Smith's stated belief that Marc writes well, I want to offer a few examples of what I am talking about. My examples are not from his fanfiction, but could as easily apply to that as well.

It was on page 10 of Q36G that I encountered the first misuse of English which called itself to my attention. (Since I wasn't reading for this, I may have read right past others, mind you.) "I was woken five minutes after falling asleep..." "Anyway, Peter Toluzzi, also woken..."

The construction, "woken", is not a word. The word Marc wanted was

"awakened". ("Awoke" does not lend itself to the past-tense, "woken".)

On page 14, Marc wrote, "My nervousness reasserted itself outside the Qantas building, from where the airport bus was to leave, but I was in the right place after all, and got deposited at the correct terminal". Marc tried to say too much in that sentence and almost mangled its syntax in the middle. On page 15 he does it again: "Mike Wallis, O.E. of TAPA, the Toronto based apa, and a fellow member of Spinoff, and Susan Madison were at the airport to meet me". Quickly: how many were there at the airport to meet Marc? Two fans, or three?

And on page 21 we hit a usage I first thought to be satirical, but subsequent repetition convinced me it was not: "If it ever does eventuate it should be a monster". "Eventuate" is bureaucratic babble, and anyone who uses it casually as if it had legitimacy as a word is betraying a tin ear.

On page 49 Marc does something which he did throughout his trip report, but here I found it inexplicable: "The three foreigners, Bob Shaw, Colin Fine and I, discussed the vagarities /vagaries?/ of American customs, with Bob boggling over one restaurant to which he'd been taken earlier in his trip, while most of the others were performing the ritual post-mortem on the con". No, I'm not referring to the over-freighting (again) of the sentence (giving it too much information to convey) - I'm talking about the description of a conversation which almost wholly lacks any content. He might as well have said "Bob Shaw, Colin Fine and I discussed the weather".

Obviously the mention of this conversation was the perfect place in which to offer up not only some of Marc's observations on American customs (which are rarely remarked upon elsewhere in his report) but those of Shaw and Fine as well. If Marc did not feel up to recreating (or synthesizing in a believable style) the actual conversation (with actual or quasi-quotes), he could at least have summarized what was said.

Worse, we are told that Bob Shaw, always an amusing raconteur, was "boggling over one restaurant to which he'd been taken earlier in his trip", but we aren't told why.

To my mind one of the qualities which distinguishes good fan-writing from the less-good is its anecdotal nature (when appropriate). Writing up an anecdote is just like writing fiction. The use of dialogue, pacing, punchlines, etc., is exactly the same. And when we write con reports, trip reports, etc., this is a natural place for anecdotal writing. Surely a variety of amusing things were said around or to Marc; he might even have said a few things worth quoting himself. Why are none of them here?

Frankly, my first suspicion was that Marc, at least while in America, did not hang around with fans whose conversation was worth quoting.

Some of them, I know, are more given to silliness than to wit - and while silliness can be enjoyable for participants in the moment, it rarely translates well into anecdotes. (You hadda be there, fer shure.) But Bob Shaw is simply not in that category. Bob Shaw's account of "boggling over one restaurant" should have made at least a decent anecdote. That it didn't says more about Marc Ortlieb than about Bob Shaw.

"Good fanwriting" does not involve any arcane knowledge, nor the ritualistic use of time-worn catch-phrases. (Two hyphenated phrases? That's not too many...) What it does require is exactly what "good writing" requires. It requires a respect for grammar (but not pedaniticism), and an awareness of the precise meanings and nuances of words, so that one's sentences end up saying exactly what one wishes them to say. Beyond that, it requires some talent, for "good writing" is, once one masters its craft, an art and requires a talent for that art.

There are specific goals to shoot for in fanwriting, most of them derivatives of the goals of all good writing. One is clarity. When someone tries to say too much in one sentence, it rarely reads clearly and the subordinate clauses often refer ambiguously to various implied objects. Take that quote from page 14, for example.

Marc starts out talking about his nervousness about making the correct connections to the airport, then locates himself outside the Qantas building "from where the airport bus was to leave", with the implication that his nervousness concerns whether in fact the right bus does leave from that spot. He continues, in the same sentence, with the news that it was the right spot, and adds that he "got deposited at the correct terminal", and we can only presume that he was "deposited" by a bus. This isn't hard to figure out, but if one reads the sentence literally one might decide that it was Marc's "nervousness" which "deposited" him "at the correct terminal", which was apparently an airport terminal and not, say, a computer terminal. There is enough information in that one sentence for at least four sentences and perhaps a full paragraph.

The pace of one's prose will determine the ease with which the reader gets really emersed in what one has written. If you write about events with a semi-shorthand, slightly out-of-breath style in which event is piled quickly upon event, not only is your work hard to skim, it's hard not to skim. If you stop, take a metaphorical breath, and relate events in their natural sequence, giving each event the space it deserves, your narrative will read like engrossing fiction. Let's see if I can give you a clear example of what I mean by rewriting Marc's sentence:

"When I got to the Qantas building, and the spot where the airport bus was supposed to pick me up, my nervousness reasserted itself. Was this really the right place? Did I have the correct schedule? I had visions of everything that could go wrong at this point, concluding with my missing my plane. But then the bus came. I was where I should be, and

it took me where it was supposed to, and when I was deposited at the correct terminal, my nervousness abated." That doesn't really sparkle, but it is at least somewhat more engaging. Had it been my experience, I would have had more specific references I could have worked into the narrative.

And that leads me to my next point. Clarity is enhanced by specific references. Instead of saying, for example, "I walked into the party and found several people already there", which is a natural conversational sentence, one might say, "I walked into the party and found five people already there". "Several" is a vague number; "five" is a specific number. Instead of describing something as "colorful", for instance, you might describe its actual colors and their relative brightness in their surroundings. These things enhance the mental image which the reader is building and maintaining as he or she reads. The vaguer the descriptions, the foggier the mental image (or the less accurate; the reader may substitute assumed specifics for those left out by the writer). The foggier the mental image, the less clear the communication.

When I read a typical fan's report on a party or a trip, I find that a common error made by fanwriters is to mention a specific group of people, by name, and then fail to mention when one or more leaves the group, leaving me with the image of all those specific people going out to the restaurant, clambering into the car, or whatever - and if the car is described as a sports car or a two-seater, I'm going to be brought up short with the thought, "How did all those people get into that car?" Then I go back and reread, trying to find where the group thinned down to two people. This is simple sloppiness on the part of the writer, but it's very common because the writer knows who was there and has forgotten that his or her readers do not know everything he or she does.

Marc's trip report did not make uninteresting reading, but it was not engrossing either. Too often he simply related a sequence of events without giving those events much weight or significance. Too often he told us that people talked, without telling us what they said. And too often he tried to put too many ideas into simple sentences. These are common problems in fanwriting, but they are rarely problems in the writing of fandom's better writers. Until Marc accomplishes more precision in his writing I am not going to regard him as a major fanwriter.

Enough of Marc Ortlieb the fanwriter. Let's consider the outside contributions to Q36.

In Q36H the first non-editor-written piece is Harry Andruschak's "Behind the Eight Ball". When I first read it I wrote "what a fool" in its margin. Typically, it runs only a page or so in length, and treats minor ideas trivially. I have yet to read anything by Andruschak that deserved publication, but this one - dealing with private apas and black-balling, concluding with a suggestion for a "Blackball Apa" - is

one of the most inane of all his pieces, founded as it is on a wit-like lack of comprehension of what private apas are in the first place. I suppose we should be grateful that he didn't see fit to talk about JPL and the space program again.

John Packer's comic strip, "The Wrong Track", elicited a "blech" in the margin. In defense of Packer (responding to my letter in J), Marc says, "Ignore the technique if you don't like simple art. Look at the humour. John produces some of the most consistently funny material going". It isn't "simple art" that I object to; I admire the "simple art" of people, like Rotsler, who can suggest a great deal with very few lines. The "simplicity" in Packer's art is very literal and almost anti-artistic. But, ignoring this "technique", I tried reading Packer's strip.

As I mentioned many pages ago, I write a review column for THE COMICS JOURNAL, and before I began writing that column I edited HEAVY METAL for a year. Prior to that time I collected comics for most of my life. When "underground" comics first began to appear in the sixties, I bought them all, from the cream (like ZAP) to the least promising (much of YELLOW DOG, among other anthology comics). I have, in the process of accumulating all this experience, seen the total spectrum of comics, from the most professional to the most amateur. (Did I mention the slush pile at HEAVY METAL? At least you didn't have to read pages of manuscript to assess the worth of a submission. One look was all it took.) In terms of both his art and his writing, I'd rate John Packer somewhere a little below that underground Teddybear artist, Rory Hayes. His work reminds me of the stuff that would come in from junior-high school students, drawn in ball-point on lined notebook paper, some of which was funnier.

Taste is a relative thing, and I'm willing to admit that some people may bust a gut laughing at Packer's strips. They probably laugh pretty hard when somebody sits down and the chair is whisked away at the last moment, too. But, hey: In fandom Packer's stuff ranks about as high as Darrell Schweitzer's "Dero Schweitzer" art in HOLIER THAN THOU. Some people think that's screamingly funny too.

Terry Frost's "A Guide to Melbourne" is probably bristling with inside jokes, most of which I missed, but it is short and doesn't waste the space it occupies. (His "Melbourne in Winter" in J is twice as long and nearly as good, however...or maybe I just got more of the jokes.)

Linda Lounsbury's "Notanoken II", a brief conreport, has all the failing failings common to undistinguished conreports, as detailed earlier. There is not one quotemark in the piece. It's all I-did-this-and-then-I-did-that. Here's the entirety of Saturday night:

"That evening it was back to parties and skinny dipping. It was much the same as the Friday night, but the con committee had gone next door to Sears, and had bought a couple of beach balls, so we played some

informal volleyball in the pool. I then went to the music party while I was awake enough to enjoy it." I wish she had been awake enough to write more interestingly about her experiences.

The remaining outside material is contained in the letter column. Throw in two pieces of editorial nattering (one catching up on errors in G, the other describing Marc's attempts to keep control over his life by making lists) and Marc's fanfiction (the first chapter of his Enchanted Duplicator update), and you have the entire issue. Basically, nearly everything in Q36H worth reading (excepting the letters) was written by Marc. The outside contributions (excepting Packer and maybe Frost) were apparently just what happened to turn up in the Ortlieb mailbox (I can't imagine they were solicited) and Marc seems to have printed them in order not to offend their authors with a rejection.

I wish I could find my copy of Q36I, but despite several hours of serious searching, I haven't turned it up. (I'm sure I put it somewhere "special" so that I'd have it on hand for this piece, but I'll be damned if I can find that special place now...)

Q362 is a listing of fanzines Marc's recieved, with short, sometimes one-sentence, descriptions. I wonder why people do that. Perhaps it serves as a valuable checklist for people wondering which fanzines to send off for, or send trade copies to, but in my experience little else is accomplished by non-review listings like these. There is little difference between Marc's listings here and Keith Walker's in FANZINE FANATIQUE; neither offers much in the way of critical feedback or even real egoboo. I found amusing Marc's observation, in the course of listing NABU 12, that "What the Poms and the Yanks have failed to realise is that the best fanzines come from Australia, but I guess they might as well continue fighting over second place". Marc is just whistling in the dark. (There is no mention of the GAMBIT I sent Marc in this listing; either it hadn't arrived yet or it strayed in the mail.)

My experience with writers' groups (the workshop variety, a la Milford) has shown me that learning to criticise is as important as learning to write, and an adjunct to learning to write better. Criticism requires of the critic that he or she take apart the story (or whatever the object of the criticism is), stripping it down logically to its core, analyzing in the process how well the supporting structure worked and held together. In this way the putative author learns, critically, how a story "works". He or she will also gradually internalize the critical function until capable of applying it intuitively to his or her own work as it is being written.

In the same way, I think it is very instructive for any fanzine editor to also review fanzines. In the process of figuring out what does and doesn't work in other fanzines, and why, the faneé may learn a great deal which can be applied to his or her own fanzine. This is particularly true because fanzines have for fifty years built on common

traditions. In the course of putting out mimeographed fanzines, faneds have learned a great deal about what can and can't be done with the process. Many of today's fanzines are very sophisticated in their use of mimeo. Nearly everything a current-day faned can think of has been tried before, and if one is aware of these previous experiments one can borrow what has worked or figure out what didn't work and correct for it, building yet higher on the foundations of past fanzines.

Part of the much-remarked-upon Balkanization of fandom has been the loss in some quarters of this Ancient Knowledge. Some fans find - or adopt the stance of finding - this liberating. They regard the past as a prison, knowledge as shackles. But the low reputation enjoyed by most Australian fanzines today must, I feel, be due in good part to the inadvertent "liberation" of Aussie fandom from the fanzines of the past. How else can one explain the fact that a decade ago Australian fanzines enjoyed a far better reputation abroad?

A hint of the gap between fandoms in Australia can be found in Q36G, where Marc observes, "Australian fandom has changed a lot, both in personnel and in character since Aussiecon /1975/. Also there was the fact that the people whom John /D. Berry/ knows well /in Australian fandom/ are fans with whom I still don't feel as comfortable as I might. I've gotten to the point where I feel quite comfortable around Leigh Edmonds, but I must admit to finding Foyster and Bangsund more than a little daunting."

Clearly an emotional gap exists between the editor of what is currently considered Australia's best fanzine and several of the editors of Australia's previous top fanzines.

To return to the point I wanted to make about the "numbered" issues of Q36, I think it would be entirely to Marc's advantage in the long run (and other faneds' in the short run as well) if he began writing lengthier and more thoughtful reviews in place of these brief descriptions.

And that brings us at last to Q36J, the most recent issue on hand.

The issue opens much as H did, with the second chapter of Marc's addition to The Enchanted Duplicator. Here Marc seems to be taking on the one-author fandoms built around Marion Zimmer Bradley (the subject of an article in a recent issue of PEOPLE magazine, which surely must have given her followers orgasms) and others like her. At twelve pages, the piece is overlong for the points it makes.

"The Albatross" is a doggeralization of Poe's "The Raven" and runs two pages. The co-authors are Joanne Wright and Ann Poore, and I can imagine them tossing lines and phrases back and forth, seeking the correct rhyme and having a good time, but I am left cold. Well, I rarely like verse anyway.

"The Numbed Beast" is Packer's two-page strip for the issue. What look like talking coathangers run through a mercifully brief lampoon of Heinlein's unfortunate book. I searched in vain for the reputed "humour".

On the other hand, Packer's illustrations for Terry Frost's "Melbourne in Winter" aim lower and succeed better, actually complementing and enhancing the piece.

"The Final Mission" is Harry J.N. Andruschak's answer to a rather funny (if also rather cruel) fantasy by Darrell Schweitzer in which Darrell "explained" that Andruschak was actually a janitor at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Darrell's "explanation" appeared in *HOLIER THAN THOU* #14 and one might reasonably wonder why Andruschak's response did not go to a subsequent HTT. The answer may lie in the fact that HTT editor Marty Cantor dropped Andruschak's column. He may have rejected "The Final Mission" as well. Oddly enough, and despite the fact that this piece is yet another reflection of Andruschak's obsession with the U.S. space program, this is the best thing I've read by the man. I suspect this is because for once Andruschak writes about himself in the JPL environment, taking us along with him as he goes about his job in a dust-free section of JPL. His description of what is required to maintain dust-free conditions is interesting because it is particularly specific in its details and describes a situation with which few of us would otherwise be familiar. Despite the way it trails off into an almost religious passion for the dying U.S. space program, "Final Mission" represents the most focussed and least inane piece Andruschak has done yet.

An "Interview with Charlotte Proctor" follows. The "interview" was conducted by "two silly little people, Jim Cobb and Nancy Brown", who asked the questions, some of which were ordinarily good questions. The answers are inane or worse, and may or may not have come from Charlotte Proctor and may or may not be in actual response to the questions. Little was accomplished here but to waste two pages with minor (feeble, in fact) silliness. I note Charlotte came in last in the DUFF race and I can't help wondering if this piece wasn't a contributing factor.

"Striking A Happy Medium" offers a much meatier exchange between Julie Vaux (she of the art portfolio in *THE MENTOR*) and Marc, followed by a more generalized piece by David Grigg which Marc apparently felt would offer a good balance to Vaux.

Vaux's "A Letter of Discontent" verges on a You-Don't-Have-The-Guts-To-Print-This letter. It is full of ignorance and misunderstandings. She opens by characterizing Q36 as "a self-declared tru-fan satirical pseudo-scientific fanzine", and follows this with a description of the "tru-fan attitude" that "'one mustn't be very serious'", an attitude that "is the source of my discontent". Ms. Vaux is, it develops, deadly serious.

What she wants to be serious about is this:

"Q36 is supposed to be one of Australia's leading fanzines? Right? Yet it's printed on primitive stencils, on low-grade paper. This distresses me as an artist and as a craftswoman who cares about material quality. What distresses me is that I know we can do better."

Frankly, Ms. Vaux could do better. Her artwork is distressingly poor and her sense of craft as an artist is minimal. Had she bothered to inform herself about the medium of mimeo she could have discovered that it offers unique opportunities to an artist - opportunities largely negated, it must be admitted, by the tendency of modern faneds to electrostencil all the art they use.

Ms. Vaux wants to see Q36 and other "tru-fen" fanzines printed photo-offset (and not whipped out on an office copier, either, a practice she regards as a "negative aspect" of "amateurism"), and sold in shops and by subscription. "Now I know that we can't all be creative, but this isn't a matter of creativity, it is a matter of caring craftsmanship, of which there isn't much around. Instead we have the cult of the Sacred Mimeo, and a few sensible individuals /Ron Clarks, apparently/ trying hard to loosen the restrictions of amateurism."

"Amateurism", that's the rub. "Professionalism" would be so much keener for Julie; "amateur" is for her a dirty word. No one ever told her that what professionals do for money amateurs do for love, and that the latter requires no less sense of craftsmanship. Indeed, Q36 refutes her nicely: Marc does approach his fanzine as a craftsman and this shows in his clean mimeography and, in this issue, his use of a second color for some of the art and headings. (A chart in Q362 reveals that mimeo paper costs 10¢ per thousand sheets more than offset paper of the same size, weight and color in Australia, making "low-grade" a value-judgement not supported by price.)

I find ignorant attacks on fandom by outsiders and fringe-fans lie Ms. Vaux annoying but I will admit things like this stir up the juices and get the adrenalin flowing, and that's something fanzines need occasionally. Marc's wishy-washiness can lead him to disguise his own complaints in allegory, but Julie Vaux cuts right through Q36's incipient blandness with her outspoken tirade. Responses should enliven Q36's letter-column issues to come.

Marc, in his brief reply, answers another of Ms. Vaux's potshots - that if anyone reads a comic book or sees a movie he or she is also "a media fan" - by pointing out that lots of people enjoy sf without becoming sf fans, so there's no reason to brand everyone who ever watched TV or went to a movie "media fans".

David Grigg, in a reprint, "The Future of Fanzines", first describes his own experiences with fanzines and why he enjoyed doing a fanzine, and then draws a parallel between fanzines and computer "networking", concluding with the thought that computer networks may offer an electronic equivalent to fanac some day. This is at best an oblique

reply to Ms. Vaux, and ignores the role of the non-apazine in drawing the computer network parallel. I can see a network replacing the apa as a new form of instant round-robin (multiple) correspondence, with in fact some advantages (principally over reliance on the mail service), but until we have facsimile printouts in that network I can't see a network replacing the genzine. There is too much pleasure for the faned in crafting the total package of the fanzine.

The remainder of the issue consists of Marc's editorial, "Back to the Drawing Board", the lettercol, and a final editorial "Afterthoughts". Once again, the substance of the issue is to be found in Marc's own material, with the Vaux adding a little seasoning. The Grigg was reprinted, to help balance the Vaux, and the rest of the material was minor, almost filler-material.

I think Q36 fails as a genzine precisely because none of the outside contributions come close to equalling Marc's own, and Marc is for the most part an amiable but undistinguished fanwriter. His talents as an editor seem underdeveloped and fail to match his talents for publishing Q36 in such a well-designed, well-crafted form. He needs to find much stronger outside contributors. If I was he I would start soliciting some of the better, but not yet BNF, overseas fanwriters (the BNFs too, once Q36 had been built up a bit). At the same time I'd go after Australian fanwriters like Bangsund, Foyster, and Edmonds, who generally still uphold the older, higher, standards. I might see if I could think of a topic that Jack Herman could sink his teeth into, and I think I'd try to get something by Rob Gerrand, who has been appearing in Leigh Edmonds' fanzine lately. (Well, if I was Marc I'd be a lot more aware of local fanwriters than in fact I am, and no doubt I'd pursue others as well.) The duty of a good editor is to have a vision by commissioning fanwriters on specific topics. (For example, poor Irwin Hirsh commissioned this, little dreaming of what he'd unleashed.) I think Leigh Edmonds' comments on Q36's lack of direction and comfortable muddle are perceptive and should be carefully considered by Ortlieb.

ORNITHOPTER/RATAPLAN (#s 10, 11, 12/21, & 22): At last: a good Australian fanzine! I have saved Leigh Edmonds' fanzine for last because it is the only Aussie fanzine (save the very infrequent SF COMMENTARY) I've seen in recent years which I completely enjoyed, and the promise of concluding with it has led me through this long literary journey like a carrot on a stick, dangling before me and always eluding my grasp as I stumbeed on. Perhaps this has been obvious from the approving way I've quoted from ORNITHOPTER, and perhaps by this point you have sussed my biases well enough to guess as much anyway. I was strongly tempted not to bother spending much time critiquing ORNITHOPTER/RATAPLAN - I had, after all, not intended when I began this piece to enter into the D. West Lengthy Fan Article Competition - but just to point to Edmonds' zine approvingly and say something like, "Now there is what I mean when I say Good Fanzine".

But that's rather cruel to Leigh - he is after all the only Australian fan writing lengthy fanzine critiques, which means that he never gets to read one about his zine - and unfair as well to those I've critiqued earlier. If I am so free with my criticism of those fanzines I don't like, then I can be no less thorough with one I do like.

So let's talk about what I like about ORNITHOPTER/RATAPLAN.

First, Edmonds has a complete editorial conception for his fanzine. I don't know whether he actively solicits all the material he doesn't write himself, but it is obvious that all of it fits the broad picture he keeps in his mind's eye of the fanzine. Without exception all the material is literate on a level not achieved by any of the previously-reviewed fanzine. The range of topics is broad, including as it does a non-fannish travelogue of Europe and (by a different author) a visit to the Louvre. Here is the sense of intelligent people communicating interestingly to each other which used to characterise Australian fanzines for me and which I can no longer find elsewhere except the rare Gillespie zine.

This editorial conception carries over to the design and pacing of Edmonds' zine, which reminds me of Malcolm Edwards' TAPPEN (although in tone the fanzines are less close): There is no interior art, and the editorial material interleaves with the outside material. ORNITHOPTER made use of regular set-pieces, including an opening bit of whimsy which I was glad to see dropped when ORNITHOPTER mutated into RATAPLAN (I felt those pieces dragged on too long for the modest points they had to make without being intrinsically interesting as fiction). Edmonds talks about aspects of his current life (although not as intimately as is common in the apas), reviews two or three fanzines in depth, and conducts a meaty lettercolumn. Additionally Rob Gerrand is usually present with a short column. These elements alone make for a good fanzine, but Leigh augments each issue with one or two other outside contributions and these are uniformly of a quality at least equal (and sometimes superior) to Edmonds' own material.

Edmonds himself writes in a style which seems to me to be equal parts Gillespie-style SFC-sercathical and John D. Berry-style thoughtfull (almost gentle) introspection. Although he does not beat about the bush in his critical writing, Edmonds maintains a temperate tone which I have occasionally envied. You won't find Leigh angrily mouthing off in print; his writing seems carefully considered and more than likely second-draft.

The artwork is confined to the covers, and ORNITHOPTER 10 and 11 have cover art (apparently) by Valma Brown about which the best one can say is that they compete with John Packer's Q36 covers in the Childish Scrawl Department. Under the circumstances I can appreciate the fact that Leigh has foregone interior art. Better no art than bad art.

Better yet, the covers have improved considerably with RATAPLAN 21 and

22. Marilyn Pride's cover on 21 is nicely rendered and nicely surreal (dinosaur plays a drum), and Elizabeth Darling's "At the Louvre" cover on 22 is a real delight, a loosely-sketched cartoon that would fit right in, stylistically, in a magazine like THE NEW YORKER.

ORNITHOPTER 10 is probably the weakest of the four issues - which is not that surprising when one considers that it was the first issue in some while. Denny Lien's Advention '81 speech is better than most transcripts of speeches, but suffers the usual problem of not having been intended to be read in print. Still, the speech is a confection, offering up only a few whimsies and only its construction - tighter than most speeches - rescues it from blandness. I could see it more easily in Q36.

The other outside contribution (not counting the first of Rob Gerrand's columns) is Joseph Nicholas's piece about his return flight to England. Although slightly marred by the gratuitous slam at the Fanshins' SF in Dimension (Nicholas can't deal with a philosophy of optimism, falling back on the epithets "naive" and "superficial" to express his disgust), this is probably the best thing Nicholas has written in years, being uncharacteristically a narrative and non-polemical (except for that brief lapse mentioned above). Gone are the paragraph-long sentences, the multiplicity of subordinate clauses, even the usual supercilious tone of voice. I should imagine this piece comes far closer to expressing that side of Nicholas which is better known to those who have met him in person, and I hope it is a portent of more pieces of this nature from Joseph.

(In RATAPLAN 22 Edmonds, replying to a letter of mine, refers to "the feuding" Joseph and I "have been engaging in", and in Dave Langford's letter immediately following Dave comments that "The perpetual public spectacle in fanzines is Joe Nicholas locked antler-to-antler with Ted White". In this case the immediate stimulus was a Nicholas letter in ORNITHOPTER 11 which for no reason at all hauled out his conception of an argument he and I had been having by correspondence - or, more accurately, an argument I'd been having with Judith Hanna which Joseph arrogated to himself for the purposes of his letter. Since I expect to treat the subject more fully in GAMBIT 57, I won't pursue it here, but what I do want to say is that I do not regard myself to be "feuding" with Nicholas despite a variety of disagreements we've had over the past year or two. Nor do I think that we've locked horns in fanzines all that often; at the moment I can recall only two instances, those being a letter I wrote which was published as an article in NABU 12, and my editorial in GAMBIT 56. Both were in direct response to items Joseph had written and not out-of-the-blue attacks. But apparently the novelty of someone holding a few of Joseph's arguments up by the scruffs of their necks was such that I have become identified in many people's minds as some sort of nemesis or regular antagonist of Joseph's, and the expectation is that I will automatically react with hostility to anything the man does. This is a fundamentally error. I would like nothing better than to see Joseph abandon what appears to have been an

artificially mannered style and write in a more open, personally expressive fashion. His "Fear of Flying" is a big step in that direction, and one I applaud.)

The outside contribution in #11 was Jennifer Bryce's European trip report. She writes unaffectedly about what interested her and although an occasional name I recognized (Chris Priest, Franz Rottensteiner) popped up, for the most part she was writing about the European experience.

In #12/21 Bruce Gillespie and Helen Swift are the outside contributors and perhaps it's the RATAPLAN influence on the fading ORNITHOPTER, but for whatever reason these are quite meaty contributions, especially Helen Swift's.

Gillespie's "Why I No Longer Read Science Fiction (Well, Hardly Ever)" paints a fascinating picture of Gillespie's growing disillusionment with science fiction. Once an idealist who believed that by commenting on and critiquing sf as literature he could turn sf into literature, Gillespie has finally come to the same sad realization we all reach eventually: at least 90% of it is crap, and there's more all the time. Bruce entered fandom at an ideal time, when sf was full of yeasty ferment and looked like it was trembling on the threshold of something new and better and very exciting. The late sixties were sf's last really exciting times: doors had been opened to new areas, the sky was the limit, and anything could happen. What did happen was curiously parallel to the growth and collapse of late-sixties rock (which had gone from one leap of ambition to the next with the realization that now anything was possible). Science fiction began to sell. It made the best-seller lists. Sci-fi movies became the biggest boxoffice hots of all time. And the guys who were going to blow it all off proved to be unequal to the task. Spinrad turned out to have a tin ear and callow perceptions. Moorcock masturbated. Rock stars got old and fat, and so did Heinlein, Clarke and Asimov. It turned out that pandering to the masses made more money than integrity and experimentalism; Alan Dean Foster lives a lot better than Chris Priest. The Science Fiction Writers of America has over five hundred members, and most of them write crap. Some of them are doing very well at it.

Now Gillespie has discovered mystery novels: "The best writers of the mystery story ... show that one can write a good novel while still staying within the bounds of the genre. Science fiction writers have lost my support because of their resolute unwillingness to include any of the basic qualities of good fiction in their writing." The same can be said of the best writers of westerns, which may explain why I read a great many more mystery and western novels these days than I do sf. They are better written. (I have one nit to pick with Edmonds on the way Gillespie's piece was presented: Bruce opens with an introductory paragraph and then for incomprehensible reasons the piece-proper is begun with a quote-mark. That quote is closed at the conclusion of the piece, effectively bracketing the complete article with quotes. But

none of the intermediate paragraphs opens with quote-marks, and none of the actual quotations within the piece is presented as a quote-within-quotes, both of which are called for if the entire piece is to be presented as a single quotation. Actually the use of quotes to bracket the article was simply done to set off the main body of the piece from the introduction, but I can think of many far less clumsy ways. For me, at least, an open-paranthesis or open-quote that is not followed in due course by a close-paranthesis or close-quote is like the proverbial one shoe falling: I keep waiting for its mate.)

"A Trip to Yalata" by Helen Swift was a real eye-opener for me, since I am ignorant of Australia's race problems and the culture-clash between aborigine and caucasian conquerors. It was also very handy in a serendipitous way for me since my next project upon finishing this one is to review the new special anti-drug issue of THE TEEN TITANS prepared in cooperation with Nancy Reagan and the White House. Helen's observation that "Drug abuse among teenagers is so common as to need to be viewed as 'normal experimentation', and thus not to be worried about too much" is one I shall quote as very much to the point. Her description of the gasoline (or petrol) sniffing among impoverished teenagers, and its dangers to their health, carried more weight than would most fanzine articles, coming as it does directly from her own government-sponsored research. Similarly her description of the field-trip she took, the people she met, and the conditions she encountered, has a bite to it, fueled by her perceptivity and her anger. Yet, for all that this is not "fannish" stuff, it is eminently fanzine-worthy because she personalizes it, puts herself in the middle of her piece and makes no pretense at depersonalized "objectivity". It is precisely in this fashion that her piece here meets the suggestions I made in commenting on WAHF-FULL's "Real World" pieces: Helen writes about a very real Real World, and yet does so in a style I regard as genuinely "fannish". This is the standout piece in these four issues.

In #22 the outside contributions are Paul Stokes on the Louvre and Bruce Gillespie on the Lee Harding wedding party. Stokes begins his piece with the vivid "My time in the Louvre lay across two days" (a typical fan would have said "I spent two days in the Louvre", a much more pedestrian turn) and walks us through both a potted history of the Louvre and some of its galleries, spending most of his time in the Oriental Antiquities. I could have done with less pure description and more of Stokes' opinions (those he expressed were both considered and pungent), and I felt the piece ended a bit abruptly, but it was nonetheless an enlightening tour and despite (again) an "unfannish" topic it fit comfortably into RATAPLAN. I'm reminded of the mid-sixties WARHOON with its articles on Fellini; one has the sense of a fanzine operating on higher cultural levels than mass-market pop-media. Gillespie's piece was more informal, more "fannish" in its sense of community and long-time friendship, and maybe even a bit wistful.

It can be seen from the foregoing, I hope, that my standards in fanzines are not based upon a narrow, "traditionally fannish" interpretation. My

admiration for ORNITHOPTER/RATAPLAN is not predicted on its publication of specifically fan-oriented material (since much of its material is not) but rather on two things: an attitude which seems to me quintessentially fannish (no matter what topics that attitude is brought to bear upon); and an emphasis on literacy, on high standards in the actual writing, which makes virtually all of the zine (possibly excepting some letters) a pleasure and a delight to read.

It is in Leigh's own writing that I find the first evidence that an Australian recognizes the same problems in Aussie fanzines that I have noticed. Indeed, Leigh carries it a step further than I have. Commenting on WAHF-DULL he says, "If Jack is not aiming high enough this may be because his audience is incapable of responding appropriately. If this is the case then it is a great pity for Australian fandom that we are unable to support a higher level of intellectual activity." (#10) Leigh may have been just being polite with that remark; it appears that ORNITHOPTER/RATAPLAN's higher level of intellectual activity has recieved support, although hardly from all Aussie fans to be sure.

Leigh has attacked the problem at both ends. In his fanzine critiques he has given Australian fanzines the first thoughtful consideration and criticism most of them have ever recieved (and had I been aware at the outset that he would be doing this, I might have passed up the invitation to write this piece on the grounds that it was redundant and unnecessary), treating each with dignity and fairness, but calling attention to its shortcomings and possible solutions. This alone is invaluable, because until Australian fanzine editors become aware through the feedback of intelligent criticism of their editorial failures they are unlikely to feel the need to correct the.. Leigh adopts a judicial tone, examining each fanzine within its own context, imposing no narrow standards, laying down few "rules" to be followed, but accurately pinpointing each fanzine's strong and weak points. ... Because most critical fanzine reviews (perhaps including this one) tend to express some indignation over percieved errors, if they do not become (pace The Old Nicholas) outright abusive, the danger is always that the editor under attack will respond to the abrasiveness of the review and ignore its advice. Edmonds does his best to avoid this problem with an even-tempered tone that is largely successful. (But not completely. John Alderson describes ORNITHOPTER 11 as "a very badly edited means of escapism...the worst edited and certainly the emptiest in terms of content..." I can't help thinking that says more about Alderson than it does about ORNITHOPTER.)

And, at the other end, Leigh has gone ahead and published a fanzine that demonstrates some of the things he has talked about in his reviews, setting higher intellectual standards for it and proving that one possible reason for the lacklustre quality of most Aussie fanzines is their too-low level of ambition. Or, as he puts it in #21, "...one of the reasons that I find myself embarked upon the business of publishing a bi-monthly fanzine is because there is nobody else in Australia who is publishing the kind of fanzine that I think needs to be published at the

regularity which is necessary. ... Of course, a monthly publishing schedule would be even better, but one has to eat and sleep too."

By #21 the gathering momentum was beginning to pay off with a much fuller lettercolumn and a rich mix of responses.

Jack Herman, for instance, responding to Nicholas's letter in #11, offers first a very sensible thought: "Fanneds have to evaluate their efforts primarily in terms of their own aims and achievements and the sort of feedback they get from the readers to whom they are appealing." But he follows this with "What I find most ironic is that Joseph, who was one of the first to advocate a consistent line of fanzine reviewing towards the production of a pretty stereotyped sort of fanzine, is now outraged at Ted White for suggesting much the same sort of thing." It's been several years since I read Joseph's reviews, but I recall them excoriating sloppy production, sloppy writing, and sloppy thinking (mostly in American fanzines), which doesn't suggest any stereotyping to me. But then, I have never advocated "much the same sort" of stereotyping myself. It disturbs me to see otherwise intelligent fans reacting so blindly to criticism, especially when it wasn't even directed at them. The individuality of fans and their fanzines is one of the aspects of fandom I celebrate, but I don't excuse illiteracy or moronic doodling in the name of "individuality". The imposition of "standards" does not imply a single Standard for fanzines, and I'm surprised that this is not obvious to people like Jack.

It's all very well to talk about "appealing" to one's readers, but a fanzine is not conducted like a commercially-vended magazine, it does not survive on its sales-appeal, and in fandom many of a fanzine's readers will be fellow fanzine editors. Thus a fanzine is part of something bigger: a community of fanzines and fans. It expresses the unique viewpoint of its editor and is fueled by the interreaction of its readers. If the readers are ignorant of most fanzines they will respond with considerable enthusiasm to even the most mediocre fanzine when they encounter it - and it seems to me that the "barbarian invasion" of media and con-fans has made this a more common situation. But most people learn from experience and develop standards, and become more critical of mediocre efforts.

Julie Vaux responds to Leigh's review of *PARIAH* with this: "I felt you were being unfair to Gerald Smith in your review of *PARIAH*. You can not expect him to develop Jean Weber's editorial skills so quickly. Be generous and give him more time." Since I don't think Jean Weber's "editorial skills" are much advanced over Smith's, I wonder how much time will be required for him to equal them. More to the point is Leigh's reply:

"...I should comment on the suggestion that Gerald Smith (or anybody who comes in for criticism) should somehow be protected from adverse comment because they are trying to get better, and praise and patience will solve all problems. I happen to disagree; from my own experience I have

learned that nothing teaches so well or so thoroughly as the rebuke. Even mild criticism (and that is the best that Australian fanzine editors have been offered over the past few years) does nothing but lull the receiver into a sense of security, and reading that somebody sees all sorts of failings in your performance, an honest appraisal, is worth many pages of muddy back-patting."

Maybe I should have that paragraph boxed and run at the top of each page of this article; it perfectly states my own reason and purpose here.

Vaux continues, commenting on Edmonds' criticism of the art in PARIAS: "I found the actual art quite adequate by fanzine standards and, as a fan who both paints and draws and has studied the history of several art mediums and forms... well, to be quite frank I am one of the few fans who is qualified to give a true art critique (and not a personal opinion disguised as one)." (The elipsis is hers, as is the plural of "medium", which, as we all know, is really "media".) It will come as a surprise to Ms. Vaux, but any number of non-Australian fans have both training and experience as artists, myself among them. (I trained to be an artist from the age of eight to eighteen, achieving fluency in most of the commercial and non-commercial media, never dreaming that I'd "grow up" to become a writer, editor, and musician instead. I haven't attempted any art in many years, but still have a number of drawings and paintings left over from my youth. I point this out so that Ms. Vaux will not regard my comments on the art in Australian fanzines as only "a personal opinion", although of course they are personal opinions as well.) And to call mediocre art "quite adequate by fanzine standards" is to imply that "fanzine standards" are rather low, and that a fanzine deserves nothing better. This, of course, is precisely the problem with a great deal of Australian fanzine art, including Julie Vaux's own.

OUTRO: Well, if you've made it all the way to this point, you will probably agree with me that the foregoing "specifics" have pretty well covered the range and extent of both the "problem" and the "solution" posed at the beginning.

My feeling is that Australian fandom has suffered a situation far from unique: an explosion of new fans from a variety of sources, a break with its earlier traditions and the concomitant gaffiation or withdrawal of its former leading lights, and the domination of apahacking and apazine "spontaneity" and sloppiness. All of these have led to a body of fans slowly rebuilding Australian fandom, their fanzines primitive by most modern standards.

I suspect geography also has something to do with it. Present day Australian fandom reminds me more than a little of fifties U.S. fandom. There is a lot of distance between pockets of fans, and despite the present size of Australian fandom (which I gather is much larger than it was ten or fifteen years ago) much fanac takes place by mail. This contrasts noticeably with British fandom, which is contained in a small geographical space and tends at times toward incest but also creates a

pressure-cooker atmosphere that has produced a lot of fine fanzines and fanwriting.

Many fans are capable of fine work, but require a stimulus to produce it. That stimulus has been unfortunately lacking in Oz until rather recently, but I think Edmonds and RATAPLAN have introduced it once again, setting examples and chivying others into trying harder to do better, to produce their best.

I have purposely excluded Irwin and SIKANDER from this entire discussion. I have seen only a few issues of SIKANDER and while I liked their "feel", I didn't think them very substancial or interesting. But I like the fact that Irwin has taken the editorial bull by its horns: he is to be commended for the very idea of asking a variety of outside reviewers to comment on Australian fanzines. I'm sure he is aware of the generally poor reputation of Aussie zines abroad, and it appears to me he is seeking both to bring this reputation home to the consciousness of his fellow Australians, and to prod them thereby into an improvement. As I've said earlier, he surely had no idea of what he was asking for when he asked me to inaugurate this series (and if I haven't killed it in the process); in plain fact neither had I. (I envisioned perhaps a dozen pages.) I have spent a total of eight months on this piece, from first reading the zines and thinking about them to writing these last words; it has been an albatross clinging to my neck, threatening never to let go. I approach its conclusion now almost with disbelief, I have lived with it for so long now. This final week I have put aside all my paying work to finish it and yet I am pushing hard against the final deadline.

Having recently read D. West's "Performance" in TAPPEN 5, and having yet more recently noted that few have been willing to comment at length on that work, most fans being too daunted by its size, I am not happy about the even greater length of this piece, which may be simply too large to digest for many people. My suggestion, if you've skipped ahead to read this bit and suss my conclusions without reading what has gone before, is that you read my comments on each fanzine individually, like the chapters of a book. That might help, if anything will. And perhaps its very size will save me from a few outraged responses from those whose oxen I have gored herein. If not, may God have mercy upon my soul.

- Ted White

YE ED SAYS: As Ted mentions, this article is the first in a series of fanzine commentary that will appear regularly in SIKANDER. Each installment will be written by a differnt person, with the hope of gathering new and differing views and insights. Ted's address is 1014 N Tuckahoe St, Falls Church, VA 22046, USA. This article is, by the way, longer than the biggest fanzine I've ever published. Let's see what some people had to say about that fanzine...

For once in my life I'm going to finish wha...

At Least You Can Say You Have Read It

423 Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown, Maryland,
21740, U.S.A.
February 13, 1980.

Irwin Mirsh,
379 Domain Road,
South Yarra,
Victoria 3141, Australia.

Dear Irwin:

letters

Leigh Edmonds
PO Box 433
Civic Square
ACT 2608

Thanks for SEKANDER 7; I was beginning to wonder where it had got to. Overall I was not too impressed, I think that may be because the writings of Billy Wolfenbarger and Bruce Townley did not interest me very much, in

particular I share the sentiments expressed by Norman Hollyn over Wolfenbarger. As for the Edmonds piece, that just shows how much of an idea is lost between its conception and its final form on paper.

About the best piece of writing in the issue was, I thought, your editorial - not because it mentioned either me or cricket, but because of the fairly skillful way in which you lead one thing into another. It is not the smoothest piece of fan writing that I've ever seen, but it is a lot better than most that gets done in this country.

Your comments on John Alderson are, I think, a bit of overreaction. I, like many others, am beginning to tire of the way in which John seems to get things the wrong way around and seems to hold values which are quite divergent from those held by most fanzine editors and readers. On the other hand, John often writes about interesting things and it seems to me that such offerings should not be rejected "out of hand". Instead, when John submits something for publication it should be an editorial duty to point out those areas in which the logic or the argument seems weak and those places where thoughts need further amplification. If John is interested in having his views aired he will be willing to comply with the wishes of editors, if he is not then he can withdraw his piece. Either way any publication should be made when both the editor and John are satisfied that what is being presented is done in an acceptable form.

Of course one of the main differences between me and John is that when I write something I want to entertain first and to then educate, whereas John is almost entirely interested in education to his unorthodox views through a series of rather unusually strung together ideas. If he were to use these strings of "logic" to entertain us with a novel view of the world he might get a lot further than he does now when he just ruffles peoples feathers to no personal advantage. I sometimes think that John is a good example of the old saying about "a little knowledge being a dangerous thing".

The one thing in the issue which I thought was not too bad was the thing from Stu Shiffman, the trouble with it really wasn't much more than an idea which had been half developed.

Thinking again about the issue I think that the reason I was not too impressed might have to do with the amount of time and space that John took up even though he was not there himself. The comment was almost all negative and so the central theme of the issue was also negative. In other words there was no focus to the issue, it seemed like a collection of blue pages stuck together in search of a leader. Still, even in this state SIKANDER stands high among Australian fanzines which may be a comment on the state of things in general.

rich brown
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If I recieved SIKANDER 6 - I don't believe I did, but even so - I don't recall John Alderson's article. Yet, judging by inference from the replies you print, I was somewhat non-plussed by your editorial comments about it in the present issue. You seem to imply he "slipped one over" on you - wrote a button-pushing controversy-for-the-sake-of-controversy piece while you were (I guess) looking the other way.

Maybe there's a good reason to what you say - perhaps you cut out 2.6 tons of vitrol, invective and nasty unremitting name-calling from the letters you printed (or from those you did not print) - I have no way of knowing. But if that's not so, again judging by what you let us see of the letters of response, it seems to me he's "sparked an interesting discussion", which is what you say he used to do, in contrast "to raising some heated controversy" - which is what you feel he did in the article he wrote for SIKANDER 6. Huh? "Heated" controversy? I see no evidence that the people who made reply were in need of a napkin to wipe the froth and spittle from their mouths after having had their say - or any indication, really, that they believe you agree with John simply because you printed this article.

While it would be one thing for you to disagree with him, and/or say you believe he may be manipulative and/or pushing people's buttons for the glee of seeing them react, it's quite another to deny him any defense of his (admittedly somewhat silly, judging by the same inferences already mentioned) views in reply to the response he has engendered. (Although perhaps, considering the topic of the discussion, "engendered" is not the best word to use...) If he doesn't mind making a fool of himself - so long as you make it clear that's what you think he's doing - I can't see how it does you harm. But, I guess we have different ideas of what constitutes a "heated controversy" and, anyway, it's your fanzine...

...so, assuming you don't want to hear any more on the "controversy", aside from telling you how delightful I thought Stu Shiffman's piece, I really only found one other thing to comment on. Harry Warner mentions John Berry's piece on escalators (or piece which mentioned escalators, since as I say I'm not sure if I saw SIKANDER 6 and have no specific

recollection of the piece), which prompts me to point out that I live two blocks from the largest escalator in the U.S. - 405 feet from top to bottom, two persons wide (yet, frequently, people ignore or, I suspect, do not understand the signs which say "stand to the right" so as to let people in a hurry go by), and leads into the Dupont Circle Metro Station.

While I'm sure this means absolutely nothing to anyone else, it's positively stfnal to me. The escalator is about a block and a half from where Klatu Got It In The Neck (in THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL), but quite aside from that the station and its escalator remind me of nothing quite so much as a Frank R. Paul cover. Amazingly like a Frank R. Paul cover, in fact - all it really needs to be compleat is a few people flying up with their personal helicopters strapped to their shoulders...

Which in turn reminds me of a question which has been puzzling me a lot of late. Namely, here we are living in the future - at least "the future" which used to be talked about by sf writers every few years or so during the 1950s in non-stf magazines like POPULAR MECHANICS and MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED - and I still don't have a personal helicopter to strap to my shoulders. While they never printed fiction, those magazines occasionally polled a few well-known sf writers to extrapolate what we might expect in the next 15, 20 or 30 years - and it seems to me there was a pretty strong consensus that by the 1980s or so we'd all be flying around with our personal helicopters strapped to our backs. In fact, some of the ads they carried even offered to sell you plans for making your own rocket-powered personal helicopter to strap to your back - and as far as I know they may still be selling them. I admit I didn't reach my majority at any time in the 1950s, so I wasn't in a position to send off for those plans - and considering that I've never seen anyone flying overhead with one, I suppose they must have ended with something like: "Step 287: Attach U-238 driven atomic-powered rocket motor..." - but even so, I feel disappointed. I mean, I really looked forward to that future - getting up bright and refreshed each day, eating my breakfast "pill" (to which all food was to be reduced), stepping outside and strapping on my whirly blades, rising into the morning shy along with the hundreds, thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands of morning commuters...

It's shabby, is what it is. Down right shabby. If this is the future, take me back to thr 1960s...

((I think Leigh and rich put this Alderson "controversy" into its proper prospective. My reaction was a bit of an overreaction. But I do think I edited out the "2.6 tons of vitrol, invective, etc. At least that showed a better sense of editorial balance. ih))

Richard Faulder
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I was interested in your comments in regard to your publication of the John Alderson article that you've never been interested in fanzines that are

interested in controversy for controversy's sake. I'm reminded of a comment made by Jack Vance during a question-and-answer session at Tschaicon. In response to a question about the social relevance and/or responsibility of sf writers, he commented that authors who deliberately set out to make some profound social point by attacking some obvious areas of social injustice are simply using cheap shots to take the easy way out of coming up with plot ideas. (Any social issues that naturally bob to the surface during the course of the book are another matter, of course.) The same sort of thing applies to fanzines, I guess. In this theatrical world we live in, people tend to confuse visibility with fame. If you're just after the latter, then notoriety is as good a way of getting it as any, especially as most of your audience is also incapable of making the distinction. (By "you" I don't mean Irwin Hirsh.)

Bruce Townley has both style and wit, although perhaps wtill not enough of the latter for my taste. In a shorter piece of writing this wouldn't have mattered, but as things stood I did get to the point where I was wondering when the article was going to end.

Stu Shiffman's piece seemed to me to move in fits and starts. I'd be really enjoying a bit, then the interest would drop out, only to start up suddenly again. His accompanying artwork certainly helped a lot.

For me Leigh Edmonds' was the highlight article of the issue. Nor was it simply the ethnic references. The whole thing flowed along smoothly and wittily and I enjoyed both the individual incidents and the developing context.

In a sense I can't really see what the fuss is about with the census. Sure, in absolute terms it's an invasion of privacy. However, in today's Real World the information is accessible by consulting the databank net. At least by co-operating with the census you have some control over what information is used about you, and the form in which it is presented. The alternative is to have the government interrogate the databank net and drag up and correlate a lot of information you'd rather they didn't happen to know.

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Greetings from the vacationland of the world.
I'm also writing to you from a land without Pro
Football at the moment and for many more it
looks like. I dunno if I ever forced you to
endure the grim horror of viewing a Redskins
game when you visited the US of A a coupla

years back, who knows, they may have even been playing good football way back then. Or, at least, football worth watching. Which they haven't been able to do for about 75% of each season for the last two years at least. Needless to say I looked at the first official game of the season with only about half an eye (a painful experience if not done properly) and even tuned in laconically after half the game had been played. Things started to pick up in the last quarter when I was out in

the kitchen getting a beer. I could tell the game was hotting up from the excited whoops I could hear wafting in on the breeze passing by a nearby apartment house. The Redskins had scored after intercepting a fumble from the supposedly much stronger Philadelphia Eagles. There'd been something like an 80 yard run which I had of course even missed the instant replay of. Moments before the game was over my parents came home from a two-week vacation and while I was dutifully helping unload the car, secure in the knowledge that that first touchdown was little more than a fluke and that there was no way the lardass Skins could close the 14 point gap in the less than three minutes remaining. Sure enough they did it as I could tell from the various cries and whispers of joy bourne to me by the wind from that same apartment house. It was suddenly a tied game and I'd not seen a bit of the action that had made it that way! I did manage to see the final field goal by Mark Moseley (one of the most incredible of his career by the way) in the overtime but I felt let-down if only because I'd let down my self-image as a football fan. So I suppose the present football strike is all my fault, directly caused by my breach of faith. I've been torturing myself with College Baseball on Cable Television (since the major leagues don't recruit from College Baseball teams, it is a truly amateur sport and manages to live down to all expectations very nicely, thank you), a hair hair-shirt to atone for my sins.

I suppose it's connected to my impure thoughts related above but the Baltimore Orioles have missed the National Playoff's, the Pennant Race and all that (thereby further blighting Earl Weaver's final season) by only one lousy game. Poot. This sin business is getting a little out of hand.

Incidentally, if you felt at all confused during the above ranting maybe such a feeling in some small way simulated my own mazy feeling when I read about Cricket in fnz. THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING is gonna be on Cable TV this month so I'll be sure to watch it to see how this Pakistani cricketer fits in.

Jack R. Herman
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As a cricket-buff it should have occurred to me that the zine might have been named after a good, stock, medium-pacer but it never did. Somehow, though, I can't see it as BRADMAN either. Bangsund, at his best, might have produced a Bradman, Marc Ortlieb could do a very good HARVEY or, perhaps, HOBBS, and Warner and Loney might produce a CHANDRASEKHAR but your zine seems more of a SIMPSON or BENAUD, good and reliable, with a few twists and a touch of the unorthodox. Above average but not headline-grabbing.

I did appreciate Bruce Townley's meal by meal trip report. Having suffered through a number of repetitious and either over-bland or over-spiced Mexican (or Tex-Mex) meals, I'd like to find some inspired meals of the chalupas sort. Of course, I have to risk the revenge taken by what my doctor calls a "reflux" which has all the symptoms of an ulcer,

but who could resist well-prepared, but tasty, spicy and different food.

Leigh's vignette captures the colonial spirit well. Its gentle prose complements the mood and contributes to one of the best pieces of fannish fiction I've seen. Leigh is an excellent fannish writer in this mode, and his knowledge of Australian history enables him to set his scene with remarkable fidelity. It is certainly the outstanding piece in the issue.

Unlike Greg Hills' response to censuses (censi?) I go to the other extreme obfuscation - I list my occupation as "Pedagogical Engineer specialising in Linguistic Remediation", my religion as "deist", and my job-category as "child-minding". Let them make of that what they may.

I'm not sure about your cover art, when your columnists are 3:1 in favour of non-Australians.

Frank Macskasy Jr
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I had an idea that your title SIKANDER was taken from the movie THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING, and is a distortion of "Alexander" who supposedly conquered that imaginary country when the young Persian was sweeping through that part of the world.

I think I know how you feel about that movie. When I first started watching it, I thought, "Hello! Here's another hoary old tale about a couple of adventurers who rip-off 'unsophisticated' natives". But as I continued watching, it soon became apparent that THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING had a far deeper theme to it, and was indeed forward looking.

In some ways, THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING almost qualifies as sf (speculative fiction) in that it presents ideas and a theme not often discussed in Western literature and art. Except in science/spec. fiction which manages to deal with just about anything this universe has to offer. True, THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING does not have ray guns, robots, and rockets - but it does have something vastly more important and more valuable in sf; ideas.

Christine Ashby
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Derrick wants me to tell you that "Sikander" is the Persian form of "Alexander", as in "Alexander the Great". Seeing that you are familiar with the plot and setting of THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING I don't suppose that further

elaboration is needed on the significance of Kipling's choice of that name. As it so happens, Kipling is one of my favourite writers. I think that there is an unfortunate tendency to dismiss him out of hand as a poet, merely because he is associated with an ideology which is now passe. I find him a consummate craftsman. As for the film of the story, we saw that at about the same time as we saw THE WIND AND THE LION, which was also a most enjoyable film. Sean Connery has rather a limited range, I think, but he certainly buckles a tremendous swash.

Cherry Wilder
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Sikander is Hindu or other Indian language for Alexander, the great white conqueror who reached as far as the river Indus way back when. That is why those old guys in

Sikandergul were so keen to have Sean as king - they had been waiting all that long time for another white conqueror. The name in Arabic is Iskander... same guy, Alexander, and the arabs regarded the Al part as an article... like El Morrocco. I always thought it was a beaut name for a fanzine because I knew the little story (and thought you did!)

((I did. I just thought there was more than what I picked up from the film. I seems I picked up quite a bit from the film. ih))

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Always interesting to see where odd fanzine titles come from. My first fanzine was entitled Unison. In my innocence I didn't realise that was the brand name of a contraceptive - until I got a LoC that pointed it out to me in revolting detail.

David Bratman
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I deduced, with my fine scientifiational brain, that Bruce Townley's article is an installment of a trip report. Ta da! He shouldn't be surprised that Gary Mattingly doesn't talk much. Many fans, especially "fanzine fans" (whatever they are) are nontalkative people who

express themselves only on paper.

I wouldn't know personally, mind you. I've never met Gary Mattingly. In fact, Bruce's trip to San Francisco seems to have covered all the major San Francisco fans I don't know. And I used to live in those parts, even. Strange. The only one of them I have met more than once is Loren MacGregor. And he used to live in Seattle, so there's some bizarre justice in it all.

Mike Rogers
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I guess I'll never understand cricket, even if it is the ancestor of my favourite sport, baseball. I only remember one anecdote about the sport. A couple of years ago, there was an article noting that English cricket fans

were decrying the increased instance of cricket bowlers deliberately throwing at batters. You would have thought it was the end of the world. I had to chuckle; "brushbacks" have been part of baseball strategy from the beginning of the sport. For that matter, baseball ethics are truly deplorable. Nothing is illegal if you don't get caught. (No, it doesn't say that in the rulebook, but everyone accepts it as an unwritten rule.)

Somehow, it seems rather strange that an Australian fanzine would have

two trip reports from American fan visiting other American fan. Since I don't know any of the participants and only recognize a couple of names, my interest is lacking. I can give better marks to Shiffman's movie ideas. I've seen these before from his pen; my favorite was his idea for Kubrick's THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, starring Paul Newman as Manuel O'Kelly Davis.

Surely by now, William Gibson has seen the generic SF book, published by the same outfit that does the other generics. I read it. It's not bad at all. You don't remember any of it a week later, but it's pleasant enough. It also takes gentle pokes at the entire idea of generic literature. Besides, I thought almost all mass-produced "romances" were essentially generic literature, anyway. After all, the novels are marketed as interchangeable commodities without any individual identity. What could be more generic?

((I think you are getting the idea of cricket; terms like "the end of the world" are very much part of the aura of the game. ih))

Diane Fox
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Liked Mike McGann's shuttle artwork for the 'zine title. And enjoyed the parody of "sci fi" ("sic fi" - nicely snide and pointed).

Wm Gibson's comments on "Romance" the No Frills books was blood-curdling. Unlike food, books are nothing but frills. (At least, fiction is nothing but frills. A technical manual, etc, can be standardized and factory produced without changing its purpose.) A no-frills work of fiction is a sort of self contradiction - reading one would be a similiar experience to carrying a pile of bricks from one side of a yard to the other, one by one, then carrying them back again. Meaningless make-word. But to addicts I suppose the pleasure would be more akin to, say, masturbation. You aren't getting anything out of it basically but it feels nice.

Eric Mayer
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As always I enjoyed the current issue. It is one of the few regular fanzines ((Ha! ih)) of the last few years and we really need such things. I have always liked Billy Wolfenbarger's stuff, the sort of moods he creates, even though his approach to life is considerably different from mine. I do have a quibble this time, however. There is, to my mind, a bit too much allusion to events. Though I do appreciate the way he conveys his mental state, I wouldn't mind if he broke down and set forth a few concrete facts, for example about just what his friend and he did way back when. That would be interssting too. I realize his method is too nibble at the corners of things, sticking in the brain to his own inner heart, and its a good personal style, but it would be very effective to consciously break from that style every so often, such breaks would provide contrast.

Very much enjoyed Bruce Townley's Burgers which is one of the more

interesting things running lately. Bruce doesn't adhere to the more formal school of faanish writing that seems to prevail at the moment. The first installment of Burgers inspired me to write the article I did for Dan Steffan's BNF. Good stuff. Bruce's article, that is. Why is it, I wonder, that fans write so much about eating though? Is it because they tend to be so destitute that they're never sure where their next meal is coming from? Or is it that they can hardly believe they, as slans, engage so often in such a mundane activity?

A note about Mark Loney's loc. My parents once bought an old chest of drawers in an antique shop and upon bringing it home discovered that it was full of memorabilia - diaries, daily appointment books, newspaper clippings, letters, church bulletins, collected by a turn of the century school teacher. It was quite fascinating. The woman must have been considered "liberated" in that age. She took charge of various social functions, wrote poems for the local newspaper, lived alone except for visits from her sister. The dresser was filled, aside from the memorabilia, with suffragette literature. The most puzzling thing however was a long, handwritten travelogue. There were no other mementoes of travel in the drawers and I couldn't decide whether the thing was a diary, or some sort of odd fiction. I wondered what happened to that teacher, whether she withered away so to speak in the little town where she lived. It was rather like reading through a stack of 75 year old personalzines.

H. Snoopwhistle
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Thank you for SIKANDER. It must be more than 20 years since I last recieved an Australian fanzine, and I'm beginning to suspect that my files may be incomplete.

It seems different somehow. Australians don't talk like this. I've been to parties - orgies even - in Earls Court and they don't say anything like "Did you know that the word "chair" comes, via Old French from the Latin 'cathedra'". Ho no!

They say: "Trite, mite, pyra norks loiike Evrist. Troid to dobbitonher but these bleedin oasties seyakomin. Dyawanna tubafostys?"

Rap back: "Gdonyasport," - hold out your hand and wham! another frothy can arrives. It certainly beats duplicating. As soon as I get shot of my current sheila and marry Edna Everage, you can bring John Berry to the housewarming.

And Berry can bring the beer.

From the illustration it looks as if Prince Charles will be playing the lead in The Walt Willis Story. No problem there, but there's no mention of who has been cast as the sex-obsessed, barely literate degenerate who dragged the wheels of IF into the gutterfor the James White part, who else but Lassie?

I feel as if I arrived a little late for the party, but I really enjoyed SIKANDER and I'd be grateful for the next issueunless there's another 20 year hiatus. ((Close... ih))

(signed) Chuck Harris

I ALSO HEARD FROM: JOHN J. ALDERSON (three times!); HARRY J.N.

ANDRUSCHAK; ANDREW BROWN "Do you really want to be the editor of Australia's only American fannish zine? I realise the difficulty of finding suitable Australian contributors, but really...."; JOAN-HANKE WOODS, with 3 beautiful limited edition prints; LUCY HUNTZINGER; JERRY KAUFMAN; ANNE LAURIE LOGAN, "Enjoyed Bruce Townley's report, which mentions all the things I remember most about my own travels - food, booze, physical ailments, bookstores, and strange freeform evenings in the company of good people. And I still don't believe in cricket, especially after running across Douglas Adams' third collection, Life The Universe and Everything."; JIM MEADOWS III; PATRICK NELSON HAYDEN; BARNEY NEUFELD; JOYCE SCRIVNER; JEAN WEBER, "Reading of Bruce Townlet's travels, which included much discussion of solid and liquid refreshment, was distressing since I am on a fairly strict food regimen at the moment, including a prohibition on alcohol."; and

JOHN BERRY, who asked me to mention that his new address is 4 Chilterns, South Hatfield, Herts AL10 8JU, U.K. That was all of a year ago....

RECOMMENDED READING I had intended to include a list of fanzines recieved since last issue, but in a year I got so many fanzines that I don't really feel like typing up the list. So would you if you were in this situation. However, I would like to recommend the following fannish reprint volumes:

THE COMPLETE QUANDRY, Vol 1, A complete reprint of issues 14-17 of Lee Hoffman's 1950's fanzine Quandry, one of fandoms most remembered fanzines. \$5.00 from Joe Siclari, 4599 NW 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA.

THE BEST OF SUSAN WOOD, \$3.00 from Jerry Kaufman, 4326 Winslow Place, North, Seattle, WA 98103, USA.

FANTHOLOGY 1981, the best articles from the fanzines of 1981. \$2.50 from Patrick Nielsen Hayden, c/- Jerry Kaufman, 4326 Winslow Place North, Seattle, WA 98103, USA.

THE CACHER OF THE RYE, by Carl Brandon, one of the best pieces of faanish fiction by fandoms best hoax. \$7.50 from Jeanne Gomoll, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624, USA.

All prices quoted are in US\$, and include postage to Australia, if appropriate.

NEXT ISSUE will, hopefully, be out in 3 months time. And if not, I don't wish to hear anyone say "Told you so...". I already have a few articles in the files. So things are looking good. See ya'.

Edited and published by Irwin Hirsh
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AUSTRALIA

and is available for a letter of comment, written
and/or drawn contributions, your fanzine in trade,
Old Fanzines or \$2.00.

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Dedicated to Wendy Ninedek.

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Dust Makes Damage!

