

FAAN FICTION 1930-2020

an exploration



ROB HANSEN

Faan Fiction 1930-2020: an exploration

Rob Hansen

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Foreword

One aspect of fandom only lightly touched on by me in *Then* was fan fiction. By which, of course, I mean fiction about fans and/or fandom. This is a thread that has been woven through SF fandom since it began, enduring almost to the present day, and so is worthy of consideration in that light. I'll be looking at the people who wrote it and all its various forms and the purposes to which they were put. Inevitably, the quality of the writing varies wildly, with that of those who later went on to write professionally usually being a cut above the rest.

A surprising amount of fan fiction is already available in various Ansible Editions ebooks. Where I reference these I've put [AE] after them to indicate that fact and a full list of same can be found at the rear of this volume. Similarly [fan] appears after those available at fanac.org, and [fia] for those available on my own website at fiawol.org.uk. Where possible the pieces of fan fiction reprinted herein to illustrate various types and forms – all by UK fans – were specifically chosen from those *not* already available. As a result, most will be things the majority of readers won't have encountered before.

While I've done work on US fandom – see *Challenging Moskowitz* and the section of my website devoted to the Los Angeles fandom of the 1940s (which I may rework into an ebook at some point*) – my primary focus remains UK fanhistory, and this volume is part of that ongoing mission. This also keeps the project to a manageable size.

* Added to the TAFF site ebook library in December 2021 as Bixelstrasse:
The SF Fan Community of 1940s Los Angeles. – RH/DRL

Fan fictions that comment on contemporary issues in fandom and/or feature fans of the day rely on familiarity with those particular issues and fans to achieve their effect, which is why you can lose a lot when removing such things from their historical context and reprinting them decades later. However, now that works of fan history such as *Then*, *Homefront*, and *Then Again* are available, that familiarity is largely being assumed here, though some things may be footnoted.

This volume doesn't pretend to be exhaustive; there's almost certainly a lot of stuff I've never read and whose existence I'm unaware of. Nor does it

pretend to be any sort of major critical work – I have neither the inclination to produce such a thing nor the necessary critical vocabulary. It's subtitled “an exploration” rather than “a history” because that in large part is what it is, an attempt to grapple with an aspect of fandom largely ignored by most fan histories thus far, including my own. Which is not to say there isn't some placing of this stuff in historical context along the way, of course.

It should go without saying that the pieces reprinted herein, some of which were written more than eighty years ago, reflect the attitudes of their time. As usual I have lightly edited many of them but, as with earlier volumes, I have made no attempt to amend anything to bring it more into line with the attitudes of today. To do so would be to render inauthentic anything so altered, as well as being pretty damned presumptuous on my part.

The heyday of such fan fiction was probably the 1950s, which also produced its most famous exemplar: *The Enchanted Duplicator*. [1] Written by Belfast fans Walter A. Willis and Bob Shaw (who later became a professional SF author, of course). An allegorical tale telling of Jophan's quest to find the Enchanted Duplicator, it was first published in 1954. According to Willis, writing many years later in *Scottishe* #38, it was:

...received by fandom with such awe-inspiring enthusiasm that it must obviously have filled some deep-felt want for a new basis for our hobby, now that our former proselytising zeal for science fiction no longer seemed to make sense. More surprisingly it was warmly welcomed by people like Ken Slater and the new generation of serious-constructive fans in the North whose attitude it had criticised by implication.

Eventually, to avoid confusion with the amateur fiction based on the IP (Intellectual Property) of others – the sense in which the term is most often used today – those dwindling few who still wrote traditional fan fiction began calling it “faan fiction”, and hence the title of this volume (but only the title). The term never really caught on over here and is now largely moot. The conditions that had allowed such fiction to flourish no longer existed and as a form it is now more or less dead.

– Rob Hansen, May 2021

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(Looking at the dates on the earliest files, I see that I started work on this project in September 2019. It feels good to finally get it “out the door”. I hate

having half-finished projects lying around. Hard to believe it's now forty years since I drew the cover repurposed for this volume. I doubt if I could draw it now, my skills in that area being far too rusty.)

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My thanks to Ian Sorensen and David Wake for helping with the list of dramatic presentations at UK conventions that I added to my website several months ago and which was always part of this particular project. Also to Mark Plummer for research assistance, Pat Charnock for heroic proofreading, and last but never least to Dave Langford for his usual exemplary work in turning all the files I sent him into this book. Thank you one and all.

1. Defining Fan Fiction

From their earliest days SF fanzines published both amateur fiction and fan fiction. Aren't they the same thing? No, not at all. Amateur fiction was an attempt by its authors to write science fiction of the sort that was appearing in the SF magazines of the time. Such tales were heavily disparaged on the grounds that had they been any good they would have been sold to the prozines. Since they actually were often tales that had failed to sell professionally, this was quite literally true. So what then was fan fiction?

As not infrequently happens to language, the term "fan fiction" has changed in meaning over the decades. To repeat an analogy I've used elsewhere: in much the same way that, say, crime fiction is fiction about crime, fan fiction was originally fiction about fans. Which is perfectly logical, when you think about it. In fact, here's the entry on fan fiction from the first *Fancylopedia* [fan], published by Jack Bristol (a pseudonym of Jack Speer) in 1944:

fan fiction – Sometimes improperly used to mean fan science fiction, that is, ordinary fantasy published in a fan magazine. Properly, the term means fiction about fans, or something about pros, and occasionally bringing in some famous characters stf stories. It may refer to real fans by name (Tucker nudged Brackney, who was nursing a "black eye"), or may be about types, especially Joe Fann. The background may be either fantastic, as Joe Fann into Space, or mundane as in Murder at the Chicon (tho this piece is fantasy under Speer's decimal scheme, describing events which we know didn't happen in our time-line). Fictitious elements are often interspersed in accounts of fan activities, which may make them more interesting, but plays hob with a truth-seeker like Thukydidies. Round Robins have been attempted in the fan fiction field. [2]

Fandom was small enough back then, and for a decade or so afterwards, for most fans likely to come across such fan fiction to be familiar with the majority of those mentioned therein, either personally or through the pages of the fanzines. The heyday of this sort of fan fiction was probably the 1950s, though it continued for decades afterwards.

There have been many examples down the years of professional fiction featuring traditional SF fans, pros, or conventions in varying degrees, including Anthony Boucher's *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942), Sharyn McCrumb's *Bimbos of the Death Sun* (1988) and *Zombies of the Gene Pool* (1992), Larry Niven's, Jerry Pournelle's and Michael F. Flynn's *Fallen Angels* (1991), and Jake Arnott's *The House of Rumour* (2012). Further titles appear in the *SF Encyclopedia* entry for Recursive SF, and the New England SF Association (NESFA) has a large online listing of such stories. [3]

Which brings us to fan fiction in the modern sense – let's call it IP fan fiction (i.e. amateur fiction based on IP owned by others and set in and/or using characters from fictional SF or fantasy universes created by someone else) – and to a silly claim that sometimes gets made:

...much that is literarily lauded from olden days – from the Aeneid to the works of Dante and Shakespeare and Milton and on and on – is essentially fanfiction, and we are continuing perhaps the oldest literary tradition of reshaping and retelling existing stories. [4]

If everything is fan fiction then nothing is. People have been reworking tales told by others since time immemorial, a fact that is not very useful when it comes to examining fan fiction as the term is understood by most people these days, IP fan fiction. The childhood writings of the Bronte sisters and their brother Branwell incorporated existing fictional characters and real people in settings of their own imagining. [5] However, while interesting, considering this to be IP fan fiction in the modern sense is about as useful as considering Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638), whose protagonist is carried to the moon by a flight of swans, to be science fiction. No, if we're going to look at amateur writing set in fictional SF universes by others, then the first author we need to look at is Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875-1950).

Best known these days as the creator of Tarzan, Burroughs's first published story was "Under the Moons of Mars". This was serialised by Frank Munsey in the February to July 1912 issues of *The All-Story Magazine*, appearing in collected book form in 1917 as the novel *A Princess of Mars*. Its protagonist was John Carter, and countless writers, film-makers and even scientists have cited it as an influence on their careers. Indeed, Ray Bradbury has claimed that Burroughs is "probably the most influential writer in the entire history of the world". This might seem like an outlandish claim, and

it's not one that would hold up if we were talking in solely literary terms, but we're not. For instance, it was because of the part Burroughs's science fiction played in inspiring real exploration of Mars, that an impact crater on Mars was named in his honour after his death. Long after many films based on characters inspired by him had appeared, John Carter finally made it to the big screen in the 2012 movie *John Carter* – much better than its reputation would have you believe. This takes certain liberties with the source material, not least because Burroughs was essentially a Victorian male – he was born in 1875, after all – with a view of the world that implies.

In 1956, Michael Moorcock launched his fanzine *Burroughsania* devoted to ERB's work. It saw 18 issues in all and brought him to the attention of the publisher of the weekly *Tarzan Adventures*. When he took over the editorship of *Tarzan Adventures* he was only 17 years old, making him possibly the youngest professional editor in UK publishing history. Like most ERB fanzines, *Burroughsania* was devoted mainly to bibliographies, articles about his characters, and the like. *Burroughsania* carried fiction by Moorcock, but this mostly featured his own character Sojan. I don't have every issue, but *Burroughsania* #4 (June 1956) contains number two in a series of short fictions by one J.M. Taylor set in the past of ERB's Mars under the title "Barsoomian Nights". And at the end it says: "To Be Continued..."

The first Burroughs fanzine appears to have been *The Burroughs Bulletin*, which was launched in the US in 1947 by Vern Coriell. While the fanzines themselves are not available online at the time of writing, an index to the first seven issues is, and again it appears to have been devoted mainly to bibliographies, articles about Burroughs's characters, and the like. Original fiction is notable by its absence but this policy clearly changed somewhere along the line because in 1963 Coriell asked Mike Resnick to write a John Carter story for him. Resnick duly obliged and the novella "The Forgotten Sea of Mars" was the result. However, because Coriell sat on it for two years Resnick took it back and gave it instead to Camille Cazedessus Jr., the editor/publisher of *Erb-Dom*. It was seen there by a professional editor who told Resnick that if he stripped out the Burroughs characters and expanded it to novel length he would publish it. Which is how Mike Resnick's prolific career as a professional SF writer began. [6]

And, yes, this does sound like what happened decades later with E.L. James's *Twilight* IP fan fiction being reworked to become *Fifty Shades of*

Grey. There really is nothing new under the sun.

What may well be the first significant work of IP fan fiction to emerge from fandom also utilized ERB's characters. This was D.R. Smith's *The Road to Fame* (1941-1946), a mash-up that featured John Carter, Tarzan, and Professor Challenger, as well as others from the SF pulps such as Richard Seaton, Blackie DuQuesne, Kimball Kinnison, Hawk Carse, Aarn Munro, and many more. (This is covered in the 1940s section of this volume.)

Tolkien fanzines began to be published in the 1960s and, apparently, even early on some contained fan fiction set in Middle-earth. Which brings us to the original *Star Trek* series (1966-1969).

It's sometimes claimed that IP fan fiction began with *Star Trek* fandom. As I hope the above demonstrates, this is incorrect. At most, *media* IP fan fiction began with *Star Trek*, but there may be counter-claims even here. More research would be necessary to determine whether this is the case. I will however note that the first issue of Dick Shultz's fanzine devoted to *The Avengers* TV series was published within weeks of the first Trekzine, *Spockanalia* [fan], meaning that both were being worked on at the same time. Inspired by Schultz's love of the show in general and entirely understandable infatuation with Diana Rigg in particular, this was titled *Rigger Digger* but changed its name to *En Garde* [fan] with its second issue.

Something emerging from *Star Trek* fandom that was genuinely new was a professionally published collection of IP fan fiction. Here I can do no better than quote from its Wikipedia entry:

Star Trek: The New Voyages (1976) is an anthology of short fiction based on *Star Trek*, edited by Sondra Marshak and Myrna Culbreath. Although published professionally, the collected stories were written and submitted by fans. Many of the stories were previously published in fanzines, or collected in fan-published anthologies. *The New Voyages* was commissioned by Frederik Pohl following his acquisition of *Star Trek Lives!*, which featured essays on the growing *Star Trek* fandom, and a chapter on *Star Trek* fan fiction. [7]

Star Trek fandom was different from the existing SF fandom in that it was overwhelmingly female, so it's perhaps not too surprising that every story in that volume was written by a woman. Some of the writers, such as Juanita Coulson and Ruth Berman, had been part of existing SF fandom long before

the coming of *Star Trek*. Coulson co-edited the long-running fanzine *Yandro* (1953-1986) with her husband Buck, which saw 259 issues in all. And of course the “mother” of *Star Trek* fandom, Bjo Trimble, was a member from the 1950s of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, which began life as the LA chapter of the Science Fiction League (LASFL) in 1934 and continues to this day.

Though *Doctor Who* predates *Star Trek* it didn’t develop its own organised fandom until the mid-1970s, but from that decade onwards all the television SF shows that followed in the wake of *Star Trek* seemed to quickly acquire their own dedicated fandoms. Those of us active in traditional SF fandom at the time termed these collectively “media fandom”, never dreaming that media fandom would continue to grow and grow until it now dwarfs us to the point that it’s what most outsiders visualise when they think of SF fandom. Each of these film- or TV show-centred fandoms inevitably developed their own IP fan fiction, too.

While genre IP fan fiction did not begin with *Star Trek*, one thing that particular fandom was responsible for introducing to the field is “slash”. As Dave Langford explained in his column in *SFX* #171 (July 2008):

The phenomenon of slash fiction, in which (usually male) characters from SF and fantasy creations do naughty things together, has been going strong since a fanfiction author first paired off Captain Kirk and Mr Spock in 1974. Kirk/Spocking, or K/S, became an enduringly popular subgenre, and slash fiction takes its name from the stroke or slash in K/S. Nowadays it is a truth universally acknowledged in SF circles that, no matter what bizarrely implausible slash-fiction pairing you imagine, someone will already have written it.

Slash was not immediately greeted with open arms by *Trek* fandom. Not surprisingly, there were those who were horrified by the whole idea and it would be some time before it gained wider acceptance. [4] [8] However, gain acceptance it did – to the point that now, in this time of the Internet, it may be the predominant form of IP fan fiction. More commonly known as “shipping” these days – from “relationship” – those who write such tales are known as “shippers”. To a shipper any show of friendship or affection between two male characters, however platonic it might appear to most viewers, is instantly interpreted as a sign they’re actually hot for each other and want to

bone. Similarly, any show of animosity between two male characters, however real it might appear to other viewers, is instantly interpreted as a sign the pair are in denial about their feelings and are actually hot for each other and want to bone. Shippers can become intensely attached to the pairing they “ship”. There has even been online warring between fans of a given film or TV show as to which is that series’ OTP (One True Pairing) with partisans of different pairings vowing to “go down with my ship”. In extreme cases, such fans have agitated for their ships to be validated by being made canon in the shows themselves, something show creators have rightly resisted – being a consumer of a form of fiction gives you no say in its future, nor should it. Consumership is not ownership.

When *Fifty Shades of Grey* first made a splash the S&M community were horrified by how it handled issues of safety and consent but in doing so they were missing the point. This wasn’t about them or real world S&M at all but about the writer and her readers’ *fantasies* about S&M. Similarly, what slash fiction/shipping deals with is its predominantly straight female writers and readers’ *fantasies* about gay male attraction and sex and has little to do with real gay men. In fact it’s no more for or about them than the “lesbian, girl-on-girl action” portrayed in skin mags aimed at straight men is in any way for or about actual lesbians. Issues of the inherent fetishisation and sexual objectification in all of this has probably been dealt with somewhere at some point and is, anyway, outside the purview of this particular volume.

And now that all that’s out of the way, let’s get back to original, traditional fan fiction, and to its beginnings....

2. The Beginning (1930s)

The earliest example I've found of what is identifiably fan fiction of the original type is in *The Planet* [fan]. The Scienceers, who first met in New York's Harlem in December 1929, are generally regarded as being the world's first local fan group (as opposed to a correspondence club), and *The Planet* was their fanzine. Depending on how you define what is and isn't a fanzine, *The Planet* also has a good claim to being the world's first. [\[9\]](#) [\[10\]](#)

The Scienceers were a serious, science-centred group whose mission statement appeared in the first issue of *The Planet* (July 1930):

The purpose of The Scienceers in issuing this paper is four-fold. First, to record the activities of the club itself. Second, to provide a medium for the expression of its members ideas on contemporary scientific developments. Third, to foster a widespread interest in scientific fiction. Fourth, and most important, to prove that science is not a dry-as-dust study, but a vital, interesting, and entertaining subject.

By the time *The Planet* [fan] appeared the group were meeting at Mort Weisinger's home on Van Cortlandt Avenue in the Bronx. Members included at various times Weisinger, Allen Glasser, Warren Fitzgerald (misidentified as "James" by Moskowitz), Herbert Smith, Philip Rosenblatt, Nathan Greenfeld, Herman D. Kaidor, Charles Weiner, Julius Unger, and (debatably) Julius Schwartz. Given the above credo it was surprising when the following appeared in the third issue:

Sir Edgar Visits the Scienceers Allen Glasser

The regular Saturday night meeting of The Scienceers, world-famous organisation of super-scientists, was in session in the elaborate quarters provided for its use by Col. Mortimer Weisinger, wealthy treasurer of the society. In the luxurious clubroom, its walls adorned with priceless paintings and tapestries, a half dozen

distinguished members sat in richly-upholstered leather armchairs, discussing in cultured tones the latest achievements in the realm of science.

Prof. Herbert Smith, noted astronomer, was discoursing on the nature of the newly-discovered planet Pluto, when an insistent ringing of the doorbell interrupted his lecture and woke the other members.

They heard the door being opened by the footman, a loud voice demanding admittance, and the sound of a scuffle. Then a hatless, dishevelled man burst into the clubroom.

“It works!” he shouted wildly. “It works! The first successful space-machine ever built! I’ve just tested it; and now I want you, the world’s greatest scientists, to accompany me on my initial trip into interplanetary space – a voyage to Mars! Will you go?”

He paused and stared expectantly at the astonished members.

“The man’s mad!” cried Dr Charles Weiner, the famous nerve specialist. “Throw him out!”

“Wait!” It was Philip Rosenblatt, the electrical wizard, who spoke. “Give him a chance. He may have something worth while.”

“Quite so,” agreed Capt. Allen Glasser, noted author and explorer; and turning to the intruder, he asked, “Can you prove your claims?”

“Of course!” the stranger replied. “The machine is in my laboratory not far from here. Come with me, and I’ll show it to you.”

“One moment,” spoke up the Hon. Nathan Greenfeld, President of the association; “Who are you, may I ask?”

The stranger drew himself up proudly.

“I am Sir Edgar Ray Merritt, of London,” he declared. “I came to New York recently to perfect my space-flier. But come; there is no time to waste.”

He strode to the door, and, convinced by his evident sincerity, the eminent clubmen followed him to the street.

“Sorry I didn’t bring my car,” apologised Sir Edgar; “but I was too excited to think of it. I came by taxi.”

“That’s quite all right,” said Col. Weisinger. “Use mine.” He waved his hand, and a shiny Rolls Royce that had been parked at

the corner drew up before the waiting group.

“Where to, sir?” the chauffeur asked respectfully, as the men entered the spacious, richly-fitted vehicle. Sir Edgar answered, giving an address on Kingsbridge Road.

In less than ten minutes the car came to a stop before a one-storey brick building, unlighted and seemingly deserted.

“Here we are!” exclaimed Sir Edgar, as the men alighted from the car. “Now to see the greatest invention of the age.”

They were about to enter the building when the sound of running footsteps behind them was heard. As they turned, two men in grey uniforms dashed up to the surprised group. Singling out Sir Edgar from the rest, they grasped him firmly by the arms and started to lead him away.

“Say! What’s the idea?” someone called after them.

“Nothing much,” answered one of the uniformed men over his shoulder. “We’re just taking Goofy Gus back to the bug-house. He went nuts reading science-fiction and he’s hopped on going to Mars. He pulls the same stuff every time he gets loose. You guys fell for it hard. Ha! ha! ha!”

(1930)

Slight it might be, but given how early it appeared this could very well be the first piece of fan fiction to appear in any SF fanzine.

The UK’s first fanzine, *Novae Terrae* [fia], wasn’t published until March 1936. Amateur SF would only appear in NT occasionally, the first such piece it carried – “Trial Trip” by D.R. Smith – turning up in issue eight that November. The merest hint of fan fiction can be seen in Smith’s “Happy Encounter” in *Novae Terrae* #23 (May 1938), consisting as it does of a conversation between him and a fictional fan. However, since this amounts to little more than setting up a straw man in order to win an argument it doesn’t qualify as more than a hint. Eric C. Williams’s “Idle Chatter in the Vaults” in *Novae Terrae* #28 (December 1938), consisting of a conversation between two librarians cataloguing fanzines in the British Museum one hundred years hence, could just about make the grade, but I’m going with the next issue. *Novae Terrae* #29 (January 1939), the final issue, carried with it a supplement: “The Fan Who Ruled the World” by Dave McIlwain. Here was something recognizably fan fiction but, despite its title, rather tentatively so.

Its protagonist Wilfred Schnotzzle is a Michelist* and designs a time machine with the intention of spreading that fannish take on communism to the rest of the world. The ludicrous components used to manufacture the machine signal the tale's humorous intent, but all that would be needed to turn it into a regular piece of fiction is to replace Michelism with any other real-world cause.

* Named for John B. Michel of the New York Futurians, who proposed this politicisation of fandom in 1937. – RH/DRL

This was not the first piece of fan fiction to see print in a British fanzine, however. I'd give that honour to Don Cameron's "The Call to Arms", published in *The Satellite* #2 (November 1938, edited by McIlwain and John F. Burke), and it's a much more interesting piece of writing.

In the 1930s SF fandom was very much a boys' club and several fans of the period even proudly labelled themselves misogynists, something no one called them to account for or even seems to have commented on. Indeed, the existence of the much-disparaged "love interests" in their beloved scientifiction was something such fans wanted to see stamped out. It was these attitudes that Cameron satirises in "The Call to Arms". Though written more than 80 years ago, the gate-keeping, seeing female SF readers as being somehow "fake" fans, and the sense of entitlement displayed when the leader of the male fans demands that SF editors print stories tailored to their preferences, are all things any media fan of today would recognise. A few contemporary fans make appearances, too. Of those I recognise, William F. Tabernacle is obviously William F. Temple, Alderman is Doug Mayer (mayor), D.R. Black of Monkfed is D.R. Smith of Nuneaton, and Cameron also gets in a little dig at Sam Youd – who appears briefly as Sam Theyd, a renaming that proves he was one of those who mispronounced "Youd". This exchange between Youd and D.R. Smith in the lettercolumn "Fantast's Folly" in *The Fantast* #3 (June 1939) clarifies the matter:

D.R. Smith:

I dare not say it out aloud,
But think perhaps they call you Youd.
You may tell me this is rude,
For probably your name is Youd.

C.S. Youd:

We'd like to murmur to the crowd –
Our name is definitely Youd.

And speaking of Youd, his “Fanopolis”, serialised in *The Fantast* #2-#6 (May-September 1939), is the earliest example here of another type of fan fiction, one in which fandom takes the form of a physical place, be it a city or a country. The serial also serves as a warning of the perils of making something up as you go along with no clear idea of what the ending should be. Though never completed and now largely forgotten, it's impossible to read “Fanopolis” without being struck by how much it often reads like the later *The Enchanted Duplicator* and how similar the two are tonally. It's particularly notable for having real fans appear under thinly disguised versions of their own names, the earliest example I've seen of this over here. While some of the renaming involved little more than the change of a single letter – e.g. Burke/Barke – others are a bit more involved. It took me a while to realise that Red Flannel was Ted Carnell. I suspect Macinpain for McIlwain was recycling a mangled typo of that name seen somewhere, in the same manner as “Snaghurst” would later become a nickname for R.G. Medhurst.

The 1930s also saw the first UK fanzine devoted entirely to amateur SF. This was *Amateur Science Stories*, the first issue of which appeared in October 1937. It was edited by Doug Mayer for the Science Fiction Association – our prewar national SF organisation – managed three issues in all, and was where Arthur C. Clarke's fiction first appeared.

The Call to Arms

Don J. Cameron

Dear Sir,

Take the sex out of your stories! Do you imagine that we fans, who are already more than fed up with women in real life, want to be stuffed with love interests and heroines galore? Girls have no place in imaginative literature – they are too narrow-minded to be anything other than a nuisance! Therefore, keep them out!

Yours, with emphasis,

E. Nexer.

That was the letter (published in *Stupendous Stories*, July 1940), which had such far-reaching and cataclysmic effects in the fandom of Great Britain. If you remember, the controversy it caused was so great that the August issue of *Stupendous* contained but one story; the remaining eighty pages being one huge readers' department. And, needless to say Mr Nexer was suitably squelched by innumerable female fans wielding poisoned pens – but he was also supported by the majority of the male readers.

“We want sexless science fiction,” announced Nexer in his second letter, and the cry was taken up by all male fans to the annoyance of the girl readers. Nexer, so elated by success, became bolder. His third letter was actually threatening.

“We male fans outnumber the females by about twenty to one. Unless you, the Editor, comply with our request, and give us stories without a love interest, we shall boycott all further issues of *Stupendous Stories*. So be warned!”

And on a dark night in November, Nexer mysteriously vanished. Immediately fandom was divided.

“You’ve kidnapped him!” accused the supporters of Nexer.

“We haven’t,” retorted the others.

So the verbal battle went on, and rivalry eventually gave way to bitter enmity. The January 1941 *Stupendous Stories* created scientific history, all told. Fan magazines became a forum of propaganda and the increase of

interest in science fiction was astounding.

The climax of the affair was reached on January 21st of the new year when supporters of love interest (who were known as the “Pros”) declared war upon the “anti-sex” enthusiasts, otherwise known as the “Cons”.

Under the leadership of a platinum blonde, Tessa Ract, the female army gathered on Salisbury Plain to give battle to the arrogant males. In some manner, five thousand girl fans had been recruited, and they formed a formidable array as they marched in formation to the chosen battlefield.

“The situation,” said General G.K. Guyfellow, “is very serious. We cannot fight the Pro army because they are girls; and also because we outnumber them greatly. Yet if we do not fight we are automatically branded cowards. So what are we to do?”

William F. Tabernacle, who had been standing on his head in the corner, pulled some straw out of his hair and dipped his finger in the inkwell.

“I suggest,” he said, squinting at the General, “that all subscribe one penny each so that I can go and see *Little Women* at the Odeon.”

A figure with a mask-like countenance seemed to come to life. The General turned eagerly towards him.

“You have something to suggest, Mr Alderman?” he gasped in amazement.

The other rumbled mysteriously.

“What is pretty lousy the day after tomorrow might make a shape last week,”* he said suddenly, and once more lapsed into a state of suspended animation.

* A reference to the motto which appeared on the masthead of the SFA journal Tomorrow: “What is good enough today is much too bad for tomorrow” – RH

“It is obvious that greater brains than ours are needed,” said the General at length, “we must held a conference on the subject, so call up all those of more than one ounce brain capacity, and order ten gallons of beer. We must think!”

Twenty Great Brains sat around a long table, drinking beer. They represented the top liners of the science fiction world, and all were assembled to consider the problem which the challenge of the Pros presented.

“Lovecraft was a better writer than Edgar Allan Poe,” said one with great wisdom.

“But what’s wrong with John Russell Fearn?” asked another. Everybody

promptly proceeded to answer his question, and, in the midst of the hubbub, the door opened, and a black robed figure, with ashes on his head, entered.

“All is dust!” he quoth solemnly. “For I am undone. I have weighed them in the balance, and found them wanting. My accounts show a deficit of one penny three farthings and I cannot fork up enough to seek tomorrow. Woe is me!”

He sat down and wept.

The secretary was awakened and he ticked off the name of L. James Kidd... only one more name remained.

“Where,” he asked, “is D.R. Black of Monkfed? Is he not coming?”

One of the brains stood up.

“I tried to procure him, sire, but he was busily engaged in building a house from old *Wonders*, *Astoundings* and *Amazings*. When I asked him what he was doing, he said he was an Escapist, trying to create a world of his own from fantasy and science-fiction. He refused to come to the conference, so I left him making his escape from the world.”

General Guyfellow thumped the table.

“Gentlemen,” he roared, “We are all familiar with the situation. The Pros have challenged us to battle. If we fight, we’re cowards, and if we don’t, we’re cowards! So what are we to do?”

Sam Theyd stood up and flourished a sheaf of papers.

“I shall read you some of my poems,” he proclaimed, and was instantly disintegrated.

William C. Cire muttered “God bless the library – heaven help it,” then took a wicked looking trumpet from under his coat and raised it to his lips.

They shot him on the spot.

Somebody started an argument about the merits, or lack of them, of Binder... and all the while the company thought. And slowly an idea evolved....

Two armies faced each other on Salisbury Plain; an army of girls versus an army of youths, all eager to fight for their rights; all followers of the great god Fantasy. The morning air was vibrant with tension, and everybody seemed highly excited. General Guyfellow strode forward fearlessly to a central position between the two forces and signalled to Tessa Ract to do likewise. She came and stood within ten feet of him.

The general spoke.

“We have considered from every angle the situation which you have

forced upon us, and have reached the conclusion that there is only one way to settle this dispute in such a manner as to avoid loss of life or loss of dignity on either side. We, as science-fiction fans must set an example to the rest of the world. It would be foolish for us to fight: it would be completely unscientific. Therefore, I suggest that we, each of us, choose a person from our ranks, one who is an adept at arguing. They shall stand here and, starting from scratch, shall argue upon any subject under the sun. We shall stand here and judge fairly, and the victor shall, by arguing, bring victory to his or her side and so avoid a war.”

Tessa Ract was silent for a long time before she spoke.

“Your suggestion is a sane one, and is certainly better than mere primitive warfare. We shall settle the dispute by argument.”

And so a man was chosen from the Cons, and a woman from the Pros. They stood in the space between the armies while the General announced them.

“Science fiction fans of both sides,” he began. “we have decided to fight this war with words, instead of swords. On my right you see debating expert Al Blossom, representing the Cons. On my left is Pro arguer, Miss Joan Kurbe. They are going to argue until sundown, and Miss Tessa Ract and I as judges will agree, I hope, on the winner. Right, go to it, and may the best fan win.”

Joan Kurbe was the first to speak.

“Wesso,” she said, “is better than Dold.”

“You’re crazy!” snapped Blossom. “Dold is by far the better artist. He’s got technique.”

“Technique is not a necessary adjunct to style. Wesso can create atmosphere, whereas Dold often fails to do this because his pictures are unintentionally amusing.”

“Wesso’s figure work is lousy. He always draws the creases in the clothes in exactly the same way.”

“On the contrary, Wesso’s figure work is very good, but only at rare intervals. In any case look at Paul – his drawings were excellent, yet his figures were always childish, always wore same clothes, and always looked the same. His women were hideous!”

“But Paul was not a good artist! Why, Schneeman is far better than Paul ever was!”

“Schneeman is positively rank! His machines are hopeless; and his work

always looks rushed. Brown is far better than Schneeman!”

“Brown’s illustrations are always blurred and chalky, and he can’t draw monsters for nuts. Marchioni is a finer artist than Brown, any day.”

“Well, you can keep your Dolds, Schneemans, and Marchionis. There is no artist to beat Virgil Finlay!”

“Y-you like Virgil Finlay?”

“He stands supreme!”

“B-But so do I! I think he’s a swell artist. Remember his drawing to ‘The Faceless God’? Wasn’t it wonderful!”

“So fine! And the one to the ‘Guardian of the Book’!”

“Immortal! And what about his frontispiece to ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’?”

“Terrific... and the one to ‘The Thing on the Doorstep’?”

“Magnificent!”

“Darling!”

“Sweetheart!”

And the two long shadows which the sun threw on the grass merged into one, and pointed symbolically to the western landscape – to the peaceful countryside and the serene blue sky....

Fifteen thousand long shadows stretched towards the east, towards a sky of deepening purple. And, in the west, a crimson sun winked solemnly behind a cloud as he sank towards the beckoning horizon....

(1938)

Fanopolis

C.S. Youd (writing as Fantacynic)

(Fiction re fandom seems to be gaining in popularity. First there was Cameron’s “The Call to Arms” and then the suspiciously similar effort in the *American Cosmic Tales*, and we must not forget Speer’s serial “Six Against the Past”. And one fan has revealed that he is writing a *novel* about fan life! Fantacynic informs, however, that he thought of this plot long ago, so would-be finders of plagiarism may consider themselves foiled. But enough. We hope you like it – and we hope Fantacynic is able to finish it! – CSY)

Part One

The day was hot and cloudless and, gracelessly reclining on a scorched bank of grass, the Neophyte felt less and less like reading and more and more like sleeping. As the remorseless sun frizzled him, the printed page wavered and danced erratically and the energy required for concentrated reading waned swiftly. Finally he dropped the magazine and, lying back, left the hero in the middle of a battle to the death with a dinosaur. One last sleepy glance revealed the name of the magazine – *Marvel Science Stories* – before he fell asleep.

Almost at once, it seemed, someone was tugging at his shoulder and, grumbling, he opened his eyes and stood up. He blinked rapidly at the sight before him. Rising like giants into the cloudless sky towered the minarets and towers of a city. And what a city! His brief experience with science-fiction convinced him that here was the real McCoy, the daddy of everything Stuart ever imagined.

In the true tradition it was built of a gleaming white material, and the inescapable trellised bridges and flying buttresses, sweeping up and down, in and out, in dizzy perspective, made it a huge maze of intricate light and patterned shadow. An occasional cigar-shaped airship lounged across the sky and amongst the “levels” of the city there was the bustle of tube cars and

scurrying of ant-like figures. Wondering who could live in so strange a place he turned to look at the interrupter of his rest.

He was a small peaceful-looking man, though rather ludicrous with a bulging cranium and over-sized ears. A broad smile spread over his face as the Neophyte turned to him, and he wagged his ears sympathetically, with an ingenious rotary movement. Wonderingly, the Neophyte asked him where he might be.

“You might,” pronounced the little man, “be in Babylon or Chicago. Actually you are in Fanopolis – the city of the Fans,” he rendered kindly.

“Fans?” murmured the Neophyte. “What are Fans?”

The little man considered this gravely for some moments. “There again there is room for doubt,” he remarked at last. “According to the general view, as expressed by the Apostle Gernsback, they are beyond power of description. Some of the Nonfans say the same, only they mean it differently. Actually they are the camp-followers of Scientifiction.”

“Oh, I see!” said the Neophyte, a light of understanding dawning upon him. “You mean readers of *Astounding*, *Thrilling Wonder* and *Amazing*!”

The little man shuddered and his ears twitched in a beautiful Immelman turn.

“Don’t mention *Amazing*,” he whispered fearfully, “the Aristocrats have fallen out with the editor, and in revenge he comes out now on the fifth Tuesday and as there isn’t always a fifth Tuesday in the month, no-one knows when or if the next *Amazing* is coming out. As a result they have to maintain a continuous watch on the book-stalls in case a Tower Fan should get a copy before them. It’s all very unsettling.”

“Who are the aristocrats?” questioned the Neophyte.

“They are The Top Liners,” capitalised his friend – “the Big Fans you know. But we mustn’t waste time talking now. I have to present you to the Council. They see all new arrivals and give them their ranks in fandom.”

Clutching the Neophyte’s hand tightly, he raced off down the hill towards the city which beckoned from about a mile away.

It was a long mile, the Neophyte thought, and it seemed that his companion was of the same mind for he soon stopped for breath, and rested on the velvety grass. For a while the Neophyte was too occupied with getting his second wind to ask questions, and by the time he had recovered his attention had been drawn to a group of people approaching them across the fields.

They were an odd collection of people, but in the van were three who seemed to be leaders of some sort. One of these was bent double under what the Neophyte realised at last was a Grand Piano! He enquired of the little man if he was right.

“H’m, you’re right, alright,” returned his friend. “That is the Fantasy Reform Publications assortment. The one with the big feet calls himself the Fantaspoet. That one on the left with the thing like a cornet (actually a clarinet) is John P. Barke, while beneath the piano is Macinpain. The rest are their adherents – there aren’t many: the rest of us don’t want reforming.”

The Neophyte was still unsatisfied. “But why the clarinet and the piano?”

“Well, it’s like this. Those three are always composing anthems and songs, so they have to carry their instruments with them. The best off in this respect and by far the most annoying is the Fantaspoet who sings. Barke plays the clarinet so he’s not so bad, but Macinpain *would* learn piano and being very stubborn insists on carrying it around. He can’t see how silly it is.”

As he spoke the party had milled around into an irregular group and were marching off. Across the meadows came the strains of a song:

*For ten long years they had suffered it in silence,
Tripe, tripe, tripe, tripe in Science-Fiction’s name;
But when new magazines came sweeping in a cloud on them
They made a list of everyone in any way to blame.*

*Then they rose, from ’Frisco and Los Angeles,
Minneapolis, Chicago and Boston, Mass. as well,
From Texas they came, from Zenith and from Podunk,
From Arkham and from Providence – and one or two from Hell.*

*And then they moved, like Zombies on an outing,
Trekking with determination on the Last Crusade;
Brave the rumble and sparkle of their ray-guns,
Brave the marching of the Fantasfan’s Brigade!*

Several verses after this were indistinguishable – and when they next became audible they were carolling:

*The Fans were marching, marching through America,
They found a nest of authors and viewed the sight with pain.*

*They took Nat Schachner and threw him in the lion-pit,
But the lions didn't like him and they threw him back again.*

*New York they seized, and captured all the Editors –
Palmer, Weisinger, Campbell and the breed.
They rounded them up, and sent them to Australia,
And only the Australians failed to thank them for the deed.*

The wind carried most of the rest away and but for one verse it was lost. This seemed to run,

*Then the mood spread far across the ocean,
Fans arose from Nuneaton, from Eastleigh and from Crewe;
From Liverpool, from Manchester, from London and from Birmingham,
From Upper Wallop, Lower Wallop, Nether Wallop too.*

His guide was apparently refreshed now, for he rose and beckoned him to follow. A little reluctantly, for he was tired, the Neophyte obeyed, and they soon reached the open gates of Fanopolis. Before he followed the little man through them, he cast one look back and saw that the procession had split up. Macinpain was rolling down hill on the piano, while on the breeze came the faint but heated voices of Barke and the Fantaspoet luridly discoursing on the merits of Robert E. Howard.

Puzzled he entered Fanopolis.

Part Two “The Council at Work”

Inside the gates of Fanopolis the Neophyte gazed with interest at the view that presented itself. They were, it seemed, on the ground level of the city, for overhead higher levels and curving bridges rambled about like some eccentric scenic railway. At either side, buildings towered up to lose themselves in the maze above and, outlined against the white stone, he read glaring headlines:

“*READ THE SCIENCE FICTION FAN!*” – “*Cosmic Tales: The Best in Fan-Fiction*” – and, enterprisingly painted on a model of a space-ship:

“FAPA for Papa,
Mother and Child!”

His guide saw him glance at this last, and smiled.

“A little optimistic, that,” he remarked, “we are essentially a bachelor community. But we have wasted too much time already – I’d better call a car.”

Quickly he stepped over to an automatic machine by the roadside and pressed a button. At once, it seemed, a tubular car slid up, and the door opened.

“Robot control,” said the little man proudly as he ushered the Neophyte in. “When I press this button on the panel in front of me the car will take us automatically to the Council Chambers.”

He pressed the button. Nothing happened. Once more he pressed, with the same result. With a sigh and a brief flurry of curses he let down a flap marked “Manual Control” and, gripping a handle, pressed another button. As the car shot forward, he turned to the Neophyte in explanation.

“It’s the Brain,” he declared. “Every so often he goes crazy and won’t do anything, or else does everything wrong. Either way we have to shut off power and work these confounded things ourselves. Such a pity, too, for the Brain is quite a nice fellow when he is all right – I often go up and have a chat with him. Broods rather a lot over Seabury Quinn, perhaps, but he doesn’t like Fearn, and knows a lot of lovely adjectives for the Michelists.”

“That sends him insane, then?” queried the Neophyte.

“Search me,” his friend replied mournfully. “He says anyone would go nuts after living as long as he has in the company of science-fiction fans, but I think it’s the ice-cream that does it really.”

“Ice-cream?”

“The Brain lives mostly, of course, on some synthetic muck, but Louis Lankus and Billy Stratford (Shakespeare – Jack Speer – wow! – F’c) sneak strawberry ice-cream into him in return for inside information on DAW. It works hell with his carbohydrates and gives him a terrific hangover.”

While this conversation had been in progress, the car had been advancing at no mean speed through Fanopolis. Soon it came into the more frequented streets and the Neophyte saw that side-walks and shops were thronged with people. Suddenly there was a hail from one of them, and the car slowed to a halt. Before the Neophyte knew what was happening a figure had jumped in and the car was off again.

“Allow me to introduce you,” murmured his guide, one hand on the steering-handle. “This is Mr Red Flannel, ‘Service’ proprietor and News-

Hound-in-Chief. On my left a new-comer, Mr... Mr..."

"Call me Ishmael Neophyte."

"...Mr Ishmael Neophyte."

"Pleased to meet you," screamed Red in a concentrated gabble. "Do you want to buy a *Startling*? We have some fine *Science Wonders* going cheap. Have you heard the latest yarn about RAP?"*

* *Raymond A. Palmer – RH*

The driver broke in.

"Give him a chance, Red. He must be pretty dazed as it is."

The Neophyte flung him a look of thanks.

"By the way," he continued, "this is the third-time in three months the Brain's given way. I was telling Ishy here that I think the ice-cream is at fault."

"Don't you believe it," shrieked Red. "He's never been the same since D.R. Black first came. Black's an engineer, you know," he went on more quietly, "and he was so certain that a Brain was impossible that he took a bag of tools up to the Tower one night and started to find out how and why it ticked; with the help of a couple of screw-drivers and a spanner. The Brain had to sic about five robots onto him and have him thrown out on his neck before he would stop, and it was bound to have a bad effect. Who-oo-ah!"

The car stopped for a second and he darted out and into the door of a palatial building, superscribed "SCIENCE FICTION SERVICE."

"A very nice fellow," grinned the Neophyte's guide, "but he's never still a moment." He looked at his watch and the grin vanished. "Oh, blast!" he announced. "It was 5.30 when we got this car and my watch reads 8.30 now – someone must have let Hamilton loose with a time-warp again. Eddy's all right if he's well watched but when he gets playing around with his warps, no-one is safe. I remember the time he used a space-warp and shifted half a dozen Michelists to Berlin during a Hitler Thanksgiving. Lawndes got them back just when the fun was going to start." He sighed.

The car jerked to a halt before a colonnaded dome, prettily surrounded by grass lawns and flower beds. They got out of the car and the little man led the way past two time-machines and a statue marked "Made in Auburn" to the becolumned porch. Pushing open a door he revealed a strange scene. The interior was round, and tiers of seats sloped down from the sides to an apparently vacant central dais. In these seats were the dimly visible forms of

who knows what blasphemous creations; some seemingly asleep, and others, from the hum of snoring, obviously so. The few awake were in the middle of a debate and, to judge by the abuse bandied, rather an important one.

Just then a saintly figure rose from behind the dais and quelled the clamour with an out-stretched hand. He then yawned four times and whispered in a bored sort of voice:

“The vote will now be taken. Those in favour raise their hands.” A pause. “Those against?”

He counted rapidly.

“The second reading of the bill to cut whiskey adverts from *Astounding* is passed, Hambell, Pimple and Bohl alone dissenting.”

Pandemonium broke loose again and the patriarch smiled over the heads of the squabblers at the Neophyte. He beckoned, and the Neophyte walked towards him.

Part Three

“Digression in a Flat”

The patriarch took hold of the Neophyte’s arm and led the way through the assembly-room to a door on the other side. As he opened it he turned, smiling, and said:

“You, I understand, are Ishmael Neophyte. Allow me to introduce myself – I am Hugo Gernsback, generally and irreverently known as Uncle Hugo. For my sins I have the task of conducting newcomers around Fanopolis. You see, I founded Fanopolis.”

“A remarkable achievement!” said the Neophyte warmly, “I congratulate you.”

There was a far-away, reminiscent look on Uncle Hugo’s face.

“Yes,” he said softly, “we pioneers made a good job of the foundations. It is up to the younger ones to top the towers.”

They were silent a moment, gazing out across the tracery of bridge and building; then Gernsback spoke again.

“Have you decided whether you will live alone, or at the Flat?” he enquired.

“Flat?” The Neophyte was puzzled.

“Didn’t Mepho tell you? Well, it’s like this – Bill Pimple, Ego Narke and Boris Pantson* thought it would be a good idea to live together and so

inaugurated the state of Flatness. As newcomers came in they, too, decided to live in the Flat, whose size was conveniently increased by the obvious expedient of building more rooms onto it. Within a year there were twenty Fans in it.

** Bill Temple, Arthur C. Clarke and Maurice Hanson, who shared the famous Flat in London. RH/DRL*

“And that wasn’t all. When the state of Flatness first began, others also thought it a good idea but for various reasons refused to live in the original Flat. DAW started a Flat – which meant that Tykora had to start one too, until now Flat-dwelling indicates your adherence to one or the other of the Fan-creeds and very few Fans live alone. Still, until you can sum up the various creeds it might be a good plan for you to have a Flat of your own. Later you can join up with whatever group you find you like best.”

“Yes,” murmured the Neophyte. “I should like to find my feet before I commit myself. You must know that all this is very bewildering to me – I had heard dim reports of Fanopolis in the outer world but never imagined it was so... so – well, ‘terrific’ has lost all value as an adjective but it describes my reaction excellently.”

“I know! I know! The tremendous steps fandom has taken sometimes cause even me to catch my breath. But you mustn’t waste your time listening to the rambling of an old man; besides, Red will have told the others at the Flat of your arrival and they will want to meet you. Shall I call a car?”

“If it isn’t very far, I think I’d like to walk.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” approved Uncle Hugo. “I distrust the way the younger generation is coming to depend so much on the cars – the Brain knows what it’s doing when it causes these frequent break-downs. It is a great relief to know that the Brain is always there, so wise and considerate.”

They set off at a brisk pace through the clean, wide streets of the city and within half an hour were at a junction of two avenues quaintly named “Lovecraft Lane” and “Schachner Street”.

“Rather a misalliance, is it not?” smiled the Neophyte, as they turned into a door in the corner building.

“Yes, indeed! There was a great commotion when it was first named. Beck, Barlow and the rest of the Lovecraft gang sat on their hind legs and howled about it being an insult to the memory of a genius, and, of course, Barke, Fantaspöet and Macinpain seized it as a glorious opportunity to kick up a fuss. But really the highbrows are very much in the minority in

Fanopolis, and when the provincials threw in their votes for Schachner the decision was obvious.”

“P – provincials?” panted the Neophyte, toiling up an unending flight of stairs (having stoutly refused the elevator).

“Didn’t you know? By far the majority of fans are not permanent residents in Fanopolis but only visit. There is little intercourse between them and us and there have been movements to exclude them from the city altogether. I don’t think they will ever come to anything, though. The magazines are all commercial (except fan magazines, of course), and so they are all for the provincials.”

They had finally reached the top of the stairs and for some time had been conscious of the strains of music. As they topped the last step this broke out with redoubled vigour and, in quick succession, two other melodies made themselves heard.

“By Payment on Publication,” cursed Hugo, “if we haven’t arrived on a Music Night. What lousy luck!”

“Why? I rather like music, if it isn’t too high-brow.”

“Wait till you’ve suffered as many Music Nights as I have! Ego, Boris and Bill started it all by having the first Music Night – they listen avidly to such stuff as that Russian guy’s ‘Steel Foundry’. Well, Barke and Macinpain had by this time taken up residence across the way, and, resentful as usual, decided to hold a Music Night of their own, in which they let fly with people like Venuti, and a person extraordinarily called Pee-Wee Russell. D.R. Black and Fantaspöet were considerably annoyed by such specialisation and formed a third Music Night to enjoy everything from Beethoven to Bing Crosby. Unfortunately they all chose the same night and, being fannishly stubborn, have refused to change at all. When a Music Night occurs all the other Flat-dwellers shut themselves up in soundless rooms. As the rooms are far from completely soundless they occasionally venture out to hurl curses at the music-lovers but the din soon drives them back.”

“Dare we beard the lions?”

“Yes. Your arrival will be doubly welcome to the miserable non-musicians since it will mean the abandonment of the Music Night. Come on.”

Resolutely they opened the door and, flinching a little before the caterwauling that assailed them made their appearance known by a loud “Oi!” Vulgar it may have been but it was effective. In the large assembly room Barke and Macinpain were listening to a gramophone emitting

unrecognisable crashes and boop-adooping; Black and Fantaspöet were defiantly reading *Astoundings* to the tune of “Bolero”, and away in the distance a small group were swaying in almost mystic ecstasy to Poldeggar’s 37th symphony in opus 158. The two former machines shut off at once, while from behind innumerable side-doors rose huge sighs of relief, but either through distance or absorption, Poldeggar’s 37th continued.

Simultaneously Black and his companion threw their *Astoundings* at the gramophone, and, as the record jarred to a halt, got up to greet the two arrivals.

“Vandals!” howled Ego, “hydrocephalic Philistines!”

Then he, too, noticed the newcomers and dropped the *Astounding* he was preparing to return violently to its original possessor. As if by magic doors opened on all sides and the Neophyte had his first experience of Fans in the bulk.

Part Four **“Voice of Fanopolis”**

He had a confused impression of being slapped on the back by ten thousand prize fighters and his right hand felt as though a bone-dissolving ray had been turned on it. Impotently protesting he was carried along on this wave of greeting and good spirits and deposited gently on the shore of intimacy and understanding. Vaguely he knew that he was now fully accepted.

Gradually the tide of welcome subsided and the Neophyte had an opportunity to take stock of his new companions. They were a diverse lot – young and old, strong and weak, dark and fair but all had something in common. He sought in his mind for a clue to this, but abandoned it in order to concentrate on the questions pouring into him.

They would like, it seemed, to know everything knowable about him. Macinpain, in fact, produced a huge note-book headed “Practical Psychology”, and began asking questions of quite a personal character, Yorick Popkins produced another note-book and started to ask him what was his Favourite Story of the Month but was promptly sat on by D.R. Black. Thereupon Ego remembered the attack on Poldeggar’s 37th and sat on Black. Others joined in, and while they formed a scrum in the centre of the hall Barke and Macinpain drew the Neophyte aside.

Ten minutes later they had abandoned their attempt to make him a

member of the newly formed Pan-Panning Society and the mess in the middle had cleared up. It seemed clear that the Music Night was definitely over now, for portable desks and typewriters were being hauled out, and soon the hall was a hive of industry. While some typed or read, others wandered round and looked over their shoulders. Diffidently the Neophyte asked Barke if this was not rather bad form.

“Good Lord, no!” exclaimed the latter. “It might have been considered so in the early days, but now we realise that curiosity is the most vital force in man and allow of its satiation. And then, of course, it adds to the fun. The glorious uncertainty of slanging somebody in a letter without knowing whether he is reading it over your shoulder or not is one of the things that make life worth living. Come along, let’s see what’s happening.”

The Neophyte was not at all sure that Barke’s feelings on the subject were shared by the rest, but he followed warily. Barke led the way to a spot behind one busy typist and motioned for silence. Awkwardly the Neophyte read over his shoulder:

Dear Mr Hambell,

I regret to inform you that the last issue of *Astounding* was utterly hopeless. That you have the nerve to ask 20 cents for such damnable bilge inspires admiration. The only story worth reading was de Tramp’s “Mohawk from Mars”.

Your affectionate customer,
C. NIC.

They moved away to a place behind another critic.

Dear Editor,

The July *Astounding* was superb! The cover was the best yet. The decorations were the best yet. The Editorial was the best yet. Everything was the best yet.

Yours, etc.
P.S. I’m an awful liar.

The next person they encountered was diligently engaged in entering particulars of *Amazing Stories* into a huge filing-index. Apparently he was a very enthusiastic fan, for he was also making percentage ratings of the stories by some ingenious means of awarding 5% to each of twenty qualities. Barke and the Neophyte endeavoured for a time to follow his mental and

arithmetical reasonings but soon discovered that the latter were quite as incomprehensible as the former.

They became aware that they were not alone in their inspection when two brawny hands appeared and seized the neck of the computer who had just added 17% and 28% together to make 105%.

“Ego,” murmured Barke, “simply can’t stand for any violation of his beloved mathematics. Ergo, the thuggee. But he won’t really hurt him – he’s a very soft-hearted fellow.”

They stood behind the next person for quite a while before the Neophyte realised what was wrong. Then, like a douche of icy water, it burst upon him that this fan was writing a letter *by hand!* Excitedly he pointed out to Barke the extraordinary phenomenon. Barke smiled.

“Yes,” he answered, “this is Pie-can Rose-in-bloom, generally known as Pike. While a baby he was dropped on the head by a robot and ever since machines have been anathema to him. He was nearly banished from Fanopolis once for a battle with the Grizzly Bayer, but, bless you, he’s more of a fan than any of the Council so they can’t do much about it. His only fault is his incurable optimism. He concludes letters to science-fiction fans with the words ‘Good Reading’. But the letters seem pretty dull today. Come along and let’s see the fanmag section.”

In the far end of the hall were situated ominous, squat contraptions that seemed quite capable of pouring forth the most deadly rays if they tried. Closer inspection, however, showed that these were nothing more than rotary duplicators, happily intermingled with hekto sets and printing outfits. A busy hum of work pervaded the atmosphere and all the workers seemed very sociable. Their sociability did not affect their intolerance of interruption, as Barke and the Neophyte soon found. Whenever they came too near a Press they were insultingly commanded to “vamoose”, “vanish”, “buzz off” or “hit the horizon”, depending on the nationality of the worker. One sweating American, busy at something called *Le Zombie*, muttered that he’d had one cartoon pinched by Fantaspot for the *Pantast* already, and he knew how Barke got his material for Sally, so would they please sheer off? Barke remembered his position as guide and refrained from violence but could not resist pouring a tube of mimeo ink down Sucker’s neck as he bent over the stencil. While Sucker clutched at his back and made the air hideous with his cries, Barke clutched the Neophyte’s arm and made for the door.

“I sometimes wish they had never resurrected that buzzard,” he panted

when they reached the open air again. “And now for the sights of Fanopolis. Macinpain and Fantaspoe should be here waiting for us. Ah, there they are. But what in...” He whistled thoughtfully.

The two in question calmly slid down an overgrown Belisha Beacon together with a third person whom the Neophyte did not recognise.

“S’ all right,” remarked Fantaspoe jauntily, “dear old Professor Sweet-and-Low claimed the other day that he’d invented a ‘friction-eliminator’ so Rave here, and Louis Lankus and myself were just testing it. If the absence of a rear portion to pants is anything to judge by the dear old doc has been blethering again. Or maybe linking the positive and negative leads together didn’t do the generator any good. Anyway, we’re ready to go now.”

Part Five “Meanderings”

“Where shall we take him?” enquired Lankus, who turned out to be a large, raw individual, with an air of a transmigrated cart-horse. Barke looked thoughtful, a favourite habit of his since it threw his Gibraltar chin into splendid relief. Fantaspoe also endeavoured to look thoughtful, but succeeded only in appearing owlish. Macinpain didn’t look at all, but concentrated on getting a car. When one finally appeared he said,

“We shall take him to see the V.B.I., of course.”

Their faces lightened as they boarded the car but the Neophyte was still trying to work it out.

“Who,” he asked at length, “is the V.P.I.?”

“Not V.P.I.,” Macinpain corrected, “V.B.I. – or Very Busy Individual. It was a fan once, but it kept on getting busier and busier until now it does nothing at all. It’s perfectly obvious.”

Neophyte was not at all convinced of this but his brief experience of Fanopolis had shown him that the more questions one asked here, the more puzzling were the answers. In any case, Lankus and Barke kept him fully occupied with running commentaries on the streets and people. The Neophyte was not very interested at first, or perhaps he had grown cautious of taking interest in things Fanopolitan. He was jerked out of his reserve, however, by seeing someone, in the middle of the street, throwing lengths of rope into the air, and wearing a worried expression withal. Fearing the worst he asked Macinpain the reason for this eccentric behaviour.

“That?” queried the latter vaguely. “That? Oh, that’s Jimmy Angerbone – he wants to be a magician, you know, and he’s trying to learn the Indian Rope Trick. So far the only thing he’s done is lasso the big finger of the Council Hall clock. When he felt the rope make contact with something he blissfully closed his eyes and tugged like fury. He still has the bump on his head.”

“That, by the way,” he continued, pointing to a marble and onyx affair, “is the Convention Thing. We have a Convention every so often just to parade the new insults we’ve learned. The latest stunt, as illustrated by the Nitwitz, is to refuse admittance to everyone who does not agree with you. Barke held a Convention all by himself last Saturday...”

Barke drew the car to a halt, turned round, and placed a finger to his lips.

“Hist!” he muttered, “disturb not the abode of the Very Busy Fan – we be on Gholy ground.”

Silently they all alighted and trooped through a door expertly camouflaged to look like a blank wall. It was very dark within, but soon their eyes grew used to the dim radiance permeating the room, and the Neophyte made out a darker blotch at one end of the chamber. This, when approached, resolved itself into a barrier, composed of many massive tomes. On the back of one he read *Encyclopaedia Fanopolia – Vol 3*.

Reverently Barke knocked twice on this wall, and was rewarded by a small, weak voice from somewhere inside.

“Go away,” it whispered peevishly, “I’m very busy.”

“Our pardons for the interruption, your Gholiness,” replied Barke subserviently, “would your Gholiness deign to tell us what you are doing?”

“I am going to begin studying music, meteorology, journalism, memory and murder – everything beginning with an ‘m’ in fact.”

“But ‘journalism’ doesn’t begin with an ‘m’,” broke in the Neophyte profanely.

“No, it ends with one. That’s why.”

“Why *what?*” heckled the Neophyte.

“Why there’s no sense in poetry.”

“But I don’t see...” began the Neophyte again, until Lankus tapped him on the shoulder.

“Easy, brother. The V.B.I. always speaks in riddles – some say there’s an answer to them, but five people have gone mad trying to figure them out

already. It doesn't matter anyway. He's always going to begin something, but he never gets round to it."

There was a wild look in the Neophyte's eyes.

"Let's get out of here, for God's sake" he said, *[text unreadable]*.

Silently they went to the door, leaving the V.B.I. in undisturbed peace. The Neophyte looked very pale when they were again in the full light of day. Fantaspoet gazed at him apprehensively, as though expecting him to faint any moment, and Lankus produced a monstrous bottle of smelling salts.

"Take me somewhere peaceful," he whispered half-inaudibly, "I don't think I can stand this much longer."

Berke whispered, "Sanctuary," and the other two nodded in understanding. Macinpain was already calling a car.

The Neophyte did not see much of the journey but when he again sat up there was no sign of buildings around them. Instead he saw a tumultuous sea of colour, flowers on flowers banked in rhythmic beauty. The car was at rest within a purple-carpeted canyon and overhead the cliffs arched, hung with crimson and gold glowering tendrils.

The engineers of this place must have been magicians, reflected the Neophyte, as he became aware of a lilting, rippling melody which seemed to emanate from the very flowers. At any rate, their sleepy heads were swaying in harmony with it. It was a wild, eldritch tune, strangely reminiscent of something by Wagner. It exulted tenderly over the reality of beauty and mourned sadly over its eternal defeat by evil things; it promised and yet, at the same time, confessed that the dream bubble must break.

"This is a very lovely place," he said softly.

Barke took him gently by the arm, and the party wandered on through the ravine of dream-lost fantasy. Then they turned a corner, and came out into a wide space.

It must have stretched for a mile or more, and the sight of tiny, multi-coloured suns, hanging motionless over it made the Neophyte realise that they were underground. They were standing at some elevation above the general level, on a circular lawn from which many tiny paths issued forth, to scurry down and lose themselves in the riot of flower and foliage that covered the plain. As Barke led the way along one violeted path Fantaspoet tried to explain it.

"This spot is the best-loved of all in Fanopolis, for this is the place of if, the dreams of what might have been. It was built in memory of the great ones

who loved the dark fantasy and died unrecognised. It is dedicated to Lovecraft and Howard, Weinbaum and Daniells, Whitehead and Hatch – all the dreamers who lost their way in an ugly world. Listen.”

Somewhere, somehow, a voice was singing Tosca’s ‘Farewell to Summer’.

“The swallows are making them ready to fly,
wheeling out on a windy sky...”

Before them lay a long bed of white roses, and embedded in it scarlet begonias carved the name – “HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT”.

“It is time to return,” said Barke.

•

(We hope next month to conclude this serial)

(1939)

3. In Time of War (1940s)

The “last man” trope, where a man – it’s almost always a man – wakes to find everyone gone as a result of some calamity or other, predates science fiction itself. Stumbling through deserted streets he searches for others who have also survived. Sometimes he might locate them, sometimes not, but in the new situation he finds himself in he’s able to sleep in the finest hotels and help himself to anything he could desire from all the material goods left behind by the departed. The original *Twilight Zone* TV series used the trope in an episode where all that actor Burgess Meredith’s character desires is to be left in peace to read all the books he wants to. Waking up to a deserted city he raids the main library and settles down to do just that... only to accidentally smash his spectacles before he can. Not surprisingly, the trope has been used in fan fiction on several occasions.

In *The Fantast* #8 (February 1940), two issues after abandoning “Fanopolis”, editor Sam Youd chose to start a new serial, this time a round-robin with him writing the first chapter and John F. Burke tapped to write the second. This wasn’t their first time doing so since the pair had participated in an amateur SF round-robin elsewhere a few months earlier. “The Survivors” opens with Youd waking up a century hence, after mankind has destroyed itself. By now, in the real world, we were at war with Germany so using this as the cause of mankind’s demise was an obvious thing to do. Realising he will not be the only fan reawakening, Youd sets out to find the other fannish “Rip van Winkles”, a quest continued by Burke in the second chapter in *The Fantast* #9 (March 1940). Bill Temple was scheduled to write the third chapter, and appears to have done so. However, according to Mike Rosenblum in *Futurian War Digest* #2 (November 1940):

“There is still a possibility of *Fantast* coming out and surprising us one of these days. Apparently besides his lack of time, Sam managed to mislay an instalment of that epic serial ‘The Survivors’.”

This is a real loss as not only was the tale just getting going, but Temple was British fandom’s leading humorist at the time. Still, even as it stands, “The Survivors” is a worthwhile piece of work that includes some interesting

incidental details about the fans it features.

Satellite #16 (March 1940) carried Arthur C. Clarke's "At the Mountains of Murkiness (or Lovecraft-into-Leacock)" a parody of H.P. Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness". Parody being a recognised literary form, this is perhaps more accurately described as amateur fiction rather than fan fiction, though Walter Gillings does get a mention in his professional capacity as an editor.

When the next issue of *The Fantast* appeared after more than a year in April 1941, Douglas Webster was now the editor and "The Survivors" was nowhere to be seen, having presumably been abandoned after the missing instalment could not be found. In the interim much had happened.

At the end of May through the start of June 1940, the battered British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk. Soon afterwards the Battle of Britain began with the Luftwaffe and the RAF battling for air supremacy in the skies above England, a necessary precursor to a German invasion of Britain. Bill Temple also had other things besides fan fiction on his mind that summer. As he wrote in July:

At the moment I am awaiting with interest the outcome of a race between three events, any one of which is due to come about any day now:

- 1/ The arrival of "Bran" (so called because Joan and I don't know yet whether it will be a "Brian" or an "Anne". Or both!);
 - 2/ The arrival of my Army call-up papers;
 - 3/ The arrival of Hitler & Co.
- Wonder which'll win?

Anne would arrive soon after this, as would the call-up papers, but the arrival of Hitler & Co. was postponed indefinitely when the Luftwaffe failed to neutralise the RAF. In September came the Blitz, and the Temple home in Wembley was damaged by a bomb blast that, among other things, brought down the ceiling in Bill's study. Fortunately they were all away by then, Bill in the Army and his family having been evacuated from London. With everyone understandably keeping their heads down in cities across the country it wasn't until things eased up around March 1941 that anything like normal levels of fan activity began to resume.

"The Survivors" had shown real signs that it could develop into something special had circumstances – including Youd's own entry into the

forces – not aborted it. In *The Fantast* #11 (November 1941), his second issue, editor Webster announced a three-part fan fiction serial by Arthur C. Clarke that would be appearing in the following three issues, which it duly did. Titled “A Short History of Fantocracy (1948-1960)”, it describes how fannish military forces take over the world and establish a global “Fantocracy”, and is included in *Homefront* [AE].

Something worth mentioning at this point is D.R. Smith’s *The Road to Fame* even though it was amateur fiction rather than fan fiction, a mash-up that featured such famous characters from SF as John Carter, Tarzan, Professor Challenger, Richard Seaton, Blackie DuQuesne, and many more. These are sent on a journey where they:

“...will have to face such obstacles as the Impassable Precipice of Public Ridicule, the high passes of the Mountains of Contempt, the Bog of Apathy in the lowlands beyond, and the vast waterless Plain of Mediocrity where hunt the Wild Wolves of Fierce Competition.”

The whole thing reads like a kind of a longer, sercon version of *The Enchanted Duplicator* (see 1950s). It also has an interesting publication history:

The Road to Fame first appeared in *The Fantast*, published in England during 1941-42 by C.S. Youd, J.F. Burke, and Douglas Webster. It was originally conceived as a round-robin type of story, with each author writing one instalment; however, after D.R. Smith started the ball rolling no one else wanted to continue, so he did, writing each section just in time to meet the publishing deadline. When *Fantast* suspended publication, the story was still unfinished. That was in 1942. In 1946 I persuaded Don to finish the story so that I could reprint it as a booklet; at this time he also compiled the glossary of characters. The whole story was stencilled during 1946 and sent to Andy Anderson in Los Angeles for illustration and printing. No more was heard from it.

In 1950, when Roy Loan, Jr., was looking for material for his *The Talisman*, I decided that here was an opportunity to get it published, since I felt I really owed it to Don Smith after getting him to finish the story. Three instalments appeared – and then publication of *The Talisman* was suspended. I have finally decided that the only way to get it printed is to do it myself. Here it is.

The above will explain the dated nature of certain parts of the story and the omission of certain prominent characters who would probably have been included if the story had been written – or even revised, which it was not – today. With great thanks to Don Smith for the various favours.

– Bill Evans for FAPA (January 1953)

Ruth Berman reprinted it in 1961 (mimeo reproduction), and again in 2004 (photo-offset). At the time of writing copies of the latter are still available from her.*

* \$6.00 or \$8.00 outside North America (dollar check preferred) to Ruth Berman, 2809 Drew Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416, USA. The Road to Fame has since been added to the TAFF ebook library. – RH/DRL

The Fantast #14 – the final issue – appeared in July 1942, by which time the British fanzine scene was looking pretty anaemic. Fans in the forces had little time or energy to produce more than the two or four-pagers that were mailed out with Mike Rosenblum’s *Futurian War Digest*, which at that point was the only regularly appearing fanzine. Like Webster, Rosenblum was a conscientious objector, the only people who *did* have the time and energy to publish more ambitious zines. Not long after shuttering *The Fantast*, Webster put out *Cthulhu* #1 (and only), and this contained a new type of fan fiction.

In hip-hop music a “diss” (from disrespect) track is one in which one artist attacks another. In *Scoop!!*, Webster created diss fan fiction, and his target was Ted Carnell who frequently praised Robert Heinlein and/or name-dropped “Bob” in his writing (see *Homefront* [AE], “Thank Heaven for Heinlein” in *Tin Tacks* #7 [September 1941] etc.), Webster clearly considered all of this excessive, hence his response with *Scoop!!*, which also included side-swipes at several other people.

The Survivors

C.S. Youd and John Burke

C.S. Youd:

In bringing you the first part of this serial, we should like to express our indebtedness to Jack Speer and the staff of *Cosmic Tales*, whose “Six Against the Past” furnished the idea here put into operation. Briefly, and for the benefit of those who may not have read the story mentioned, this concerned the adventures of six well-known-American fans cast from a visit to the World’s Fair into prehistoric America. The first part was written by Jack Speer, after which readers were invited to carry on, the best effort sent in being accepted. (Readers may recall “The Moon Doom” in *Wonder Stories*, run on similar lines.) Our own plan, as you will see, is not quite the same. Now let *Fantacynic* speak for himself.

•

C.S. Youd (writing as Fantacynic):

The idea for this serial was first suggested in England by John F. Burke, who indicated the theme and made many other useful contributions. I was then commandeered for Chapter I, and how far that choice was wise remains for you, the readers, to judge. Meanwhile I think it best to point out that there are some rules to this new game, which I should like respected.

In the first place; only readers of *Fantast* may be included amongst the cataleptics, although if the writer can think of means of introducing other characters in a different manner he may go ahead. Anyone unsure of names or addresses of these readers should apply to CSYoud at the usual address. Then, it would be more convincing if writers, after the initial fantasy, kept to strict logic, though this might be waived. *Do not* get into a maze of Fanopolian nonsense! Finally, to save the trouble and disappointments (not to mention the energy wasted) in picking out material, I have decided that one writer should always pass the story on to a definite person for continuance. Thus, I hand over to John F. Burke for Part II, and he, in turn, will pass on to someone else. No limit placed on the number of parts any one writer can complete – if we were selfish enough, Johnny and I could keep passing it back and forward forever, but this is very unlikely. Writers should avoid

hostile personality at the expense of others, and I hope that people satirised also enter into the fun of the thing and bear no malice. In conclusion, if *you* feel you would like to take a hand, drop a line to the Editor of *Fantast* asking to have a chapter and mentioning any possible brain-waves that may have struck you, and he will forward your request to the current writer (always provided that he isn't too laz – too busy).

There is no definite length-limit, but it should always be possible to print a chapter without having to enlarge the magazine.

Chapter I by Fantacynic

There was a slight warning rustle, and the remains of the bed collapsed without warning into the thick layer of dust that covered the whole room. From the midst of the wreckage a figure stirred, stretched, and sneezed. With the air of one long accustomed to movement it clawed at the wall and slowly drew upright. It whistled softly. Christopher Samuel Youd was considerably surprised.

On closer examination the figure proved to be a youth of some eighteen years, of average figure without being too muscular. Very long brown hair swept annoyingly into his eyes, which were small and grey, and partially obscured by the dangling remains of a pair of rimless spectacles. He brushed it back with stubby, workman-like hands, and stared ruefully at the long nails that adorned them.

Setting his mind to more important things he ruminated on how he could have arrived at his present plight. The bare, dusty room he stood in was unfamiliar and he strode swiftly to the window at one end and looked out.

He gasped and caught his breath at the sight that presented itself. Outside was sheer chaos, the torn ruin that he had seen in *Things to Come* and privately rejected as just a little too fantastic. He was looking out from the backs of what had once been the working-quarters of Southampton. No possibility of mistaking the city, torn and shattered as it was, with the glaring outlines of the Docks in the distance, and the tall spire of the new Civic Centre pointing a forlorn finger at the heavens. Its still snowy whiteness contrasted harshly with the other vista of caved-in houses and deserted streets. As he watched, a small house in the distance collapsed with a faint rumble and the dust eddied up in whirls.

But if this were Southampton, where was he?

It came to him suddenly with the sight of that squat chimney he had seen so often when he had been visiting this place. The Royal South Hants Hospital. Of course! When he fell ill, they would naturally send him... His train of reasoning broke off short. He wasn't ill, could recall no illness, and anyway, why this desolation?

He had always prided himself on his quickness of perception, but it was not for several minutes that the solution came to him, a solution which he at first rejected as too idiotic. But as he surveyed the ruins of the most important shipping centre in England (excluding London, of course), he began to realise that nothing else was possible.

That article had done it all. He was fond of Smith's articles, and featured them in *Fantast* whenever possible and he recalled with sudden sharpness the article in question. It had come as a blessing to fill up an odd two pages in the twelfth issue, and he had hurriedly committed it to mimeo with a benediction. It was good stuff, anyway. Smith indulged in harmless pleasantries at the expense of science-fiction authors and editors and drew attention to the deplorable stuff that was being dished up in the year of grace 1940. So it was deplorable, Youd remembered indignantly, nauseating tripe! But that Smith article... It had concluded with a nice touch of fantasy. Smith had remarked that with boredom so rampant, it would not be surprising if fans did not one day emulate the Sleeping Beauty and fall into suspended animation over a particularly dull Hamilton narrative. Who knows, he said, but that they might not sleep for a hundred years, and wake to find themselves famous?

Unhappily the subsequent issue of *Superb Science-Fiction* had contained a Hamilton narrative. "Worms of Eros" it had been called, and Youd remembered how desperately he had endeavoured to plough through the last ten pages. He had never accomplished it. The last he recalled was a slight drowsiness when the hero swelled his biceps at the Venerian villain, and then – oblivion and this was the result!

Auto-suggestion, he realised, was the guilty factor. The strain of modern life – the seed of destruction placed by Smith – and the final shattering blow by the Worms of Eros! Possibly a cataleptic sleep had resulted. He was very vague about this, but Wandrei had used it for "Time Haven" so it might be true. It was true. Nothing else would explain the mysterious circumstances attending his presence here.

But even so, what of the city? There had, he recalled, been a war on

when he unceremoniously left the Twentieth Century. The realisation that civilisation really had taken the advice of moralistic science fiction writers and wiped itself out was decidedly a shock. He rejected the thought that Southampton might have been deserted for any other reason with the common-sense knowledge that no civilised state would under any circumstances sacrifice a port with four tides a day and excellent docks. No, civilisation had gone all right. The question was: had it left anything?

As he ruminated, another building, nearer, collapsed with a flurry of bricks, and he became acutely aware of his own danger. True, the Hospital was a far more substantial structure than the little homes that were settling into the dust outside, but he couldn't know what damage might not have been done to its foundations. With a quick decision he loped out of the room, paused irresolutely by the lift, and set off to descend the six flights of stairs to the outer world.

Outside the air of desolation was heightened by the removal of confining walls. As a near-by wall rippled to the ground like a pack of cards he wondered whether his decision to leave the shelter of the Hospital had been altogether wise. He moved out into the middle of the road and looked warily at the dilapidated houses about him. Two sparrows flew down and revelled in the sunny dust. He realised that those were the first creatures of the new world he had seen, and thanked DAW's deep-purple Ghu that all life had not perished from the quarrelsome tellurian globe.

He had a definite aim in view as he set out. First to the Library, to see if any newspaper accounts of the catastrophe remained, and then out to look for survivors. It seemed very likely that at least some of those who had read the article had also succumbed; in fact, it seemed very probable that all who also read *Superb Science-Fiction* (and who didn't read the one aristocrat left to pulp science-fiction?) had shared the same fate. He realised that he – the only person with knowledge of Fay's sadly meagre circulation details – would inevitably be the focal point of any reorganisation, and patted himself on the back happily.

He was by the new Library now, and plunged in. His first reaction was that he had again drawn a blank, for the reading shelves retained not even the scraps of paper he had hoped for. His one hope now was for a book, and, if the crash had been as sudden as he surmised, that seemed an extremely unlikely object. But he found one. Prominently laid at the junction of the Library and Art Gallery he came upon it – a thin bundle of sheets, made of

some white metal that he likened to aluminium.

He devoured the scanty information avidly and smiled at the mixture of letters and ideological symbols designed, he realised, to help any interplanetary visitors who might happen along. So man had attained a little respect for cosmic scales before passing the buck for the last time.

The information contained in the “book” was not profuse. It spoke of the wars that had broken out like boils all over 20th Century Christian civilisation, and of the final flare-up, beginning with German aggression in Poland and the prompt reprisals by Britain and France. Apparently after the summer of 1940 events had moved swiftly. Nation after nation had spurred to the battle-field, and the restrained tempo of attrition had changed into a quick fury of destruction. This had culminated in Distego.

Distego, he learned, had been the invention of a French chemist. He had shown the French Government this new weapon and that group, faced with a solidly hostile Eastern Europe and a very luke-warm American ally, had plunged on it desperately. The book told of the young chemist’s dismay, of his explanation that the weapon was untried and no antidote had been found, and of the desperation which had caused his expostulations to go unregarded. For Distego was a very potent weapon.

The book refused to divulge details of its nature, but hinted that it was a new kind of chemical gas. Later on Phillip Hetherington was to point out that in the new world there was no sign of the ox, the onion, or the guinea-pig, all of which had shared the human prerogative of sharing 48 chromosomes, and was to be requested by unanimous vote to drop that line of research and take up bee-keeping. In which the amiable Phil had concurred.

The book closed abruptly. The Distego disease was spreading rapidly and no country seemed to be immune to it. The air was poisoned and the human race was making its exit with less and less dignity as the tragedy became wide-spread. Just a small band of devotees were preparing these books, leaving them in the focal points of humanity’s largest cities. It closed with particulars of the position of New York’s Time Capsule, and of a new capsule which had been hidden below the London Museum. From these might be learned the story of man.

Youd closed the book with a sigh, and turned to the fretted windows through which the sun stretched its twilight arms. He could have wished for a more literary epitaph to Man, but a dying race cannot always detail its last message to a Shakespeare. Anyway, they couldn’t waste time on anything but

essentials. Sighing mournfully he prepared to bed down in a corner, below a still glowing Rembrandt, and cursed the days he had read *Weird Tales*. Art Galleries were eerie places in a deserted city!

•

It was three days later that he set out on his quest. Three days he had been hunting for petrol and oil – and then mastering the mechanism of the lone Chrysler he had discovered in a sheltered garage. He was considerably surprised that anyone so unmechanical as himself should have mastered the art of driving so soon but accepted the boon gratefully. Now there was the question of destination.

London must be his ultimate aim, for London sheltered half a dozen or more *Fantast* readers. But – should he go there first? With a car like this he could manage the trip in a couple of hours and it might be best to pick up a local or so beforehand. It burst on him with dazzling swiftness – what about Smith? Smith, who had been the Cause of It All – he would find Smith! After all, Warwickshire wasn't so very far. The thought of returning home he brushed away quickly; he hadn't been particularly fond of Eastleigh but...

The long lean car traced a sinuous course to the north-west. After the noise of the engine had brought several houses tumbling perilously close to him he learned to go carefully through towns, but he made up for what time he lost by exhilarating dashes along country roads. By means of metal signposts and a surprisingly intact atlas he had found in Southampton it took him not more than three hours to find Nuneaton, and only another hour to discover Hartshill and, more important, number 13, Church Road.

The house seemed deserted like the rest until he swept to a halt outside and saw the trail of smoke issuing from the chimney into the light blue afternoon sky. Quickly he got out, and ran down the path to the front door. He beat a rapid rat-tat on the wood and waited impatiently for a reply. Almost at once steps were sounding hollowly from within; then the door creaked open and he saw – Smith!

“Hello,” he remarked fatuously “and how are you?”

Smith considered him suspiciously.

“Now I wonder which one you are?” he murmured thoughtfully. “If it's McIlwain, you can go to blazes. But no, it doesn't resemble the commonly-held conception of McIlwain and its chin proclaims that it is not Burke. It's too young for Clarke, Temple or Chapman, and it most certainly isn't Hanson.. I know – you're Yood!”

He was pained.

“Yowd, *please*,” he commented. “Does nobody ever read my comments in *Folly*?”

Smith was suddenly galvanised into action.

“Come in! Here we are wasting time with every moment precious – this way!”

Youd followed him and was soon in a cosy room with a bright fire burning in the grate. But what astonished him was that the room was completely furnished and there, in rows along the wall, were stacks of science-fiction magazines! He gaped irresolutely. Smith turned and smiled.

“Surprised, eh? Fortunately my parents had completed a gas-proof room, with the results that you see. I was interred therein with magazines when I succumbed and the openings sealed. Very fortunate. You’ve realised my article caused it all?”

Youd nodded in silence and saw Smith swell visibly.

“It’s not everyone who can claim to have saved mankind,” he remarked brightly. “Hmmm. Hamilton might claim some reward, and, anyway, we only had one female reader of *Fay*, and she an American.”

“Too bad; I suppose the Americans, seeing ‘Worms of Eros’ before the article, weren’t influenced. But it might have worked.”

“I hope so. I’d like to see Doc’s face when he finds the Comintern is no more! But look here – if you’ve been awake three days, what have you been up to?”

“Three days? Some variation it seems; I woke up last night. As to what I’ve been doing – hunting out tinned food mostly, and reading *Skylark 3*”.

“Great Ghu!! Reading *Skylark 3* indeed! Quite apart from wasting time, I should think the case called for Lovecraft rather than the Zane Gray of tomorrow.”

“Lovecraft was generally boring. Smith, now, had a gift for scientific fiction. His science accurate, his characterisation convincing, his logic unanswerable!”

“You are talking boloney, but that is Smith’s privilege. I am not going to spend the rest of my life arguing with you – what about some food?”

After supper, plans for the next day were discussed. London, it was agreed, should be aimed at, despite Youd’s tentative suggestion for roping in the outlanders first. As Smith explained, most of them lived in the north, and it would be much better to establish a base first.

There was a little difficulty about the car. As proprietor, Youd insisted that he drive, while Smith based his own claim on the strength of having taken – and failed – the driving test. A compromise was finally reached to the effect that each should drive half way, Smith doing the first part. With a feeling of plans made and obstacles surmounted they settled down to the night's rest.

•

It was about eight o'clock and already warm when they set out. Despite perfectly reasonable apprehensions at the way Smith cornered, Youd had to admit that the journey progressed easily enough. They breakfasted on bully beef at Lylesbury, threw scraps to wild-looking ducks in a stream, and Youd took the wheel. In spite of frequent sardonic comments from his side he had only one collision and spent ten minutes passionately justifying to Smith his reason for going round a blind corner at fifty m.p.h. At a quarter to eleven they were on the outskirts of London, and by 11.15 they were cruising along Grays Inn Road. Youd explained, gesticulating dangerously with one hand, that although the Temples and Ego had left the Flat late December 1939 it was extremely likely that they would return in such circumstances as now held sway. Smith disagreed, but thought it likely that "88" might become general HQ, while not actually a place of residence.

They found "88" easily enough, by reason of the model spaceship that was hung precariously from a window. As the car roared along the deserted street the spaceship was displaced by a group of faces, amongst which Youd recognised Eric Hopkins, Ted Carnell and Harry Kay. As they climbed out of the car there was a short, sharp struggle and the three faces disappeared. Then, without warning, a glass of beer, an arm, and a long face were thrust upon the balmy air of London.

"Well for Cats' sake," murmured a voice and Smith and Youd realised that This Was Bill Temple.

Far away, in distant Liverpool, the awful notes of a clarinet split the happy summer air.

Part II

by John F. Burke

Burke opened his eyes with customary reluctance, and gazed at the ceiling. He closed his eyes again, then opened them, and said "Hell's bells" in a

muffled voice before struggling out of bed through a clinging mass of sheets that gave off a distinctly unpleasant odour. He regarded the ceiling again, and frowned.

True, there had been a slight crack in that ceiling last night, but it was only a small one and could easily have been remedied with a little plaster. The network of lines that now decorated the erstwhile whiteness would need more than a little plaster.

Burke grabbed for the curtains to pull them apart, but they gave way, and let in a flood of light that illuminated an appalling sight. The bedside bookcase, crammed with *Weird Tales*, modern poetry, and back issues of *Rhythm* for some five years was in ruin. From decaying sheets of paper rose a stench to which only Lovecraft could have done justice, and even then only with some strain on his vocabulary. Bewildered, England's Most Aloof and Refined Fan turned once more to the window. It was hard to judge conditions outside, for 57 Beauclair had always faced on to a large expanse of allotments, all of them in that state of glorious confusion characteristic of the "dig for victory" enthusiasts. Still they did seem a little more overgrown than usual.

"It's this sleeping sickness," said Burke eventually, looking around his Well-beloved room.

He remembered that some weeks back he had slept until one o'clock on a Sunday morning and missed going to dinner with his relations – evidently he was afflicted with some disease.

"Should be a new *Fantast* out soon," he murmured to himself, preparing to go downstairs and see what the post had brought. "And Good Ghu!"

A horrible thought occurred to him, and, although he dismissed it in favour of a more important thought concerning a date with someone that coming Saturday, it came back again with renewed force. That article by Smith in the last *Fay* – the one he'd awarded the colossal sum of 2 out of 10 because he thought it was so much better than Donald Raymond's usual – could it be that? He looked round at the bedside bookcase, and sure enough, there was that issue of *Superb Science-Fiction* on top. He had been reading it just before falling asleep, and had only just about had the strength to put the light out before he fell into slumber. If that guy Smith had really done what he was afraid that guy Smith had done....

A little investigation showed that it must be true. Everywhere was silence, a condition most unusual at 57 Beauclair Drive. With sudden fright,

Burke resolved to shatter the silence before it drove him mad. He dived under the bed and emerged with his clarinet, which he fitted together with trembling fingers. The keys were stiff beneath his fingers and when he placed it to his mouth a piercing whistle emerged, followed by a noise reminiscent of train buffers grating against one another. Not since his early days on the instrument had he made a noise like that; he could still remember McIlwain's comments.

"Dave!" he said.

Although the McIlwain creature pretended to have grown out of science-fiction and devoted most of his time to Freud and such highbrow periodicals as *Movie Humour*, Burke had a strong suspicion that this was all a blind – that the fair-haired Adonis of Cotswold Street really wallowed in Edmond Hamilton. In any case it wasn't very far.

About half way down the road, Burke's mind wandered off as usual, and he meandered blissfully over to the car stop, where he remained sunk in meditation. After about an hour had passed he looked up. The Liverpool tram services were pretty terrible, but an hour was just a little too long. Then he realised that the trams were probably not running any more. Anyway the time-tables said "Subject to alteration without notice", so it was no good relying on them. He fumbled in his pocket for a piece of chocolate, but he could only find an old trouser-button and a rude letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which he had never had the courage to post.

The road to the abode of his fellow jitterbug seemed longer than usual, but repeated trips had made him accustomed to the monotonous surroundings, and it was in a reasonably soothed state of mind that he rolled up at 14 Cotswold Street and pulled the bell. Then he remembered that the bell had never worked, as the string had broken about half way along the passage and McIlwain had always been too lazy to remove the wall in order to repair it. He hammered on the door and whistled "Shoot the Likker to Me, John Boy" through the letter-box.

"It couldn't kill you, then," said a disgusted voice, and a familiar form stood aside to let him in.

Burke took one look, placed his clarinet-case on the floor, sat on the hat-stand, and laughed until tears came.

"Well?" demanded McIlwain, raising a hand covered with hectograph ink in a menacing gesture.

Burke looked at the long waves of golden hair that streamed down his

comrade's back, and had another fit of hysterics.

"Never mind," he said when he recovered. "What are you doing now?"

"Producing an issue of the *Gargoyle*," explained McIlwain, "I've been awake for two days, and it struck me, after thinking this business over, that when all the fans get together again they'll be so glad to see a fan mag that they'll fall on me. Anyway, I had to do something, and I've burned all my magazines trying to get a fire started."

He indicated a mass of black rubbish in the fireplace.

"You need Les Johnson to start a fire," said Burke with a grin.

"Remember those old days in the SFA room?"

They both groaned, and changed the subject.

"Can you drive a car?" said McIlwain suddenly, running a purple hand through his hair. "We've got to head out of here – I suggest we make for some big place. London ought to have quite a fair population left – at least six, I make it. I noticed quite a nice line in hearses parked outside a house a little way up the road."

Burke confessed that he had never driven a car in his life, but had seen a lot of people doing so, and thought it was easy. After trying, and nearly making the hearse into a coffin for two corpses, he eventually got things worked out fairly well, and turned towards the Mersey Tunnel.

"It may not be there now," McIlwain pointed out, "and in any case none of the apparatus will be working. We may stifle. Let's stop off at the Reference Library and see if their files contain anything about this business."

His comrade was pleased, having intended to stop there in any case, to have a root round. Liverpool Reference Library is a noble place, with tiers of books to the roof, and little iron runways, along which travel boys picking out books that have been ordered. It gave the two a big thrill to be able to do their own running about, picking out large tomes and browsing through them. It was with a shock that McIlwain looked up and saw that it was getting dark.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "We'd better go and look for some food – I have no intention of spending the rest of my life here."

Burke, immersed in a weighty tome on the third tier, right above the doorway, ignored him, and continued turning pages over, causing a fine dust to rise and settle on his noble nose. McIlwain muttered something, and trickled across the floor to the magazine stand, where he fingered through copies of the *Amateur Photographer* in the hope of finding suggestive pictures.

“I’m sure I heard voices in here,” said someone.

“What?” said Burke.

“That wasn’t me,” said McIlwain, looking up in surprise. The voice came again:

“There – I told you see!”

“Great Ghu!” squealed McIlwain, dropping the book, fortunately onto the silent floor. “Ronnie Holmes – do something, quick!”

“For years,” said Burke solemnly, “I slaved in the Liverpool Gas Company, and did I detest it. I see before me two of the largest volumes of which I know, namely *Coe’s Practice of Gas Supply*. For the first time I feel they may be of use.”

He lifted one from the shelf, and looked cautiously down at the door. Still standing paralysed in the middle of the room, McIlwain’s face twisted as a familiar figure entered.

“Well, if it isn’t –”

Burke looked down thoughtfully, and dropped *Coe’s Practice of Gas Supply* with careful accuracy. Holmes went down without a sigh, and a second person followed him.

“That was Les Heald,” said McIlwain sounding a trifle aggrieved. “He might have been useful and, anyway, I like him.”

“Too bad,” admitted Burke, scrambling down the ladder. “Still, I had to use the second volume, and, anyway, our hearse is quite full enough as it is – I can hardly breathe, with you practising Yoga exercises on the seat beside me. Come on – those other two will probably chase us to London, but it’ll give us something to look forward to.”

They went down the library steps in the gentle dusk, touched by a breeze that seemed almost fragrant. No more could they smell the thousand and one odours of the Mersey, and despite a somewhat startling effluvium that came in little gusts from what had once been the fishmarket, everything was remarkably pleasant. The hearse slid forward gently, but, as they had surmised, the Mersey Tunnel was in no fit state to be travelled along, and they decided to find a little to eat, and then set out for Runcorn, or even further, since the Transporter Bridge would not be working.

“Nuneaton,” said Burke excitedly. “I wonder if Smith’s alive?”

“Soon settle him if he is,” grumbled McIlwain, who was not feeling any too cheerful, having only just recovered from the shock of finding that the coffin in the back was not as empty as they had at first supposed. After

tossing up with Burke's last ha'penny (they had gone off to sleep the day before pay-day), it had fallen to McIlwain's lot to shift the remains before they went any further.

Smith's house was discovered, with the aspect of having been recently occupied, but as there was no-one there they were coming down the path again when Burke stopped.

"A box of wire staples!" he exclaimed.

"Can't be Bob Tucker over here," said McIlwain. "I – hey, give them to me for the *Gargoyle*."

"To blazes with the *Gargoyle*," said Burke chattily. "Don't you see the significance of those – the amazing import? Don't you realise what they mean?"

"Sounds like the beginning of a Lovecraft story," said McIlwain coldly. "No Johnny, I do *not* understand anything. I see nothing but a box of nice little wire staples which will look really at home in the *Gargoyle*, when I get them."

"You mug!" growled Burke. "What would Smith be doing with staples? These can only belong to one person – Sam Youd. Which means he's been here. For all we know the two are on their way to London at this minute."

"All right," agreed McIlwain. "Have it your own way – if we discover a dropped aitch on the way I suppose you'll deduce that Ronny Holmes has passed us. Onward to London."

They bowled off at what was a most indecorous speed for a hearse, and as the first hints of London began to spring up about them they began to sing "Here Come the Men with the Jive" with typical fervour. Burke slowed into the end of Gray's Inn Road, intending to have a look at the famous Flat even if there was no-one at home. The sight of a car standing outside and a miniature spaceship dangling from the window brought a cheer from both of them as they swung into the side.

"Bring out your dead!" carolled McIlwain merrily, springing on to the side and bounding up the stairs.

"Wait a minute!" howled Burke. "The door opens outwards, you mug – I found that out last time I was here, and..."

He was too late. McIlwain hammered on the door, which was jubilantly flung open, precipitating him down half a flight of stairs. As he scrambled up a jug flew past his ear and crashed into Burke, who cursed fluently.

"I've been wanting to do that ever since you mucked up one of my

articles,” said Arthur Clarke’s voice, tinged with happiness. “Now come on up.”

END OF PART II. PART III TO BE WRITTEN BY *W.F. TEMPLE*
APPEARS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

(1940)

Scoop!!

Doug Webster

#1 Fan-Dancer Weds U.S. Stf. Author! Bride Says: "I Think He's Cute."

The wedding today of Miss E.J. ("Ted") Carnell, perhaps the best-known and most accomplished fan-dancer in the country, to Mr, R.A. Heinlein, well-known American writer of scientific fiction, came as no surprise to their many friends. Our reporter, Mr D. Webster (U, R'lyeh) managed to gain access to the whole proceedings, and on questioning a large number of the guests in between drinks, learned that Miss Carnell has been courting Mr Heinlein for the best part of two years now, with that tigerish joie de vivre and singleness of purpose which has characterised her graceful performances on the stage.

The ceremony took place at Miss Carnell's town house in Burwash Road, Plumstead. Mr Heinlein, we are given to believe, flew over from California for the occasion. He stated that the trip had been Pygmalion awful.

Miss Carnell is, of course (our Social Editress informs us), well-known to all as the proprietor of the daring "girly" show *Nude Gels* which gained such popularity among specialists at the beginning of the war, and was eventually closed down by the Police early in 1940. She wore for the occasion a blue tulle gown, reminiscent of a WAAF's uniform, and ribbons in her hair. The bride was given away by her dear friend Mr G. Ken (formerly Ken G.) Chapman, S.F.A., and the groom was given away by his ashen face and trembling limbs, without the help of which (for he hid most cunningly) he might never have been located in the crowd.

The many guests, both invited and uninvited, were mainly drawn from the bride and groom's numerous friends in the entertainment world. They were concentrated throughout at a table at one end of the apartment. Such was the throng that our reporter was never able to fight his way to the centre, and the enigmatic clink of glass on glass, and air of general bonhomie, left him mystified.

“Sailor” Chapman in State of Anguish

Our reporter gained much valuable information by systematically questioning the guests. He first approached Mr John C. (“Zeus”) Craig, and inquired into the peculiar behaviour of Mr Chapman. The latter was to be seen standing silently by a window, beer glass clenched unemptied in one hand, and gazing into the middle distance with face set in the stolid stare of a caterpillar eyeing a skyscraper. Mr Craig (I, Ilford) told our representative that he was brooding.

“Damned nice chap, Ken. Big-hearted. Best guy we could have had in charge of the SFA – everybody likes him. Knows a thing or two, besides. But he’s a bit cut up just now. Well, hell, he had hopes about Ted – they’ve been good pals for years and... well, you know how it is...”

On being coaxed, Mr Chapman made the following statement:

“Ted... Ted... me old bucko Ted... gone... all these years... Heinlein, Godsinkit... fun we’ve had... Longest list of dirty stories of anyone I know... sunk... bloody... dammit, boost I gaver in *Vom*... drinks we’ve had together... aw... the war... SFA... typewriters, hell!!... Knowner for ages... sweetie-pie... that first SFA meeting, when she couldn’t think of a thing to say... lost in admiration of me, I’ll swear... now... cor....”

Marriage Engineered by “Sphinx” Temple

Mr Webster staggered away and (he reports) fell over Mr Woof Temple (I, Wembley), who was explaining to a page-boy the meaning of “browned-off”.

“Yes,” stated Mr Temple, taking the oath: “I dunnit. But for me all this” – he waved a hand unsteadily – “would never have been, I first put the idea into Ted’s pretty head – the little nikkum – and very soon afterwards the marriage was arranged. You’ll find the words in *Fido*, March ’42: ‘Why don’t you marry ‘Bob’ Heinlein?’ Apparently Heinlein saw the report, figured that Ted had been boasting to the boys over here that he was her beau, and called for a showdown. He got it, the sucker! Aha, the dirty old man! Bet you can’t drink more beer than me.”

Telegrams to Swell Waste-Paper Campaign

At this point a recess was called in the festivities, and telegrams of congratulation were read out by Mr Frank (“God”) Arnold, the best man. It was first intimated that as some Boy Scouts had called a few hours earlier in aid of the Waste-Paper Campaign, all the bride’s collection of fan-dancing technical magazines, and half the pile of telegrams, had been given to them in a fine patriotic gesture, it having been deemed inadvisable to risk wasting stf or beer in bribing them. Extracts from the telegrams are quoted below...

- “RIDE IM COWBOY – DAW”
- “I AM ASTOUNDED – GERNSBACK”
- “IF ONCE IN A WHILE GAMIN PLAYS ON THE HARP WHY NOT OH SAY YOU WILL BE MINE – MICHEL”
- “SWINE – SWINE”
- “TERRIFICONGRATS TED EXCLAMATION POINT MY VERY BEST WISHES TO BOB AND URSELF ON THIS SCIENTIFANUPTIAL OKASHUN DOUBLE EXCLAMATION POINT V FOR VICTORY UR FOR HEAVEN IM ALL 4 U TRIPLE EXCLAMATION POINT – 4E”
- “MY GOD – SAM”
- “WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR – DOC”
- “INSIST YOU WRITE UP HONEYMOON TRIP IN DETAIL FOR ZENITH STOP WANT TO KNOW WHAT WERE IN FOR BEFORE WE TRY IT OURSELVES STOP HELLISH WEATHER STOP LOVE – HARRYANMARION”

Intimate Details

Later in the proceedings, our reporter found himself eating ice-cream next to the bride, and the following conversation is reported to have taken place:

- “Now, Miss – Miss – Mrs. Hell, may I – may I call...”
- “Just call me Ted.” (With, a pure, innocent smile.)
- “Well, Ted ole gal, and what do you think of the hubby?”
- “I think he’s cute.”
- “I’ve often admired your performances, Ted, both solo and

when you were starring in *Nude Gels*... Why, I'm sorry – did I make you blush? I'm sure I didn't mean to embarrass you. Anyway, I was going to ask – to what do you attribute your amazing and never-ending success in the fan-dancing world?"

Success Claimed on Steady Diet of Science-Fiction

She giggled becomingly:

"Undoubtedly, my secret of success is a steady and intensive diet of science-fiction. There's nothing like it for keeping a girl healthy. I think it's super. I know a lot of the authors, too; do you? There's Bob, of course – isn't he wonderful? – and 'Jack' Williamson and 'Doc' Smith and 'Ed' Hamilton and 'Bob' Williams and – oh, all the others, – I've had a shottie at them all at one time or another. It's marvellous fun. I think they're wonderful, really. And did you hear the one old Stinkfluster's wife was telling me the other day? 'My dear,' she said to me, 'my dear, did you hear the *awful* story about Mrs Campbell...?' Then I said to her..."

"And. I suppose you'll have to stop reading science-fiction and knowing all these authors now you're married?"

"Why no, my dear. I intend to keep right on enjoying myself as I always did. I think they're awfully nice...."

(Here, Mr Webster states that the bride pinched him lightly on the cheek, and inquired disinterestedly as to his movements the following night. He also, he reports, daringly took the chance of slapping her gently on the well, you know – later in the evening. But nothing has so far come of it.)

Portmanteau Reports

Here, in digest form, are some of the remarks confided in our reporter by those present –

- D. McIlwain (U, Cranwell): "Science-fiction is an expression of repressed sex instinct, anyway, so what can you expect? On the other hand, I shouldn't have been in the least surprised if these two had never got married, because as Freud points out love is closely akin to hate, and

vice versa.”

- J.F. Burke (U, L’pool): “Yes.”
- J.C. Craig (I, Ilford): “Ted’s a nice wench, but a trifle single-minded.”
- S.L. Bichby (I, Higham’s Park): “And what do you think the bitch said to me directly I came into the room?”
- E.F. Russell (I, Isle of Man): “Ted and I never did fit in together, but she’s a go-getter all right. I ain’t worrying – I’m happy where I am.”
- H.S.W. XXX Chibbett (I, Bowes Park): “Karma.”
- R.G. Medhurst (U, West Brompton): “Obviously a mixture of senile decay and desperation.”

Military Caution on Part of Groom

As the gathering was departing variously, our representative noted that there had been no sign of Mr Heinlein for some while. Enquiries failed to bring him to light. Mr Webster since claims, however, to have located him, with the help of a statement made in the public press by Mr John W. Campbell Jr., to wit:

“The author is, like the United States Fleet, ‘somewhere in the Pacific’. In fact, he’s with the fleet, I believe!”

“This forceful and unambiguous statement,” says Mr Webster, “speaks for itself.”

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Publisher’s note: Although we are not primarily a news magazine and have seen no mention of this marriage in the social columns of the latest newspapers, we print this report with complete confidence. Not only is Mr Webster our most enterprising reporter, but he largely financed this issue of *Cthulhu*. It should be mentioned that his use of “I” does not indicate “Independent” member, but the fact that the guest was Invited; “U” indicated that he was Uninvited.

We should like here to follow the excellent example of our good friend Dr Carlton Fassbeinder* in a similar case, and instigate the custom, in future, of referring to Mr Heinlein as “Ted’s husband”. Let it be so.

* T. Bruce Yerke – RH

(1942)

4. Drama and Allegory (1950s)

Fandom in the UK recovered slowly in the immediate aftermath of the war, but some indication of how much fans and pros then formed a single community can be seen by something in the December 1951 issue of SF prozine *Authentic*. This included a tale by editor H.J. “Bert” Campbell whose characters are thinly disguised versions of Arthur C. Clarke, Bill Temple, and other members of the London Circle, and which include much fan mythology. Had it appeared in a fanzine it would easily qualify as fan fiction. The Belfast group presented its compliments to the London Circle when this appeared...and found themselves parodied in *Authentic* two issues later in a tale titled “Chaos in Miniature”.

“Willis Discovers America” [fan] was a major piece of fan fiction produced by Walt Willis in support of the fund to bring him to the 1952 Worldcon and was first serialised in various American fanzines. Though he was geographically part of UK fandom, Walt Willis directed most of his fan activity towards US fandom and so was perhaps the first completely transatlantic fan, someone whom both could justifiably claim as one of their own.

In late 1952, Bob Shaw co-created the one-off *Fen Crittur Comical Books* [fan]. Written by Walt Willis and drawn by Shaw (with assistance from A. Vincent Clarke), it featured characters from Walt Kelly’s *Pogo* in a 16-page satire on SF fandom. With James White (who contributed additional material) the trio were known as “the Belfast Triangle”. This was the first comic book I’m aware of UK fans producing, but it wasn’t Shaw’s only foray into drawing comics: a three-pager written and drawn by him, “Return of the Space Boggle”, appeared in Shelby Vick’s *Confusion* #14 [fan] the following February.

In a forerunner of sorts to Shaw’s later “Serious Scientific Talks”, Bill Temple’s Guest of Honour speech in May 1951 at FESTIVENTION, the UK’s first deliberately international convention and a proto-EUROCON, took the form of a yarn about him and Arthur C. Clarke flying to Mars in a giant onion, complete with “scientific” explanations. But it was something else

presented at FESTIVENTION that deserves particular mention here. Performed by “The SF Soap Opera Company” (Ted Tubb, Audrey Lovett, Ken Bulmer, Fred Brown, Ted Carnell, and Charlie Duncombe), “Who Goes Where?” was described by Vince Clarke as “a 15 minute sf skit on a ‘hero and heroine marooned on a desert planet’”. He further noted that “this play was recorded, so may be heard again at s-f gatherings in the future.” Whether it was or not is unknown, but this was the first time a live drama had been staged at a UK con by a cast of performers. It appears to have been an SF parody rather than directly about fandom, as with most later plays of this kind, but like them it may well have still included references to and jokes about fandom and so count as another manifestation of the fan fictionalising impulse.

That impulse was also on display at CORONCON in 1953, where no fewer than *three* dramas premiered, all very different. First there was “Whiskers” by Walt Willis, in which Bert Campbell’s beard begins growing uncontrollably. Starring Bill Temple, this was played over the hotel’s p.a. system, thus simulating a radio drama – possibly the first and last time this was ever done. Next was a play performed under protest by the Junior Fanatics (they wanted to cancel it but were told the show must go on), about which details are sparse. Finally, there was “First Man on Mars”. According to Willis in his column in *Nebula* [AE] this was:

...solemnly announced as a visit from the D’Oyley Carte Ballet Co. However the “Company” decided to put the horseplay before the D’Oyley Carte and we were treated to the breathtaking spectacle of critic Fred Brown, author Ted Tubb, Convention Treasurer Charlie Duncombe, and fan Ron Buckmaster, all dressed as young ladies and cavorting coyly about the stage to the strains of “Danse Macabre”, protecting their honour against male impersonators Dorothy Rattigan and Daphne Buckmaster.

Sadly, only two photos of this “ballet” are known to survive.

A. Vincent Clarke was one of the finest fanwriters to emerge in the 1950s, and it was something he wrote in 1953 that fanhistorian Harry Warner Jr singled out as indicating that post-war UK fandom was now back to full strength. Possibly influenced by “Who Goes Where?” and/or “Whiskers”, it was written in the form of a script:

“His *A Christmas Carol* parody published in *Space Times* [fan] in 1953, entitled ‘Scrooge on Ice’ [AE], was long regarded as a

crucial point in England's fandom. It was the first long piece of fiction with fans as characters published in that nation since World War Two, proof that its fandom was thoroughly aware of itself again, and a prophecy of the literary renaissance that was about to emerge in Ireland." [\[11\]](#)

And then some. In 1948 Walt Willis launched the fanzine *Slant* with fellow Belfast fan James White, this being superseded in 1952 by *Hyphen* which he produced with Chuck Harris, and in 1954 he and Bob Shaw gave us *The Enchanted Duplicator* [AE]. This allegorical account of Jophan's adventures in the land of Trufandom and his quest to find the eponymous duplicator is easily the most celebrated piece of fan fiction ever written. Since it was first published *The Enchanted Duplicator* has seen a dozen reprintings, several sequels by diverse hands, and been adapted in the form of a play, a graphic novel, an audio production, a computer game, a board game and, most recently at time of writing, a musical staged at the 2019 Worldcon. And all this despite a lot of its references now being old enough to require explanation for modern audiences.

"Fanderella & Her Fairy Godmother" [AE], a second Xmas parody script by Clarke, appeared in *Eye* #3 (Xmas 1954); he also penned the first chapter [AE] of "The Future History of Fandom" for *Triode* #1 (September 1954, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves) in which separatist fans attempt to create their own civilisation. This was a round-robin tale that would run until *Triode* #10 (April 1957) with subsequent chapters by Willis, Mal Ashworth, Harry Turner, Bentcliffe, Jeeves, Arthur Thomson, and John Berry. Berry wrote several, bringing the saga to a close.

The first issue of *Triode* [fan] also carried a transcript of "The Alien Arrives", a play written by Willis that was performed and recorded on tape by the Liverpool SF Society (LaSFaS) to be played over the hotel public address system (twice) at SUPERMANCON, the 1954 UK national convention, held that year in Manchester. The next year, following on from this, LaSFaS created the first of their "taperas",* "The March of Slime", which was played for the audience at CYTRICON, the 1955 Eastercon. A full-cast audio drama, its title was a play on the American "March of Time" newsreels. This was well regarded by those who heard it, but better was to come the following year. At CYTRICON II, once again held at the the George Hotel in Kettering, the society debuted their second tapera. Like the first it was heavily influenced by the humour of the legendary radio series *The Goon Show*, which was written by

Spike Milligan and featured Spike, Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and (for a while) Michael Bentine.

* From "tape opera". – RH/DRL

LaSFaS not only presented "Last and First Fen"* [fia] but its members also appeared in costume as the characters they played, in the process birthing cosplay at UK cons. As with its predecessor, a transcript of "Last and First Fen" later appeared in a fanzine making it, I suppose, an early multi-media presentation. However, neither transcript is a patch on the audio recordings. (So far as I'm aware, there is no surviving recording of "The Alien Arrives".)

* No connection apart from the title to Olaf Stapledon's 1930 sf novel *Last and First Men*, whose future history starts in the twenty-first century and covers two billion years; the "tapera" runs from Roman times to a near-future Mars mission. *Fancylopedia 3* wonders whether it was based on Jack Speer's "Last and First Fen", a entirely different 1946 playlet (verse rather than prose) centred on a Mars expedition. – RH/DRL

One of those who likely lent his voice to the proceedings was society member Bill Harrison. In the Liverpool groupzine *Space Diversions* [fan] the editors had been running a series of profiles of members, but when they got round to Harrison in summer 1957 they had a bit of fun with his bio and characterised him as Sir William Makepeace Harrison, an intrepid adventurer who had been involved with all manner of improbable escapades in defence of the realm. No sooner had the issue appeared than the Liverpool fans John Owen and Stanley Nuttall decided to run with the conceit. In *Triode* #11 (August 1957), writing as Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham, they ran the first of a series of tales featuring Sir William's exploits. These usually entailed him facing off against the evil Neumann, a play on the name of another Liverpool group member, Dave Newman. The *Boy's Own* style adventurers of the Victorian and Edwardian periods were ripe for parody, as witness the later *Ripping Yarns* TV series by *Monty Python* team members Terry Jones and Michael Palin, so it's not surprising these proved popular. Harrison made the cover of *Triode* #13 and #15, and *Bastion* #2 [fan]; he even made an appearance in "TAFF Election Night, 1960"; the Liverpool group's spoof of a typical British election programme, sounding remarkably like Winston Churchill. Despite all this, Sir William was not the first fan fictional character to enjoy a series of tales in a British fanzine. That honour goes to the Goon.

This Goon for Hire [AE] was a one-shot written by John Berry, illustrated by Arthur Thomson, and published (and heavily rewritten) by Chuck Harris. This was the first tale in the humorous Goon series and announced as a December 1955 release, but it ended up being distributed with OMPA (Summer 1956) and as a FAPA post-mailing (February 1956). The title was an obvious play on *This Gun For Hire*, the 1942 American detective noir movie based on Graham Greene's 1936 novel *A Gun For Sale*. Goon Bleary (or "Goon Berry" as he's called in this first tale, "Bleary" apparently resulting from Ken Potter mangling the name) is a hapless private eye initially based in Belfast who solves fannish crimes at first alone then later with the aid of his sidekick, Art. Even before *This Goon for Hire* was published, Berry and Thomson were already planning a fanzine devoted to the Goon Defective Agency, *Retribution* [fan], the first issue of which was dated January 1956. The following year Berry launched *The Goon Library* which was devoted to fanzine-length tales, as the original *This Goon For Hire* had been. Berry wrote many GDA tales between 1955 and 1961, tales which have subsequently been collected and reprinted. They also inspired the first ever LARP at a UK convention – two decades before the term was even coined.

In June 1976 the movie *Logan's Run* was released and involved agents of the state – Sandmen – chasing down "runners". In the usual course of events the costumes from the show would be copied by costume fans (as cosplayers were then known) to be worn during the Fancy Dress/Masquerade. However, LARPing – Live Action Role Playing – can involve using all public areas of a convention as part of your gameplay. The first LARPing I ever saw at a UK convention in the mid-to-late 1970s involved fans of *Logan's Run*. However, so far as I'm aware the first time something recognizably LARPing occurred at a convention was at the 1957 London Worldcon and involved the Goon Defective Agency. Those involved were role-playing characters from a by now established series of tales, and were doing so in service of a GDA "case".

The first fan fiction films to be produced in the UK also first premiered at the 1957 London Worldcon (all of which would be screened again at the 1959 Eastercon). These included "Kingdom of St Fantony" from the Cheltenham Group and, from the Liverpool Group, "Fanzapoppin" and "May We Have The Pleasure?". Nothing of these is believed to have survived but we do still have production stills from "May We Have The Pleasure?" and

the “poster” created for it by the artist Eddie Jones [fia].

One final form of fan fiction in this decade that deserves a mention is the hoax. Every time those behind hoax fans such as Carl Brandon Jr or Joan Carr wrote something that was allegedly about that hoax fan’s life it was, by definition, a work of fiction. There were also hoax fanzines such as the first issue of Ron Bennett’s *Ploy* and subsequent issues of Ken Bulmer’s one-off *Nirvana* – neither of which existed.

The Alien Arrives

Walt Willis

(Plus American commentary by Don MacKay)

Foreword

Here we present, for the vast majority of fans who could not attend the SUPERMANCON, the play that was enacted by the Liverpool S-F Society. Those of you who were in attendance now have the opportunity for a second laugh.

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ANNOUNCER 1: This is the Light Programme and Overseas Service of the BBC. Here is a summary of the news. Communication has now been established with the visitors from Outer Space whose ships landed at various points in the United Kingdom and America early this morning. In a few moments we hope to bring you a special report from our commentator on the spot in Radio Newsreel. Meanwhile, here is a summary of the rest of the news.

Senator McCarthy was removed to a mental home late yesterday evening. Officials of the State Department say that through an error on the part of his filing clerks he investigated his own activities. Finding that all the evidence seemed to point to his being in the pay of the Communist Party, the Senator developed a form of schizophrenia, or split personality.

In the House of Commons today, the Secretary of State for War announced that owing to the necessity of releasing two divisions for service overseas, the British Army had resigned from Operation Fantast. Moving a vote of censure, the Leader of the Opposition asked if they did not realise the danger that Colonel Slater's organisation might go over to the Russians with results that could only be described as disastrous to the British paper and string industry.

And now here is the special report from Radio Newsreel on the visitors from Outer Space.

ANNOUNCER 2: As you all know, several mysterious craft, which experts

identified as unidentified objects, landed at various points in Britain and America early yesterday morning. Having dropped an enormous quantity of small metal objects onto some of our principal cities, the ships settled to the ground and remained motionless. Specimens of these metal objects were immediately rushed to Government Research Laboratories and were found to be metal scrolls covered with writings and drawings, the purport of which baffled the experts.

Attempts at communication with the aliens were delayed by disagreements as to which was the appropriate Government Department to deal with them. The Police pointed out that the aliens, as long as they stayed within their ships, would be regarded as ambassadors of a foreign power with diplomatic immunity and therefore not subject to British Law. This decision has been made known to the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Secretary, on the other hand, pointed out that they could only deal with Foreign States with which Britain had diplomatic relations, and since no one knew where the visitors came from, their government could not be recognised either de facto or de jure. Furthermore, the visitors were aliens who had entered the country without passports and should therefore be dealt with by the Aliens Registration Department of the Home Office.

A spokesman of the Home Office denied this, pointing out that they were concerned only with human immigrants and there was no reason to assume that the visitors were human; in fact there was good reason to think that they were not. In the course of the recent investigations into obscene and indecent literature, Home Office Inspectors had acquired considerable familiarity with other publications known as science fiction magazines. This was the only source of information available about visitors from Outer Space, and in the absence of any precedent, must be regarded as authoritative. According to these publications, visitors from Outer Space were almost always either insects of some sort or a species of intelligent vegetable. The matter had been referred to the Ministry of Agriculture.

After several Cabinet meetings it was agreed that each of the four Departments should send a team of experts to try to communicate with the aliens. We now bring you a recorded report from our on-the-spot commentator on the results of their efforts.

REPORTER 1: Well, here we are at Deansgate, Manchester, not 50 yards away from the Alien Spacecraft. The experts from four Government Departments arrived some hours ago, and have been working steadily ever

since. The Chief Constable ordered a summons to be served on the aliens for obstructing the traffic. The Foreign Office have sent them a note. The Home Office have written them a letter. The Ministry of Agriculture have delivered several hundredweight of forms for them to complete. However none of these overtures has met with any success. The Aliens continue to ignore all attempts to communicate with them. The only sign of activity is a revolving flexible antenna on the top of the ship. It appears to be some sort of detector.

Wait a minute! Something seems to be happening. There is a flurry among the crowd. A youth has broken through the police cordon and is running towards the spaceship. He waves one of the mysterious scrolls dropped by the aliens. Now he steps by the side of the ship and appears to read the scroll. He laughs and rubs his hands together. The antenna moves towards him. It stops just above his head. Now the youth produces a sheaf of paper from his pocket and thrusts it at the antenna. It is some sort of pamphlet or magazine; he seems to be turning over the pages and – the door of the spaceship is opening! It's half open now! I can't see anything inside yet. The youth is running towards the door. He disappears inside the spaceship. The door closes again.

Well! This is most extraordinary! Now we are back where we started. However, we'll be able to see the moment the door opens again. I wonder what is happening to that rash young man? A Police Inspector tells me that he has been identified as a member of a hitherto unknown religious sect known as "Completists"; some of whom have already caused trouble today. This afternoon the Police received orders to requisition all science-fiction magazines, many of which were in possession of Completists, and severe fighting broke out in some instances when attempts were made to confiscate their collections. They...

The door of the spaceship is opening again. It's fully open now, and I can see one of the aliens. He is stepping out of the ship. No! Look out! (SPLASH.) We lose a lot of visitors to Manchester that way. It was raining cats and dogs here today and he stepped into a poodle.

But here are two more of the aliens, and between them the youth who entered the ship a moment ago. They are quite human in form, but much taller and have noble sensitive faces. The most startling feature about them is the golden helmets on their heads, which have something like propellers on top. Yes, they are propellers. Instead of walking out of the airlock, they press a sort of switch and the propellers begin to whirl around lifting them into the

air. They are floating in this direction, carrying the young man between them. They are landing by my side. One of them is taking my microphone-I-now-hand-you-over-to...

ALIEN 1: Greetings from the Galactic Fan Federation, People of Earth! We come in peace. We have no plans for colonisation or conquest. We come to restore to the lost children of our race their Galactic heritage. We are not hideous monsters, insects or vegetables. We are, as this young man here guessed, science-fiction fans, as are all the leaders of our Galaxy. A moment's thought will show you that this must be so. As in your own world, the only people who believe in space flight are the lovers of science-fiction. Who but a science-fiction fan will be ready to volunteer for your first flight to the Moon? Thus, when space-flight becomes a reality, s-f fans will control it. And, in a civilisation based on space-flight, science-fiction fans will be the key men.

So it has been in our Galaxy for thousands of years. A whole Galaxy full of fans, all writing and publishing, feuding and organising, coming and going in fannish friendship. But let my colleague explain why we are here.

ALIEN 2: Many years ago a great space-ship, manned by Neo-fen and carrying a group of Big Name Fans to a Galactic Convention, crashed on an obscure planet. The drive could not be repaired. The sub-space radio was smashed. They were lost. With true fannish courage they tried to build their life anew on this savage world. Bravely they struggled with the hostile environment to preserve their fannish way of life. But the odds were too great. As time went on the carefully hoarded stocks of duplicating ink became exhausted. The duplicators themselves rusted and fell to pieces. The old Fannish traditions began to die out. The files of Sacred Fanzines decayed and were forgotten. Intermarriage took place with the brutish natives. After many thousands of years the great fannish culture had disappeared.

But no! Not completely. Preserved in the genes and chromosomes the fannish mind lives on, and every now and then comes to the surface in the form of a viable mutation known as a science-fiction fan. With subconscious racial memory he knows that he is different from the crass nonfans around him. His ancestral memory even leads him to an imitation of our helmets, in the form of what you call the helicopter beanie. Through ridicule and persecution he keeps alive the sacred flame handed down to him from his god-like ancestors. Knowing deep inside him that he is star begotten he lifts

his eyes to the heavens, waiting for his brothers to rejoin him.

And that is why we are here. Until recently it was impossible for us to track down these lost children of our race. Then one of our scientists invented the fanactivity detector you see on our ships, and the great search began. Sweeping through this sector of your Galaxy we detected fan-activity on your planet and landed, first dropping several thousand copies of our fanzines to make ourselves known to your fans. Now we offer them one of two choices. They can come with us and settle on one of our planets, or they can stay here. If they stay here they will still enjoy the benefits of Galactic Civilisation for we shall give you all our advanced technology. Atomic power, anti-gravity, interstellar drive, untearable stencils, all shall be yours. We make only one stipulation. This information will be given only to science-fiction fans. Nonfans have shown that they are not to be trusted with it. That is our final decision.

ANNOUNCER 1: That is the end of our special recording of Radio Newsreel. Since the beginning of this bulletin the following message has been received from Reuters correspondent in Moscow.

REPORTER 2: Speaking to a mass meeting in Red Square a few minutes ago, Mr Malenkov announced that the leaders of the Soviet Union had for years been keen science-fiction fans. The fan, Mr Malenkov said, is a true proletarian, reflecting the class struggle in his bitter hatred of the vile pro's and filthy capitalistic hucksters. The True Fans of the Bolshevik Party had long been in secret contact with other groups of active fans throughout the world. He instanced the New York Futurians, and alleged also, that a member of the party was one of the loudest voices in the councils of the London Circle.

Mr Malenkov went on to say that for many years the Soviet Government had been secretly subsidising needy faneditors all over the world. This was, he alleged, the reason why so many faneditors had so many subscribers who never seemed to write in and comment on the magazine. These silent subscribers were actually Soviet Agents. By the time the fanzine was conveyed to Russia, translated and passed around the Kremlin Fan Group it was too late to comment on it.

All this, Mr Malenkov claimed, was ample evidence that the Russian Government was fit to be trusted with the scientific secrets mentioned by the visitors from Outer Space. But if further proof was needed he called on the

Soviet People in the names of the great BNF's Lenin and Stalin, to demonstrate by the quality of their fanac that they were more active fans than anyone in the decadent capitalistic world. The Stalingrad Tractor Factory was being converted immediately to the manufacture of duplicators.

ANNOUNCER 1: Reports of the speech of BNF Malenkov, or No.1. Fan Face as he now wishes to be called, are still coming in. Some ten minutes ago the Prime Minister called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to consider it, and a statement is expected at any moment.

From America today came the following news items; we give the recording in full and are indebted to the National Broadcasting Network for their permission to do so:

US ANNOUNCER: This is the N.B.N. nooz cast brought to you by the makers of SOMNAFAN! And this is your No. 1 reporter Herman Q. Finklebaum reading it. In his address to the Nation on the state of fandom today, the president stated, quote: "We of the Americas, tho' somewhat remote from the European theater of fanac, cannot lose sight of the fact that we are indissolubly bound by ties of blood and friendship to the peoples who daily face the threat of militaristic bureaucratic Soviet pseudo-fan fanaticism. Our friends have asked for deeds, not words, they have asked us for stencils... and stilos... and mimeographs.... So that they can carry the fight to the common enemy... and we pledge our word that they will get those stencils... and stilos... and mimeographs for which they have asked." Unquote.

FLLLLASH!

Which little blue-eyed blonde well-known hereabouts for her talented torso has placed an order with the Hoboken Tin Can and Battleship Building Corporation for a brass bra so that she can pose for Bergey??? And which well-known Senator from wayback Wisconsin created a scene when his henchmen told him that Beetlejuice (or Betelgeuse as it says here) could not be banned from the night sky simply because it is a red star????

May we remind you that this Program is brought to you by the makers of SOMNAFAN! The Wonder Drug! Do you have sleepless nights? Is your appetite going?... Has life lost its ZIP? Stop worrying, friend, just pump a syringe full of SOMNAFAN into your bedtime steak and... ZINGO!... eight hours of healthful, dreamless sleep will hit you like a sock full of sand. Remember! SOMNAFAN comes in three sizes: the 'one slug' or itzi bitzi snoozum size at fifty cents the kick, the Family or Blackjack pack at a dollar

seventy-five, and the large state-size or mass hypnosis dose, delivery made only under Federal supervision, at eight hundred dollars the dose.

FLLLLASH!

Wise-cracking movie star Bob Faith, questioned on the lot of Paramount's mammoth new movie *Son of Klaatu*, answered the question, "Are your supra sola sensitivities negatived by the interpolative peregrinations of quasi-humanoid morons?" put to him by Federal agents from the Bureau of Un-Fannish Activities, with a snappy "Duh... Yuh." He begins a thirty year stretch up river next week for being found guilty of hypermoronic neo-sympathies.

FLLLLASH!

In a recent Gallup poll conducted in Van Vogt County, California, 99.5% of the population voted in favor of a magazine devoted entirely to Bergey Covers. When questioned later in the day, at a dinner given by the MacWabash American Scotch Whiskey Distilling Company, as to what was at the bottom of all this, the Governor was heard to mutter that as Bergey's bottoms were the best in the business, the question did not arise.... And that ends our nooz cast folks. Remember to tune in in three hours' time.... To keep a line on the March of Time.

ANNOUNCER 1: That ends the recording from America, but news has just come in that the President of the United States has flown to Bloomington, Illinois to confer with Mr Robert Tucker, and his plane will shortly take off again for Los Angeles where he will have an audience with Mr Forrest J Ackerman.

The following statement has just been issued from No.10. Downing Street. "Bearing in mind the possibility that the visitors from Outer Space may be deceived by the unscrupulous pretence of the so-called BNF Malenkov, and desiring to safeguard the interests of the British Commonwealth, Her Majesty's Government has tendered its resignation, with the suggestion that it be immediately replaced by a Government of British SF Fans."

It has just been announced from Buckingham Palace that Her Majesty has accepted the retiring Government's suggestion. The House of Lords and the House of Commons have been dissolved and replaced by the persons listed in Sir Vincent Clarke's *Directory of Anglolfandom*. The active fans are to form the new House of Commons and the inactive ones the House of Lords. Some minutes ago the new Prime Minister left the Palace for

Broadcasting House, after announcing to reporters that he believed a new era of peace, prosperity and tranquillity to be imminent, under the enlightened and intelligent administration of science-fiction Fandom. He has now arrived at Broadcasting House from where he will speak to the nation. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon. Sir Norman Wansborough!

Bzzz... beep... schhhhhh... zuzzzz... zurrrp... chachacha...
WhOOOOOOOOOO....

I must apologise for this breakdown in transmission. We are izzzzz investigating the trouble and will have it rectified as soon zzzz as possible. Meanwhile here is a record of “33 Variations on an Unknown Theme”

ENGINEER: This is the chief Engineer at Droitwich. Communication with London has now broken down, but I assure everyone that there is no cause for alarm. Fighting broke out among the Aliens some ten minutes ago, and although most of their space-ships have now crashed in flames, the only damage appears to have been to telephone wires. Latest reports indicate that the Alien Fleet has now destroyed itself completely. Two of the last to crash fell near the station here and two survivors, one from each ship, are being brought to my office. Here they are now. I shall leave the microphones switched on.

[The Engineer addresses the Aliens:] “I know you are injured, but while you are waiting for the doctor perhaps you could tell us the reason for this sudden outbreak of fighting?”

ALIEN 1: “It’s only too simple – those swine want to hold the Convention on Venus next year!”

ALIEN 2: “What’s wrong with our planet? Do you want to have the Convention yourself every year?”

ALIEN 1: “Who wants to go to Venus? It’s always raining there, and you’re only a lot of bloody Venusians anyway! Bloody Venusians? I’ll teach you!”

ALIEN 2: “Put down that Bomb!”

WHAAAM!!!

(1954)

The Goon Defective Agency

1955 *Hyphen* Insert:

PRINTED by Walt Willis at Oblique House, 170, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, at great personal risk.

Warning: a Message from the Bleary Eyes.

Heck. Everyone seems to be in the fanzine racket these days... Why not me and Art?

Who's Art?

Listen folks, don't talk back to the Goon like that I'm the Goon. I work for Willis see... and Art is my contact man in London. He is, in fact, the representative of the Goon Defective Agency, centred right here within a coupla miles of Oblique House.

What's the Goon Defective Agency?

O.K., stand back.

Don't move. Makin' fun of me, eh? Let me put yer straight. People jus' don't laugh at the Goon. I've got a waterproof shoulder holster strapped round my waist, my trigger finger's drippin', and I ain't particular about the bacteria count of my H₂O. Me and Art spare nobody... not even Charters on account of his age. He don't wear that sou'wester for fun. An' you femmes. We ain't got no scruples as regards weemin. I'm tellin' ya, we're tough. We've rinsed more than one permanent wave.

Get the set up?

O.K., sit down while I tell ya the rest.

I SAID SIT DOWN.

That's better.

Art an' me have decided to keep ya regularly informed of our activities. Our motto will give ya some idea of our capabilities:

NO CASE IS TOO BIG FOR US... TRUNKS A SPECIALITY.

You may have heard about my first big investigation for Walt Willis... *This Goon for Hire*... That was the start. If ya ain't got a copy, write to Chuck Harris. He'll fix ya up. He'd better. Art sent me the Harris file last week.

Ooooh. It was sumpin' shockin'.

Hear that, Harris?

My second case was the Cedric Affair. Sorta slipped up there. Things got complicated, and if things get complicated, I sorta get baffled. My most difficult case was the great Heinlein mystery. Walt holds the copyright for that story, and he'll square ya if ya got the £sd.

The rest of the GDA mysteries will be described in *Retribution*. Yeah. That's the name of our crud. I'm running it off on Walt's duper, ain't I, Walt?

What?

NO?

Listen Walt, me and Art know all about that... psss... psss... pssss....

Heck, carry 'im out, somebody.

As I said, it'll be run off on Walt's duper at Oblique House.

If ya want a copy, let us know. We ain't chargin' ya nuffin'. We consider it's our duty to tell ya these things for free. That's why we are only running off a few copies. Course, if ya like the first issue, and would like more, a fanzine or prozine would convince us that we should go agin our better nature and destroy ya dossier.

O.K., away ya go.

No, come back.

If ya want any investigatin' done, let us know. Our fees vary. For instance, at the successful conclusion of the Fanzine Mystery, *This Goon For Hire*, I got five copies of *La Vie Parisienne*. I tell ya, we're in the big time. Conversely, for the Cedric Affair, I only got a third hand copy of *Vargo Statten No.3*. As for expenses... for the Marilyn Monroe Calendar, we pay expenses.

O.K, folks, that's all.

Now git.

His Mark * Goon Bleary.

•

NOTE: *This Goon for Hire* available in December.

Retribution available soon from John Berry & Arthur Thomson.

1957 the Worldcon:

Here's the full account of the GDA's 1957 Worldcon gun-battle from James White's report in *Hyphen* #19:

The Case of the Missing Gavel by James White

Sometime during the course or five courses of the luncheon somebody pinched the official gavel and clonker.

All the talking had made us hungry again, so a party comprising the Bulmers, the Kyles, Forry, Bert Campbell, Brian Aldiss, Steve Schultheis and myself went to the Italian restaurant again.

When I got back to the hotel Steve Schultheis accosted me on the stairs. His mouth held a lopsided leer, the brim of his hat was yanked down, and over his beautiful grey and silver speckled suit there hung a ghostly image of a Goon-type dirty raincoat. He said, "Lissen, White" – the GDA never pronounces the 't' – "Arthur and me has cooked somethin' up, see. We want ya up in the room in ten minutes, huh?" I shrugged and said "Oui." He said, "Yeah, just me an' Art and you." I said, "O.K.". You have to translate everything for some people.

Ten minutes later I walked into Room 43 to find Steve and Arthur putting the missing gavel and clonker into an empty Kleenex box. I said, "Hah, so it was the GDA who stole the gavel...!" Arthur Thomson sprang to his feet, denying it hotly. Steve Schultheis poked tissue paper into the box to keep the contents from rattling and denied it coldly. Hissing in traditional Goon fashion he began to fill me in on the background.

The way Schultheis told it, he had seen the gavel and clonker disappear and had seized this opportunity to solve the case by offering Dave Kyle the services of the Goon Defective Agency to retrieve the missing articles. Kyle, in a weak moment, accepted and handed over a cash retainer totalling one halfpenny, in sterling. Steve now wanted to make a production number out of the return of the gavel and, thinking of yours truly and his weakness for guns, knew just how to do it.

When I had heard him out I stated that I would participate in his plan on two conditions. One was that Antigoon, as the fearless champion of right and the scourge of the GDA, would never stoop to gavel-pinching, so it would have to be a pseudo-Antigoon who was blamed. Secondly, I must get the gun that fired seven shots, not one of the six-shooters. The GDA operatives agreed, and we got down to details.

Thus it was that at 8.30 I was seated in the main hall with a brief-case

containing the missing gavel balanced on my knee. The place was crowded and the crowd restive at the delay in the program. Carnell, who had already been briefed on the operation, mounted the rostrum. He delivered his lines well, announcing that the delay had been caused by the theft of the official gavel. The Convention could not proceed without it, he went on in a voice throbbing with suppressed emotion, but the services of a well-known detective agency... not the FBI but one of similar repute... had been engaged to recover it. The organisation was the Goon Defective Agency and a report was expected at any moment.

At that instant a report rang out from the back of the hall where Goon Arthur Thomson, dressed in Mal Ashworth's military raincoat, fired a shot from a blank cartridge pistol borrowed from Shel Deretchin. Mal's raincoat was six sizes too big for Arthur, and all I could see of him was his shoes and the tip of his nose, plus a little hair. This first shot was the cue for me to jump to my feet. Immediately, Arthur shouted, "Stop, James White, vile pro and agent of Antigoon!" I snarled, pulled out the pistol lent me by Boyd Raeburn and returned fire, retreating down the centre isle with the brief case hugged to my side. In the confined space of the hall the firing was incredibly loud and dramatic. There was an instant's shocked silence, then mingled cheers and boos arose as those present chose sides in the battle.

I retreated slowly to the foot of the stage, then Steve Schultheis came blasting out from a side door. Caught in the deadly crossfire, I snarled, sneered and spat (I was out of ammunition by this time), then staggered, reeled and collapsed dramatically on the floor... after having dusted a section with my handkerchief... with my head resting on the briefcase. Arthur Thomson dashed up, made a phoney little speech about the GDA always winning and plonkered me on the forehead to finish me off. Steve snatched away the briefcase so quickly that my head bounced on the floor, and I heard him handing the gavel to Carnell with a spiel about the glorious GDA. It was at this point that the carefully planned operation began to get all fouled up.

Ethel Lindsay, a nurse and a very nice person who has unfortunately been led astray by John Berry, was supposed to appear, then take my pulse and temperature, and help me stagger off the scene. Instead, Unethical Lindsay was standing on a chair with a GDA badge stating that she was Stephen F. Schultheis pinned to her chest, hooting and screaming "Down with Antigoon!" And Shel Deretchin, who had no part to play whatever except lending pistols, became overcome with excitement and dashed out and

began dragging me off by the feet. At this point Arthur Thomson, out of respect for my suit if not for me, grabbed my other end and lifted me clear off the ground. I didn't think it was possible for the relatively diminutive Arthur Thomson to carry the heavy end of a fourteen stone weakling like myself, but he did it. For half an hour afterwards, however, he looked as if *he* had been shot 13 times instead of me.

The GDA-Antigoon gun battle was supposed to be a surprise item and it was. So much so that quite a lot of people in the lounge missed it. These, I found out later, had put it down to Sam Moskowitz having an attack of hiccups.

(1957)

5. Days of Change (1960s)

In 1961 the venerable British boys' comic *The Dandy* ran a serial titled "The Purple Cloud". Set in an America that in many panels looked more like 1950s England, this featured the efforts of protagonist Dandy Jim Brewster to combat a criminal gang led by mysterious mastermind Purple Mask. The purple cloud of the title was a metal eating gas they emitted from their flying saucer-like craft to aid in their robberies. Seven year old me was greatly taken with this tale, foreshadowing my future taste in literature, though I had of course yet to learn of the M.P. Shiel novel of the same name. When I eventually did I assumed for an embarrassingly long time that the comic must be a loose adaptation of the book, but all they actually share is a title.

Shiel's book is a "last man" novel, the virtual extinction of humanity being caused by a poison gas – the purple cloud of the title. It's this basic idea that George Locke used in his "The Purple Clod", a title that might suggest this was more a parody of Shiel than it actually is. Locke's tale opens with his protagonist awaking to a world where everyone else appears to have died. He discovers the cause in the headline of a discarded newszine:

LONDON CIRCLE BLOWS UP! VAST QUANTITIES OF
POISON RELEASED AFFECTING THE WHOLE WORLD IN
HOURS. SoFa EXPERTS SAY THERE IS NO HOPE. ALL LIFE,
ALL FANDOM, IS DOOMED!

This apparently began at the London Symposium, a real event in 1959 at which London fandom did indeed schism, the disaffected members of the London Circle breaking away and forming the rival Science Fiction Club of London. Surprisingly, the protagonist of Locke's tale is US fan Robert Lichtman – or Bob as he then preferred to be known. He moves through a London devoid of life, gathering the materials necessary to publish a fanzine and restart fandom while searching for anyone else who might have survived. When he does find someone conflict arises between the pair because of their different skin colours – her fingers are black whereas his are purple, resulting from their preferences for mimeography and spirit duplicators respectively. This is clearly meant to mirror racial prejudice, but despite it leading to armed conflict the idea is never fully worked out. The introduction of

Courtney's Boat and the Spirit of Fandom late in the story does little to clarify matters. Also, at 6,200 words, "The Purple Clod" is at least twice the length it needs to be to tell its thin tale. Nevertheless confronting race at all – however obliquely – was something new for UK fan fiction, hence my describing it here at length despite the story not featuring in this volume.

Locke's tale appeared in *Les Spinge* #3 (July 1960, edited by Ken Cheslin) [fan] and should perhaps more properly be considered a product of the 1950s fandom that was in its death throes at that point. The determinedly sercon fandom that arose in its immediate wake had little time for such frivolities, yet it was during this decade that Archie Mercer – another holdover from the previous one – published the impressive *The Meadows of Fantasy* (1965) [AE]. This tells the story of a fictional fan group, though they meet and interact with real fans of the period. At 59,000 words Mercer's opus was novel-length, a first for a work of fan fiction that didn't start out as a round-robin.

Speaking of which, "The Wall" [fan] was a round-robin tale featuring members of – and distributed through subsequent quarterly mailings of – OMPA, then the UK's premier APA (Amateur Press Association). Each participant was left in a cliffhanger situation at the end of the previous instalment that they then had to get themselves out of.

The Tenth Anniversary Willis Fund (TAWF) was, as its name suggests, a fund started to raise the money required to bring Walter Willis to the 1962 Worldcon, this time accompanied by wife Madeleine. As a consequence of the fund-raising effort much of his earlier fan writing got reprinted including "Willis Discovers America". This was serialised in the US fanzine VOID, which also ran a new piece of fiction by him, "The Spanish Main", though this was straight humour rather than fiction about fandom.

Beginning in 1964 and continuing through the rest of the decade, Manchester's Delta Science Fiction Film Group produced and starred in short films that were screened at Eastercons, though again these were all SF parodies as most fan-produced films of this period would be.

One of the groups that formed later in the decade and centred around Mary Reed's fanzine *Crabapple* developed its own mutant strain of the form. This began in the fanzine *Link* whose first issue was produced by Reed and Beryl Henley for the initial mailing of the British Science Fiction Association's pseudo-APA PADS (Printing And Distribution Service) in October 1964. *Link* announced itself to be a "femme-fanzine", a sort of

successor to the all-female 1950s fanzine *Femizine* (a position it soon abandoned), and contained the first of Mary Reed's "Tribe-X" stories. These were a fan fiction variant, with Reed, her friends, and a number of famous pop stars appearing in the tales under various pseudonyms (Reed herself appeared as "Mushling", after the real-life nickname "Mushy" she had acquired from a character in the TV Western series *Rawhide*).

But it's two pieces that are both examples of someone using other members of his immediate fan group in a fan fiction tale that I've chosen to include here. In the first, Don Geldart goes all *Macbeth* on the Science Fiction Club of London, whose high number of Scottish-born members had led to wags dubbing it "the Scottish SF Club of London", while Bob Shaw has fun with his fellow Irish fans. This latter includes a commentary on the tale by Shaw.

Witch Switch

Don Geldart

The time is in the future, the scene is the kitchen of the Parker Penitentiary In the centre of the stage is a large gas cooker, on the cooker is a large black cauldron, which is emitting steam and making boiling sounds. To one side of the cooker there is a table, to the other side there is a sink.

Enter three femme fan witches carrying polythene bags containing the things mentioned in the following dialogue. Clap of tartan thunder.

1st Witch	Betty Peters
2nd Witch	Ethel Lindsay
3rd Witch	Ella Parker
MacPatrizio	Joe Patrizio

1st W.	Thrice a coloured <i>Hyphen</i> hath arrived
2nd W.	Thrice and once the English fen revived
3rd W.	St. Andrew cries, 'tis time, 'tis time.
1st W.	Round about the cauldron go In the fake fen's entrails throw, Fan, that they did once call Locke, Refused to let me call him Jock. Thought the English still ran fandum In with his head. Oh! wild abandon.
ALL	Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
2nd W.	Fillet from that sercon Groves, In between two shortbread loaves. Lights of Burgess, in they go No more roving to and fro. No more toast in Ella's bed, For at last we've got him. Dead! In the pot with all the lot,

We'll teach them to respect a Scot.

ALL Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

3rd W. Beard, that from Bennett I did drag
No more will he cheat at Brag
Now in with Pat Kearney's liver,
He was a most reluctant giver.
Off with the feet of K and I Potter,
Adding her toenails should make it much hotter.
Geldart's tongue made sly remarks,
In with it, feed him to the sharks.
Chris's brain, to add some seasoning,
Now he's lost his powers of reasoning.
We've left Bruce Burn until the last,
He was their leader in the past,
"Keep fandom English" was his cry
For this good cause did they all die.
An Atom bem to make it thick
And a drop of Blogg to make it stick.

ALL Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

2nd W. Come pour it out, the time is due,
And cool it with some Liverpool brew.
(They pour out the brew into the sink)
ENTER MACPATRIZIO.

MacP. What's this here in the sink?
Why, it's tartan duplicating ink.
Oh well done, I commend your pains,
All Scots fans shall share the gains.
Come let us dance and let us sing,
I feel like doing a Highland Fling!

ALL And now we've crushed the English lion,
We'll awa tae pit oot a wee *Orion*.

1st W. By the pricking of my thumbs,
An English fan this way comes.
Open locks, whoever knocks.

ENTER HARRISON*. Blast of celestial trumpets.

3rd W. 'Tis that fake Englishman...Harrison!

Harr. How now, you secret, black and midnight hags.
What heathen thing is this you do?

ALL Look yonder in the sink
'Tis tartan duplicating ink
So get you gone to Irish fandom,
For we are now,
THE SCOTTISH SCIENCE FICTION CLUB OF
LONDON.

Harr. Haud yer wheesht, for just awhile,
And wipe away that joyous smile,
I'll add another drop of Blogg,
See – the colour starts to unclog,
And now it's British through and through.

ALL Look! He's made it all Red, White and Blue!
MACP. AND THE THREE WITCHES DISAPPEAR
IN A PUFF OF SMOKE
HARRISON conducts a choir of the risen English
members of the SFCoL sung to the tune of *Rule
Britannia....*
There'll always be an England
And Fandom shall be free
If fandom means as much to you – as fandom means to
me....
CHEERS FROM THE AUDIENCE.
end.

** Harrison is the fanfictional character Sir William Makepeace Harrison
described earlier. – RH/DRL*

Afterword by Ethel Lindsay

Some time ago I offered a prize of ten shillings for the best sketch by a club member which *could* be put on at next year's convention. To date Don is the only one who has presented me with a sketch. (Don has COURAGE!) The

general opinion of the club was that the sketch appeared to be a *wee* bit too esoteric for presentation to a general audience. The ingenuity of the club was focused for a time on the task of producing a clap of tartan thunder. I think they could have licked *that* one; but they all paled at the thought of making the witches disappear. I believe they had the uneasy feeling, that maybe we *were* witches.

So I decided to publish this sketch in *Scot*, that its author's genius might not go unsung; confident that all my readers would understand the many esoteric references. Well, I should hope so anyway: you don't *really* want me to explain about Burgess's Lights do you?

PS: The ten shillings award still goes unclaimed.

(1961)

Dragnit

Bob Shaw

Back in the old days there was a well-proven recipe for making fanzines: all you needed was a review of *Destination Moon*, a discussion on Dianetics, and a news flash to the effect that Ed Noble was getting married. But now that we've all become older and more blasé the game is to protest at great length about the corniness of science fiction. Why, only the other day I heard a formerly keen reader attack the latest *Fantastic* for a solid hour – in fact, he was so nearly dancing with rage that you might have said he was lipping the trite *Fantastic*.

Of course, it's good that fans have this highly-developed critical faculty, but we must try to be more positive in our approach. We should *show* the pro writers how to wrest fresh new themes from the hard facts of scientific progress. Just to start the ball rolling I will demonstrate how a recent news story (about the ultra-sensitive mobile equipment for detecting unlicensed TV sets now operating in Belfast) can be used for a hard-hitting human drama. I give you...

DRAGNIT

Among the serried ranks of traffic in Belfast's busy Milk Street a sleek black Fordson van was moving easily through the lines. At the wheel was Clint Kinnison, Ulster's ace spotter, wearing the grey whipcord of the profession. Across his back was the Spotters' emblem: a red hand of Ulster cupped at a huge magenta ear, over the phrase *Canis moribundum regurgitans licentious* – “Die, dog, or cough up the licence.”

“This new engine they've put in the van is running well,” Clint remarked. “What size is it, anyway?”

“I don't know,” his pretty assistant Maggie McVickers said. “It's a new Italian engine. It was tested by a thousand top Italian drivers and they all agreed it was perfect.”

“Then it must be a thousand si-si engine,” Clint replied. “I’ll open the bonnet and show it to you afterwards.”

“You mean – you’re going to take me to your litre?”

“Not bad, Maggie,” Clint said, “but remember you’re the straight man around here.”

Maggie nodded and took a deep breath, revealing her unsuitability for that role. “What’s this new mission we’re going out on?”

“Well, it’s been discovered that a gang of TV licence forgers is operating in the town. The chief has made up a list of suspected viewers who are connected with some kind of home printing business. We’ve to check them out. The first one is called Willis – we’re on our way to his place now.”

“In that case,” Maggie said, “I’d better warm up our expensive, highly-sensitive mobile equipment which is so acute that it can not only tell whether a TV set is on in a house but which channel is being watched, and even what corner of the room the set is in. Pardon me for spouting so much hot air, Clint, but that bit was all plot.”

“You like your air in plots, do you?” Clint smiled. “It suits you. Here we are – 170, Upper Newtownards Road – it’s a big house and the signal will probably be faint coming through all that brickwork. Better give the equipment full boost, maximum sensitivity.”

“Okay, Clint.” Maggie switched on the mass of electronics in the rear of the van and immediately several indicator needles wrapped themselves around their stop pins, sparks showered from half a dozen black boxes and the van filled with smoke.

“Ruined!” Maggie screamed. “The equipment’s all ruined! That was the strongest signal we have ever received. There are only four people in that house, and two of those are children, but they must have sets going on every floor. Talk about the affluent society!”

“You mean affluent, don’t you?” Clint snapped. “On second thoughts maybe in this case you’re right. Anyway, the fiends have ruined £20,000 worth of detection gear. We’ll have to go back for a new lot – the chief isn’t going to like this.”

As the black van sped back down the road, inside number 170 Walt Willis said to Madeleine, “I’ll keep trying for the golf on Scottish Television this set, you watch out for Hancock on Ulster Television on yours, tell Carol to keep tuned in for the tennis scores on BBC in her bedroom, and send word up to Bryan in the attic to give us a shout when the science fiction serial starts

on Telefis Eirann –”

“There,” said Clint Kinnison, tightening down the last nut, the new equipment installed. “Now we’ll try the second name on our list.”

“Do you think this fellow Shaw will be tough?” Maggie asked.

“Nah!” Clint replied confidently. “If he tries anything we’ll soon have his teeth chattering with this.” He patted his holstered cavity resonator and the black van roared off towards the Castlereagh Hills. After half an hour of steady climbing the engine was beginning to labour in the rarefied air and the scenery had grown bleak and forbidding, with rocks jutting up in the roadway and masses of vegetation looming on each side.

“I don’t like this,” Maggie said nervously. “Do you think he’ll have a watch-dog?”

“I’m not worried if he has – most watch-dogs are quite harmless. They shoo off more than they can bite, in fact. Get it? Hee, hee, hee!”

“I still don’t like this. We must be nearly at Shaw’s house, but did you ever see so much grass? The van’s beginning to stick in it, Clint – do you think you could lean out and cut it with something as we go along?”

Clint shook his head. “No mower for me, thanks – I’m driving. Hee, hee, hee! Never worry – there’s a small mound of dust and stones. I’ll drive up on top of it and see where we are.” He spun the steering wheel deftly and the van swung towards the mound, which – too late – revealed itself to be a large, unwashed Triumph saloon. There was a loud clang as the two vehicles collided, followed by a series of tinkling noises as £20,000 worth of delicate electronic equipment fell to pieces in the back of the van. In the dim unnatural light that filtered down through the overhanging weeds Clint and Maggie stared at each other aghast.

“Oh, look,” Maggie tittered, “your face has gone all puke coloured!”

“You mean puce, don’t you?” Clint snapped. “On second thoughts – maybe in this case you’re right. The chief definitely won’t like this, you know. There’s only one more set of equipment left.” He jerked the van into reverse gear savagely and it trundled backwards down the hill out of sight.

Inside number 26 Sadie Shaw said to Bob, “It’s high time you cut our grass, Fatso. I thought I heard a bang at the front door a moment ago, but the weeds might get the children if I open it.” Shaw only sipped his beer.

“We’re not going to take any chances with this White character,” Clint explained as they buzzed along the Upper Falls Road. “This is the third set of

equipment today, and at £20,000 a time that comes to... how much?"

"Work it out yourself," Maggie said. "Doing sums gives me a headache."

"Me too – it's called the aftermath. Anyway, the chief says we're sacked if anything goes wrong this time, so we'll go really carefully up to White's house, tune in on him and prove that he has a set, then we'll burst in and ask for his licence. If it's forged..." Clint patted his cavity resonator grimly. He made a tall, powerful figure in his grey uniform, the severity of which was relieved only by the Lens strapped to his left wrist. The Lens, which shone with a strange glow in the afternoon sunlight, was never removed from Clint's wrist. When he raised it to his eye and peered into its flickering depths – he could tell the time by his wrist-watch! His trouble was that he was nearly blind, but too conceited to wear glasses.

"We're nearly at Riverdale Gardens now," Maggie said. "God, these roads are nearly as bad as at Shaw's place! Just look at all that mud and muck – it's like something the drovers in *Rawhide* would have to plough through."

"Yeah," Clint agreed, "those guys have a hard time. Personally, I just wouldn't put up with it. If they asked me to work in those conditions I'd say, 'No mire for me, thanks – I'm droving.'"

"Here we are now, Clint." Maggie expertly clicked all the right switches and the equipment emitted a faint hum as it warmed up. A puzzled look spread over her face as she adjusted her earphones. "I thought we were getting a signal, but it's so faint I can't be sure. Even a nine-inch set gives a bigger signal. It's really strange."

"We've got to get the goods on this guy," Clint said. "Try harder! Give the detector power!" He leaned over and twirled knobs.

"Careful!" Maggie worried. "Careful! The equipment isn't made for picking up signals as faint as this seems to be."

"A man's gotta do what he's gotta do." Clint threw a variable resistance to the end of its slot; the equipment made a loud moaning sound and suddenly sagged to the floor with little puffs of smoke issuing from its insides.

"You fool!" Maggie screamed. "You've done it again."

Clint went white. "What will the chief say when I ask for more equipment?"

"I know," Maggie snarled. "He'll say, 'No more for you, thanks – you're drivelling.'" Seizing his cavity resonator she started banging him

round the head with it, and they disappeared from view in the general direction of Ballymaguigan.

Inside number 10 a smile of satisfaction spread over James White's face as he sat in his attic staring happily at the sine wave he had just brought in on his ex-WD 1½" diameter oscilloscope.

(1963)

Afterword

I was sitting in my office trying to enjoy some music on Radio 2 and thinking how bland most of today's pop groups are – I mean, I've never been grabbed by the Dooleys, have you? Suddenly it occurred to me that I had promised myself that I would send Eric the Bent one of my old articles. The trouble is, I thought, I don't think there's anything around here that hasn't already been printed and reprinted in recent years. Nevertheless I poked around in the bottom drawer of my filing cabinet, where I keep old fanzines, and came up with a copy of *The Scarr* #1 by George Charters, dated 1963. (That's the date of the fanzine, of course. Nobody in Irish fandom knows what year George is dated, because we weren't able to read the Hittite script on his birth certificate.)

Glancing through that fanzine was a weird experience, because in it I found [this piece], the writing of which I had *no memory whatsoever!* None at all! It was like a message from an alternate time stream, except that after a while I began to remember the little bits of IF history upon which the article was based. Walt Willis, having a talent for radio construction, was able to repair TV sets, and he had a number of them functioning around his house in the days when the box was not all that common. I had an old razor-edged Triumph saloon which was not so much in need of cleaning as weeding; there was moss growing on it in places. And Jim White once bought an ex-WD oscilloscope, because he preferred looking at sine curves while the rest of us were happy with the Tiller girls.

It all goes to show that it's worth while to keep a diary. You think you can remember your life, but you can't, and every day another little bit of your past slips away into oblivion. The thing that gripes me is that I have let 18 years go by in which I could have been using the pun about the watchdog. What a waste! But perhaps all is not lost. The man next door has a useless slob of a hound which he fondly believes can frighten off intruders – I think

I'll go down and engage him in conversation....

(1982)

6. Parody and Performance (1970s and 1980s)

Reacting against the serenity of most of the previous decade by championing a return to high fannishness, one might have expected the young turks of the 1970s to have embraced fan fiction as a part of that return, but this never happened. Instead the most prominent form fannish fiction took in fanzines of the time was that of parody. This was also true of 1974's "The Wizard of Ozimov", the first dramatic presentation to be staged at an Eastercon in twenty years.

Something else that debuted at the 1974 Eastercon was the first of Bob Shaw's humorously absurd series of "Serious Scientific Talks". Not so much science fiction as fictional science, these were to entertain Eastercon attendees for over a decade.

Given that parody is a recognised form of literary pastiche it's not always easy to define the difference between that and something that constitutes fan writing. Just appearing in a fanzine isn't enough. In the late 1930s and early 1940s we had *Amateur Science Stories* and the Cosmos Club's *Beyond*, both of which were fanzines but whose contents were made up entirely of amateur fiction. Indeed, both published stories that were later picked up by the pro mags. So, while I can confidently assert that Arthur C. Clarke's "At the Mountains of Murkiness (or Lovecraft into Leacock)" in *Satellite* #16 is literary pastiche, as is Peter Roberts's own later Lovecraft parody "The Lurker in the Loo", other cases are a bit more borderline. Take for instance the adventures of Harrison, whose saga continued in *Triode* when Eric Bentcliffe revived that title in 1976. As mentioned earlier, these parodied *Boy's Own* style tales, yet its protagonist was (an exaggerated version of) a member of the Liverpool Group.

Leroy Kettle's surreal "One Tun Mischief In Space" appeared in his own fanzine *True Rat*, and was one of the few examples during the seventies from the new generation of fans of purely written fan fiction. A surprising development during the decade was the small surge of fan fiction that was both written *and* drawn in the form of various comic strips. These began with David and Jon Langford's Mac Malsenn series (primarily SF parody but

featuring fan Kevin Smith as arch-fiend Nivek); included Jim Barker's "The Captive" (for the BSFA); and my own *Starfan* (created in 1979, though not published until 1980), a 20+ page comicbook about an alien neofan materialising at one of our conventions.

Possibly the most impressive piece of fan fiction of the 1970s from a UK fan appeared in Terry Hughes's *Mota*, an American fanzine. This was James White's "The Exorcists of IF". In it the original members of Irish Fandom return to the house where they had met decades earlier following reports of ghostly apparitions appearing there. I won't spoil the tale for those who haven't read it, but "Exorcists" is a poignant, beautifully written piece that deserves its reputation. It was later reprinted in the pages of *Hyphen* #37 [AE], a single issue revival of that legendary fanzine.

By contrast with the 1970s, fan fiction over here in the 1980s mainly took the form of dramatic presentations, which with the exception of "The Wizard of Ozimov" had been absent from UK conventions for almost thirty years. The first of these, at UNICON 2 in 1981, was an adaptation of "The Captive", which itself had been inspired by *The Prisoner* TV series with Jim Barker's titular character refusing to divulge why he had quit the BSFA just as Patrick McGoohan's Number Six would not reveal why he had resigned from his spy agency. Many others were to follow. The "Half-Life" cartoon series for the BSFA written by Chris Evans, drawn by Barker, and featuring Elmer T. Hack being turned into a musical by Ian Sorensen and staged in 1984. Of particular note here is what may be the only dramatic presentation based on a fanzine article, Geoff Ryman's adaptation of D. West's monumental "Performance" [AE]. This was staged at the 1987 Worldcon – held that year in Brighton – with Ryman playing West. The article in question was part convention report, part rumination on the nature of fandom, and wholly epic.

Which is not to say that written fan fiction was entirely absent from fannish publications during this decade, hence the inclusion here of Dave Langford's "One Hundred Years Ago", an account of our first ever convention. What, you don't know about the great convention of 1882? Shame on you! (And, yes, I'm fully aware of the "The Coming Race and 'Vril-Ya' Bazaar and Fete" held at the Royal Albert Hall on 5-10 March 1891 and the claim that this constitutes the first actual SF convention. My area of interest has always been the SF fandom that grew out of the pulps and its cultural influence. This event, while a notable curiosity, didn't lead to

anything greater and so is of otherwise limited interest.) [\[12\]](#)

Despite the generally high quality of the tales cited above these were now-rare examples of a once ubiquitous type of fan writing, one that appeared to be fading away on both sides of the Atlantic. American fan rich brown lamented its passing in 1988 in “Whatever Happened to Faaanfiction?”, which you can find near the end of this volume.

One Tun Mischief in Space

Leroy Kettle

A Cosmic Destiny awaited bits of the rotting astronaut!
TRUE RAT PUBS PRESENTS:–

One Tun Mischief in Space

by

Leery “Mr” Chortle B.Sc. (2 years out of 3) etc.

Complete novel!!! (Part One)
Never before in fanzines!!!!

Characters

Robot Holdstock: He was big, he was a writer, but would God and Son (Inc) keep him on for ever?

Gregory “SCARF” Pickersgill: Universal Puppet Master (failed). He knew all the answers and most of the positions. Was *his* the Galactic dong?

H.A.L.L.: He had more and better loins than most citizens. But could he go w ee-wees on his own?

Empress Piggott I: Her sordid and degrading love-affair with ——— was of no relevance.

Groopy Maule: Underling, and washer-woman to the Empress.

Brozzer: The rotting astronaut – but underneath the repulsive cancers what w as he?

Sheel A: young slave-wife of Robot, she yearned for bigger things.

Malc: Androgynous wonder. Where did he come from? When would he go?

Grah: Anotherdrogynous wonder. Was there no beginning to his talents?

PROBERTS: He had only come to borrow a cup of rice. Why was his life-for
ce fed to a budgie?

I: mindless creature from the Infinite Void – or just down the road, anyway.

The Nerds: the nerds.

Chapter One – I renew an acquaintance with an old hostelry.

It was so incredibly hot, even at six o'clock, that my skin felt as though it was
dribbling away. In fact, it seemed to be getting hotter. When I finally reached
the One Tun only my clothes were stopping me from becoming a puddle.
Everyone else looked equally uncomfortable. *I bet the buggers have drunk all
the cold lager*, I thought.

“Lager,” I croaked to the barman who probably recognised it as a said-
bookism but made no comment.

“The buggers have drunk it all, Sir,” he replied.

“Aaagh,” I quoth. (Us pretend writers do a lot of quothing. In fact, I still
haven't filled my September quotha even now.)

I finally settled for a Guinness and ice-cube. As I raised the glass I
suddenly heard a tall, bearded request for me to buy Rob Holdstock a drink.
Shrugging aside the familiar plea I supped up and, momentarily refreshed, I
surveyed the scene. At one end of the bar stood Greg, the colours running out
of his scarf and onto his suede overcoat as the sweat poured down. He was
studiously ignoring everyone who didn't speak to him first. I walked towards
him. The thermometer on the wall began to melt.

“Hi,” I said. He turned. It was then that the horror began.

The stupendous heat, no doubt caused by too many aerosols in high-rise
flats, had caused Greg's face to run. His skin was slowly sloughing off and
dropping in puddingy folds to the floor. I took a step back.

“Fucking hell,” he shouted, as his skin and clothes flopped to the floor.
But it wasn't him who shouted. For inside was another Greg, a few inches
smaller, its face contorted with rage, its scarf dirty and ragged. As I watched,
that too melted and the outer covering fell away to reveal another miniature
Pickersgill, waving its fists and screaming in a high voice, its head at chair
level. An endless stream of foul language followed its lips as they rolled
down to the floor and a six-inch Greg, filthy, furious, hairy, kicked out at

nothing and squeaked, “I don’t need you fuckers!”

It scuttled to the door, losing another layer in the process. I watched it run down the street, “cunts” and “buggers” trailing high-pitched behind it.

I turned back into the Tun. Well, *that* was something to talk about. But as I looked, and the sun burned white, I saw it was not just going to end there. Rob Holdstock’s skin dribbled onto the floor. Inside was a small clockwork motor and an out-of-date guarantee.

Suddenly, there were screams from all around. I watched, fascinated, as Ian Williams dissolved leaving behind a small gramophone that rasped, “my novel – my novel – my novel –”.

Chris Priest’s skin fell away in neat little rolls. The box that was left had a label on it. “Important Person Proximity Meter. Press red button to remove plebs.” Peter Roberts had just begun to sweat, but I knew his time would come.

Dave Rowe’s flesh collapsed, leaving a huge, boyish chunk of walnut cake standing there, indistinguishable from him but for taste. Malcolm Edwards’ skin trickled away leaving glistening trails down his velvet coat. Inside was this tiny doll-like creature which looked something like a miniature Roger Elwood. Broken strings hung from its fingers.

In the confusion, someone had kicked the Ian Williams gramophone. It was droning, “... poor me, poor me...”. Someone else kicked it – deliberately. Peter Roberts finally succumbed. His skinny body slithered to the ground, floppy fingers still clutching vainly at his Guinness. Leaping from inside him came a small, fanged creature, blood dripping from its mouth. It chewed hungrily at the piles of soft flesh all round, sighing as it did.

Where Howard Rosenblum had stood was a huge block of wood.

There were only a few people left by then and they were struggling to reach the door. As they did, they appeared to be totally ignoring me, not even bothering to push me aside. This seemed strange. I looked down. On the floor was a mess of steaming flesh. Horrified, I rushed to the nearest mirror. I stared into it for a long time.

There was nothing there.

Nothing at all.

(1975)

One Hundred Years Ago

Dave Langford

... An assembly of folk devoted to the *bizarre* and *fantastic* byways of our English prose was held – some said impiously! – over the week-end of Easter in this year of Our Lord Eighteen Hundred and Eighty-Two. With great courtesy, the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge made a free loan of their premises at Burlington House: and from the seventh to the tenth day of April, a motley and animated throng held sway in that place.

“They are strange, mad folk,” said a serving maid with whom we conversed. “Forever babbling of Magnetism and perpetual motion machines! But I dare say they do no harm.”

The honoured guest of the occasion could of course be none other than *M. Jules Verne*, whose risible romances such as *From the Earth to the Moon direct in 97 hours 20 minutes, and a trip around it* command a great following among the fanatics or “fans” of such ephemera. Why, some of these are even impelled by their devotion to assume strange garb: we were puzzled to observe individuals striding like clockwork automata about the corridors of Burlington House, wearing stiff hats and clutching furled umbrellas in defiance of all indoor custom. All was explained, though, when we learned that such “fans” choose this means of expressing their devotion to *M. Verne’s Around the World in Eighty Days*, and in particular its hero Phileas Fogg, whose supposed garb they thus slavishly imitate. Among the cognoscenti, it seems, these folk are known as “Foggers” or “Foggies” and are regarded with no little disdain.

And indeed, the esteem in which *M. Verne* himself is held would appear to be by no means universal. When the schedule of the proceedings called for him to deliver a rousing speech, there were murmurings at the announcement that *M. Verne* proposed instead to read passages from his forthcoming work *Le rayon vert* (*The Green Ray* – without doubt, a melodrama about fish); and the assembly became positively mutinous when it transpired that the passages were to be read only in French without benefit of translation. John Bull still has scant patience with alien tongues!

“The vanity and complacency of M. Verne passes all belief,” we were told by one “young Turk”, a fellow of some fifteen or sixteen years who through precocity had contrived to become an honoured “fan” guest in his own right. “It is a shabby travesty,” this young *Master Herbert Wells* continued, “that a fellow who has not even the grace to live in England should be allowed to continue as President of Britain’s Own Speculative and Fantastic Association; or the BoSFA, as we term it.”

The impudent Master Wells then went on to read to us from a projected scientific romance of his own, called, if memory serves us aright, *The Chronic Argonauts*. Suffice it to say that this congeries of juvenilia lacks altogether the underlying support of edifying scientific realism so evident in M. Verne’s *From the Earth to the Moon* or *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

But Master Wells was not to be deterred. “Then, too,” he cried, “the entire field of fantastic writing is being polluted by vile commercialism. A novel should be an autonomous work, a work which stands sturdy and alone – yet look at M. Verne! Did he not scribble *Around the Moon* as a sequel to ‘cash in’ upon the unmerited success of *From the Earth to the Moon*? Can you deny that even now he speaks of debasing the work of another and better man with an addendum of his own crass devising – I refer to M. Verne’s projected continuation of the late Mr Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*? The effrontery of it! Even *British* authors, of whom one might expect better, are succumbing to this same rot: Sammy Butler told me at a room party last night that he’s planning a sequel to *Erewhon*, and that Bible-thumper George MacDonald openly admits having hacked out a follow-up for *The Princess and the Goblin*, for publication next year. Such burgeoning fantasies are a cancer on the body of Scientific Romance. It’s all Carroll’s fault, of course, with his best-seller cult and sequels and spin-offs – see that moron there with his *Why Is 6 x 7 The Oldest Rule In The Book?* badge. Yes, I tell you that this artistic corruption of the sequel, the continuation, the series and the trilogy is a unique evil of our own time....”

We made our excuses and left Master Wells holding forth, making tendentious statements about Mr Gladstone’s Government to a group of cronies who were perhaps a trifle the worse for their indulgence in refreshments.

Many and varied were the entertainments offered during the four days of this strange “convention” affair. At a discussion of the supernatural, a *Mr*

Stoker strongly argued that something might yet be made of the old theme of Vampirism: we could not help but agree with those who observed that the matter was so hackneyed and generally “done to death” that no hope for it might be entertained. *M. Louis Pasteur* of France discoursed upon “The Germ Theory of Convention Banquets”, and quaintly asked to be refreshed with boiled water when he grew hoarse. Another discussion, on the theme (said to be traditional) of the Fair Sex and their part in fantastic literature, was ill-attended: the panel of gentlemen on the podium strove manfully to wring an hour’s discussion from the subject of the late *Mrs Shelley*. Still less popular was the unattended lecture entitled “Genetic Engineering”, given by a dubious Germanic visitor called *Gregor Mendel*, whom we later saw departing with an air of disillusionment.

But such formal events were by no means the whole of it. *Mr Oscar Wilde*, a gay young author in his twenties who only last year published a volume of poetry, was merrily welcoming inexperienced “neofans”, treating them to glasses of absinthe, and often inviting them upstairs for private discussions of the unnatural and supernatural. A callow medical student named *Conan Doyle* was fearfully affected by this absinthe, and to the amusement of all his face became hideous after a mere sip of the potion: nearby, *Mr Robert Louis Stevenson*, who was autographing copies of his latest work *New Arabian Nights*, was heard to say aloud, “What a frightful, cataclysmic change of features and of spirit! I wonder... there might well be a notion for a book in that scene of transformation.”

“I wish I’d written it,” said *Mr Wilde*.

“You will, Oscar, you will,” jested *Mr Stevenson*.

An unkempt young fellow with a straggling ginger beard introduced himself to us as *Mr George Bernard Shaw*, and favoured us with a disquisition upon fantastic literature’s legendary Golden Age.

“I assure you its past; it doesnt exist any more,” he said with some force (we noted with interest his refusal to employ apostrophes). “Poe, *Frankenstein*, *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Vernes better works, *The Coming Race*, *Utopia*, *The Battle of Dorking*, *Erewhon* and of course *Gullivers Travels*... I could name dozens more. Theres no chance that the future can equal these peaks of the Golden Age. The genres played out now. The Life Force will have to shew itself in some other way in future. There can be no hope for the heroic fantasy trilogy after Wagner, but... perhaps the drama...?”

Certainly no reasonable man could disagree; there can be only one Golden Age, and that of the fantastic or speculative romance is assuredly past. But such disagreeable truths are easily put out of mind when one listens to the exuberance of the “Foggies” and of “true fans” like Mr Wilde or the visiting German enthusiast *Herr Krafft-Ebing*. Both these noteworthy gentlemen propose to describe this Easter’s gathering at suitable length in their “fanzines” (respectively titled *The Yellow Book* and *Psychopathia Sexualis*), which will be published – in the quaint phrasing of the coterie – “Real Soon Now”.

The only sombre note to be struck in this charmingly eccentric week-end concerned the celebrated *Mr Charles Darwin*, who delivered a serious and scientific talk establishing almost conclusively that the various races of Mankind were descended from the late *Bishop Wilberforce*. Alas, Mr Darwin suffered a misadventure with a pork pie of dubious antecedents and on the nineteenth day of April shuffled off this mortal coil...

[*Locus*, May 1882]

(*really 1982*)

7. The Nostalgic Nineties (1990s)

If UK fan fiction in the 1990s could be said to have an identifiable theme then that theme was nostalgia.

Walt Willis and James White's *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator: To the Enchanted Convention* (1991) [AE] was a sequel to *The Enchanted Duplicator*, the former's earlier collaboration with Bob Shaw, and was lovingly produced by Minneapolis fan Geri Sullivan. There had been a lot of renewed interest in *The Enchanted Duplicator* over the previous decade. Reprinted once in the 1960s (Ted Johnstone, 1962), three times in the 1970s (Arnie Katz, 1971; serialised in *Amazing Science Fiction* by Ted White 1972-1973; Eve Harvey's SEACON '79 fan room edition, 1979), it had seen an impressive *five* editions in the 1980s (as part of *Warhoon* 28, 1980; Gary Farber reprint of the Katz edition, 1981; Steffan edition for CONSTELLATION, 1983; SF-Lovers mailing list, 1985; and Greg Hills's Australian edition, 1988). So perhaps it's not too surprising that the time seemed right for a sequel. Nor was it the only one.

My own *The Reaffirmation* (1993) [AE] was a "pseudo-sequel" to *The Enchanted Duplicator* that featured its protagonist Jophan making that same journey through the land of Trufandom again and discovering how much things have changed in the interim. Along the way he meets thinly-disguised versions of Vince Clarke, Walt Willis, Bob Shaw, and Chuck Harris, all of whom impart their wisdom to him. This eventually saw print in Ted White and Dan Steffan's *Blat!* #4 (1994). Since this was the final issue I have no idea what their readership made of it, but I'd enjoyed writing it enough that the following year I tried my hand at fan fiction again with "Fiawol, My Lovely". As in *The Enchanted Duplicator* fandom is a physical location in this story, taking urban form as Fandom City rather than the fantasy landscape of Trufandom. I believe this first appeared in an Arnie Katz fanzine.

Dramatic presentations continued through the nineties and into the other decades covered by this volume. Not having seen most of these, I'm unable to say much more about them, though I've put together a listing that can be

found at the link below.* Nevertheless, it seems right that they should be represented in this volume and Ian Sorensen was kind enough to supply me with a script to one of his productions from 2011 which, for various reasons, I'm including at the end of this section.

* <http://fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/appx1.htm>

Getting back to nostalgia, the 1990s also saw reprint collections of the work of former Belfast fan John Berry, who was perhaps unique among fan writers in that the majority of his writing for fanzines took the form of fan fiction. The collections were edited and produced by Ken Cheslin with new introductions by Berry. Cheslin began, perhaps inevitably, with *The Bleary Eyes* series which reprinted Berry's Goon Defective Agency tales across five volumes [AE – omnibus of first two volumes] between 1993 and 1996. These ranged in length from 54 to 76 pages. He followed this series with *Fables of Irish Fandom*, which saw five volumes in 1998 and 1999 that all weighed in at around 80 pages each. Finally in 2000 there were *Wholly Berry* and *Robbery with Violets* at 90 pages and 118 pages respectively which swept up the material that hadn't been reprinted in the earlier volumes.

Then the Internet came along.

Fiawol, My Lovely

(or: The Case of the Suspicious Suicide) A Rex Rotary Mystery

.I.

The name's Rotary, Rex Rotary, and I'm a private investigator. I'm told I'm good at what I do but, as one look at the hovel I call my office would tell all but the thickest of fans, this has never translated into material success. My one-man operation is strictly downtown, so I couldn't have been more surprised when an uptown lady like her came to me with her problem. It had been another slow day, not helped by the ongoing mail-workers' strike (a very serious matter in *this* town) and I was eating lunch, spooning the beans up straight from the can, while listening to the mellifluous tones of Hoop Andrews, on the ancient radio I keep on the filing cabinet next to my desk. Fandom City would be electing a new mayor in a few weeks so Hoop had decided to do his usual entertaining hatchet-job, complete with scurrilous rumours, on the candidates for the two major parties: Jonathan Beale for the NFFF, and Marcus Kane for the BSFA. I wasn't a fan of the New Fandom Freedom Forum or of Better Serconity For All since both parties seemed pretty irrelevant to an ordinary Joe like me, political hacks more interested in organisation for its own sake than in improving the lot of the city's residents, and I was only half-listening to the show when *she* walked in to my office.

"Mr Rotary?" she said, "My name's Melissa Roland, and I need your help."

"I recognise you from your recent fashion spread in *Locum*," I said, suavely (I hoped) dropping the can of beans into my wastebasket while leaping to my feet and sweeping aside the magazines piled on my guest chair. "Please have a seat, Ms Roland."

She frowned, obviously uncertain whether she should risk the skirt of her expensive cream silk suit on the admittedly dusty chair. There was little chance of damage since the rough edges of the various tears in the plastic upholstery were firmly secured by a web of duct tape, a conclusion she soon

came to herself. My concentration was total as I watched her lower her exquisite body into the chair and cross her perfect legs.

“So what brings one of this city’s top models to my office?”

“It’s my brother, Gary. Two weeks ago, he was found dead in his apartment. The police say it was suicide and they’ve closed the case, but there’s no way Gary could’ve committed suicide. He just couldn’t have.” She took a handkerchief from her handbag and dabbed at the corners of her eyes, composing herself again before continuing. “When the police said they weren’t going to spend any more time on the case, I told them I would. I said I’d hire my own private investigator. That’s when the detective in charge, Inspector Isaacs, suggested I come to you.”

“I’ll have to thank her. The police are usually pretty thorough and I’m not sure what you expect me to turn up, but I’ll certainly give it my best shot.”

“Thank you. I’ve put together all the details about Gary I can think of that you might need,” she said, passing me a large manilla envelope, “and also included his keys and his wallet. There’s a cheque in there that should cover your fee. Please do all you can, Mr Rotary.”

With that she got to her feet, we shook hands, and she left. Not a lady to waste time, but then in both our professions time is money. Of course, her time is considerably more valuable than mine, as evidenced by the cheque she’d left me. I whistled when I read it; it would cover my time for the next three months. Rich and gorgeous. What a shame she was Marcus Kane’s longtime girlfriend; a woman like that was just what this gumshoe needed to sort his life out. Oh, well.

.II.

My first port of call was the police department and my favourite homicide detective, Inspector Patty-Sue Isaacs. Not that anyone ever called her Patty-Sue; not if they didn’t want their lungs torn out, that is. No, to one and all she was “Ike”. I needed to see the police report on Gary Roland’s death and also to thank Ike for putting this job my way. However, I got there only to find she was out on a case and her long-suffering assistant, Sergeant Smith, wouldn’t let me see the file without her direct okay. He was immovable on this, immune to my charm, but he did tell me where she was. I needed to see that report before I went any further, so I had no choice but to drive over to

the scene of the crime she was investigating.

The Berrytown district was built in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and is full of the solid structures they erected at the end of what was one of the most creatively fertile periods the city has ever known. I found Ike in Atom Memorial Park, having had to abandon my car well before the police barriers thanks to the press and sightseers who'd gathered. Fortunately, the cops staffing the barriers knew me and they let me through. They were already loading the body into an ambulance when I finally reached Ike. She was gingerly examining a syringe.

"See this, Rotary," she said, "it was used to pump corflu into that poor shmuck's veins, and he didn't do it himself."

She handed it back to the head of the forensics team and then gave me a large grin.

"I assume you're here because you want to see the file on Gary Roland."

"You assume right. Thanks for the recommendation, by the way."

"Hey, if you can't put a little work an ex-lover's way now and again what's the point of having the influence? You still in that flea-pit office in Burbeeville?"

"It may be a flea-pit but the way the Burb's being rediscovered by all these new writers and artists I may soon be able to make a killing on the place."

"Yeah, right. So, d'you need a ride back to the station house?"

"Nah, I just got my own wheels back from the shop. I'll meet you there."

I didn't much fancy trudging through all those streets to get back to my car so I was pleased, if a little surprised, to spot it the other side of a chain-link fence and across a piece of waste ground adjacent to the park. I quickly located a gap in the fence, squeezed through, and carefully picked my way across the uneven ground. The land was only a spur of a much larger site of several acres and I was glad it only took me a minute or so to cross it. A useful short-cut.

Back at the police department, the first thing Ike did was bawl me out for messing up the floor of her office.

"Jesus, Rotary, you're staining this nice linoleum the department has been so gracious as to provide us with. What is that shit, anyway?"

She was right. I'd left a trail of purple footprints. I looked at the soles of my shoes, which were sticky with the stuff.

“Sorry ’bout that,” I said, sheepishly, “I must have picked it up on that waste ground I crossed.”

“Well, clean it off.” She tossed me a box of kleenex, and I set to work removing the stain from my sole (no wisecracks, please).

“Here’s the Roland file,” she said, sliding it across her desk, “and no, you can’t take it out of the building. I’ve got to go down to forensics to see what they can tell me about Mark Sanchez – that’s the guy we just found in the park – so you can use my office. Don’t mess it up any more.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And don’t give me any of that ‘sir’ crap.”

According to the file, Gary Roland died as a result of suffocating on electrostenciller dust. Apparently, he took a sleeping pill then donned an oxygen mask attached to the exhaust of an electrostenciller fitted with a deadman’s switch. As soon as he nodded off he released the switch, the machine came on, and he died. No suicide note, but also no signs of forced entry, struggle, or foul play, hence the assumption of suicide. The biographical data matched that given me by his sister. Briefly, he studied microbiology at Willis University, writing a thesis I couldn’t even understand the *title* of but which was something to do with genetically engineering bacteria, graduating with honours and going on to work for KaneCo, the company owned by our very own NFFF candidate for mayor. No known girlfriends (or boyfriends, for that matter). Seems he devoted himself to his work. If it was suicide, no-one could give a reason, although he’d been upset over some big bust-up with Kane that he wouldn’t talk about. Suddenly remembering something, I pulled out the wallet and keys his sister had given me. The battered metal fob on his key-chain had the crest of Willis University on one side and an inscription on the other: “All my love forever, Sarah”. Hmm. Looks like he had a girlfriend at some point in the past after all. I went through his wallet hoping to find a photo but wasn’t too surprised when I didn’t. In fact there was nothing of any interest in there except for a small business card from something called “Club di Stefano” whose emblem was a winged stylus. I was wondering how significant this might be when the door to the office burst open and Ike stormed in.

“We’ve got another murder,” she said, grabbing her coat, “this time on the West Side. Wanna tag along?”

“Yeah, why not,” I said. “I always like to watch professionals at work.”

.III.

Laneyburg is a nice area, filled with the sort of neat little townhouses favoured by those who are going places. Unfortunately for our murder victim, the only place she was going was the morgue. Her hands were tied behind her back, a stencil taped across her nose and mouth. She had died of suffocation. Ike was grim-faced as the coroner's department loaded the body onto a stretcher and carried it away.

"Goddammit. Two murders in one day. What's happening to this town, Rotary?"

Before I had a chance to answer Ike, Sergeant Smith chimed in.

"Better make that three, Captain," he said. "A call's just come in. They've found another body near Atom Memorial Park. A middle-aged male, stabbed to death with a stylus."

If Ike had been grim-faced before, her expression was positively stony as we drove back to Berrytown. A shock awaited her.

"It's Frank Kelly," she said when they showed her the body, "this city's best investigative reporter."

I knew the name from his byline, of course, though I'd never have recognised Kelly myself. What I did recognise, however, was the lapel pin in his jacket. It was a winged stylus.

"I think you'd better go now, Remy," said Ike, looking shaken. "We've got a lot of work to do here and at Sarah Wu's apartment."

"Sarah Wu? That was the dead woman's name?"

"Yeah. Now let us get on with it. I'll give you a call."

Could it be? Sarah was hardly an uncommon name, but after seeing that lapel pin I was starting to get the feeling that these deaths might be connected to Gary Roland's. And what of Mark Sanchez? He was the first person to be murdered today and brought the total to three murders, something unprecedented in the history of Fandom City. Could there be another connection there? Ike wasn't going to let me look at the files on any of today's killings, but I did have one lead I could follow up. As chance would have it, I'd parked my car in almost the same spot as I had earlier today and so got to pass that same bit of waste ground. Since this morning a sign had gone up on the fence: "Beale Construction is Proud to Announce the Building on this Site of Low-Cost Housing for Neofans. Beale Construction – Planning for Fandom City's future". Hmmm. Maybe I would vote for

Jonathan Beale after all.

.IV.

The hedonistic decor of Club di Stefano perfectly complemented its owner, the sybaritic Dante di Stefano. Dressed in an exquisitely-tailored silk suit worth more than my whole business, he sported jewelled pins and rings through multiple piercings at ear, nose, and eyebrow. Sipping fine claret and smoking a cigarette whose smell suggested substances I really didn't want to risk my license by being around for too long, di Stefano was urbane and affable as he proudly showed me around his club.

“As you can see, Mr Rotary, we cater for very select tastes, and our clientele include some of Fandom's most creative and well-known people.”

“It's those clientele I want to ask you about,” I told him. “I'm pretty sure that Frank Kelly and Gary Roland were members, but what about Sarah Wu and Mark Sanchez?”

“You'll understand that given the, ah, nature of some of the activities we cater for, a certain degree of discretion is advisable.”

“It is in the gumshoe biz, too, but all four of those people are dead and I need to establish any connection between them that I can. Can you help me?”

Di Stefano pursed his lips thoughtfully, then beckoned his secretary, a scantily-clad and very beautiful young woman, to fetch him a large album from a row of such volumes in a bookcase near the door. Placing it on the desk before him, he paged through it, found what he was looking for, and spun the album around so that I could view the photographs he wanted me to see.

“Taken at the club's last theme party,” he explained. “The theme was ‘leather’.”

On one page was a photo of the dancefloor. In the foreground, Gary Roland and Sarah Wu were locked in a passionate embrace. So I was right. On the facing page was a photo of Mark Sanchez and Sarah sitting at a table with... Jonathan Beale.

“They both worked for Beale,” explained di Stefano, “and appeared to be pretty close confidants, judging by how often you saw them in the club together.” “What about Gary Roland?” “I was never sure exactly what the relationship between him and Wu was. I gather they were an item when they were at Willis University with Sanchez, but it seemed to be a pretty

occasional thing by the time they joined the club.”

Back at my office, I puzzled over what I’d learned to date. Club di Stefano linked all four of the deceased, three of whom had been together at Willis University, and two of whom worked for Jonathan Beale, who was also a member of the club. I had no idea what it all meant yet, but the obvious next place to do a little digging was Willis U.

.V.

Though Roland and Wu had taken different majors, it turned out that both had minored in the history of our fair city and that this was how they met. So it was that I found myself in the office of Professor Theo Blanc, who occupied the Warner Chair of Fanhistory at the university. He was smoking a pipe whose odour was suspiciously reminiscent of di Stefano’s cigarettes.

“Be with you in a moment,” he said, carefully covering some old publications he’d been looking at, before pulling the blinds and letting sunlight in.

“Old newszines from the 1940s,” he explained, “they were all printed by hekto back then so you have to be careful about the light.”

“Researching anything in particular?” I asked him.

“Yeah, an article on Degler, Fandom City’s mad prophet. Do you know about him?”

“Who doesn’t?” I replied. “You still get accosted by Deglerites at the airport and bus terminal, pushing their literature on you and trying to get you to join the Cosmic Circle.”

“Yeah,” he chuckled, “we’ve all had that experience. I was just going through back issues of *Fandom Chronicle*, our mass-circulation newszine which Carlton Beale used to publish out of Berrytown, looking for contemporary reports on Degler himself. Found a few, too. Anyway, what can I help you with?”

“Sarah Wu and Gary Roland. What can you tell me about them?”

“A nice couple. He majored in microbiology, she in business. They were both idealists. They met in my fanhistory class, y’know.”

“So I heard. What about Mark Sanchez?”

“Not a name I know, I’m afraid, though if he was a student here you can probably find out something about him in the university database.”

“I may just do that. Thanks for your time, Professor Blanc.”

“My pleasure.”

According to the university database, Sanchez had also majored in business studies. So now I had almost all the links, at least insofar as how most of them first met, but what about Frank Kelly? Out of curiosity, I looked him up in the database and found a profile under “journalism”. Ace reporter on the *Chronicle*, he started out in radio, working with Hoop Andrews. Hoop Andrews. What was it Hoop was saying on his show this morning.....? And just like that, I had it. Suddenly I knew what this whole thing was all about. Fortunately, the database included all the company information I needed and, naturally, a copy of Gary Roland’s thesis. It all fit. I made three phone calls; the second to Ike, and the third to Melissa Roland. It was time to bring the whole house of cards crashing down.

.VI.

Melissa Roland was every bit as beautiful as before, though irritated at being summoned to my office.

“I was on my way to a theatre date with Marcus Kane,” she said. “We had prime seats for *Katz*, the new musical about the Brooklyn Insurgents. This had better be good.”

“It is, but before we go any further, can I ask you if you still have your key to your brother’s flat, and confirm that you always kept it in your purse?”

“Yes to both, but I don’t see...”

“Have you used it since his death?” I interrupted.

“No, there was no need. The police have his spare keys and I haven’t been able to face going there.”

“Then may I have your key, please?”

Puzzled, she nonetheless complied and fished the key from her purse. I placed it carefully into a small ziploc plastic bag, depositing the key in my desk.

“What is this all about, Mr Rotary? I demand to know.”

“It’s about greed and murder, Ms Roland, greed and murder. Do you know much about the history of Fandom City and the development of its media? No? Well, back in 1930s and 1940s, all of our newszines were printed via a process called hekto and the biggest newszine of the time, as it is today, was the *Fandom Chronicle*. With the circulation of the *Chronicle*, they got through a lot of hekto jelly. Back then, the *Chronicle*’s printing plant was

located on a site in Berrytown, near what is now Atom Memorial Park. The plant is long gone, but the land the plant stood on is still in the family and the *Chronicle's* current owner, Jonathan Beale, is building low cost housing on it that he's selling to the city. Unfortunately, rather than disposing of it properly, ol' Granpa Beale had all that used hekto jelly buried in the ground, and it's still there. A gooey, seeping mess that makes the site unfit for housing. If the city found out about this they wouldn't buy the houses but, so long as he got elected, Jonathan Beale could ensure that they did and leave the clean-up bill with the city, claiming that he had no idea the land was contaminated. Wu and Sanchez found out about his plans and, being idealists, decided to spill the beans to Frank Kelly, who they'd met at a club they were all members of. Since Beale owned the *Chronicle*, the paper Kelly worked for, Kelly leaked what he knew to his old pal Hoop Andrews, figuring on Hoop holding back on it until Wu and Sanchez got him the proof he needed from Beale's files. Unfortunately, Hoop decided to be cute and mention "rumours" of shady real-estate dealings on his show this morning. Even more unfortunately, Beale was listening and figured out who had to have leaked the story. If the proof got out he was finished, so he did the only thing he could, and killed Wu, Sanchez, and Kelly. Some of this is speculation, but I'm sure Captain Isaacs will find proof that pretty much confirms it when she raids Beale's home and office which," I said, checking my watch, "should be happening just about now."

"But what does this have to do with my brother?" asked Melissa Roland. "Are you saying Beale also killed Gary?"

"No, I'm afraid he was killed by your boyfriend, Marcus Kane."

"What?! You can't be serious! Why would he do such a thing?"

"Because of what your brother discovered. It was all in his thesis; bacteria that could break down used hekto jelly and so make the contaminated land completely safe again. Somehow, Kane had found out about the contaminated land, and with Gary's bacteria he had an unprecedented opportunity to crush his opponent and to make a killing at the same time. The way I figure it is that at just the right moment he was going to let everyone know about the contaminated land Beale was trying to offload on the city, a revelation that would've destroyed Beale's candidacy and left him with virtually unsellable real estate. Which Kane would then have picked up for a song since no-one knew he had the means to clean it up cheaply. It would've worked too, only during one of their love-making sessions, Sarah

Wu must have let Gary know what Beale was up to. Being the idealist that he was, Gary wanted to let everyone know that he'd developed a means to render the land safe, which was the last thing Kane wanted people learning about prematurely. So he killed Gary."

"You can't know it was him," whispered Melissa, tears welling.

"I'm afraid I can," I said, gently. "Gary's flat was locked, with no sign of forced entry, which means that either Gary let his killer in or the killer had a key. Since Gary wouldn't have let Kane in after Kane had warned him off telling everyone about the bacteria – that was the bust-up he wouldn't talk about – Kane had to have had a key. Which means he had to have copied your key when you were at his place. You said yourself that you kept the key to Gary's flat in your purse, and that you always kept your purse with you, so he's the only one who could have copied it. That's why I asked you to give it to me. Chances are, there are still traces on the key of the wax Kane would've pressed it into, and maybe even a partial fingerprint. I'm sure the police forensic team will get enough from it to nail Kane. As to how he did it, I'm betting that Kane somehow slipped Gary a sleeping pill and, when he knew Gary would be asleep, let himself into the flat and finished him off."

"So it was all about money and power," sobbed Melissa, the tears flowing freely now.

"It usually is. Both Kane and Beale let money and power corrupt them and so lost sight of the philosophy that guides most of the citizens of our fair city."

"Which philosophy is that, Mr Rotary?"

"Fiawol, my lovely."

.VII.

The next day, there was a media frenzy when it was revealed that both candidates for mayor had been arrested for murder, and fevered speculation over what it meant for the future of Fandom City. Personally, I figured that it probably meant good things. Most of us had never much liked being organised anyway, and now we were going to have a period where we could indulge our naturally anarchistic tendencies. And I'd done pretty damn well out of the whole thing, thank you very much. That first phone call I made yesterday was to my bookie. You'd be amazed at the odds he was offering on both of the mayoral candidates dropping out of the race on the same day.

Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits

By
Ian Sorensen
Yvonne Rowse
Julia Daly
Douglas Spencer
with additional dialogue
by Julian Headlong
Featuring Special Ghost Paul McNelis
with
Steve Lawson and Steve Green
Novacon 2011

Introduction to the show

Ian outlines the proceedings.

Ian Tonight is a very special occasion, when we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the very first Novacon. As you will see, my talented team and I will delve deep into the rich lore of Novacons, stretching back to 1971. We will, in fact, go in one era and out the other. Serious research has gone into the making of this show. This is not just a cheap pantomime!

Audience Oh yes it is!

Ian Oh no it's not! (*ad nauseam*)

Yvonne You always do that pantomime schtick!

Ian Oh no I don't!

Yvonne Shut up. We can all clearly see it.

Ian What?

Yvonne Your visible panto line.

Ian All right, on with the show. Originally I was going to get

people to come up and tell you their favourite Novacon story. But then I realised there wouldn't be enough of me in the show, so shelved that idea. Their memories are probably shot by now anyway. Instead I decided to use the rather more reliable research method of just making shit up.

Yvonne OK, let's test the quality of the BS: we've all heard of the legendary Webb's women. However, Gerry once complained that his otherwise infallible seduction techniques don't work on blondes when there is a fan from Newcastle present. The Geordie always gets off with the woman leaving poor Gerry lost and alone.

Ian Ah, he should know that in the country of the blonde the why-aye man is king.

Yvonne I'm so sorry I asked. Let's try something a little more relevant to Novacon's anniversary: how did Novacon get started?

Ian Ah, I'm glad you asked – because that's what the next 14 pages are all about. Up to 1971 there was only one con per year, the Eastercon, until Pauline Dungeate (now Morgan), Vernon Brown and the Aston SF Group came up with a cunning plan to change all that – inspired by Bob Rickard, Rog Peyton and Pete Weston who ran the Eastercon that year. The original idea was for a one-off convention with James White as Guest of Honour, but it was such a success that it generated Novacon 2 and look at where we are now. Of course, back then nobody believed a Birmingham regional convention could compete with the mighty Eastercon.

Audio – Little Brum Con

Once upon a time there was a little Brum con
Very sad because he was a little Brum con
All the big cons called him a jokecon 'cos he was from Brum
Only big cons go to the Worldcon, where they sway and hum
Bold as brass right there and then the little Brum con
Quickly found the nearest Eastercon,

BSFG said, “What a funny con
What a fluffy little con! He’s our little con”
He marched along like a proud little con and hit the bar.

It was the day of the bidding.
All the fans were there.
Waiting to see the latest Eastercon.
Trumpets sounded a fanfare, Andromeda has a sale!
Out from the throats of the crowd came a mighty roar!
Into the bar cos they wanted their beer.
Came the parade all prepared for a drunken brawl!
Harry Bell, Greg Pickersgill, Joe Nicholas.....
And who do you think as well...

Trotting right behind them came the little Brum con.
How they laughed out loud to see the little Brum con
Boasting of a great guest of honour, membership was high,
'Til the Eastercon in the centre caught his bloodshot eye.
Staggering right up to him went the little Brum con,
Drinking twice, and drinking once again.
The Eastercon cried, 'Cheers! Little con.
You're not a little con. You're a pissed little con!
You're going to be a great little con. The best in Brum!"

Then the crowd all shouted, “Cheers! Little con!
You're not a little con. You're a pissed little con.
You're going to be a great little con. The best in Brum!"
So if you've got a little con that's a pissed little con,

It's quite possible that it might be the con
That's the best in Brum!

Caption – Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits

The Vault 1

Yvonne It's a very special night tonight. Not just because we are all
 able to witness Ian's latest work of genius – oy! Who are you

kidding Sorensen? I'm not reading any more of this self-aggrandising drivel, because I'm a genuine SF fan and I'm only here for The Vault.

Julia The vault?

Yvonne Yes, the time capsule left by the Fannish Giants of yesteryear to guide us through the decades. He appears and speaks to us, and we believe in what he says. It opens only once every ten years.

Doug It's awesome! I love seeing the recaps before getting the latest prognostications – it somehow connects me to the distant fannish past.

Yvonne Look, the vault is opening....

Caption – 1981

1981 Appearance – Paul

Welcome, welcome my fellow fen in the future – 1981 AD! I am, as you probably know, Peter Weston, the inventor of psycho-fanhistory and I am speaking to you from a distant time, 1971 – a time when all of fandom is dominated by one giant convention a year called The Eastercon. My work on psycho-fanhistory revealed many worrying facets of the future that made me take action. The monolithic Eastercon cannot survive long and is already under threat by the forces of Trekdom, so I set in motion the events that led to the establishing of a new convention, one I called Novacon (because everyone said there was no-vacon-way it would work) and Novacon will act as a repository of fannish wisdom through the dark years ahead. I have recorded a number of these messages that will replay throughout the decades as the Eastercon suffers the inevitable demise my psycho-fanhistory predicts. My intention is to inspire you, denizens of the future, to continue the work I began when Rog Peyton and I began the BSFG as a way of pulling the birds and selling more books.

For you it is now ten years since Novacon was established, ten years in which I predict the Eastercon will have gone from having an astounding 200 members (almost 88% of all fans) and will have begun its long, inevitable decline. As Novacon takes in the trufen and grows, so The Eastercon will diminish and be around 150 people by 1980. Novacon's growth will enable Rog Peyton to expand his Andromeda shop until there is one in every major

city of the UK.

Mark my words, for I will return....

The Fan-history Professors

Audio – Intro Music

Caption – Fanhistory Today

Prof J: Welcome to another programme in our series in which we discuss the great events and people of fan-history. I have with me, as always, the distinguished professor of comparative fandom at the University of the West Midlands, Professor FJ Mendelsohn.

Prof M: Good evening.

Prof J: Professor, this year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first Novacon. Bearing in mind the long tradition of SF conventions, dating back to that historical meeting in 1937 at the Theosophical Hall in Leeds, I was wondering if you could perhaps place Novacon in the context of the development of SF and conventions within the United Kingdom.

Prof M: Certainly. Do you know the sort of mouldy, musty smell one gets from very old books, especially ones that have been kept in a damp environment?

Prof J: I am familiar with that odour.

Prof M: That's your deodorant, that is.

Prof J: That's as may be, but what of Novacon's fanhistorical importance?

Prof M: Well, it is certainly of primary significance in the development of regional conventions.

Prof J: Indeed, and, I was wondering, if you can recall the problems caused in the early days by fans acting in wildly inappropriate fashions, running around with zap guns and making crude attempts to proposition the few women who were in attendance.

Prof M: Ah, yes, I do recall those problems.

Prof J: That was you after a half-pint of shandy, that was.

Prof M: But there have been many changes over the decades. For example, are you familiar with the use of tin cans joined by string being used as a communications device?

Prof J: The string-driven technology is familiar to me, yes.

Prof M: That's your mobile phone, that is. But, have you ever seen the crowds of people emerging from trains at New St station and not having any clue where they are going?

Prof J: I have seen the phenomenon.

Prof M: That's your programme, that is.

Prof J: I think not, Professor. But perhaps you are familiar with the *Star Wars* character Jabba the Hutt?

Prof M: Certainly.

Prof J: That's your boyfriend. You are gay for chubby aliens.

Prof M: But tell me professor, do you recall the Slitheen from *Doctor Who*? Green aliens with homicidal tendencies?

Prof J: I am aware of the Slitheen, yes.

Prof M: Well, they wouldn't attack you because you are too smelly, stinky and ugly.

Prof J: Professor, perhaps we could return to the subject in hand, placing Novacon's 40 year achievement in the broader context of UK fandom.

Prof M: Hmmm, it is, indeed a considerable achievement. Have you witnessed a scene at the end of a Novacon beer tasting where all of the slops of beer caught in the drip trays is poured away, including the dead flies that have been attracted to it over the course of the day?

Prof J: I have seen this occur.

Prof M: That's your favourite cocktail, that is.

Prof J: Well, I think you will all agree that we have rigorously covered much of the ground regarding our chosen topic. Professor FJ Mendelsohn, thank you and good night.

Caption – Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-

Funny Skits

Boyband Reunion

Yvonne One of the biggest bands of the 80s was The Wilkettes. Formed by John Wilkes in 1983 they made their first appearance at the Eastercon that year. The original lineup was John Wilkes, Steve Lawson, Steve Green and Ian Sorensen. Their legendary first gig led to a booking at the prestigious Novacon 13 where promoter Ian Williams got more than he bargained for when the Wilkettes invited him to join them on stage and they sang a song specially written for the occasion.

Audio: *Fan Room Wizard*

Yvonne What nobody knew at that time was that John Wilkes was an unhappy fan. Not only was lead singer Sorensen taking most of the limelight, but John had an incurable affliction: in 1984 he announced that he had got..... a life. When Wilkes announced he was leaving, the band split in two: Sorensen and Lawson stayed together to play the '84 Eurocon, the '87 Worldcon and occasional gigs throughout the 80s and 90s. Steve Green went into publishing and dropped out of the music scene. Sorensen subsequently moved into theatre and Lawson became a convention manager.

However – and I can't really believe this – to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Novacon I am incredibly honoured to introduce to you for the first time since 1983 the surviving members of the legendary Wilkettes: Steve Lawson, Steve Green and Ian Sorensen performing again exclusively for Novacon 41. Ladies and gentlemen: The Wilkettes!

Audio: *At the Con*

At The Con

You can drink and you can eat but you can never get to sleep at the con.
You can have a double rum and really have some fun at the con.

You can drink a party can and prove that you're a fan at the con.

Let's go to the con (oh baby), let's go to the con, (oh baby)

Put your beanie on (oh baby), let's go to the con, (oh baby)

You can drink all night, until the break of dawn.

Let's go to the con (oh baby), let's go to the con, (oh baby)

Put your beanie on (oh baby), let's go to the con, (oh baby)

You can drink all night, until the break of dawn.

Yvonne Well that was quite literally unbelievable. Please guys, could I have a word with you? How did this happen, who's behind the reunion?

Ian It's really down to Steve here – Lawson, that is. As he was involved in the convention business he was still in touch with people. He came to see me a few weeks ago after a committee meeting and told me – well, Steve, tell them what you told me.

Lawson I told him, "I'm putting the band back together. We're on a mission from Rog."

Green He told me the same thing, and I said if he was going to ripoff Blues Brothers dialogue we should rename the band the Green Brothers.

Lawson But we didn't.

Yvonne This is absolutely fascinating. Tell me, do you do requests?

Ian Of course, anything for you!

Yvonne Will you piss off now?

The Vault 2

Caption – 1991

1991 Appearance – Paul

Welcome, welcome my fellow fen in the future – 1991 AD! I am, as you probably know, Peter Weston, the inventor of psycho-fanhistory and I am speaking to you from a distant time – a time when every fan edits their own fanzine and contributes letters of comment to everyone else's. I predict that by the 1990s where you are that written fanzines will be a thing of the past

and they will have become electronic artifacts, recorded on cassette tapes with telephone calls of comment. The Eastercon will have all but disappeared, and regional conventions will rise in popularity, the largest being Manchester due its central location and multiple active fan groups. Novacon will still exist, but will be seen as a convention for mostly young people, cutting their fannish teeth.

Roger Peyton's book empire will have expanded into music shops and recordings, based on his experience of publishing cassette zines.

Mark my words, for I will return....

Finding Hotels

Caption – Location, Location, Location

The search for a hotel can take a long time. A number of different factors need to be satisfied including sufficient function space, sufficient rooms and a management that you can negotiate reasonable prices for food and drink with. Novacon has an almost constant quest to find a new hotel.

On one occasion, following loud complaints about the Friendly hotel in Walsall, Tony popped across the M6 to the brand new Village hotel, just to check it out. He recalled being impressed as he arrived in the car park to see how vast it looked. It certainly hadn't seemed that big from the motorway but no, there it was, with people milling about on the patio enjoying themselves. How different from the cramped and dingy Friendly hotel on the other side of junction 10 he thought. However, as he got closer he discovered that it wasn't quite what it seemed. It wasn't a massive hotel, it was just that the people outside were very, very small: the hotel was actually hosting a dwarf convention that weekend.

It turned out they used to go to the Friendly too, but had resolved never to go there again for the same reason Novacon quit. Sadly, the function space at the Village wasn't suitable for Novacon, so the quest went on with committee members sent to all corners of the land...

Looking for a Hotel (Ian, Yvonne, Julia)

Julia Excuse me?

Yvonne *(bored – doing Sudoku in paper)* Yes?

Julia I was wondering about booking your hotel.

Yvonne *(still bored)* A single room is it?

Julia No, I'd like to book your whole hotel.

Yvonne *(alert – puts paper aside)* Certainly madam. What date were you thinking of?

Julia First weekend in November. But I need to make sure you have sufficient facilities for us.

Yvonne Yes, of course madam. I'll just get my husband. Oh, here he is.

Ian Good evening madam.

Yvonne This lady wants to book our hotel.

Julia So, your hotel. What function space do you have?

Ian Ah, you're planning a wedding. Nice big room, can be laid out for dinner for 150. We've got our own DJ, you know. From the capital of European disco music, Barcelona, a very trendy party city I'm told. We always ask him to start with "Congratulations".

Julia No, it's not a wedding. I've already got one of those arranged.

Ian Oh, I'm terribly sorry, madam. I don't eat rice because it reminds me of weddings.

Yvonne Harumph!

Ian Do forgive me, my sweet.

Julia We'd need a second smaller room plus a bar with 10 barrels of real ale per day and extended licensing hours.

Yvonne A rugby club do! We don't do those.

Julia No, it's a science fiction convention – all very respectable and literary. But we do spend a lot in the bar.

Ian Excellent! And dinner every evening?

Julia Bar snacks more than dinner, I think.

Ian And how many delegates will there be?

Julia Around 150. I'd expect the function space to be free of charge and to have a discount on the beer. Room rates to be, say, 10% less than your rack rate. And I'd like free rooms for the

committee. That would be six free rooms and one for our guest. With a jacuzzi.

Yvonne Oh, I don't know about that....

Julia And we would guarantee to fill your hotel for three nights, spend £4,000 over the bar each night, spend £800 on your last week's dried up sandwiches and £500 each night in your restaurant.

Yvonne That sounds very acceptable.

Ian Yes indeed. I think we have a deal.

Julia Excellent. I like working with such professional people capable of making a quick decision – so rare in hotels these days. I'll send a letter of intention first thing tomorrow.

Yvonne A pleasure to do business with you madam. Bye! (*Julia exits*)

Yvonne Basil! Stop dreaming of Trekkies in mini-skirts, you pathetic old man. Go and tell Manuel to check the traps in the function room and get Polly to dust the sandwiches in the bar.

Ian At once, my scorpion tongued dragonette. I can't wait to see you get beamed up someplace there's no air.

Caption – Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits

Grumpy Brummie People

Doug And that is, more or less, how we ended up here, in Nottingham. And if you think it's odd that the Birmingham SF Group are running a convention in Nottingham, I'd point out that the real oddity is that Brummies are running it at all. Let's face it, they aren't exactly renowned for their cheery disposition and welcoming attitude, are they? Even when they try to be friendly they are deeply off-putting. (*High squeaky voice*) "Welcome to Biiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiirmingham."

Yvonne I resent that. I don't disagree with it, just resent it. They can be happy, but only, I admit, when they have something to be grumpy about.

Audio – Happy Brummie People

Grumpy Brummie people having fun
Meet me in the bar
People, people
Never buy a round
Tony, Tony
Move to another town
Grumpy, grumpy
Make a lot of cash
For the BSFG
Novacon ain't free

Grumpy Brummie people running cons
(Grumpy Brummie people running cons)
Grumpy Brummie people moaning

Everyone around
Love them, hate them
Put the programme on
Take it, leave it
Bookroom business bad
Grumpy, grumpy
Put it on next year
Bigger membership fee
Novacon ain't free

Grumpy Brummie people running cons
Grumpy Brummie people running cons
Grumpy Brummie people smiling

The Vault 3

Caption – 2001

2001 Appearance – Paul

Welcome, welcome my fellow fen in the future – 2001 AD! I am, as you probably know, Peter Weston, the inventor of psycho-fanhistory and I am

speaking to you from a distant time – a time when it took over a day for mail to be delivered between Birmingham and London. I predict that in your time mail will be carried by magnetic levitation trains running above every street and mail will take an hour to get from any part of Britain to another, with envelopes arriving in your home along a wire connected to your door from the maglev system. It will be called Cable, and it will dominate all communications.

Novacon will still exist but be reduced to a core of fen, dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of fandom. They will be seen by outsiders as a cult, though in fact, there will be many core groups, some dedicated to fanzines, some to media, some to my beloved psycho-fanhistory. So, more correctly, they will be a bunch of cults.

The first convention in orbit should have happened by now, almost certainly run by Manchester fans due to their close links with the Jodrell Bank spaceport.

The Peyton business empire will have grown exponentially and now include airlines and a prototype spacecraft. His global brand name will be based on the most common feature of all fans: ...pardon? No! Sorry, future fen, I was interrupted by one of my colleagues here at the psycho-fanhistory institute who suggested the brand name Virgin. Of course, that would be absurd. Instead, I predict the Peyton empire will be known as Aspergers.

Mark my words, for I will return....

Caption – Meanwhile, not a thousand miles from the Bull Ring...

The Four Yorkshire Fen (Ian, Yvonne, Doug, Julia)

Yvonne Conventions aren't what they used to be. Or as good as they were going to be in the future. I want mag-lev and a jetpack! But I'll settle for a decent hotel.

Ian I agree. Back in the '70s we had the Imperial hotel – that was a dump, and then we had the poky little Angus.

Doug Ah, but that was in the city. In my day we were cast into the outer darkness of Malvern.

Yvonne Hah! We were sent to Coventry.

Julia That was better than being at the airport.

Doug The airport was a cultural oasis compared to Walsall.

Yvonne The only culture in the Britannia was growing on the bathroom walls.

Ian But we were poor in those days – we had 30 sleeping in our room.

Doug Luxury! We didn't have a room so we had to endure the Dave Lally experience.

Yvonne That's nothing! I once stayed up all night in the bar. Talking with Tobes.

Julia But you didn't have to have sex in a stairwell.
(*Others look at Julia in shock*)

Julia Not with Tobes, obviously! (*sotto voce*) He preferred lifts....

Ian We used to have room parties where people stayed up all night drinking and talking.

Yvonne Yes, we had really steep bar prices too.

Ian But room parties these days are such tame affairs – nobody's dumped a trouser press out a window for years.

Doug And Nic Farey hasn't even come close to violating the terms of his parole.

Ian And what about fanzines? In my day I won a Nova against stiff competition from Langford, Hansen and Pickersgill. Though I had to write about my bollocks instead of just talking bollocks to win.

Doug I had to get Sue Mason to do my cover art, and Simon Ounsley to do the writing to stand a chance of winning a Nova for best fanzine.

Yvonne It was much harder for me. After I shrank D. West's ducks it caused the anti-*Plokta* block vote to crumble. The horror! I'm still having nightmares....

Ian Back at the start you got awards for your fanzine, none of these other categories. Wouldn't be surprised if you could get one for wiping your nose nowadays.

Julia Well, some of the zines today aren't good for anything else.

Yvonne Quite, but I still wouldn't soil my arse with *Fanzine Fanatique*.
Doug And the programme is mostly rubbish now. Even our discos were exciting enough they set off fire alarms.
Yvonne Ah, but in my day people actually danced at the discos, where Tim Stannard spun the discs and stalked the dancefloor looking for a partner. And not for his law firm.
Ian Lawyers do it with briefs, you know.
Julia But the dance floor today is empty, ever since Eileen dragged twinkle-toes Weston off to bed at 10 o'clock prompt.
Ian Yes, everything has changed. Hotels, programme, fanzines, discos, room parties, prices. Can you think of anything that hasn't changed since Novacon began?
ALL 3 Your jokes!

The Vault 3

Caption – 2011

2011 Appearance – Paul

Welcome, welcome my fellow fen in the future – 2011 AD! I am, as you probably know, Peter Weston, the inventor of psycho-fanhistory and I am speaking to you from a distant time – a time when science fiction literature is a rising force in popular culture, mostly because of the impossibility of depicting space flight and future civilisations on screen. Psycho-fanhistory shows that watching movies will have become a marginal activity by your day and people will be avid readers, able to carry many books around in their pockets in the form of handheld microfiche reading machines. Ah, how I wish I could live in your time!

I predict that by now you will be watching my appearances either on a space station or a convention on the moon. The dismal remnant of the Eastercon will probably live out its last days on the moon, but eventually dying when the few remaining attendees leave early, complaining of a lack of atmosphere.

Sir Roger Peyton's business will make history by opening the first retail establishment in the Mars colony. I predict that, when asked whether it is a

success, Rog will say “God no! Business is absolutely terrible. I don’t know why I bother turning up, I’m not making a penny.”

And so you see, future fen, nothing really changes.

Mark my words, for I will return.

Caption – Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits

Finale

Ian Well, there you have it. Four decades of Novacon nicely, and accurately, conveyed to you through songs and laughter. You lucky people.

My thanks go to my cast – Julia, Doug, Yvonne and special guests Paul McNelis, Steve Green and Steve Lawson. Thanks also to Sally Rowse for operating the audio visuals, and to the poor soul on the sound desk.

And that’s it, except there’s One More Thing. Since 1983 Steve Lawson has been growing in stature (haven’t we all) and has now reached the pinnacle of achievement: Chairman of Novacon. And I think we’ll invite him back up here to share with us just how that makes him feel.

Audio – I’m Too Sexy

I’m too sexy for my beer too sexy for my beer
Beer’s going to kill me

I’m too sexy for my con too sexy for my con
So sexy it’s wrong
And I’m too sexy for Walsall too sexy for Walsall
It was no use at all.

And I’m too sexy for your programme
Too sexy for your programme
No way I’m disco dancing

I'm a con chair you know what I mean
And I do my little turn on committee
Yeah on committee on committee yeah
I do my little turn on committee

I'm too sexy for my bar too sexy for my bar
Too sexy by far
And I'm too sexy for my drink
Too sexy for my drink so what do you think?

I'm a con chair you know what I mean
And I do my little turn on committee
Yeah on committee on committee yeah
I shake my little touche on committee

And I'm too sexy for this con

ALL CAST And we're too sexy for this show. Goodnight!

Caption – End Credits

(2011)

8. Fan Fiction in the 21st Century

And so we come to the current century.

The most important development from the mid-1990s on was of course the discovery of the Internet by increasing numbers of people. This didn't have a great effect on traditional fan fiction but it led to an explosion in IP fan fiction. Faced with a world in which they were now no longer limited by page counts or by the work and expense involved in the production of physical fanzines the shackles were off, and those who write such fiction took full advantage of this new reality.

In America, Arnie Katz was almost alone in trying to keep the flickering flame of traditional fan fiction alive with a series of such tales published as standalone fanzines; while over here, around 2002, it occurred to me that I could write fan fiction that made use of the fanhistorical knowledge I'd gained in recent years and that this might be something new. When thinking of how best to do so I remembered the old *Quantum Leap* TV show in which, to quote from the opening:

“Dr Beckett finds himself leaping from life to life, striving to put right what once went wrong.”

This seemed like a useful set-up, so I appropriated it, with me in the Sam Beckett role and Arnie Katz standing in for his handler Al, who was always along for the ride as a hologram that only Sam could see and hear. I first wrote the beginning and end of this in order to establish the basic situation, but when I started thinking about the body of the story I got cold feet. What there is of the tale is included here with an afterword explaining why. Obviously this was never submitted to Arnie Katz, whom I would almost certainly have intended it for.

Two decades later, this basic set-up still strikes me as good idea for a series – albeit probably with Joe Siclari and Edie Stern in place of Arnie Katz – and it could potentially have “educational value” in the same way that *Doctor Who* was originally intended to impart knowledge of historical events. However, time has moved on. In 2002 there were enough people around with

knowledge of the events that would be depicted who would appreciate such tales, and still a small trickle of newcomers for whom these might have “educational value”. I’m not sure that’s any longer the case. A pity.

Dramatic presentations – some of them musicals – continued to be the main form fan fiction took in the UK in the early decades of the twenty first century, with Ian Sorensen their main impresario. Among the many SF dramas and parodies could be found more fannish fare such as “The Booze Brothers” (Sorensen, 2001), “Once More With Fanfunds” (Sorensen, 2002), “The Adventures of Pat and the Electric Motorman” (In The Bar, 2010), “Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits” (Sorensen, 2011), “Dr Whoribble’s Sing-a-long Blog” (Sorensen, 2013), and “One of Our Eastercons is Missing” (David Wake, 2014).

The final reprint piece in this section is Mark Plummer’s “How I Met Nic Farey”, an entirely fictional account that is oddly reminiscent of the Harrison tales by Jeeves and Bentcliffe.

Breendoggled

Rob Hansen

Jim Linwood: “I’d like to travel back in time to 1940 and join the Paint Research Station Science Fiction Library in Teddington. I’d chronicle its evolution into the Cosmos Club, hang out in Shirley’s Cafe, attend the 1944 Eastercon and end up in the King’s Arms (now The Clock House). Along the way (in contacts with wider London fandom) I’d meet up with Temple, Clarke, Gillings and neos like Vince Clarke. All would be written up, photographed and submitted to *Relapse* on my return.”

Peter Weston: “I should hope so, too! Me, I’d settle for a seat in the corner of the White Horse on a Thursday night in 1950 to just watch them talk.”

– *Relapse* #20, Autumn 2012, edited by Peter Weston

- 1 -

The face in the mirror wasn’t mine.

It had all started with an e-mail message from Arnie Katz asking if I’d be interested in helping out with the testing of a new electronic gaming system he’d been asked to evaluate.

“It’s an interactive virtual reality set-up that’s years ahead of anything currently on the market”, he’d enthused, “and its makers, Cyberex, claim it can be used in conjunction with the Internet so that players all over the world can take part in the same game. That’s where you come in, Rob. They’re a little concerned about transmission lag and, though not in the same league as between us and the moon, I figured there was enough between Vegas and London for their purposes. If you remember, there’s enough of a lag that they couldn’t set up the transatlantic duet they wanted to during that Live Aid concert back in the ’80s.”

I was intrigued so I agreed, and four days later a box containing some very high-tech looking hardware showed up here at Gross Manor. At first I

was a bit taken aback by the DANGER: RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL – DO NOT OPEN CASING stamped on the side of something labelled “Cyclotronic Tachyon Generator”, but I figured that if Arnie had arranged for it to be sent over it must be okay. I dutifully connected this and all the other peripherals to my computer as per the instruction manual, pressed the adhesive pads on the electrodes to my temples, donned the VR visor, and got online to Arnie. As I waited for the connection to be made, I thought over all that he’d e-mailed me about this stuff over the past few days. As Arnie had explained it to me, a laser imaging rig would project holograms of us into the programmed VR simulation and we’d be able to interact with it and each other accordingly. Sounded good to me. Arnie’s words began to appear on the computer screen....

“Okay, Rob, press ‘ENGAGE’ and let’s fire her up!”

Wondering what imaginative scenario the programmers had fashioned for us, I pressed ENGAGE. I was rewarded by a burst of light on my retinas, an unpleasantly vertiginous feeling of dislocation, and what I would’ve sworn was the faint whiff of corflu. When my vision returned I found myself sitting at a table in what appeared to be a hotel bar, an odd place for the programmers to have located their game. The detail, though, was amazing, many orders of magnitude better than anything I’d ever encountered before. All the other people in the bar looked completely real, their expressions, body language, and the low murmur of their conversations being utterly convincing. Everything was perfect.

Too perfect.

Looking down, I saw that I had a pad and pen in my hands. I had been drawing, and in a style that while not my own was still instantly recognisable to me. The hands that held the pad and pen were thinner than mine and, I realised with a sudden queasy feeling, so was the body they were attached to. I lurched to my feet, only then noticing just how new yet old-fashioned everything looked, and staggered off in search of a toilet. I found one and, in the mirror over one of the handwash basins, my suspicions were confirmed. The face in the mirror wasn’t mine. But I recognised it. He looked maybe thirty years younger than when I’d last seen him, a few weeks before his death, but the face was unmistakably that of Arthur Thomson.

“A restroom?!” said a voice behind me, “What sort of games are you supposed to play in a men’s restroom? Well, that can played by all the family, that is.”

“Hello, Arnie,” I said, turning around. He looked exactly the same as always.

“Atom?” he whispered, his eyes going wide.

“No. It’s me. Rob. For some reason I look like Arfer, sound like him too, and I don’t think this is a simulation.”

“Of course it is,” replied Arnie, regaining his composure, “Look.” He reached over for the handwash basin. His hand went right through it. “See? It’s just a simulation and in here I’m just a hologram.”

“Yeah, but I’m not.” I rapped on the basin with my fist. It made a very solid noise. “This isn’t a simulation, Arnie. Somehow, my mind’s been projected back through time and entered Atom’s body. This is the past, and you’ve come along for the ride.”

“Far out! I’m still in my office at home, I can tell, and what I’m experiencing as virtual reality through this system is the actual reality you’re now in. This is great!”

“Pardon me if I don’t share your enthusiasm, but I want to know how I got here and how I get home. This wasn’t the other space I expected to get to when I jacked into our computer.”

“Who are you talking to, man?” asked a new voice. I whirled around and saw that someone had entered while I was lost in talk with Arnie. The newcomer was a teenager, tall and thin, gangling and dark-haired.

“Umm, I was talking to my friend here,” I replied, pointing to Arnie. The kid furrowed his brow in puzzlement, then started laughing.

“Oh, I get it,” he said, “he’s your imaginary friend, like James Stewart had in that film. Is he a giant rabbit, too?”

Arnie stepped up and waved his hand in front of the kid’s face, and through it, whistling and whooping at the same time. It was obvious the kid could neither see nor hear him.

“Anyway,” said the kid, “that stuff you were saying about jacking into computers and entering other spaces when I came in was really cool. Could be a book in that stuff, y’know.” He ambled over to a urinal, took a piss, and then left, nodding to me on the way out. As he did so, something fell to the floor. I picked it up. It was a convention name-badge. The convention I was at was PACIFICON II.

“Holy shit, Rob!” said Arnie, “This is the 1964 Worldcon!”

“And that’s not all. Look at the name on the badge.” He did. It read: William Gibson.

“Ummm, that’s not possible,” said Arnie. “Bill Gibson first gafiated in 1963. He wasn’t at PACIFICON II.”

“What the hell is going on here?” I whispered.

“I don’t know,” replied Arnie, grimly, “but I know how we can find out.”

Arnie’s scheme to test whether or not I’d really time-travelled was simplicity itself. At his suggestion, I phoned through a small ad to be run in the personals column of the *Optic*, a Las Vegas newspaper. Since today was Sunday 6th September 1964, Arnie only had to have someone seek it out in the Monday 7th September edition in the papers archives. As soon as I’d done this, Arnie vanished and I went up to my/Atom’s hotel room and ran through what I knew about this convention.

PACIFICON II was the worldcon whose committee had barred Walter Breen on the basis of then unsubstantiated allegations that he was a child molester, an action that had split US fandom pretty much in two. On the one side were Breen’s defenders, the Opposition, who had argued that as none of the allegations had been proven and no criminal charges ever brought, Breen had to be considered innocent until proven otherwise; while on the other side were those who supported the committee’s decision on the grounds that given the nature of the allegations against Breen it was better to be safe than sorry. The affair, known as either the Breen boondoggle or the Breendoggle, had caused a lot of damage, weakening fandom as a whole and ending many old friendships. Sighing, I turned on the small black and white TV in the corner and watched an interview with Robert Kennedy, who’d resigned as Attorney General a few days ago in order to run for the Senate, before switching channels to an episode of *I Love Lucy*. Arnie returned just as it was finishing.

“Well, the message in the *Optic* confirms it, Rob. ‘AK phone home – Luke Skywalker’, indeed!” He laughed. “Still, more importantly I now know what’s going on. While I was away, I got an e-mail message, sent via an anonymous remailer, from someone claiming to be from Cyberex and calling himself ‘Deep Thoat’.”

“Deep Thoat?!”

“Yeah, turns out the guy used to be a pretty well known fan, though he won’t say who. Anyway, for the past few years he’s been working in the ‘Exotic Projects’ section of Cyberex, where they give their people free rein to work on any idea, however wild, that might one day deliver up a new technology that the company can exploit. Seems our boy hit paydirt. He came

up with a working method of time travel that, as we already figured out for ourselves, involves switching the traveller's mind with that of someone in the past. Only thing is, first time he tried out the prototype there was an accident."

"What sort of accident?" I asked, uneasily.

"He was in that first rig, wondering which historic event he should visit first, when he started thinking about fanhistory and the fannish events it might be fun to drop in on. As he was thinking this, the prototype auto-timer cut in and turned the rig on. Only thing was he hadn't quite figured out the correct calibration back then, so instead of projecting his mind back through time it sent a powerful psychic burst across the period and events he'd been thinking about, one which affected the sub-consciousnesses of various people throughout fanhistory and began altering the course of events."

"Wow!"

"Wow, indeed. Because of feedback, he knew what had happened the instant it did, and that someone was going to have to go back and put things right. Thanks to the accident he was now a kind of psychic Typhoid Mary so any attempt by him to put things right could only make them worse. No, he needed someone who knew their fanhistory to do the job. That's where we came in. Without the knowledge of his bosses – they have no idea the project is anywhere near as advanced as it is, anyway – he shipped two of the mark II units to me under the subterfuge that they were part of a gaming system, getting me to send one to someone outside the US so that if Cyberex find out about the one I've got and come after it there's still one that, hopefully, will stay beyond their reach."

"Far out!"

"Yeah, and there's more. Some of the effects of the accident were fairly minor, like the gaffiated Bill Gibson suddenly deciding to drop in on PACIFICON II, but others weren't. Which is why you're here. You're automatically drawn to times and places where significant damage has occurred so that there's a chance of putting it right, and some real damage was done here. Bad as the Breendoggle we remember was, what now happens here makes it much worse."

"How do you know that?"

"Because that's what it now says in the fanzines from back then. According to Deep Throat, the effects of the altered past start seeping into the present first in the fanzines and then, if you fail to put things right, the full

blown effects sweep over us like a wave and everything gets altered. So I know what the crucial event was because I just read it in *Atom Abroad*, Arthur's trip report."

"So what was it?"

"Tonight, at the awards banquet, Ted White is going to get up and read out a blistering attack on the PACIFICON committee drafted by others in the Opposition. This really pours oil on burning waters, causes a wave of outrage that leads even more people to join one side of the feud or the other, even over in England, and it really does plunge all fandom into war. The resulting devastation is tremendous, with a consequent shrinking of fandom and conventions such that when *Star Trek* fandom appears on the scene a few years from now it easily absorbs our enfeebled fandom into its own. It's the end of fandom as we know it. Planet Earth, fannish population in the thousands, all Trekkie."

"God, what a horrible future!"

"That's right. And only you can prevent it from coming to pass, Rob."

"Was your 1964 self at PACIFICON, Arnie?"

"No, I was too young and poor to make the trip, even if I hadn't decided to stay away. I got into fandom in March of 1963 by dint of co-editing a fanzine with Lenny Bailes. I found out about the Breendoggle one Sunday after an ESFA meeting when a group at the next table began reading Donaho's 'Letter from the PACIFICON II Committee' aloud. I met Breen at Discon, and though he seemed a bit of an eccentric and bohemian, I'd found him friendly. Right from the start, I didn't like the idea of conviction without hard evidence or fair trial. Not that I was really in any position to do more than indicate where I stood, or that anyone but a few other neos would've cared, anyway. About a year later, when I was getting pretty plugged into fandom and had become a Fanoclast, I came into more direct contact with Walter's defenders, Ted White and Les Gerber, and a little later rich brown, who carried the fight on on behalf of the Fanoclasts. I was pretty much still a rookie in their eyes, so I wasn't expected to inject myself into the controversy."

We were both silent for a moment, reflecting on what he'd said, before I pulled myself to my feet, taking care to avoid catching my reflection in the wall mirror. Arnie noticed my reluctance and gave me a quizzical look, but he said nothing.

"I think it's time," I said, "for me to go and save Fandom As We Know

It.”

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[part 2 was never written]

- 3 -

“Looks like we’ve done it,” said Arnie, breathing a sigh of relief. “The fanzines are all back the way we remember them. For now, anyway.”

“Good,” I said, turning and staring at my reflection in the mirror for only the second time since I’d arrived in 1964. Arnie looked at me curiously.

“Just what is it with you and mirrors anyway, Rob?”

“Avedon and I got to know Atom pretty well during the 1980s,” I replied, staring wistfully at my reflection, “and we became close. We were both at his funeral.”

“Ah!” said Arnie, understanding now.

“That’s the trouble with time travel,” I sighed, “the past is full of ghosts.” I reached out to the reflection and our fingertips, Atom’s and mine, met at the surface of the glass. “Goodbye, old friend,” I whispered. I stood there for a few seconds, lost in thought, before turning abruptly from the mirror. “Okay, Arnie, get us out of here.”

“Press RESET, guys,” said Arnie, to the Vegnants that only he could see.

There was an implosion of light, the faint odour of corflu, and when I opened my eyes... I was somewhere else. In front of me stood a naked man. As I watched, he gathered up his fallen towel from the floor, wrapped it around his waist and, with as much dignity as he could muster, turned and marched into the other room. Next to me someone laughed.

“Well, you certainly surprised Tucker, Lee!*” he chuckled.

Lee? I looked down at myself, my sudden certainty as to where I was and *who* I was instantly confirmed.

“Oh boy,” I sighed, “here we go again...”

(2002)

* Like many other fans, Wilson “Bob” Tucker had assumed Lee Hoffman was male and was taken aback when they eventually met. See Fancyclopedia 3 for more on both. ♦ RH/DRL

Afterword

The reason this was never completed was that I got cold feet. The Breendoggle was still a sore point with many people in 2002, yet here I was blithely intending to write a piece of fan fiction weaving in and out of what actually went down at the 1964 Worldcon. It was only after I'd written the opening and closing sections above that I really sat down to consider the meat of the story. That was when I belatedly realised just how many toes this had the potential to tread on and decided to abandon it.

I don't actually regard *Star Trek* fans with the horror you might assume from this tale. They just happened to suit my purposes. Also, I couldn't resist riffing on *First Contact*, my favourite *Star Trek* movie, with that "Planet Earth, fannish population in the thousands, all Trekkie" line.

Something else I couldn't resist was adding the quotes from *Relapse #20* (Autumn 2012) used at the beginning of this tale, though everything else remains unchanged.

Oh, and for anyone wondering, the end scene was a tease. The next tale was going to open with me expressing my relief at putting things right without specifying exactly what, then teleporting out to delve into something in UK fanhistory.

How I Met...

Mark Plummer (Number one in an occasional series)

I am often asked, “Just how did you meet Nic Farey?”

Of course, I do not use “often” in its strictly literal sense. I am often asked “Oh, where’s Claire?”, and I am rarely asked to recite the contents of the July 1939 issue of *Astounding*, and the frequency with which I am asked about Nic sits somewhere between the two. But as the enquiry about *Astounding* can easily be resolved by consulting the Internet or a suitable reference work (or indeed page 7 of this very fanzine), and as it is difficult to give a definitive answer to the question about Claire – although right now it’s “Downstairs, deactivating some out-of-date Christmas crackers” – I have decided to address the question of Nic once and for all.

I first met Nicodemus Alfalfa Farey – it was many years before he allowed me to call him Nic – in Paris just before the Revolution. I was working for an elderly Neapolitan greengrocer who paid me a pittance to sell second-hand onions to poor Polish émigrés in the fifth arrondissement, while he was apprentice third flugelhorn in the band of the Swiss Guards. He was widely regarded as a promising musician and had already had an audition to replace Brian Jones in the Rolling Stones – this was during the short-lived period when Keith Richards was enamoured of guitar-and-flugelhorn music – but there was also a dark side to his past. The word on the street was that he had been born under a bad sign – and I believed it, especially after he showed me the sign, which said “Matrenity Wrad” in ill-formed and shaky serif letters. He told me that the sign-writer had been an elderly Pole suffering from bad acid reflux as a consequence of eating second-hand onions of dubious provenance, and it was only many years later that I learned that it had in fact been crafted by a distant ancestor of James Bacon.

I was as surprised as anybody when Nic left Paris suddenly that autumn evening, and I never knew exactly what precipitated his flight. I have heard it said that there are numerous hints in the society columns of the Parisian papers of the day but in truth I felt then – as I do now – that I would rather remain in ignorance of the true circumstances. All I know is that the resulting

vacancy for an apprentice third flugelhorn in the band of the Swiss Guards was not advertised and to this day has never been filled in the conventional manner. Rather, when necessary for official parades and the like, the gap in the ranks has been filled by a succession of life-size cardboard cut-outs of a junior minister of the interior. These had been produced as a promotional item for the signing tour following publication of the minister's monograph on the need for dietary variety amongst Polish émigrés, and had been massively over-ordered by an ambitious functionary at the publishing company who was only too glad to find this alternative use for them.

I confess that I often lost track of Nic in the decades that followed Paris. His Prague years, for instance, remain largely a mystery. He was working as a cockroach in Franz Kafka's Bar, that much is true. But beyond that I know nothing. I heard that he fought the Austro-Hungarian oppressors alongside Garibaldi's red-shirts. The red-shirts were remarkably tolerant of this as they were themselves fighting the Sardinians, but Nic always had that effect on people. I also know that he spent the spring of 1878 in the Belgian town of Arras, as later he often spoke of the good time he'd had there.

But from time to time we found ourselves in the same city. There were bacchanalian evenings in Tirana where we drank local wine and danced with wild Turkish women – and, in Nic's case and on one particularly memorable occasion, a remarkably tame and generally compliant turkey. We lived awhile in Geneva of our own accord, and when the cafes closed Nic would ride his bicycle across the city and sit beneath Spike's window, romantically serenading her with selections from Frank Zappa albums arranged for solo flugelhorn. I never had the heart to tell him that Spike had returned to California three months previously.

It was the summer of 1914 when he invited me to join him in Sarajevo and that is how we came to be drinking Jim Beam in a street café from which we witnessed Gavrilo Princip's attempt to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and thus we were amongst the first to know that the attempt had failed. The Archduke was not in the car that day; his place had been taken by a cardboard cut-out (Franz Ferdinand shared a publisher – and thus an overzealous publicity department – with the French junior minister of the interior). His wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, was not so fortunate. Her own book – a fictionalised account of the life of a duchess trying to make sense of her marriage to a man who is unsure whether he is a member of the nobility or an architectural feature that spans a space while supporting weight

– had been deemed too progressive for early twentieth century tastes. The manuscript languished unpublished in various archives for nearly ninety years and had been entirely forgotten until it resurfaced tucked inside a bundle of SFWA newsletters that were donated to the Science Fiction Foundation in Liverpool in 2002. It was duly published to great acclaim and won the Orange Prize for fiction in 2005 – but it was too late for the Duchess who died in a hail of bullets that June day.

Sophie’s fate, though, proved to be less politically significant than that of the cardboard cut-out. A full government enquiry into the affair revealed that the Archduke had been represented by a cardboard stand-in at all official functions since at least 1911, while the man himself had retired from public life entirely and was living as a commoner in Paris where he sought to fulfil his dream of being appointed to the position of apprentice third flugelhorn in the band of the Swiss Guards. The people of Australia-Hungarania were appalled by the years of deception and rose up against their government.

All of Europe was plunged into war and Nic was held responsible, entirely unfairly I should add, and so he conceived the idea that we should flee to Kyrgyzstan. His arguments were sound: that the country was unlikely to be invaded as nobody would be able to spell it correctly in any military orders, and anyway it would not be possible to invade a country that did not then exist. His theories proved correct; but the latter point worked against us as we would be unable to leave the non-existent proto-nation until the republic declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

At first we lived in a succession of taverns in the capital city of Bishkek, but after a trivial argument over a grapefruit I left Nic and went to the south to seek my fortune. Luck was with me as I was adopted by a wealthy but childless onion factor. He was keen to expand into the export and second-hand market and welcomed my expertise; and when he died I inherited the business.

Nic’s fortunes in those years were more mixed, as I learned from a series of regular if routinely under-stamped postcards. At first he made a meagre living selling life-size – and slightly wine-stained – cardboard cut-outs of a French junior minister of the interior that he had purloined some years before. Yet even in those days of austerity his generous nature showed through. When James Bacon passed through town in 1923 as part of his sf fandom outreach project (<pop> “Can’t stop now, bye-o” <ping>) Nic donated two cut-outs to the scheme. One was later sold to raise funds, and the

other has undetectably stood in for Steve Green at fan fund auctions since 1978.

But those were lean years. In desperation Nic sold his flugelhorn to buy alcohol; and then six months later sold his alcohol to buy a flugelhorn. He would sit dejectedly beneath balconies in case Spike was on them. He bombarded Paul Simonon with poorly recorded demo tapes of his own – characteristically flugelhorn-dominated – arrangement of ‘Rock the Casbah’, but never received a reply, presumably because the tapes were invariably delivered to an uncomprehending Paul Simon by mistake.

It was to be many years before we reconnected, a chance encounter at the Eighth Annual International Onion and Flugelhorn Festival which had been relocated from El Paso to Bishkek at the last minute. Entirely coincidentally, it was also the day that independence was declared and so we took our chance to finally escape that god-forsaken country now that it formally existed.

We went first to England, where we stayed with Graham Charnock for six months during which time nothing happened. Or was our host Rob Jackson? It is so difficult to tell. But we realised we had grown apart during the Kyrgyzstan years, and so we finally parted. I moved to Croydon in south London where I set up a small antiquarian onion shop, and Nic crossed the ocean to America. Arriving on New Year’s Day in 1993, he stepped off the boat and on to Ted White’s foot. When last I heard he had found his way to Las Vegas – it only took him three-and-a-half days to hitchhike from Saginaw, an achievement that has never been properly acknowledged – and I presume that he lives there still.

And now, when next year the Twenty-Eighth Annual International Onion and Flugelhorn Festival comes to Sunnyvale in California, not all that far distant from Las Vegas, I wonder... will we meet again?

(2010)

Conclusions

So, having come to the end of my ramble through the decades what have I learned about traditional fan fiction? Well, it could be humorous or have serious intent; could be an epic or just a few paragraphs long; could feature real fans, fictional characters, or a mixture of both; and while its primary home is the printed page, that impulse can manifest in other ways. It's also become clear that there are different types or categories. Fan fiction can be satirical, parodic, allegorical, accusative, or performative. It could extrapolate from the present, look to the past, or make fandom a physical place. But, ultimately, for all its many permutations, fan fiction falls into two basic categories: commentary or whimsy. Or to put it more simply, either it has something to say about fandom, fans in general, or specific fans – or it doesn't.

It's obvious that as a form, traditional written fan fiction has been declining since the middle of the 1960s to the point where it now barely exists, but it's a thread that has wound through the history of fandom since the beginning. As such, it's as worthy of consideration as any other aspect, hence this volume....

...which is more or less where I'd intended to conclude things, until I started wondering what a fan-fictional analogue of present day SF fandom might look like. The Fandom City described in "Fiawol, My Lovely" was pre-internet, but how might it appear now, two decades into the twenty-first century? And what would Rex Rotary think of the changes? There was only one way to find out.

It might appear perverse to present a brand new piece of fan fiction here after essentially declaring the death of the form, and including a third piece by me is deplorably self-indulgent, but what more appropriate ending could this volume have?

(Note: This tale was inspired by, but is not a judgment on, the SF pro and fan community as it exists two decades into the twenty-first century. In the world it depicts they have cellphones, email, and basic websites, but not social media)

The Chronarian Gambit

(or: The Case of the Vandalised Volume) A Rex Rotary Mystery

.I.

The name's Rotary, Rex Rotary. I'm a private investigator. And I'm Fandom City's best. Boastful? Not when it's the truth. I have no more time for false modesty than I do for Morris dancing, rap "music" or mimes. Unfortunately I have plenty of time for everything else these days because business has been slacker than a neofan's jaw on meeting his first pro. It would be nice if my skills had ever brought me long-term material success, but I can't even afford to hire a secretary.

I'd been reduced to checking the personal ads in *The Fandom Chronicle*, in hopes of finding someone I could offer my very reasonably priced services to. The *Chronicle* had once been the city's main newszine but these days, even under the brilliant editorship of Langdon Ford it was at best number three, with *Locum* and *Folder 550* vying for the crown. At the moment both seemed preoccupied with the upcoming mayoral race, with *Locum* backing incumbent Amy Zotzynski and *Folder 550* her challenger Lisa Folsom. I referred to the pair as "the blonde" and "the brunette" because apart from their hair there wasn't much to tell them apart physically. Yeah, yeah I know it's sexist to describe women purely in terms of physical characteristics, but the truth is I didn't much care who occupied the big seat at New City Hall; I just wanted them to keep their damn policies to themselves. Like almost everyone in the old part of town, I wasn't happy with the recent resolution they'd passed creating a group – the Naming Improvement Taskforce (NIT) – to look into everyone Fandom City has named a street after, with a view to renaming any where they uncover something they deem "problematic" about those individuals.

Guess who'll be choosing any new names?

Sighing, I threw the newszine down on top of a pile of earlier issues of the *Chronicle* next to my desk awaiting recycling, stretched, yawned, and

poured myself a third cup of coffee. It looked like it was going to be another slow day.

Which is of course when the phone rang. It was Josik Leary.

“Rotary, I need you,” he said, getting straight to the point. “Can you get over here?”

“Already on my way,” I replied, hanging up on him and heading for the door.

I was careful to lock it behind me, not because my office contained anything with significant monetary value – or any at all, really – but because you could never be sure there wasn’t something in your files that someone else would like to get their paws on.

Josik was an old friend, Chief Librarian at the city’s oldest library. He and his partner E.D. had taken on the responsibility of preserving and cataloguing Fandom City’s earliest documents. Referring to the pair as the city’s memory as I and others often do isn’t mere hyperbole. For those of us who care about our past the work they do is vital.

It was a bright and sunny day so I decided to go on foot, which is always my first choice anyway. Walking the streets you got a better feel for the city. By being open to its sounds and smells, by traversing its highways and byways while being ever mindful of the weight of its history, by simply keeping your eyes open, you could take its “pulse”, or so I told myself. I chose a route to the library that I knew would take me past the “Burgess Pies” stall on the corner of Morojo and Youd. Its founder’s face beaming down from the fascia signs of the many outlets across the city was a familiar and reassuring sight. For generations the chain’s premium pork pies have kept us supplied with tasty and affordable high cholesterol street snacks. Since I hadn’t had any breakfast yet a pie would do nicely. Well, that was the idea anyway. When I got there I was dismayed to find it had been replaced by something called “Tammy’s Tofu” whose main product seemed to be something labelled “tofu on a stick”.

“All sticks are made from wood officially certified as 100% recycled and recyclable,” announced a sign on the front of the stall, “while our salt shakers contain only the most Earth-friendly, sustainable and ethically-sourced artisanal salt.”

No. Just... no. Gentrification had been a fact of life in Fandom City for a while now, but I didn’t often rail against it because change was the one constant in life and there was little you could do to halt it. Still, seeing the

results had penetrated this deep into the old part of town was a shock.

Next to the stall was a newsstand that sold candy, so I bought a Yerke bar instead. Not quite as filling as a pie but it would have to do. As I bit into that thick, hard chocolate, I couldn't help remembering the trouble the manufacturer had got into with its last, incredibly ill-judged advertising campaign: "Yerke – It's Not for Femmefans!" Quite apart from the sexism, the use of an outdated term like "femmefan" also raised eyebrows. The protest resulting from this is one of the few times established fans and gentrifiers have come together on anything.

Fandom City's original central district is small enough that I was able to walk the rest of the way to the library in ten minutes or so. I nodded approvingly as I passed by the art deco splendour of the Carr Theatre, which was currently staging a revival of *Scrooge on Ice* (not actually performed on ice) by one of our greatest playwrights. It was the hottest ticket in town with every performance sold out months in advance. Soon, I entered Gernsback Square with its statues of Gillings, Widner, Rosenblum, Hornig and other prominent early citizens, took a right past the boarded-up neo-classical facade of the old City Hall building and headed down Daugherty Street to the Ackerman Library, where I found Josik Leary and E.D. waiting for me.

"We left everything exactly as we found it," said Josik, leading me through to the main reading room.

"Found what?" I said. "You still haven't told me what this is all about."

"*This*," said E.D. gesturing at a table with her right hand.

On the table lay a leather-bound volume, open at the point where several pages had clearly been ripped out. I winced. As a proud citizen and deep believer in the city's traditional values, the sight of such vandalism pained me. What the perpetrator had torn out wasn't merely paper but a piece of our history.

"What is it?" I said, circling the table and examining the volume from all angles.

"A complete run of *Chronal Matters*, the groupzine of the Chronarians." I frowned.

"Chronarians? Never heard of 'em."

"Not many people have. They were an obscure, short-lived group back in the Fifties who had limited interaction with other fans. Their groupzine was distributed exclusively among the membership. So far as we know, this leather-bound collection contains the only surviving copies."

“We think it was a woman who visited yesterday afternoon,” said E.D. “We were otherwise occupied in the next room, so she could easily have done this without us noticing.”

“Description?”

“Slim, medium height, and wearing sunglasses and a headscarf. Which means I can’t tell you anything about the colour of her hair or her eyes. But she was young which, as you know, is unusual for the library.”

I nodded. The fiction section was full of books by authors who’d kept Fandom City entertained for decades, but few younger citizens were interested in anything written before they were born. That applied doubly to old fanzines and anything to do with our history. Oddly, more interest had been shown in that history lately by academics from outside Fandom City. Josik had helped one of them – Professor Slay – with her researches only last week.

“I expect you’ll soon be getting a bunch of young visitors from New City Hall,” I said.

“The NITs? Let ’em come. This is a library, anyone is welcome to do research here regardless of their purpose in doing so. But I refuse to be part of a witch hunt. If they’re looking for dirt they can dig it up themselves.”

I picked up the vandalised volume, examined the scuffed leather binding, then sniffed it.

“Hmmm, that’s interesting.”

“What is?” asked Josik.

“Oh nothing... at least nothing I want to share with the rest of the class at the moment. How long has the library had the volume?”

“Not long,” said E.D., “it’s a fairly recent acquisition, part of an anonymous donation of old material made to the library a few weeks ago. We get donations all the time – bequests, too, of course. There’s enough in the discretionary fund to cover your fee for finding out who did this.”

“Good to know,” I said, “though I’d have investigated something like this pro bono.”

“We know, but you shouldn’t have to.”

“So, was there anything else of interest in that donation?” I asked, slowly running my finger down the ragged stump of the torn out pages.

“Not really, no,” said E.D. “It was mainly easy to find stuff from the period that we already had multiple copies of.”

“I don’t suppose either of you know what was on the missing pages?”

“Fraid not. We catalogued and shelved the volume two days ago but neither of us had done more than glance at the contents.”

“Then I think the first thing I should do is sit in a corner and read through the rest of it. Perhaps that will give me some idea why it was targeted.”

“I’ll get you some coffee,” said Josik.

I read slowly and carefully, making notes as I went, so it took me an hour, but eventually I was able to announce:

“I think I’ve found something. Check out these minutes of a meeting that took place just before the missing section.”

“What am I looking for?” asked Josik, taking it from me.

“Among those present was a guy the others referred to as ‘Zotz’.”

Josik frowned.

“Short for Zotzynski, maybe?”

“That would be my guess. Zotzynski is a pretty unusual name, so he could be a relative of our current mayor.”

“You think it could’ve been her took the pages?” said E.D. “But why would she? What could the Chronarians have done in the 1950s so bad that she was afraid of it getting out today?”

“That, as they say, is the sixty four thousand dollar question. And if I’m going to answer it I’ll need to start with the P.I.’s best friend – the phone directory.”

Josik handed me the library’s copy of the Fandom City Directory and I turned immediately to the page containing names starting with “z”.

“All the others were in uniform during the war except for Zotz. He was the youngest Chronarian and was only a child at the time. That being so, there’s an outside chance he’s still with us and... damn.”

“What is it?” asked E.D.

“The only Zotzynski in there is the mayor. OK, then let’s see if there are any relatives of the others living in the city.”

A check turned up two possibles, so I took out my phone and rang them both, Josik and E.D. listening avidly to my end of our brief conversations.

“Well?” said Josik.

“Neither is any relation,” I said, “but both were surprised to be asked if they were related to a member of the Chronarians again.”

“Again?”

“A reporter – or, at least, someone claiming to be a reporter – phoned

both of them with the same query last year.”

.II.

OUTRAGE AT LIBRARY, read the headline on the afternoon edition of *Folder 550*. WHAT IS THE MAYOR TRYING TO HIDE? asked the subhead.

I stared at the newszine in disbelief. I’d been passing a newsstand when the headline had caught my eye. It was barely two hours since my meeting with Josik and E.D., two hours I’d spent with the library’s business directories, but there was the story in all its particulars, the reporter identifying the mayor as the person who had ripped out the pages and identifying some dark secret concerning “Zotz” as the reason why. I hadn’t gone to the press with any of this and I knew Josik and E.D. wouldn’t, so how...? I found the answer buried in the story. The reporter who broke it – Dashondra Jones – had been in the next aisle over at the library, researching another story, when she overheard us talking. Eavesdropping, she had taken notes of everything we discussed.

Ghudammit. I had hoped to conduct my investigations quietly, but the cat was out of the bag now.

An hour later I was standing at a window in the reception area outside the mayor’s office on the fifth floor at New City Hall, which is how long it had taken me to get here on the subway. The mayor herself lived even further out, so I was glad we weren’t doing this at her home. While her harried secretary was fielding telephone calls behind me, I was staring out over the new part of town. It certainly was impressive. It dwarfed the old part, a bright and gleaming metropolis with new buildings going up everywhere as far as the eye could see. It was gentrification on a massive scale. Unfortunately, gentrifiers everywhere operate the same way, first moving into old, often run-down areas, tarting them up and – when not displacing the original inhabitants – riding roughshod over any existing culture and imposing their own. Once upon a time the rest of the world had hardly known Fandom City existed; now *everyone* knew. However, what they were seeing was not our traditional culture but the new one being presented to the world in our name.

Turning from the window, I took a seat and picked up a leaflet from the pile on the adjacent table. This had been produced by the mayor’s PR team and on the front was a photo of Amy Zotzynski with husband John Mason.

He was a reporter who worked for *Locum*, and someone twenty years older than her. Inside was the expected puff-piece that talked about her life and achievements in glowing terms. What it didn't touch on was how her party, which she had started, revolved around her to an extent unprecedented in city politics. Lisa Folsom's opposition party was just as new but seemed far more balanced, not that I liked their policies any better. If Lisa died tomorrow – a very real possibility given her love of extreme sports – you knew the party would be able to carry on without her, something I was far less certain of in Amy's case.

Perhaps the most intriguing thing about the two women was that they had met in college when they roomed together and had been good friends then. Only afterwards had politics driven them apart.

During a brief respite from the incessant ringing of the phone, the secretary looked over at me.

"The mayor is ready to see you now, Mr Rotary," he said. "please go through."

This I did. As I entered her office, the mayor rose from behind her desk to greet me. On that desk, next to her appointments diary, was the latest edition of *Folder 550*.

"Mr Rotary," she said, shaking my hand. "Glad to meet you."

"Mayor Zotzynski," I replied, "I'm both pleased and a little surprised you agreed to see me. Would you have if not for this affair at the library?"

"Residents of the old part of town are just as much my constituents as those of the new, but given the report in *Folder 550*, I was expecting you. It wasn't me, by the way."

A predictable denial. She might even be telling the truth. Who knows? Not me; at least, not yet.

"I have to ask: where were you yesterday afternoon?"

"At home, in bed. A small touch of food poisoning."

"Alone?"

"Unfortunately yes, which from your point of view means I have no alibi. My husband was out. He had a meeting at his lodge, the second in two days, which was unusual."

"His lodge? St. Fantonio?"

"Of course."

The Sons of St. Fantonio is our equivalent of the Masons, with equally lurid rumours about what members get up to together in secret ceremonies

held behind closed doors. Despite the name it has always welcomed women too.

“Are you a member?”

“No. John has offered to sponsor me for membership but it always seemed more politic not to join – better optics.”

“And are you related to this ‘Zotz’, that you’re aware of?”

“Yes. Abel Zotzynski – ‘Zotz’ as the others called him – was my grandfather.”

“Then you knew about the Chronarians?”

“I inherited my grandfather’s papers when he died ten years ago. Among them were copies of *Chronal Matters*. I was home when the story broke, so I went looking for them. I always kept the loose issues together in a cardboard document folder, which I can’t find. They’re missing. I can only assume someone stole them, but I’ve no idea when. I haven’t looked at them since I first got them, so they could have been gone that long.”

“And what did they contain that could be used to embarrass you now?”

“I have no idea. I started reading them expecting book reviews, critical essays, poetry and other good stuff like that. Instead they were full of gossip about group members, in-jokes, and chatty reports on their activities. A waste of time if you didn’t know them, so I never read very far.”

“Hmmm. If, as you claim, you weren’t responsible for stealing the missing pages, who do you think was and what would be their motive?”

“Isn’t it obvious? It has to be Lisa Folsom, and it was done to discredit me. The rumours are already starting. What did it say in *Folder 550*? Ah yes: ‘What is the mayor trying to hide?’. Well, I’m not trying to hide anything. I’m as eager to find out who’s behind this as you are.”

I stared at her, trying to gauge whether or not she was telling the truth, but no one is better than a politician at faking sincerity. The successful ones are almost impossible to read.

.III.

After leaving the mayor’s office I set up an appointment with Dashondra Jones via phone then spent several hours checking out the list of businesses I’d looked up at the library. As usually happens, it was the very last one on the list that had the information I was looking for and gave me a name. That was one piece of the puzzle accounted for, now for the next one....

It was early evening when I made it to New Bixel Street and the Tucker Hotel where I'd asked Dashondra Jones to meet with me in the Glicksohn Bar. I had a quick word with the receptionist first, then made my way through to the bar. She was already there when I arrived, sitting at a table, her eyes closed as she concentrated on whatever was coming through her headphones. I ordered a couple of pints of Hoare's Best and carried them over to her table. Placing one in front of her, I touched her lightly on the shoulder to get her attention, momentarily startling her. As she took off her headphones I caught a snatch of what she was listening to. To my surprise it wasn't music – and no, I'm not talking about rap. I was intrigued.

"Hello, Mr Rotary," she said as I took the chair across the table from hers, "and thanks for the drink. I'm guessing you have questions about my newszine report."

Getting right to the point. I like that.

"You guess right," I replied. "Being in place to overhear what you did and so have speculation about the mayor's involvement get out as fast as it did was awfully convenient for anyone who wanted to embarrass her. You'll understand why I might find that a little suspicious, particularly given that *Folder 550* is supporting the mayor's opponent in the upcoming election."

"I can see how it might look that way, yes, but I'm a freelancer. I don't work for the newszine and I don't support the same party."

"You don't?"

"No, I'm a NFFFer."

"The New Fandom Freedom Forum?" I said, surprised. "I didn't think any younger voters supported them anymore."

"Young voters are not a bloc," she replied, sounding irritated, "and I like their policies. I do a lot of volunteer work at their H.Q."

"They're a shadow of the party they used to be."

"You would know. You played a part in weakening the old parties, after all."

"You know about that?"

"I do. I'm actually interested in the history of Fandom City so of course I've looked into how we got to where we are now from where we were then."

"So you just happened to be doing research in the library of your own accord when you overheard my conversation with Josik and E.D.?"

"I didn't say that. As it happens I was there as the result of a tip, though on another story entirely."

“So what was this story, and who gave you the tip?”

“I’m sorry but as a journalist I can’t reveal my sources. It’s the same for you as a P.I. when it comes to your clients, so I’m sure you understand.”

.IV.

Later that night, after darkness fell, I could be found sitting on a bench opposite the apartment block I was staking out on a hunch. It was a brand new building in what used to be Laneyburg before the gentrifiers who gradually displaced the original inhabitants had decided the name was “problematic”. By that time most of the old buildings had been demolished to make way for new development so there were few of the original inhabitants left to protest the renaming. As I sat there I mentally reviewed all I had learned about this case so far and tried to make the various pieces fit into a coherent whole. The one that worried me was Dashondra Jones’s revelation she was a NFFFer. That was important somehow, I could feel it in my bones, but its significance eluded me.

The sight of someone emerging from the building opposite woke me from my reverie. This was it. Ordinarily you might have to stake out a joint for several nights, but if this was going to happen it was going to happen tonight. I fell in behind my target, maybe a hundred yards or so back, and began tailing them. The game was afoot.

In no time at all we were in the old part of town and heading down streets I had known for decades. I was pretty certain I knew where we were headed, but seeing the Atom Art Gallery in the distance confirmed it. We hung a left onto New Bixel, entering the street from the opposite end to the one I’d used earlier in the day, though the destination was the same: The Tucker Hotel.

I followed my quarry into the lobby, staying out of sight as they entered an elevator, not emerging until the doors closed and it began its ascent. I watched the numbers over the elevator doors climb. It stopped on the fifth floor. Walking back to the reception I gave a smile as the receptionist I’d talked to that afternoon gave me a nod and turned the hotel guest book around so it was ready for my inspection as I reached the desk. Fandom City – the old city – was *my* city, and I’d prowled its sometimes mean streets long enough to be on friendly terms with all manner of useful people. I ran a finger down the list of those who had checked in this afternoon, stopping at a

familiar one, one booked into a room on the fifth floor.

“I’m assuming only one of them went out tonight?” I said.

The receptionist nodded. It was all beginning to make sense now. I just needed to make one final phone call before I turned in for the night.

“Rotary?” said Josik. “How’d you know I’d still be at the library?”

“You always work late,” I said, “which works for me. There’s something I’d like you to look up for me. It concerns St Fantonio and its good Lords and Ladies. Oh, and I need to get in touch with Peter Carrot, too.”

“Gone to the glades,” said Josik.

That meant he had gafiated – the term we use for when someone moves away from the city.

“I expected him to be one of those old fans and tired who retires to a cottage on the outskirts with a name like ‘Dunpubbin’ and spends all his time indexing his collection.”

“Nope, but he doesn’t live far from the city....”

.V.

Peter Carrot was Langdon Ford’s predecessor as editor of the *Fandom Chronicle*, a newszine of the old school, and Josik had been right; he didn’t live far from the city. I took a taxi to see him first thing the next morning, checking my phone on the way. I smiled. Josik had texted the information I’d asked for, and it confirmed what I’d suspected.

I found Peter Carrot in the garden attached to the strangely familiar apartment block where he lived. He glanced up as I approached him down the path.

“Rex Rotary,” he said, straightening up and offering his hand. “It’s been years.”

“Too many,” I said, shaking his hand.

Far too many. The garish clothes and long hair I remembered appeared to be long gone.

“I was just tending my mushrooms,” he said indicating the patch of ground he’d been bent over. “It takes up most of my time these days.”

“Did Josik Leary tell you I was coming?”

“He did, and why. Come inside and we’ll see if I can help you with what you’re looking for.”

His home on the third floor was neat and well kept. On a shelf rested

books about unexplained phenomena and a bound set of his celebrated fanzine *Albumen*.

“Welcome to my flat,” he said, showing me in and putting the kettle on.

“Flat?” I replied. “Not apartment.”

“No. They call them apartments these days because it sounds fancier, but it’ll always be a flat to me.”

“That’s it!” I said, snapping my fingers. “That’s why this place seems familiar. It looks just like the buildings they’ve been putting up in the new part of Fandom City.”

“Uh-huh,” said Carrot. “There are those who say fandom has taken over the world, but I sometimes think it’s the world that has taken over fandom. It’s a long time now since it was last a proud and lonely thing. Tea?”

“Thanks,” I said.

“I pulled out my photo albums from thirty years ago,” he said. “They’re on the table. Why don’t you sit down, go through them, and see if you can find what you’re looking for while I brew us a pot.”

By the time he joined me at the table with our tea I had indeed found what I was looking for, just as I remembered them.

“Do you mind?” I said, taking out my phone.

“Go ahead.”

I took photos of the snaps I’d located, then put it away again. Peter eyed me shrewdly.

“It still excites you, doesn’t it?” he said. “The chase.”

“What can I say? I’ve always liked solving puzzles, and the more intricate the puzzle the more satisfying it is to solve.”

“So you’ve never thought of retiring?”

“Never. When I leave my office for the final time it’ll be toes up.”

“And after the last of the old town’s residents goes ‘toes up’ I’m sure they’ll bulldoze the place.”

“So you don’t think we can get some sort of heritage status and save the place before then?”

“Those who came after us don’t understand how it used to be a proud and lonely thing to be a fan, or how much of a sanctuary Fandom City was for us back then. How could they? No, they’ll demolish it, build over it, and then forget it.”

“You sound regretful.”

“I am. I may not live in Fandom City any more, but I’d hate to see the

old part of town vanish.”

.VI.

I didn't share Peter's gloomy view of our possible future but it still would have dampened my mood had I not spent most of the trip back to the city planning my next and final move. The last pieces of the puzzle had fallen into place, which meant I just needed one further interview to wrap things up.

I wasn't entirely surprised when Lisa Folsom asked to meet at her apartment that afternoon. She would want to hear what I had to say with no possibility of anyone else overhearing.

“So, are you still investigating that book vandalism?” she asked me after we'd gone through the pleasantries.

“I am, yes.”

“But why? Having heard the volume existed Amy Zotzynski made sure to get to it before the Naming Improvement Taskforce could, and removed the incriminating pages. What more is there to investigate?”

“If things were as simple as you make out, then nothing,” I agreed, “but they're not.”

“What do you mean?”

“I knew something wasn't kosher from the very beginning,” I said. “When I examined that leather-bound volume of *Chronal Matters* it looked old but the leather smelled new. So I went around the small number of binderies we still have in the city, and one of them confirmed he'd bound them together into that volume for a client barely a month ago. That client did a pretty good job of ‘distressing’ the leather but fell down when it came to the smell.”

“I don't understand why binding those old fanzines is significant,” said Lisa.

“It's significant because *Chronal Matters* was always a four-page, two-sheet zine held together with a single staple in the top left corner. Removing an issue or two from a pile of them would hardly be noticed – lots of collections are missing several issues – but ripping them out of a bound volume is both dramatic and hard to miss. And the whole point of the exercise was to ensure this was impossible to miss.”

“Why?”

“Because whatever those pages may or may not have contained, a cover-

up is usually more damaging when discovered than the crime itself.”

“So you’re saying this was all a set-up? But who was responsible?”

“When I visited the mayor, she was surprised to find the copies of *Chronal Matters* she had inherited from her grandfather were missing. Given how rare they apparently are, I’m convinced this was the set that got bound together and then donated to the library. Amy kept them at home where the only two people who had access to it were she and her husband, John Mason. The man who ran the bindery gave me a good description of the customer who brought the fanzines in to be bound. He may have given a false name, but that description matches John Mason.”

“Mason? So you think this was all down to him?”

“No, he was working for the woman who went to the library and tore out the pages. But who was she? It was obvious from the start this whole affair was intended to damage either you or Amy Zotzynski, but not at all obvious which one of you. Either you could have done this to set her up, or she could have done it to make it *look* like you were trying to set her up. Then there’s this.”

I took out my camera and showed her the photos I’d snapped copies of at Peter Carrot’s. The first showed two young men sitting side by side on a couch at a long ago convention; the second showed them kissing passionately. One of them was John Mason.

“Who is that with Mason?” asked Lisa.

“The current leader of the NFFF.”

“Oliver Kent? Wow, I’d hardly have recognised him.”

“He’s gone bald and put on a lot of weight since then, but it’s definitely him.”

“If you think that photo is going to damage either of them in this town you haven’t been keeping up with things. No-one cares about such relationships anymore.”

I gave a little chuckle.

“This will come as a surprise to you I’m sure, but despite your generation believing otherwise no-one cared here thirty years ago either.”

“Then I don’t understand why you showed me those pictures.”

“You will. Getting back to the vandalised volume, there was no point in Mason putting all that work in unless everyone knew about it. Enter Dashondra Jones. It obviously wasn’t a coincidence she was there. She’d been given a tip on another story entirely, one I suspect is fictional, that

necessitated her being in the library and doing research among the shelves where she would be best positioned to overhear us. She refused to tell me who she got the tip from when I asked her citing a reporter's responsibility to protect her sources. Quite right, too. However, she did tell me she did volunteer work for the NFFF and I eventually remembered that Oliver Kent and John Mason had been lovers in their youth. Could Mason have given the tip to Kent, who then innocently passed it on to Jones? If so it seemed probable this had happened at the St. Fantonio lodge meeting the previous day, assuming both men were members. I got Josik Leary to check this out while I visited an old friend to retrieve the photo I needed to prove the connection between them."

"My, you have been busy," said Lisa.

"Whoever planned this had to know about the existence of *Chronal Matters* and what was in those fanzines, since the whole plan depended on that. Amy obviously did, but so did you. Her grandfather died ten years ago, when you were sharing a room together in college and when Amy took delivery of them."

"But you still don't know which of us did the dirty deed in the library, you can't."

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I do. When I visited the mayor's office her appointment diary was open on her desk. Reading upside down is a basic skill for a P.I., so I learned that she and her husband were going to see *Scrooge on Ice*, probably to show herself to voters in the old town, and that they'd booked an overnight stay in The Tucker Hotel. I visited the hotel a little later and asked the receptionist to make note of their comings and goings for me. Then last night I played a hunch and staked out a building. This building. If you and John Mason were working together it was possible you were also lovers. If so then for a risk seeker like yourself, someone who loved extreme sports, the thrill of having sex with your lover in their hotel room while his wife was at the theatre would be irresistible."

"So you followed me?"

"I did. Knowing it was you, it's now also clear that Mason caused his wife's food poisoning and contrived to be out of the house all day to ensure she had no alibi for when the crime was committed."

"Well done," said Lisa Folsom, clapping ironically. "It seems like you've figured out everything."

"Not everything," I replied. "I still don't know what was in those pages

that were torn out.”

“Why, nothing of any interest to anyone, just some boring meeting minutes.”

My eyebrows went up at this.

“Nothing?” I said. “Nothing factual at all?”

Now it was her turn to chuckle.

“You’re behind the times, Mr Rotary. Facts don’t matter anymore. We live in a post-fact age where what you *feel* about something is far more important than how much you may or may not know about it. Your lot say we rush to judgment, are quick to consign people to the outer dark for any transgression, and you’re right. It’s something I took advantage of. People didn’t need to know what Amy was covering up, just that she was covering up *something*. I planned this for a long time. After I told John about *Chronal Matters* and he found the set where Amy had tucked it away, I had him phone around to see if anyone in Fandom City who might be related to a Chronarian had been left copies by that person. Once we were sure no other copies were likely to come out of the woodwork we were in business. In city council I moved for the creation of the NIT, something I knew Amy’s party would go for, because I needed there to be a good reason why she would have vandalised that volume when she did.”

“And the pages you tore out? Where are they now?”

“Shredded and burned, of course. I wasn’t going to take the chance someone might find them. But never mind that, we now need to discuss what happens next. I’m sure you’re intending to take all this to the press, which will give the election to Amy, but what if I offered you something not to do that?”

“If it’s money, don’t bother. I’m already working for a client and when I am I never shaft them. Not only would that be very bad for business but it’s a matter of personal honour and ethics.”

“Oh, I can offer you something far more enticing than money. I know you hate the whole idea of the Naming Improvement Taskforce and I suspect your client does too, but they haven’t even gone into action yet. There’s still time for me to arrange it so they never do. Well, Mr Rotary; what do you say?”

.VII.

FOLSOM IN PLOT TO FRAME MAYOR read the *Chronicle*'s main headline, while beneath it a smaller one read: MAYOR & HUSBAND TO DIVORCE.

Laying the newszine down on my desk, I leaned back in my chair, enjoying the familiar shabby comfort of my office. I'd be tempted to refer to its "faded grandeur" but it had never had any grandeur to fade.

"I hear *Locum*'s letting Mason go, too," I said, sipping my coffee, "and that Lisa Folsom's being asked to stand down as party leader. Couldn't happen to a nicer pair"

"I can't thank you enough for giving me the story," said Dashondra Jones, "but why did you turn down Lisa's offer?"

"Because she destroyed those pages of *Chronal Matters* without a second thought. That's a piece of our history now gone forever, and that matters to me."

"OK, but now the council will deploy the Naming Improvement Taskforce, and I know you don't want that."

"No, I don't. Lang Ford is both a personal friend and very grateful for the scoop he knows I steered your way. He reckons it will triple circulation, at least for a while. As a favour to me he'll be following up with an editorial in tomorrow's edition pointing out that NIT was only instigated by Folsom as part of her plot against the mayor and calling for it to be disbanded. Unfortunately, its remit fits in very nicely with the aims and values of Amy Zotzynski and her party. Still, the *Chronicle* will also be starting a petition, so we'll see what happens."

"And if it doesn't work?"

"Then it doesn't work. Names are just names; they come and they go. Unlike our fanzine heritage."

She was quiet for a moment as she digested this.

"My part of town wasn't just assigned to you, was it?" I said. "You asked for this beat."

"What makes you say that?"

"Firstly you joined the NFFF rather than one of the newer parties, which is unusual in someone your age. Then when we met the other day and you took off your headphones I caught a snatch of what you were listening to. 'The March of Slime' is not something someone of your generation would just casually add to their playlist. All of which tells me you're a lot more traditionally-minded than most of them."

“You’re right,” she sighed. “For all its woeful lack of people of colour, I’ve always been fascinated by the early history of Fandom City, its original culture and all the fans who peopled it back in the day. But don’t tell anyone.”

“Why not?”

“Because to fans of my generation it’s deeply uncool to be interested in something seen as being so retrograde. Or in anything that happened before we were born, if I’m honest.”

“Ah, I remember being young and worried about looking uncool. Fortunately it’s something you grow out of. So I’m guessing you’d like to see *Scrooge on Ice*?”

“If I could get a ticket then yeah, I’d love to.”

“There are advantages to being someone a lot of people owe favours to,” I said, producing a pair of tickets from the inside pocket of my jacket.

Dashondra’s eyes lit up at the sight of them, then she frowned.

“Two?” she said. “You’re not asking me out on a date, are you?”

“God no, I’m old enough to be your father. Also, you’re gay.”

“That’s something I keep on the down low, so how did you...?”

I smiled.

“Hi. The name’s Rotary, Rex Rotary. I’m a private investigator. And I’m Fandom City’s best.”

Appendix

Whatever Happened to Faaanfiction?

rich brown

Faaanfiction, he said. Doesn't it bother you sometimes? I mean, don't you ever wonder whatever happened to faaanfiction?

He was an Old Fan and Tired. I'd never met him, but I thought I knew who he was. Or, at least – for it's not always the same thing, you can be sure – who he had to be. But since I wasn't certain I only wondered, as we walked down the hallway of that particular convention hotel, if there might be someone at the con who might be an old and tired enough fan to recognise him on sight.

Sometimes (he went on), when I have no fanzines to read, or cons to go to, or club meetings to attend, I sit and listen to my beanie-prop twirling in the breeze... and then I have time to wonder about it: Whatever happened to faaanfiction? I mean, precisely when and, more important, why did it disappear from our fanzines? What does it mean to the microcosm now that it has?

Are we doomed or better off without it? And, you know, since this involves me thinking about it for a while, I suddenly get this overwhelming feeling of loss and realise how much I miss it – faaanfiction, I mean.

Had there been some polite way to come right out and ask his name, I would have. I'd've said, "Hey, you're Morgan Botts – right?" or something like that.

But I felt a strange reluctance to do so, which I can't explain even now. Anyway, there was neither opportunity nor time to determine who in our group might have been in fandom long enough to recognise the famed stf-fan inventor. I mean, we were moving at a pretty fair clip down that hallway because, first of all, we didn't want to be in the hallway long enough to be noticed and perhaps followed by a bunch of neos wearing Spock ears, and second, waiting for us, just down the hall and around the corner, was what was supposed to be the best party of the convention.

[Who he really was, was, when you come right down to it, perhaps not

particularly germane to any of the following – my concern was just that, if he were Botts, I felt I would have to drop Redd Boggs a pocsarcd. I mean, Boggs had been wondering, in an aside in one of his fanzines not long (certainly not more than five years) back, if Morgan Botts would have liked light beer. I remembered reading it in one of Redd’s fanzines. “Would Morgan Botts like light beer?” he wondered? (It was an aside but it would have made a good lino.) Well the thing is, you see, this fellow, whoever he was, had said somewhat earlier that he didn’t drink light beer because it was like making love in a canoe – fucking close to water, y’know. That sounded like the sort of thing Morgan Botts might say. But I digress.]

I should say that since this fan (whether or not he was the famed stf-fan inventor Morgan Botts) had been speaking to us with his mouth, he made the extra effort necessary to bleat the “a”s in “faaan”, which in turn is part of the word “faaanfiction”, so that none of us might confuse it with the amateur sf which is (even in this supposedly enlightened day and age) all too frequently to be found in the pages of fanzines [and which, of course, is only fanfiction – with a single “a”].

Not, considering how wistful he spoke, that any of us were likely to have even the slightest confusion about his intended meaning.

As for his question, since no one else replied, I stepped forward to opine as how faaanfiction [I carefully bleated my “a”s] had not actually disappeared or anything. I mean, it was not as though it has completely disappeared – we still got an occasional piece every now and then. We just didn’t see much of it in fanzines these days unless it was Very Well Done... and then, before anyone could interrupt – it didn’t seem anyone wanted to, you understand, but before they could – I went on for a bit about the faaanfiction I could recall reading in fanzines in the past five years or so.

But strangely enough, and contrary to the point I had hoped to make, I was surprised by how few pieces there were to mention. I was as complete as I could be, racking my brain with a pool rack left over from an old Walt Willis pun, but except for a passel of excellent reprints in the renewed *Hyphen*, I could only recall Larry Stark’s excellent piece in *Boonfark* about trufan and a beautiful costume fan, and of course Jeanne Gomoll’s reprinting of Terry Carr/Carl Brandon’s *The Cacher of the Rye*. I vaguely recalled a few others – Philip K Qwertyuiop in *Whistlestar*; a piece by Eric Mayer, somewhere; maybe another piece or two I’ve forgotten by now. But that was about it.

I also went on (at perhaps too great length) about James White's brilliant, evocative and bittersweet "The Exorcists of IF", even though it had been reprinted in that *Hyphen*, because, to my mind, it is without question the finest of a genre which has had many fine pieces, even if you include *The Enchanted Duplicator* (which is something of a Special Case and you probably shouldn't use it even to compare with other kinds of faaanfiction, but – as Buckaroo Banzai put it – no matter where you go, there you are).

In reply, the Old Tired fan said it really made him stop to wonder, because there used to be a lot of faaanfiction in fanzines and now there would seem to be very little. "It really makes me stop to wonder, because there used to be a lot of faaanfiction in fanzines and now there would seem to be very little," is about the way he put it. He even pointed out that there was a time, not so long back, when you could tell if it was a "fanzine" or a pale imitation by whether or not it contained a piece of faaanfiction – nine times out of ten written by the "Irish" (really English) John Berry. (Nowadays you can make the same distinction, at least after the first issue, by whether or not it has a loc by Harry Warner.)

Then someone in our group voiced an idea that perhaps this was because the personal essay was "more durable" than faaanfiction – but in such a way, if you know what I mean, that what I heard was not just "more durable" but "better". More durable?, the Old Tired fan said. Well, yes, I suppose – rather obviously, rather indisputably – that is the case. But why? Because it's in some way "better"? (He, it seems, heard implied just what I'd heard implied.) And anyway, he went on, if that's actually so, how so?

I'd like to say we batted this around for a while or discussed the relative merits of the personal essay vs. faaanfiction in a calm, rational fashion. Just a hallway conversation while we were on our way to what was supposed to be the best party of the con, you might say. I'd at least in part like to be able to say that because, now that I can step back to consider the whole matter dispassionately, I have to admit the two forms seem close to equal in terms of their Potential for Encouraging Good Writing (or what we in the fan trade call the "PfEGW quotient"). Anyway, I can now see how they would both tend to teach similar but somewhat different things about writing generally and certain specific aspects of fiction writing in particular, if that's worth noting. While I can certainly quite easily make a case for all this now, I have to admit I didn't do so then. Two sentences into our "discussion" and we were – or rather, I was – shouting.

Yes, I know fandom's just a goddam hobby and that if there's what's considered a Proper Attitude about things fannish, it's not to take them so seriously that you end up shouting at people when you're discussing them. I guess I can get sercon about my fannishness.

It started with me shouting at the pro-essayist who, once he recovered from surprise at my having raised my voice at him, parried my angry words with a loud disputation of his own. Nothing of course, was resolved thereby – but then, in fandom, that's usually the case. As is, frankly, quite usual with my style of debate, in this instance my argument was complex and convoluted.

I made the nasally inflected and politically correct point that, while our excursions into personal journalism might be considered to stand for the collective fannish intellect, as it were, it would have to follow (as certainly as night does day) that our creation of the genre of faaanfiction must (“of necessity”) be seen as a symbolic representation of the fannish heart. After this profundity, I conceded the oversimplification, in as much as unquestionably both can inspire either laughter or tears – and some of the best of either could and would do both – but even the most gonzo of personal essays (I said) had as its intent the conveyance of some Truth – that is, viz., i.e., and to wit: Myth. Magic. Fantasy. Whimsy. Legend. Dreams.

Personal essays may convey any kind of Truth, either fannish or mundane – and while I suppose they remain Truths, nonetheless, I felt (and feel) faaanfiction is somewhat purer in that it brings us face to face with Truths of our own folk mythos. Personal essays allow us to express our personalities, but faaanfiction fires expression to our souls as mythical, paper beings and at the same time creatures of fabulous fable.

After all, I said, waving my hands excitedly and wiping the spittle off the bottom of my chin, a personal essay can only mention the Tower of Bheer Cans to the Moon, whereas faaanfiction can and must evoke it. Oh, to be sure, the T. of B. C. to the M. was introduced in an editorial Terry Carr wrote in an early *Innuendo*, but other fans played with the idea – and the Tower was constantly being evoked in the faaanfiction of the era, which is really what gave the myth its resonance. Thus, personal essays (I waxed poetic) may be prose vehicles to transport our mundane realities across the rough road of the light fantastic, and of course for that reason are highly valued – particularly those which are skillfully cushioned so as to absorb the more violent bumps of that well known thoroughfare. But faaanfiction (I waxed enthusiastic) is,

by comparison, a magic carpet ride which takes us high above the clouds to provide us with the proper vantage point and perspective from which we may look down upon mundane realities...

I probably would have gone on to opine that faaanfiction could do anything the personal essay can do and then some – had the pro-essayist not brought me up short with a stinging criticism of faaanfiction.

The thrust of this was that faaanfiction demanded its readers have some prior esoteric knowledge of goings on in the microcosm so as to be perfectly understood, and in fact was often written simply to be a vehicle for that form of esoterica. Thus, he said (with a slightly condescending, superior smirk as we proceeded down the hallway and turned the corner), not only did faaanfiction have a dishonest kind of “short cut” not to be found in the personal essay, or even other kinds of fiction, but what would otherwise be considered poor writing. He went on to say this sort of thing was intentionally divisive, designed to put those In The Know on one side and those Not In The Know on the other. At the time I disputed both the front and the back, as well as both sides of this argument loudly – and now, here do so again, albeit quietly and (hopefully) more calmly, lucidly and logically. Not, mind you, that faaanfiction has never been written with deliberate bits of esoterica inserted. Of course it has. But it was simply absurd to claim that either the personal essay or other forms of fiction are excluded from this supposed “failing”. All three of these forms can be deliberately esoteric, rewarding those who bother to explore for the deeper meaning, referencing in-jokes which have been heard before by the majority of the readers (and which would be newly funny to them, in this new context and application, as Jack Benny’s sigh got funnier the more times you saw him do it), so that this was but one of the charms and not one of the failings of the form. But where it exists – in the personal essay, other kinds of fiction or faaanfiction itself – it is simply one of the “givens” or “conventions” of the form. You don’t score a work of that Crazy Buck Rogers Stuff simply because it utilises, with extensive “explanations” for the benefit of newcomers, the concept of an ftl drive. As much as any Worldcon, I deliberately punned, ftl is a science fiction convention – but, unless the author has something new to say about ftl or something relevant to be communicated in the story being told, there’s little point in rehashing what nine out of ten readers already know and what nine out of ten of those remaining can figure out by inference.

And then, where, by way of example, I could have cited any of several

dozen sf stories, instead I went straight to faaanfiction, making extensive reference to “The Exorcists of IF”. Certainly (I continued) “The Exorcists of IF” contained references to fannish happenings, many of which were first recorded in the pages of *Hyphen* in the early and mid-1950s, as well as other fanzines of that period, and certainly it must be obvious that an understanding of these would heighten anyone’s appreciation of the story. But one could perfectly comprehend the point of the tale with a less-than perfect understanding of those references – their complete comprehension was by no means absolutely necessary to understanding that point. Those references conveyed to any perceptive reader that the characters involved had shared better, fun-filled times and the story was no less poignant if those reference were seen as no more than that... and, like anything else written, regardless of the form, what was derived from it was dependent not merely upon the clarity of the writer but the perceptions brought by the reader to what was to be read.

By the time we reached this point in the argument, we had also reached the end of the hall and the door to the room in which The Party was to be held. The first person to reach it from our group had already knocked.

I turned to “Morgan Botts”, if indeed it were he, only to discover that he had abandoned us (and our argument) somewhere along the way.

Too bad – while I still felt reluctant to ask him his name, it had occurred to me as I was making my points that I could simply say the most recent “esoteric” fannish reference I had seen in a fanzine had been the one about Morgan Botts, an aside in a personal essay written by Redd Boggs, rather than in a piece of faaanfiction... and then observe the reaction of this Old Tired fan to see if that gave me any clue.

The dispute had to be left at the door – there being, inside the room, things to alter the state of our consciousness and take our minds off the topic and, if that were not enough, also a number of fans who had not heard any part of the discussion so that, in all, it was a much simpler thing to drop than to attempt to rehash.

Besides which, we entered the room one at a time; the pro-essayist was just before me and, because I was to be the last to go in and was certain – and, as it turned out, was correct in my certainty – that no one would notice, I clipped him behind the right earlobe and left him lying in the hallway because he’d pissed me off and I didn’t want any more of his lip.

But I probably wouldn’t have continued, in any event. Because, as I recall, that was one of the few times when what was supposed to be The

Party of a convention actually turned out nearly to be The Party of the convention. (The party everyone talks and writes about was the one on the following night – on the rooftop of the hotel. I lost my 3"x5" notebook in which I kept room numbers for forthcoming parties during that walk and discussion down that hallway, and so all the next day, whenever people came up to me asking if I knew where the really dynamite parties were going to be held, I said I'd heard there was supposed to be a real bash up on the rooftop that night. However, since I have a memory like a cast-iron sieve, in truth I can't recall what anyone said or did after we walked through the door; I never was too good at remembering those kinds of details anyway. But it was a hell of a fine party, most of the con reports saying it was almost as good as the one the following night on the hotel roof, and all I can say for certain is I don't think I thought too much about the topic during the party, and Morgan Botts (or whoever he was) didn't show up again, or not while I was still there, which was throughout most of it. Nor did he make it to the party on the roof.

But now that convention is over. And sometimes, when there are no fanzines to read, or other cons to go to or club meetings to attend, I sit and listen to my beanie-prop twirling in the breeze... and wonder whatever happened to faaanfiction. It's not, of course, as if it had completely disappeared or anything – we still get an occasional piece every now and again – but it is (I must concede) exceedingly rare. And what I have more or less decided is that, if faaanfiction had once been a beacon which shined its effulgence on every corner of fandom, sometimes casting shadows larger than life itself, then we would have to conclude that, by comparison, these days, it's little more than a candle guttering in the breeze – and the shadow it casts is minuscule indeed. I wonder what, if any, light will come to take its place?

Is it, do you think, that our faaanfiction was never more substantial than a thought or a dream? What happens to thoughts, once expressed? Dreams, once dreamt?

Do we lose them forever – or will we, perhaps, rethink and redream them again a few years down the road?

When these things occur to me, as I've just admitted they do at times, I sit and wonder precisely when and, more important, why faaanfiction may eventually disappear from the microcosm, and what it will mean to us once it has, since faaanfiction gave the breath of life to our myths. I wonder, too, if we have perhaps been too intent on keeping our collective intellect intact

while failing to notice that we may have lost our collective soul.

And since this involves me thinking about it for a while, I suddenly get this overwhelming feeling of loss and realise how much I miss it – faaanfiction, I mean.

(1988)

Fan Fiction in Ansible Editions Ebooks

This list covers only British fanwriters and excludes material contained in the present ebook.

BERRY, John

- 1950s/1960s: The early Goon Defective Agency (GDA) stories including *This Goon For Hire* with Chuck Harris; collected in *The Goon Omnibus* (2017, comprising the first two volumes of Ken Cheslin's five-volume edition)

CLARKE, Arthur C.

- 1942: "A Short History of Fantocracy, 1948-1960" – *Fantast* #12-#14, December 1941, April 1942 and July 1942; collected in *Homefront* (2020)

CLARKE, A. Vincent; all collected in *A Vince Clarke Treasury* (2015)

- 1953: "Scrooge on Ice" – *Space Times* Christmas Number vol.2 #12
- 1954: "The Future History of Fandom" round robin part 1 – *Triode* #1, September 1954
- 1954: "Fanderella & Her Fairy Godmother (A Fantomime for...)" – *Eye* #3, Xmas 1954
- 1958: "The Case of the Convention Cadaver" – *Ploy* #12, April 1956

HANSEN, Rob

- 1993: *The Reaffirmation*, standalone (2016)

HARRIS, Chuck

- 1955: "It's Eney's Fault"; collected in *Creative Random Harris* (2021)
- 1956: *This Goon For Hire* with John Berry; collected in *The Goon Omnibus* (2017)
- 1990: "A Dream of Fandom"; collected in *Creative Random Harris* (2021)

"HURSTMONCEAUX, Harry" and "FAVERSHAM, Cyril"

- 1957-1975: *The Harrison Saga* (2022)

LANGFORD, David

- 1989: “Contrivance Memories” – *Contrivance Progress Report #6*, 1989; collected in *Don’t Try This at Home* (2015)

MERCER, Archie

- 1965: *The Meadows of Fantasy*, standalone (2019)

SHAW, Bob

- 1954: *The Enchanted Duplicator* with Walter A. Willis, standalone (2015)
- 1956: “Goon Abroad This Year?” (GDA) – *Retribution #4*, October 1956; collected in *Slow Pint Glass* (2020)
- 1957: “A Chance of a Ghost” (GDA) – *Retribution #7*, 1957; collected in *Slow Pint Glass* (2020)

TEMPLE, William F.

- 1940: “The British Fan in His Supernatural Haunt” – *Gargoyle #3*, December 1940, edited by Dave McIlwain; collected in *Temple at the Bar* (2017)
- 1951: “How to Write a Science Fiction Serial” – FESTIVENTION speech; *Rhodomagnetic Digest #17*, November/December 1951, edited by Don Fabun; collected in *Temple at the Bar* (2017, as updated 2021 to add this piece)

WHITE, James

- 1975: “The Exorcists of IF” – *Mota #13*, December 1975; revised for *Hyphen #37*, August 1987 (*Hyphen #37* ebook, 2019)

WILLIS, Walter A.

- 1952: *Willis Discovers America* – serialized in various fanzines 1952; collected and annotated edition 1955; included in *Willis Discovers America and Other Fan Fiction* (2021)
- 1954: *The Enchanted Duplicator* with Bob Shaw, standalone (2015)
- 1955: “The Future History of Fandom” round robin part 2 – *Triode #2*, March 1955; included in *Willis Discovers America and Other Fan Fiction* (2021, as updated 2022 to add this piece)
- 1991: *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator* (with James White), standalone (2019)

The round-robin saga “The Future History of Fandom” begun by A. Vincent

Clarke and Walt Willis (as above) continued in further issues of *Triode* which can be found at <https://fanac.org/fanzines/Triode/>.

Notes

As referenced by and linked from square-bracketed numbers in the text.

[1] <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THEN%20Archive/TED/TED1.htm>

[2] http://www.fanac.org/Fannish_Reference_Works/Fancylopedia/Fancylopedia_I/

[3] http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/recursive_sf
<http://data.nesfa.org/Recursion/>

[4] <https://www.themarysue.com/first-published-slash-fanfiction/>

[5] <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-brontes-invented-imaginary-realms-and-created-some-5800925>

[6] <http://www.erbzine.com/mag19/1931.html>

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek:_The_New_Voyages

[8] <https://www.csindy.com/coloradosprings/a-50-year-trekkie-bestows-star-trek-history-upon-the-next-generation-how-fandom-and-fanfiction-sparked-the-galaxys-most-controversial-romanc/Content?oid=14273176>
[Not available in Europe, alas.]

[9] <http://fanac.org/fanzines/Planet/>

[10] <http://fanac.org/timebinders/scienceers.html>

[11] *All Our Yesterdays* by Harry Warner Jr. (Advent 1969)

[12] <https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/news/2016/march/5-10-march-1891-bovril-and-the-first-ever-sci-fi-convention-at-the-royal-albert-hall/>

Original Appearances

- “The Alien Arrives” by Walt Willis – performed at SUPERMANCON, Manchester, June 1954; published in *Triode* #1, September 1954, edited by Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves.
- “Breendoggled” by Rob Hansen – written *circa* 2002; first published 2021 in this ebook.
- “The Call to Arms” by Don J. Cameron – *The Satellite* #2, November 1938, edited by Dave McIlwain and John F. Burke.
- “The Case of the Missing Gavel” by James White – *Hyphen* #19, January 1958, edited by Walt Willis.
- “The Chronarian Gambit” by Rob Hansen – first published 2021 in this ebook.
- “Dragnit” by Bob Shaw – *The Scarr* #1, April 1963, edited by George Charters; reprinted with new afterword in *When Yngvi Was a Louse*, 1982, edited by Eric Bentcliffe.
- “Fanopolis” by C.S. Youd writing as Fantacynic – serialised in *The Fantast* #2-#6, May-September 1939, edited by C.S. Youd.
- “Fiawol, My Lovely” by Rob Hansen – written mid-1990s for some US fanzine; perhaps never published until added to the fiawol.org.uk website in 2008.
- “The Goon Defective Agency” by John Berry – insert in *Hyphen*, 1955, edited by Walt Willis.
- “How I Met...” by Mark Plummer – *Banana Wings* #42, May 2010, edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer.
- “Novacon Considered as a Helix of Semi-Funny Skits” by Ian Sorensen – script for performance at Novacon 11, November 2011.
- “One Hundred Years Ago” by Dave Langford – *Channelcon Programme Book*, Easter 1982, edited by Coral and Rob Jackson; reprinted in *Locus*, July 1982, edited by Charles N. Brown.
- “One Tun Mischief In Space” by Leroy Kettle – *True Rat* #6, 1975, edited by Leroy Kettle.
- “Scoop!!” by Doug Webster – *Cthulhu* #1, July 1942, edited by Doug Webster.
- “Sir Edgar Visits the Scienceers” by Allen Glasser – *The Planet* #3,

September 1930, edited by Allen Glasser.

- “The Survivors” – Part 1 by C.S. Youd in *The Fantast* #8, February 1940; Part 2 by John F. Burke in *The Fantast* #9, March 1940; both edited by C.S. Youd.
- “Whatever Happened to Faaaanfiction?” by rich brown – *BSFAN* #17, Fall 1988, edited by Elaine Stiles; reprinted in *Captain Flashback* #17, April 2020, edited by Andy Hooper.
- “Witch Switch” by Don Geldart – *Scottishe* #26, December 1961, edited by Ethel Lindsay.



The End

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