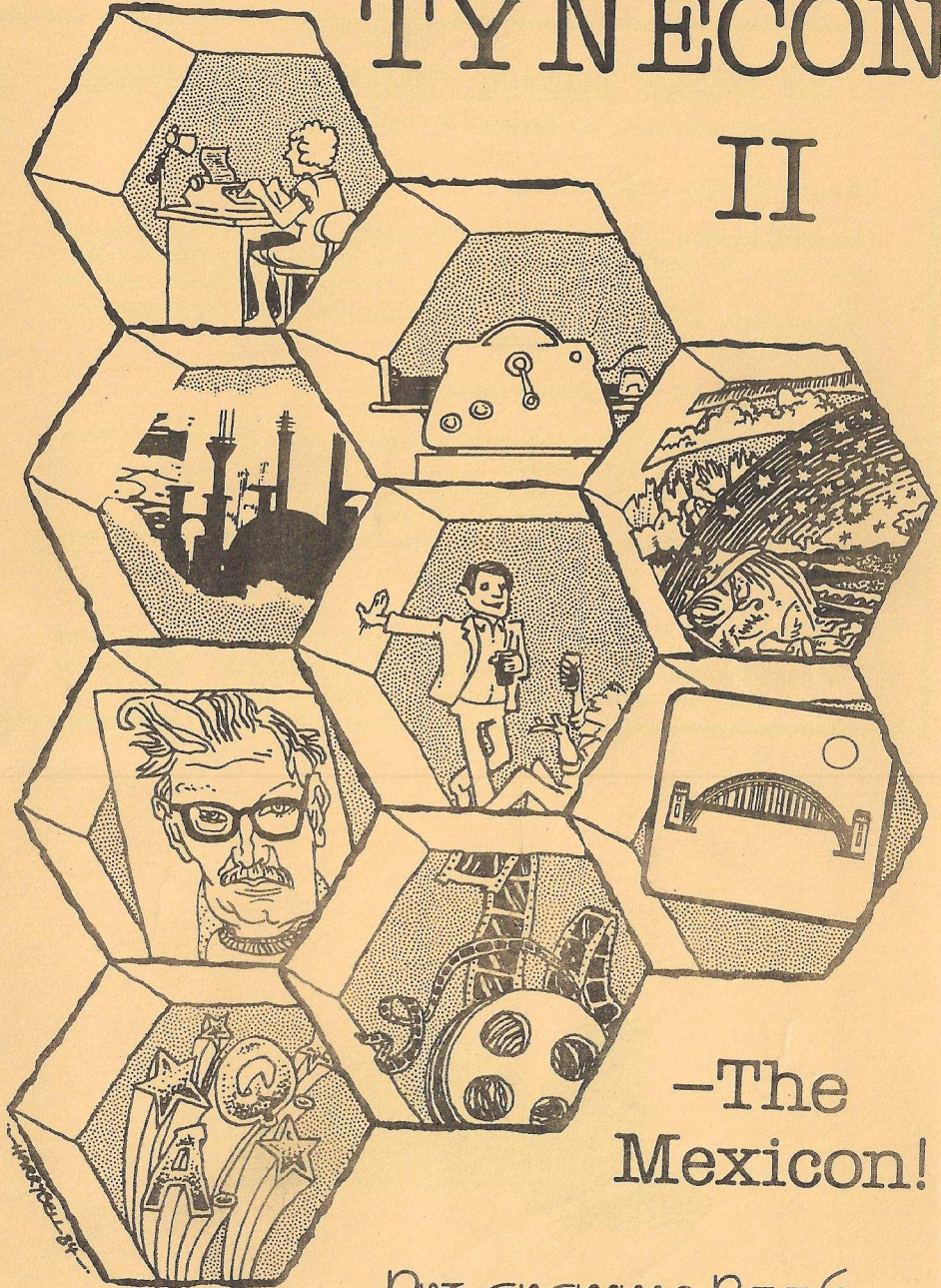


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# TYNECON II



-The  
Mexicon!

Programme Book



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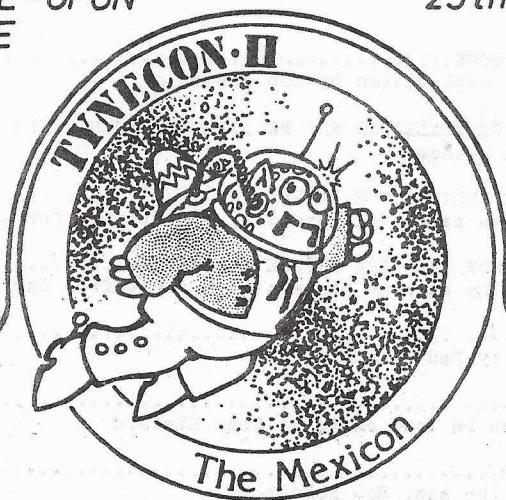
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25th - 28th MAY  
1984



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We'd like to thank KATE DAVIES for typing this book; JOHN HARVEY for printing it; PAM JARVIS (Arts Marketing) for publicity and moral support; THE RIVERSIDE MUSICIANS COLLECTIVE for loan of P.A. equipment; ALBACON for loan of badge-making and film equipment; Dave Wilkinson and Dave Bell for quiz assistance; and Mike Hamilton for the convention newsletter.

Thank you one and all.



# The programme book

ROB HANSEN

One of the traditions at conventions is that on arriving at the con hotel you are given an envelope containing a programme sheet, badge, and Programme Book. Everyone, of course, pins the badge to their clothing straightaway but how many read the Programme Book while at the con, or even flick through it? I certainly don't, and I doubt very much that you do either. No, what usually happens is that it stays unread until after the convention, by which time the pieces within have lost their immediacy and some of their relevance. Which is why all of you registering no later than a week prior to the convention will have received this one by post beforehand. The MEXICON Programme Book is designed as a primer for the convention and intended to complement it. Reading this publication before the con starts will, we hope, make MEXICON a more rewarding experience.

In many ways MEXICON should offer a different type of convention experience. For a start, it doesn't have a Guest of Honour. This is because we feel the position has been devalued over the years by misuse, by the routine appointment of a GoH as a matter of course rather than because of a strong conviction that the individual concerned truly deserves the honour. However, whilst we may not have a GoH we do have three writers who will, for a variety of reasons, be solo-featuring on programme items. Profiles of all three appear in these pages.

As hammered home relentlessly in our Progress Reports MEXICON is a convention which focuses on written science fiction rather than trying to cover SF in all its many manifestations. But by this we don't mean star-spanning epics set in exotic galactic empires. Our aim is not to concentrate on that safe and over-worked area that lies at the centre of the SF field but rather to explore those exciting regions out on the edge, where science fiction and mainstream literature begin to merge. As such we're particularly proud to be able to welcome Alasdair Gray and Russell Hoban, two writers whose works have garnered critical acclaim in both mainstream and SF circles. Where Hoban and Gray have ventured into these areas from the mainstream side Christopher Priest has come to them via science fiction, and in the speech he gave at this year's Eastercon he expressed a view of the current SF field that accords closely with that taken by MEXICON. Therefore we're pleased indeed to be presenting that speech in print for the first time in this book.

There's another side to Mexicon apart from the seriously science fictional, of course, and that's fandom. I imagine that many of you reading these



words have some knowledge of fandom already but for those who don't we've decided to reprint Ann Warren's article, BEING DIFFERENT. In reading this piece and following her efforts to fully get to grips with just what fandom is, and why, we hope you too will begin to gain some appreciation of the world you can enter when you go from being an SF reader to a fan. The MEXICON programme will carry both SF and fannish items and the latter should provide more insight into fandom. If there is anything in the article or the programme items that you don't understand, or if you're intrigued by them and want to find out more, there are plenty of people at the convention only too willing to help explain things to you, particularly in the fanzine room.

The fanzine room is to fandom what the bookroom is to SF and a large cross-section of fanzines, those curious publications that are the means by which the sub-culture manifests itself in print and maintains lines of communication between conventions, will be available within. There will be old fanzines given away free, new fanzines for sale at nominal prices, and an auction where some of the choicer collectors items will go to the highest bidder. Give it a visit.

Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to IT HAPPENED HERE, a fascinating article about the making of a film of the same name (being shown at MEXICON, naturally) by one of those who appears in it. That's it. Have a good MEXICON.

# ALBACON 84

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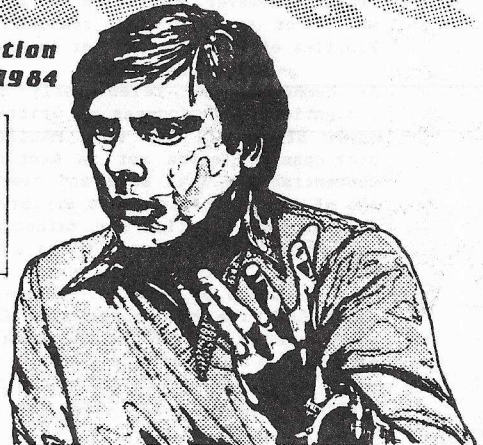
"HARLAN ELLISON IS NO ESKIMO"  
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ALBACON 84 GUEST OF HONOUR  
**HARLAN ELLISON**



*I expect you're wondering...*

## **Kevin Williams, chairman**

*...why we asked you here this evening?*

Welcome to Tynecon II, the first "Mexicon"... not only a convention... but also a movement. The idea of Mexicon is one whose time has come. It is an idea which sprouted simultaneously in the north and south, and there are now signs of it happening in the USA. The best evidence, for it, however, is your presence here this weekend... and all we want from you is to have a good time. We want this con to inform, entertain and hopefully to inspire and agitate! We want you to feel fully a part of it. We want you to take part in it. So be careful. We may be asking questions later!

Tynecon II, the first Tynecon since the last one... and that was ten years ago. Ten years that have seen a lot of changes in the world of SF conventioneering. Tynecon '74 was an annual British Eastercon... run under the auspices of the British Science Fiction Association. But the BSFA auspices have become a bit anorexic for many years now, and no assistance is provided for any Eastercon, financial, organisational or ideological. This year's Eastercon, Seacoñ, took place in Brighton, and at the time of writing was expecting an attendance of some 2000. At Tynecon '74 the attendance was 400. Popularity and healthy growth is, of course a good thing. But another thing has also changed... the nature of the beast. While conventions may have grown five-fold in ten years, the popularity of SF, I suspect, has not. During its headlong growth, the Eastercon has swept many other interests into its maw with the efficiency of a Bussard Ramjet (See? I still read SF!). What was, ten years ago, the annual British SF convention, is now the annual Wargaming/Blake's Seven/Computer game/Hitchhiker/D&D/Sword & Sorcery/Star Wars/Dr Who/SF convention.

Many of these fringe SF interests also organise their own conventions, and we are taking a leaf from their book. For Tynecon II - The Mexicon, is also just such a specialist convention... a specialist convention dealing with Science Fiction and Science Fiction only, in its original, and most vital form ...the written form. What a novel idea!

That's why Tynecon II The Mexicon is not an Eastercon.

Mexicon is the principle and Tynecon II is this year's manifestation of what we hope is going to become an annual event... Britain's largest annual SF convention. Being such a specialist convention, Mexicons may well prove to be smaller than Eastercons, though this is not necessarily an objective, since there is and will be, no limit on memberships, and it will, of course, be open to everyone. But, Mexicons will only cater for the

interests that it serves. There will be no facilities provided for War Gaming. No computer room. No 24 hour video programme etc. etc.

Enough of what Mexican isn't. More of what it is. Rather than trying to spread its scope to encompass each of the many fringe interests which currently border SF, Mexican will concentrate on SF as a literary form, on the books and magazines that show SF at its best and most vital and original. It will seek to explore SF as a serious form of literature; to examine the ever more diffuse interface between SF and so-called "mainstream" literature. And to help us achieve this, we are very pleased to have the support of the more literate of the established SF writers, and are particularly pleased to welcome Russell Hoban and Alasdair Gray, both writers who have built a considerable reputation for themselves in the "mainstream". Also, within the SF programme, we want to try to address some of the burning issues of the day and their potential impact on SF. One particular topic we plan to explore, is the alarming and growing trend towards increasing Government censorship, especially as applied to what is described as "drug-related material". (Buy all Phil Dick books now - before they're banned! We are not kidding!)

The fan programme is designed to edify, divert and inspire, by raising discussion of Fanzines beyond the trivial. In addition, you will find in the Fanzine room, an EEC Fanzine mountain, to be read, taken away free, used to mop up spilt beer and to remove those stubborn stains. New Fanzines will be sold cheaply or given away for an impassioned plea. A Fanzine auction will take place and a Fanzine production workshop will be held for those incautious enough to throw themselves (with ego bared) to the mercies of the critics.

The film programme has been planned as an integral part of the convention and is not intended to be a distraction for those who want a quiet kip away from the bar. But at the same time we unreservedly guarantee fascination, wonder, marvels, intrigue...oh...and some rather tasteless and bawdy fun. We also guarantee that you won't have seen most of them before... because we will not be showing monster/blaster/spacer movies, but films which represent more Speculative fiction than Science Fiction, a wider theme which encompasses as many different types of film as it does fiction. Films which use SF themes and motifs, rather than out & out SF movies...

Just so you don't get the idea that Tynecon II - The Mexican is all going to be desperately serious and get everybody's head aching, we plan some six or seven hours of games and quizzes throughout the weekend. You've probably begun to encounter some of this already, for in the good and true democratic principles of Mexican, we are running a three-day quiz in which not only is everyone free to take part... it is compulsory ("Line zem up, Heinie...") This is the all-pervading SF ULTRA QUIZ (one huge prize!). In addition there will be a couple of fun-filled Author verses Fan games and other surprise items you won't know anything about until they start happening to you!

There's more!!!.....A free Disco on Saturday night, guaranteed to play good music for bopping to, with no DJ garbleburble....promise. Also a free committee party on Sunday night, to celebrate their ulcers.



Yet more!!!!.....A book-dealers room which as usual will provide many imported books not generally available in the UK. But we have also asked the dealers to bring along books by authors working in the mainstream, but whose work acknowledges the influence of SF ideas (eg, Burroughs (William that is!), Pynchon, Lessing, Angela Carter) as well as stocking up on our guest authors' books. Buy! Buy! Buy! ...This is a truly wonderful and warm thing to do, because it pleases everybody..the authors..the dealers..the publishers..the agents.....us.....oh..and you!

All this for only £5!???......I think I'll go!

There's one final Mexican idea that I want to tell you about. "The Linear Programme" is not the title of a new Jerry Cornelius novel, but a really revolutionary idea that was old hat ten years ago. All thirty-six hours of programming will take place in the same room - the main con hall - over all four days. So if you're really crazy enough, you can see all of it. We believe this simple device will provide the essential heart and atmosphere of the convention. Everything going on at the con will be taking place in the con hall, or a few yards away in the bar or Fanzine room or continuation room or bookroom. (We need a continuation room to enable us to keep the main programme to time, while not summarily closing down heated debates which threaten to overrun). This focus will, we hope provide a vitality and atmosphere of "things-going-on" which has maybe become a bit diffused and diluted at cons over the past few years, where multiple programming has been the rule of the day. The geography of the hotel is ideal for our purposes. Mexican will be compact, sociable and friendly while at the same time charged, provocative and rabble-rousing! .....and possibly on occasion a bit chaotic! In the words of that great Hegelian philosopher Andy Fairweather Low, Tynecon-II - The Mexican will be a Megasheebang!

So all we ask of you is to: relax, look, listen, shout, wave your arms, argue, yell, participate, cheer, jeer, squeal, bark, hoot and even whoop (if you must) Also drink deep of the beer (for the bars will remain open to unreasonable and hazy hours) and the atmosphere, and have fun! Buy the authors a drink - they're working hard for you this weekend... for free. In exchange, I'm sure they'll be pleased to regale you with fascinating tales of their glamorous lifestyles. Your final task at Tynecon, is to not let the committee down by making a lie of the bloated claims of alcoholic consumption we have promised the management will take place. This is ideologically sound, for in the true spirit of the convention's visionary hero-philosopher Phillip K Dick, this process will aid your explorations of the nature of reality.

As for the committee, who are introduced and described in embarrassing detail elsewhere, only two of the Tynecon '74 committee remain, although the rest are coming. Interestingly (fascinating but useless facts time), for exactly one half of the current committee, Tynecon '74 was their first (and favourite) convention. The present committee is an optimised blend of experienced boring old farts, skilled SF professionals and semi-professionals, active fans, and enthusiastic (relative) newcomers to Fandom and convention organisation. Everyone on the committee believes in what we are trying to do with Mexican, and has worked long and hard, and gone to

much personal expense and inconvenience (while also having fun) to pull it off....so the least you can do is enjoy it!

The Royal Station Hotel is the same hotel (and not much changed, though well preserved) which hosted Tynescon '74. Ownership and management have changed, but if anything, for the better. The present management have been exceptionally helpful and have enthusiastically entered into the spirit of the convention. They've coolly and efficiently dealt with all our requests some of which were rather bizarre. Our thanks go to them (Mr Worthington & Mr Ecclestone) for their help, courtesy and cooperation thus far. Lets all of us help make it a successful weekend for the hotel also.

One thing remains to be explained... a question that is probably burning on the lips of those who don't yet know... "Why the Hell is it called Mexican???" Wonder no more. Here is Linda Pickersgill to elucidate with her customary eloquence...

## THE ORIGINS OF MEXICON

So why is a convention situated smack dab in the middle of Geordie-land called MEXICON? Is it really because Newcastle is twin-city to Tiajuana? Or because folks in the Highlands like to sing "South of the Border Down Newcastle Way"? Or because enchiladas go well with Newcastle Brown? The real answer lies in a situation that arose at CHANNELCON in Brighton during Easter of '82. Maybe you remember it as I do, especially those lull periods when the bars were shut and there seemed nothing better to do than sit around and mutter halfhearted complaints. The particular afternoon a committed group of us were seated near the bar in case by some freak circumstances it should open early, muttering away and airing our favourite gripes while watching as barbarian hordes and Logan's Runners ambled by. The muttering had to do with the changing nature of Eastercons (cross reference see "Rob Hansen's Guide to Fannish Complaints" number 37). This rapidly aging gripe was about how the mass popularity of Science Fiction had broadened the definition of what was once primarily a written medium to include films, television, comics, computers, costumes, war games, and Star Trek porno. The conclusion was that written SF, both as literature and as a basis for fanzine culture, is now a fringe itself in the wider field of what is now known as "Sci-Fi". It's a sad day to discover your star is no longer the only one shining in the universe, so we griped and waited for the bar to open.

"What we really need", someone began, "is a special special interest group. Something truly fringe that we can claim to belong to and demand that the next Eastercon cater for us." "Yeah, but like what?" "Like Mexican fandom", Abi Frost threw at us. We all turned to stare at her. "You mean there is such a thing?", Gregory asked. "Oh, surely there must be somewhere...Mexican fans running around doing Mexicanly fannish type things. I don't see why Mexican fans should be neglected just because they're a small special interest group."

Things blossomed from there. We would become Mexican fandom and demand bilingual programme books and programmes catering to Mexican fans. We'd want siestas scheduled for the afternoons as well as tequila on demand and tacos served at the banquet. Our plans grew wild. Chris Evans suggested we all wear sombreros with "Kees Me Queek" badges on them as inspired by



the 'souvenir of Brighton' hats he'd seen earlier that day. Greg suggested that we all wear tight black trousers with silver-spangled stripes running down the seams, and Harry Bell suggested bandeleros. Without realising it we had slipped into using a Hollywood style pseudo-Mexican accent and each new suggestion was greeted with many "arriba"s and "si si"s. "And we'll request that we have our very own Mexican badges", someone threw in, to which the unanimous reply was: "BADGES? We don' need no steenkin' badges!" (cross reference see: "Treasure of the Sierra Madre"). By this time the bar had opened at last and we all grabbed a drink to toast our identity as a fringe group: Mexican fandom... ....the kind who read SF and fanzines. Spontaneously we broke into Mexican-like song, "aye yi yi yi...". It was the only Mexican song we knew and even then we didn't know the rest of it so we just kept singing the same phrase over and over again: "aye yi yi yi...aye yi yi yi...". Mexican fandom was born.

To close, I would like to reiterate the basic principles of the Mexicon idea:

## THE MEXICON CHARTER

- 1) Mexicon is a specialist convention dealing centrally with the written form of Science Fiction, and deliberately shuns fringe elements by not catering for them.
- 2) Any explorations around this theme, must derive from it and reflect it (eg. at Tynecon II we are choosing to reflect some key SF motifs in a variety of speculative feature films).
- 3) The planned events should be tailored to fit into a Linear Programme, which aims to involve as many of the attendees as possible.
- 4) It should, as far as possible, examine the active issues and controversies of the day as they relate to SF (eg, at Tynecon II - the censorship debate).
- 5) It should strive to keep registration and hotel costs as low as possible.
- 6) Where it does not contravene 1,2,3,4 and 5 above, Mexicon should endeavour to try to not take itself too seriously!
- 7) Charter? We don wan no steenkin' charter!

Bienvenido a Mejicon!

el jefe

# The pernicious cult of the expert

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST

The first science fiction convention I went to was in 1964, exactly twenty years ago this weekend. The guest of honour on that occasion was Ted Tubb. It was the first time I had ever heard a writer give a speech, and for me it was one of the highspots of the weekend. I remember that Ted ranted against the whole science fiction establishment for half an hour, then stopped abruptly, almost in mid-sentence, when he ran out of things to say. Ever since then, I've always seen Ted's speech as a model for all guest-of-honour speeches: keep it short, kick a few people in the goolies, then shut up quickly.

I'd gone to that convention because a few months earlier I had got into fandom, and at more or less the same time I'd started writing. In this respect, nothing much has changed in twenty years. I'm still in fandom, I'm still writing...and most of you lot are the same, another con, same old faces, same old hangovers. Even the new faces have the same old hangovers.

Back in 1964, science fiction conventions were mostly concerned with the written word. Not many people could afford TVs in those days, and so we were used to reading. The jokes were all written down for the hard of hearing, and passed around as quotecards. Even the films they showed were silent films, and the audience chipped in and provided all the dialogue. Apart from this, it was all much the same, with a lot of familiar faces looking much younger. It was in 1964, for instance, that I first met Rog Peyton. In those days he had a full head of hair, and he bought books instead of selling them. In fact, he bought so many books at that first con that most of the ones he's trying to sell now are the same copies. And I met Gerry Webb for the first time. In case you don't know Gerry, he's the source of that low droning noise you can hear all the time. It's not the air-conditioner...it's Gerry. He never stops talking. I can claim a small piece of fannish history...it was me who asked the question! Gerry's ambition is to be an astronaut, and travel out to Mars and beyond. The old-timers here, the ones from 1964, will all go in person to Cape Canaveral to see him off. Then there was John Brunner, still in his teens, celebrating the sale of his fiftieth Ace novel. I was at a room party with Mike Moorcock, and watched while he sat in a corner and wrote an entire Elric novel. Lang Jones was sitting next to him, reading and correcting the pages as they came out of the typewriter. At one point, I distinctly heard Lang say: "Here, slow down a bit mate! I can't keep up!" And then Bob Shaw and Harry Harrison were there, looking much younger. Bob was in



the bar, but Harry was in a pram. And Harlan Ellison was running around and telling everyone he'd just delivered THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS.

I feel I'm at home when I'm at a science fiction convention...fandom is a bit like a second family to me. I'm sure many of us here feel the same way, because we're all descended from the same bloodstock. To one degree or another, and in many different ways, we have a common interest in science fiction. To keep the metaphor going a little longer, I sometimes see myself as a son of science fiction, because it was reading and enjoying SF, in my teens, that started me writing. But sometimes young sons grow up to reject a family's values, they drift away from home comforts, they become prodigal. I've felt this happening to me in recent years, and whenever I sit down to talk about science fiction I can't ignore this. On the other hand, some aspects of science fiction still interest and involve me, and within certain limits I feel positive about it. Because families are one of the places where you can speak your mind, it's this contradiction I want to talk about today.

A minor digression first, though, to make clear what I'm talking about. When people say "science fiction" they generally mean at least two or three things at once. I do too. In the first place, there are the individual examples of science fiction...the stories and novels, the films, the TV shows, and all that. Secondly, there's a much broader meaning, when people make generalisations about what they call it. They say, "science fiction is..." or "science fiction should be...", and so on. This is the religious aspect of the stuff, preached by people like Lester del Rey and Sam Moskowitz, and to a lesser extent by all of us. This is the commonality, the quality which we say can be found in all the examples.

I'm not talking about either of these. The third meaning is the one that interests me. It is science fiction as a kind of writing, as a literary form, the way in which speculative ideas can be approached through fiction. You'd think that among SF writers and critics there would be a lot of agreement about this, and yet over the years I've often found myself at odds with the SF establishment. I know I'm in a minority, somewhere out on the loony fringe, but as today is one of the few occasions I can say whatever I like, I'm going to try to persuade you of my view.

I began writing during the New Wave period. Now, I've never really been a New Wave writer, but because it coincided with my first efforts I picked up a lot of the propaganda. The most compelling argument of the New Wave was that writers should be themselves. Because it was the 1960s, what they actually said was that you should do your own thing...but it's all the same. A better way of putting it is that writers should try to find their own voice. There is, in fact, no better advice for new writers.

But when I started writing, I simply wanted to be like the writers I admired. I thought science fiction was terrific stuff...and right at the beginning all I wanted to be was a science fiction writer who wrote science fiction. But I discovered I wasn't much good at that...most of my early stuff was secondhand and second-rate, and almost none of it was published. I only started selling when I began acting on the propaganda, and tried to write like myself.

Every time you write something, the result for the writer is more than just the finished story or novel. Writing is a process of learning...finding out what you can write, and what you can't, what your limitations are, where you can improve next time. Particularly the last one. Everything I've ever written has been a closing of one door, followed by the opening of another. So, as far as I'm concerned, there is a sense of continuity. I can see connections and links between all my novels, even if they're not immediately obvious to everyone else. One of the real links is that all my books are a form of science fiction, according to my own interpretation of the phrase. I'd always assumed that other people understood this. But after I had finished my novel THE AFFIRMATION, about four years ago, it was brought home to me in no uncertain way that I was wrong.

For a few innocent days after finishing, I was convinced that people would see it the way I did. Although it was clearly not the sort of SF that these days is churned out on word processors, it nevertheless had continuity with the rest of my stuff. Putting it as simply as possible, I felt that THE AFFIRMATION had found a new way of writing science fiction. If you've read the book, you might think I'm trying to have my cake and eat it. The story is set in the present day, or the immediate past, and everything that happens can be explained in realistic terms...but even so, I felt it contained a genuinely speculative idea (one which has been subsequently researched by psychologists), and anyway the whole thing is structured and plotted like many science fiction books. I managed to palm the book off on my hardback publishers, here and in the States, but after that the trouble began. One by one the paperback publishers turned it down, saying it wasn't SF, and it wasn't anything else either. In the end, the last publisher who saw it, Richard Evans at Arrow, made an offer and I grabbed it. In the States, the book was sent round a total of three times to every paperback publisher, and rejected three times. To this day, I still haven't sold it in paperback in America. The same happened abroad: with a very few exceptions, the publishers who had translated all my other stuff would have nothing to do with it. As a result, not surprisingly, THE AFFIRMATION has earned me less money than almost any other book.

The inevitable conclusion I came to was that the way science fiction was defined by other people was clear, but narrow.

My new novel, which is called THE GLAMOUR, is the next logical step after THE AFFIRMATION. I see it as yet another new kind of science fiction novel...but I'm saying that quietly, so only you can hear. As far as the publishing world is concerned, I'm sticking to my story that THE GLAMOUR is a general novel. I'm saying this for commercial reasons - because I can't afford another flop - but my argument today is nothing to do with money.

It seems to me that the science fiction category was once a place where writers could be allowed to grow, that it was a natural home for offbeat books. But it also seems that this has changed. Books today have to be orthodox science fiction, or they have to get out.

I believe the reason for this is that we are now seeing the logical outcome of a fallacy. The actual nature of science fiction has always been misunderstood. There is a conventional wisdom about SF, but it is



essentially false. The problem is that everyone except me seems to accept it.

The fallacy is that the creation of science fiction as a separate category was a good thing. Hugo Gernsback did that back in the 1920s, but everyone who has followed has accepted this, and never questioned it. Gernsback identified and separated out a certain kind of story - in those days, most of them had been written by H.G. Wells - and he and all the people who followed him encouraged writers, mostly hacks, to write the "type" of story he had identified. At first, most of these imitations were pretty terrible, but things slowly improved. By the end of the 1930s, science fiction had reached the period most people call the "Golden Age". All this is as familiar to you as it is to me.

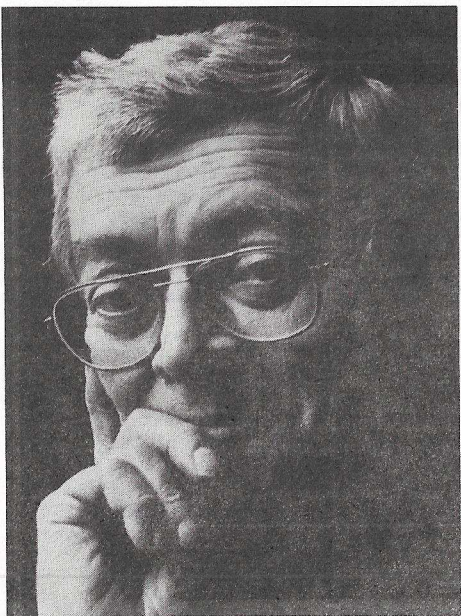
Gernsback was the first of many people who set down rules for writing. The next most influential rule-maker was John W. Campbell. Many have followed.

Now, although I think the creation of an orthodoxy was and is a bad thing, I'm not saying that it has produced only bad work. None of us would be here if that were so. There aren't enough rule-makers in the world to suppress the creative spirit, and over the years a number of good works have been produced. I feel these have been in spite of the system, rather than because of it. But even today, in the restrictive climate that prevails, there are still a few pockets of resistance. A number of excellent young writers are appearing in the States - writers like William Gibson and Bruce Sterling - and over here INTERZONE has produced a steady stream of good stories. (In passing, let me say I was surprised to learn the other day that INTERZONE has only 600 subscribers. Even NEW WORLDS did better than that. If only a third of the people here this weekend took out a subscription, we could double its circulation immediately.

But getting back to the isolation of science fiction...when you set something apart - in this case, when science fiction was set apart from the rest of literature - you create a ghetto. A ghetto is generally a slum, in which outcasts are either encouraged or forced to live together. The ghetto mentality causes a fear and suspicion of the outside world, and creates a self-sufficient camaraderie inside, with its own language and customs. If this doesn't describe the science fiction world, I don't know what does.

It's roughly sixty years since the ghetto was set up, and some would say that the former slum has now become a proud city. After all, science fiction is now very successful, some of the writers have become famous and many have become bestsellers. But this is again a commercial argument, and I'm not interested in that. What's more important is that science fiction is still a closed community, and as in every closed community, administrative hierarchies have been set up to maintain the smooth running. These authorities are mostly self-appointed, because they are convinced of the virtue of the ghetto. They act like party apparatchiks, ensuring that nothing changes.

For example, there is hardly a publisher in Britain or America who does not have some kind of consultant science fiction expert. I heard last week of one American publisher who has three. Television companies retain story



# RUSSELL HOBAN

follows his 'masterpiece' (Observer)

# RIDDLEY WALKER

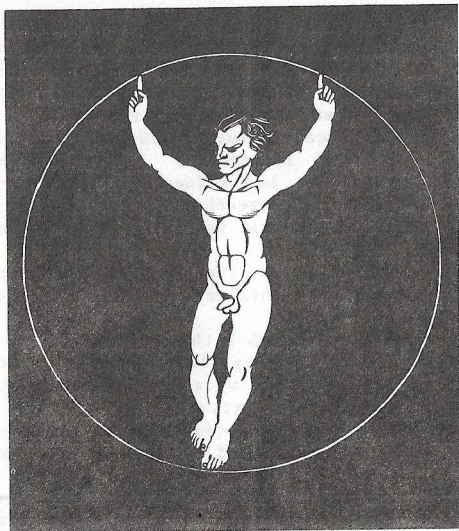
with a novel of genius set at the  
time of the First Crusade of AD 1096

# PILGERMANN

\* 'Author and book are the stuff of  
which cults are made' *The Listener*

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FROM THE AUTHOR OF *LANARK*  
AND *UNLIKELY STORIES*, MOSTLY



# 1 9 8 2 JANINE ALASDAIR GRAY

According to the author 'This already dated novel is set inside the head of an ageing, divorced, alcoholic, insomniac supervisor of security installations who is tipping in the bedroom of a small Scottish hotel. Though full of depressing memories and Conservative propaganda it is mainly a sado-masochistic fetishistic fantasy. Even the arrival of God in the later chapters fails to elevate the tone. Every stylistic excess and moral defect which critics conspired to ignore in the author's first books, *Lanark* and *Unlikely Stories*, *Mostly*, is presented here in concentrated form.'

JONATHAN CAPE

*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*  
is available in Penguin Books



consultants, drawn from the ranks. Literary editors on newspapers have regular science fiction reviewers, who are usually either SF writers or critics from the SF world. The BBC has sent down its SF expert to cover Seacon this weekend for Radio 4. The cult of the self-appointed expert is upon us, and we have science fiction histories, science fiction readers' guides, science fiction encyclopaedias, science fiction source books and science fiction year books. All of them accept the conventional wisdom, and all of them pass on the artificial rules laid down in the past. Almost without exception, these experts are good party men, who misspent their youth soaking up the ideology from ANALOG or F&SF, or one of the many other approved party publications.

Once this sort of madness has started, serious or ambitious of different work is driven out. Not just because these experts who will rule on the ideological OK-ness of what is written..you can always fool a bureaucrat once you know he's there. The real reason is that this kind of attitude is essentially conservative. The Politburo has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Good writers are driven out, but more importantly the climate is not encouraging to new or young writers unless they toe the party line. A classic example of this is in that thing called ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCI-FI MAGAZINE. For the first few years this was edited by a man so thoroughly steeped in science fiction orthodoxy he ought to be a member of the SFKCE. He published a number of new writers, almost all of them producing secondhand work. His proudest boast was that he had discovered Barry Longyear, one of the most derivative writers since John Russell Fearn.

We all connive in this in a small way. How many times have any of us been watching a movie or a TV show, and seeing some terrible cliché have thought: why don't they ask someone who knows? But it's exactly this attitude that gives our tacit support to the self-appointed experts.

A knowledge of the rules is not necessary to good work. Take that play that was on TV two or three years ago: THE FLIPSIDE OF DOMINICK HIDE. It was written by two writers, Jeremy Paul and Alan Gibson, who had absolutely no experience of science fiction. Yet the play was original and witty, and an example of perfectly crafted science fiction. They came to the play because they felt moved by the idea, they had something to say. The same feeling has produced all those novels by writers who are not members of the ghetto: H.G. Wells, in his time, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Anthony Burgess, Rex Warner, William Golding, Adrian Mitchell. Writing in the same way today there are people like Jonathan Carroll, Margaret Tabor and William Goldman, and feminist authors like Sandi Hall, Zoe Fairbairns and Marge Piercy.

We connive because we are distrustful of outsiders. We have a word for them: "mainstream". Literary values are despised and distrusted, a sign of being a poseur or a poof. What is surprising and alarming is the number of science fiction writers who hold these attitudes. Talking about literary values in science fiction is not a posh way of saying it should be written better. Fine writing, stylish writing, is just another kind of bad writing when it doesn't belong.

A case in point is the obsessive interest some writers have in what they call world building. SFWA even puts out a little booklet on how to do it, and the SFWA magazine is full of tips on science and technology. The conventional SF wisdom is that the science comes first, fiction comes second. This is just like that road-safety slogan for car drivers: "Safety First". But driving a car is a dangerous thing to do, and if anyone seriously put safety first they wouldn't drive anywhere. "Go Somewhere First", and "Safety Second" is what they really mean. The same is true of SF. Nothing has form without the words...writing is the principal activity. The words come first, the science follows. You can't "build" a world using words, you can only describe one. The essence of all fiction is the extended metaphor, and any construct, however detailed, cannot be more than a metaphor for something else. Yet some science fiction writers routinely deny this, and trick out their books with maps and plans and glossaries, trying to kid themselves, and their readers, that this is manly speculation, not poofy literature. Yet the genius of the science fiction vision is that it can and should have both levels. It can seem real, and it can stand for something larger. What's the point of a ringworld, if all you do is walk around it?

Before I finish, I'd like to offer a new definition of science fiction. Not to build up the suspense, the definition I would make is that science fiction is the literature of visionary realism.

People have played the definition game for years, and here is one more to add to a long list. What is different about mine, apart from being very short, is that it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. Most of the other definitions have looked back at what has already been written and attempted to sum it all up. Any definition that does this only adds one more rule, narrows the possibilities and encourages the experts. I propose, very modestly, that my definition not only covers the best of everything that has gone before, but also suggests a way forward.

"Visionary", because of the nature of the writing. The dictionary defines visionary as being "characterised by idealistic or radical ideas, especially impractical ones". Isn't this an exact description of a science fiction writer?

"Realism", because of the form taken by most SF stories and novels. Science fiction is popular literature, written with conventional narrative, told as a story and filled with convincing detail.

Science fiction therefore counterpoints the madness of the idea with the sanity of the text. The vision conflicts with the realism.

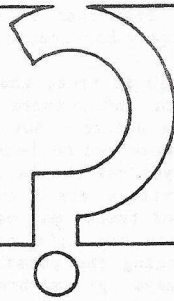
I have already broken the first of Ted Tubb's rules by going on too long, so it is almost time to shut up. If I've sounded disillusioned by saying all this, let me emphasise that my disillusion is not with the form of writing, but with the procedures, attitudes and results. A glance at the bookstalls here this weekend will confirm what most modern science fiction has become.

Look at the books. Sequels by elderly writers to books they wrote when they were young. Fantasy trilogies, with wands and broadswords and

(continued on page 22.....)



what do we do  
now that the future's here



CHRIS  
EVANS

The question is, of course, rhetorical: the future is constantly arriving, and in an objective sense 1984 has no more claims to significance than any other year. Yet the continuing influence of Orwell's novel was bound to make 1984 a special date in the SF calendar, and it seems appropriate that it should be marked by a convention founded on the objective of examining the state of the art in science fiction today and discussing its role as a serious form of literature.

The SF programme at Tynecon II has been expressly designed for the intelligent reader of SF. With the success of STAR TREK, STAR WARS and their various offspring, media SF is currently big business, and many conventions now cater for film and television fans. But everyone involved in organising Tynecon II has been a long-time reader of science fiction, and it is with the printed word that our loyalties primarily lie. Most of us have followed the familiar pattern of being avid and indiscriminating readers of SF in our early years before gradually developing what we hope are more sophisticated tastes. Most of us now read relatively little of conventional, died-in-the-wool science fiction and have come to feel that the most challenging SF is now being written on the borderlines of the field, where science fiction intersects and overlaps with other forms of literature. It seemed to us that an SF programme which set out to explore these borderlines would have the virtues of both novelty and necessity.

With these objectives in mind, Paul Kincaid and I set out to invite guests from both within the SF world and without - from both sides of the border, as it were. We wanted SF writers of an individualistic and ambitious nature, and writers from outside the field who have used SF motifs in their work; we wanted critics, editors and readers to participate, since they, too, are vitally important in influencing the kind of literature which we read.

To talk of "borders" and "the SF world" might be to encourage false dichotomies. science fiction continues to defy definition, and it has been claimed that SF doesn't really exist except as a commercial label for the convenience of publishers, booksellers and category-minded readers. But there have always been writers who pride themselves on "belonging" to the genre, and it could be argued that speculative writers who have read SF widely in their formative years rarely escape entirely the influence of its traditions, no matter how far removed their subject matter becomes from conventional SF concerns. Their fiction will therefore have a subtly

different flavour from that of writers who come to science fiction from a more general literary background.

Whether or not this is true, there is obviously a basis for distinguishing between SF writers and writers who happen to write SF, if only for the convenience of the debate. But writers are individuals, and any branch of literature is no more and no less than the sum of its constituent parts - a truism, perhaps, yet one that's worth emphasising when one talks of science fiction, where writers are frequently regarded as part of an amorphous mass. Patterns and trends may be discerned from book to book and author to author, but in the end it's particular writers who are responsible for shaping and enlarging the possibilities of their chosen field. The best writers are always ground-breakers, tirelessly exploring their own preoccupations in defiance of tradition, convention, and the economic facts of life. Their work resists easy categorisation.

Given these qualifications, we nevertheless hope to illuminate some patterns and trends in modern SF. There is, of course, nothing new in this endeavour: diagnosis and prognosis have become common in SF ever since critics and academics began to take it seriously, and perhaps even before then. But science fiction is continually changing, and in some respects becoming more and more eclectic. If the future is constantly surprising us, so, too, is the fiction which purports to reflect its possibilities.

Some of the most important changes which have taken place in SF over the past twenty years or so have been highlighted by a stern critic of modern SF, Kingsley Amis. In his introduction to *THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION* (Hutchinson, 1981) Amis takes the view that science fiction was at its best in the 1950s, before it became noticed by the outside world and before SF writers began to adopt techniques and themes drawn from literature in general. To Amis, the best science fiction is unselfconscious, conservative in style, with the science-fictional notion or situation being of paramount importance and considerations of characterisation, presentation and what might be termed conscious artistry taking second place; but since the 1960s, experimentalism and the pernicious effects of critical attention have reduced it to a travesty of its former self, with the innocence and spontaneity which had always made it special having been lost.

A complementary position has been voiced by Robert Conquest. Writing in 1972, Conquest offers a prescriptive rather than critical analysis of SF, saying that

"...where 'mainstream' literature has, in modern times, tended excessively towards first introspection and later the disruption of sense and the achievement of significance by frenzy, essential elements - especially intellectual concern, objectivity and a sense of the phenomena - have found an important refuge in science fiction ... science fiction is a form of writing in which the essence is the manipulation of the context, a writing in which excessive introspection or preoccupation with the nuances of individuals is almost always out of place and destructive of the effect." (Quotes taken from the introduction to *THE ROBERT SHECKLEY OMNIBUS*, Penguin edition, 1984.)



Essentially the kind of SF which Amis and Conquest like best has been formularised by Amis himself as "Idea as hero". They see the very strength of science fiction as having lain in its separateness from other kinds of literature and its enquiring nature, which by implication means an emphasis on the external world as opposed to the inner workings of the human mind. What is abundantly clear is that much modern SF fails to satisfy on these scores since it is now not only far less compartmentalised but also contains a growing number of writers with more developed literary sensibilities - by which I mean writers who are concerned with such things as human motivation, metaphor, ambiguity and literary craftsmanship.

Amis' polemic is guaranteed to infuriate anyone who believes in the continuing development of science fiction, but although his arguments are greatly weakened by his admission that he has not read much SF over the past twenty years, there are serious criticisms to be answered in his complaints about modern SF. For example, there may be something in his assertion that SF was more fertile and inventive of basic ideas and situations in the 1950s, and that since then it has tended to produce less in the way of originality and more in the way of elegant variations on themes now well established. Is SF using up its basic stock of raw materials? In her essay THE WEARING OUT OF GENRE MATERIALS Joanna Russ has suggested that this process of exhaustion may well occur, with new notions and themes passing through three stages of evolution in which they are first presented as dramatic revelations, then explored in a systematic way, and finally taken for granted, becoming no more than backdrops or subsidiary motifs in stories. Yet science and society as a whole are constantly evolving, throwing up new ideas and social situations which ought to replenish the well from which SF writers traditionally draw. We're planning a discussion around the subject of whether science fiction has lost its novelty value and become decadent.

Amis' complaint that critical respectability has been another damaging influence on science fiction is also worth exploring. Academic courses in SF have burgeoned over the past twenty years, and the general level of SF criticism has greatly improved. But while this might lead to a better understanding of the nature of SF and the way in which it achieves its effects, is it a help or a hindrance to the actual writers of science fiction? Can too much theoretical awareness stifle creativity? There'll be a debate on this subject in which practicing writers and critics state their cases.

Implicit in Amis' prescription for good science fiction (or at least the kind of science fiction which he prefers) is the view that it is a middlebrow and unsophisticated medium from an artistic point of view, and that therein lies its charm. This prompted a topic for a further panel discussion: given the fact that many readers are attracted to SF in their teens but later stop reading it, we were drawn to wonder if science fiction is fundamentally adolescent in its appeal, and, if so, whether it can aspire to full maturity without losing its special character.

The final criticism that a concern with the minutiae of character also militates against good science fiction is not one which we plan to address directly in the programme, though we hope it will form part of the overall

debate. A few points on the subject seem pertinent here. The American academic Scott Sanders, writing in *SCIENCE FICTION: A CRITICAL GUIDE* (Longman, 1979) has made a persuasive case that much SF is about the disappearance of character, its concern being to depict the dehumanising effects of a bureaucratic and technological world in which the individual is rendered anonymous by the institutions of society in a period of rapid, disorientating change. (Orwell's *NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR* is a classic example of such a theme.) This seems fair enough up to a point, but in recent years science fiction has discovered the human personality with a vengeance, many of the newer writers in the field using SF themes and motifs which are integral but subordinate to the main aim of dramatising their characters' inner conflicts. The question no longer seems to be whether SF can contain credible characters but whether it is improved as a result.

Other trends discernible since the 1960s include a strong vein of novels and stories about transcendence, and a fascination for portraying non-human societies and modes of consciousness: gone is the alien as bogeyman - he's now someone with whom we hope to grok. Both these changes also represent a shift in preoccupations from the objective to the subjective in SF. A further trend now well established is the "world-building" novel after the fashion of *DUNE*, wherein the author painstakingly sets out to create a richly imagined society, usually on an exotic alien planet. In most of such novels the emphasis is on texture and panorama, the story being straightforwardly told and the plot aspiring to the epic. The kind of SF has much in common with historical novels, and in some senses represents a deliberate retreat from the experimentalism of the 1960s.

Most science fiction remains steadfastly conservative in technique and subject matter, and many of the more ambitious SF writers have sought to disassociate themselves from the field entirely. But at the same time writers such as Doris Lessing, Thomas Pynchon and others have begun to adopt SF motifs in their work, often to invigorating effect. We'll be asking whether the best SF is now being written by authors who would not commonly be considered as SF writers.

Overall the bias of the panel discussions at Tynecon II is towards the theoretical, but we didn't want to ignore important practical considerations in the business. At conventions it's become traditional for people to deride publishers, with writers complaining about paltry advances or poor sales, and readers bemoaning the fact that they can't find their favourite authors' titles on the bookshelves. We decided that it was time a few representatives of the publishing world had the opportunity to explain the various factors which determine how and why books are published, and there'll be an interview with two editors who have a proven track-record of publishing SF in hardback and paperback.

Convention audiences usually contain their quota of aspiring or unpublished writers, and a further feature on writers' workshops will discuss how such workshops are organised and what value writers obtain from them. We also plan a feature on the general subject of SF magazines. Old favourites such as *ANALOG*, *FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION*, *NEW WORLDS* and others once used to be the breeding ground for new writers and new ideas. But in Britain there is now only one regular outlet for SF, the quarterly magazine *INTERZONE*, and



in the USA such stalwarts as GALAXY, IF and FANTASTIC have gone out of business, with newcomers such as ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE publishing the kind of SF which many readers see as unimaginative and outdated. Are the magazines still the place to find inventive SF, or have they outlived their usefulness?

We're very pleased to have Alasdair Gray and Russell Hoban as two of our guests since both have produced fiction which lies in that fertile hinterland between conventional SF and the wider field of literature. Alasdair Gray's first novel, LANARK, owes much of its power to a strikingly original use of SF motifs, a fact which the text itself acknowledges. Fantasy elements have often predominated in Russell Hoban's work, but in RIDDLEY WALKER he tackled a theme dear to the hearts of many SF writers in which the very medium of communication - language - has undergone a profound change.

We're also pleased to welcome Richard Cowper as our third special guest. His work might be more familiar to readers of SF, but he, too, came to science fiction from a more traditional literary background, having published so-called mainstream novels before turning to SF and becoming instrumental by example in accelerating the emergence of literary values in the field. All three authors feature in solo items on the programme.

Among our other guests are the authors Robert Holdstock, Garry Kilworth, Christopher Priest and Lisa Tuttle, all of whom have produced their own distinctive brand of fiction both within SF and without; the critics John Clute, Colin Greenland and Peter Nicholls, three appreciative and insightful commentators on SF, at least two of whom have also written fiction; and the editors Malcolm Edwards and Richard Evans, of Gollancz and Futura respectively, who are relatively rare individuals in the publishing industry in that they are informed and understanding of SF. These form the backbone of the guests who will feature in the programme at the time of writing, but we also hope to co-opt other convention attendees on to the various panels and encourage as much audience participation as possible by allowing time during each item for questions from the floor. One of the healthy features of science fiction is that it's always been a participatory medium in which communication between writers and readers has been strong; conventions, fanzines and regular meetings of SF fans have ensured a vigorous, continuing debate between the producers and the consumers of a brand of fiction which even at its shoddiest seems to stimulate passionate opinions.

What does the future hold for SF? No doubt it will continue to surprise, infuriate and delight readers. I can think of no better way to end this potted guide to the SF programme at Tynecon II than by quoting from the work of Robert Sheckley, whose terse and witty SF stories are still an example to many writers today. At the beginning of his novel, IMMORTALITY INC., Sheckley has his present-day protagonist abruptly waking up to find himself in the future; the man, Elaine, begins to speculate on what the outside world might be like, but his comments could easily refer to Science Fiction itself:

"Today there might be free atomic power, undersea farming, world peace, international birth control, interplanetary travel, free love, complete desegregation, a cure for all diseases, and a planned society in which men breathed the deep air of freedom ... But there were less pleasant possibilities. Perhaps a grim-faced Oligarch had Earth in his iron grasp, while a small, dedicated underground struggled towards freedom. Or small, gelatinous alien creatures with outlandish names might have enslaved the human race. Perhaps a new and horrible disease marched unchecked across the land, or possibly the Earth, swept of all culture by hydrogen warfare, struggled painfully back to technological civilisation while human wolf-packs roamed the badlands; or a million other equally dismal things could have happened.

"And yet, thought Blaine, mankind showed an historic ability to avoid the extremes of doom as well as the extremes of bliss. Chaos was forever prophesied and utopia was continually predicted, and neither came to pass."

PRIEST continued.....

dragons. Interactive fiction, plotted like computer programs and inspired by video games. Novelizations of films that were no good to start with. Star Trek and Doctor Who and Luke Skywalker and K9. Stupid books based on stupid games. Endless quest sagas, tarted up with glossaries of made-up words. Slick imitations of Heinlein, tapped out on word processors. There is no vision in any of this, and not much realism either. But behind all these books are the smiles of contented bureaucrats.

Thank you.



# Interzone

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# RUSSELL HOBAN

PAUL KINCAID

There are perhaps half a dozen writers whose work I consider so good that I am too impatient to wait for the paperbacks. When new books are published, therefore, I find myself rushing out to buy the hardback. Foremost in this exclusive, and expensive, club is Russell Hoban.

I first came across his work when RIDDLEY WALKER came out in 1980. This must be one of the most remarkable books of the last decade or so. Set some time after the holocaust in what remains of Kent, the whole thing is written in a rigorously worked out debased English. When you first open the book it is an off-putting experience to confront and try to make your way through the odd spellings and broken words, but as soon as you try reading it aloud it becomes a rich, vigorous demotic. In other words this book demands to be spoken rather than read, and the language does more than pages of dense description could manage to illustrate the society and the characters. I know similar techniques have been used before, as for instance by Anthony Burgess in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, but never so skilfully or to such dramatic and exciting effect. 'Tour de force' is an overused epithet, but this is one book that deserves it.

The brilliance of RIDDLEY WALKER drove me to Hoban's other adult novels. I found a series of books each of which was very different from the others. Just about the only common element was a tendency to push at the very boundaries of fantasy, in effect to make any distinction between fantasy and the mainstream meaningless. There is, in virtually all his books, a robust and very effective use of the fantastic, perhaps best typified by his first adult novel, THE LION OF BOAZ-JACHIN AND JACHIN-BOAZ (1973). Here the two eponymous characters, father and son, move from the Middle East to London pursued by a fantastical lion, or else haunted by an all-too-real lion, whichever way you want to look at it.

KLEINZEIT (1974) was very different, a wild, surrealist romp crowded with dazzling word-play. The hero, for instance, is in hospital for a skewed hypotenuse. Ordinary, everyday objects like shaving mirrors carry on conversations. God is a vague character with a hopeless memory who can't recall whether Kleinzeit is in hospital for a dichotomy or a hypotenectomy. And death is a black, hairy beast lying under Kleinzeit's bed. Hoban's books have always been laced with an appealing humour, but this is the most outrageously funny book he has written.



TURTLE DIARY (1975) is perhaps the least typical of his books, if such a diverse output can be said to have a norm, it is also my personal favourite. There is no fantasy, instead it is a simple, straightforward and very moving account of two lonely people who come together to free a group of turtles from London Zoo and return them to the wild.

After a long pause there came RIDDLEY WALKER, five years in the writing; then there was another pause of three years before his most recent novel, PILGERMANN (1983). From the future of RIDDLEY WALKER, Hoban has turned to an equally desolate past, the time of the First Crusade, though hardly with the rigorous realism of an ordinary historical novel. Pilgermann is on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, accompanied by ghosts, including the ghosts of a sow and a bear, both of whom talk, by death in the form of a sex-crazed skeleton called Bruder Pfortner, and by the personification of his own death. He never reaches Jerusalem, but gets involved in the siege of Antioch, where all sorts of mystical elements, from Judaism, Islam and Christianity, all came to a head. It is a weird, wonderful and haunting book.

Russell Hoban was born in 1925 in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. He served in the American army during World War Two, winning the Bronze Star in Italy. He has worked as a freelance illustrator and as an advertising copywriter, though he has been a full-time writer since 1967. His first children's book was published in 1959, since when some 50 books in all have appeared, the most recent being THE BATTLE OF ZORMIA (1982). He won the 1973 Whitbread Award for HOW TOM BEAT CAPTAIN NORJORK AND HIS HIRED SPORTSMEN. He has lived in London since 1969. In WHO'S WHO he lists his recreations, intriguingly, as stones and short wave listening.

I will be interviewing Russell Hoban at Tynecon II - The Mexicon, but he'll be here for the whole weekend, plenty of time for everyone to get to meet him. After all, this will be his first convention, so let's make him welcome.

# ALASDAIR GRAY

An introduction in four parts

PAUL KINCAID

**PART THREE** Anyone who reads the review pages of the national press can hardly fail to have been aware, in 1981, of sudden paeans of praise for a first novel. The novel was LANARK by Alasdair Gray, published by the small Edinburgh press, Canongate. Everyone from Brian Aldiss to Malcolm Bradbury was making outrageous statements about how good it was. I soon found friends, whose taste I trust, making similar statements. Such universal approbation tends to make me wary, and it wasn't until the book came out in paperback in 1982 that I got around to reading it. I immediately regretted the wasted months. LANARK is quite simply the most enjoyable novel I have read in many a long year.

It defies any attempt at classification, being a unique mixture of science fiction and gritty realism, autobiography and fantasy. Tragedy blends imperceptibly into comedy. Everything the critic normally looks for in a good book is to be found here, yet the action is fast enough, the writing so lively and full of joy as to keep the most uncritical reader turning the pages eagerly.

In case I haven't made myself clear, LANARK is spellbindingly good, and we are delighted to welcome its author, Alasdair Gray, to Tynecon II - The Mexican.

**PART ONE** Alasdair Gray was born in the depressed Glasgow of 1934, the city where he has lived and worked ever since. He assures me that the scenes in LANARK describing the early life of Duncan Thaw are quite true to his own experiences. And like Thaw, Gray went to Glasgow College of Art - "Though I didn't murder anyone or commit suicide".

At college his interests were evenly divided between drawing and writing, both of which have been important in his career since then. In fact Gray's bold, dramatic and involved drawings are an inseparable part both of LANARK and of his collection of short stories, UNLIKELY STORIES, MOSTLY.

**BOOK TWO** Both writing and art have formed strands of Gray's life. He has made a living as a painter of portraits and murals. He has served as Glasgow's Official Recorder, a job which involves painting the portraits of local dignitaries and celebrities. Yet he has also written a number of television, radio and stage plays, and was Writer



in Residence at Glasgow University between 1979 and 1981, the period which presumably saw much of the work on LANARK.

But by no means all the work. LANARK was, in fact, a very long time in the writing. One chapter was runner-up in an Observer short story competition in 1958. Two other chapters were published in 1970, another in 1974, and two more in 1978 and 1979. A long birth for any novel.

**BOOK FOUR** Fortunately we don't have to allow such a long gestation period for other books. LANARK was followed by the collection UNLIKELY STORIES, MOSTLY, and his second novel, 1982, JANINE is due out from Cape on 26 April. This looks like it is going to be just as hard a work to define. One excellent extract has already been published in FIREBIRD 3, and we are going to have a chance to decide for ourselves since Alasdair Gray has agreed to give a reading of what he calls the "science fictional passages" from the new book, then to answer questions about his work.

Alasdair Gray has already been advised, by his friend Chris Boyce, that he will have an enjoyable time at Mexicon. I can only hope that we will make Mexicon live up to that promise. I also hope that we will all take this opportunity of getting to know one of the most exciting literary talents in Britain today. Alasdair Gray has already told me that he loves to answer any questions about his work, so all you need to do is say hello.

# RICHARD COWPER

## Landscape and the man

ROB HOLDSTOCK

The road to Richard Cowper's village house, in remotest Devon, is so narrow and winding that at one point it is necessary to perform a three point turn just to continue on your way. The houses, white-washed cobstone below dark thatch, watch silently as you face your last task: turning from the road into the narrow alley beside the Cowper's own residence. But suddenly the claustrophobia is gone, and the land opens out into a breathtaking panorama of wooded hills, sleepy fields, dark ridges and a broad expanse of the meandering River Dart. When there is a fine mist over the river, the view from Richard Cowper's small, bookladen study becomes a timeless image of an English landscape whose spirit remains as vibrant, now, as ten thousand years before. The ship that next slides silently across the veiled water, up towards Totnes, might as equally be a black-sailed Viking raider as a sturdy fishing vessel from after the Drowning, taking Kinsfolk of the White Bird through the Seven Kingdoms. It might be a hover-yacht, manned by intelligent, cloned chimps singing sea shanties and happily peeing into the wind. Or it might be Mister Cowper himself, stroking easily across the current in his twelve foot rowing boat, loaded to the gunwhales with Tom Caxton homebrew equipment, and chortling merrily as, in the distance and in his smaller boat, his guests for the weekend row themselves in ever decreasing circles.

I cannot think of a more idyllic location for a landscape writer, like Richard, to live. The imagery of nature informs his work in a powerful and unforgettable way. I defy anyone, on finishing the *White Bird of Kinship* stories, to not feel that they have really been to the Somersea, or to Corlay, or to high-walled York on that night, in the snow, when a young piper changed the course of a future world...

I first met Richard Cowper in 1974, at a writer's workshop in Milford, his second, my first. His novel *TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS* had just been published; *BREAKTHROUGH*, *KULDESAK* and *CLONE* (a very funny novel, I would discover later) were behind him. The story that he had brought to the workshop was his first piece of shorter fiction and, I remember him saying, a new direction in his writing. My first response was that it was dauntingly long. I noted that it was called "The Custodians", and put off reading it for a few days.

During those days I discovered that there was more than science fiction behind him. As Colin Murry, he had published his first novel, *THE GOLDEN VALLEY*, in 1958. Three more followed: *PATH TO THE SEA*, *RECOLLECTIONS OF A*



GHOST and A PRIVATE VIEW. That the first three are not available is a great shame; but that the delightfully funny and almost unbearably moving PRIVATE VIEW is long out of print is nothing short of indecent. As Colin Murry, too, he produced his autobiography, ONE HAND CLAPPING and SHADOWS ON THE GRASS. To put it mildly, the two-volume account is an experience all of its own.

Sometime in the middle of that Milford week I tackled "The Custodians", sitting in the smoky hotel lounge, surrounded by shuffling workshop activity, the rustling of papers, the clink of empty gin bottles, the rattling impact of cliches against purist literary minds. And to use one of the oldest of cliches, while reading that story, time just seemed to stop dead.

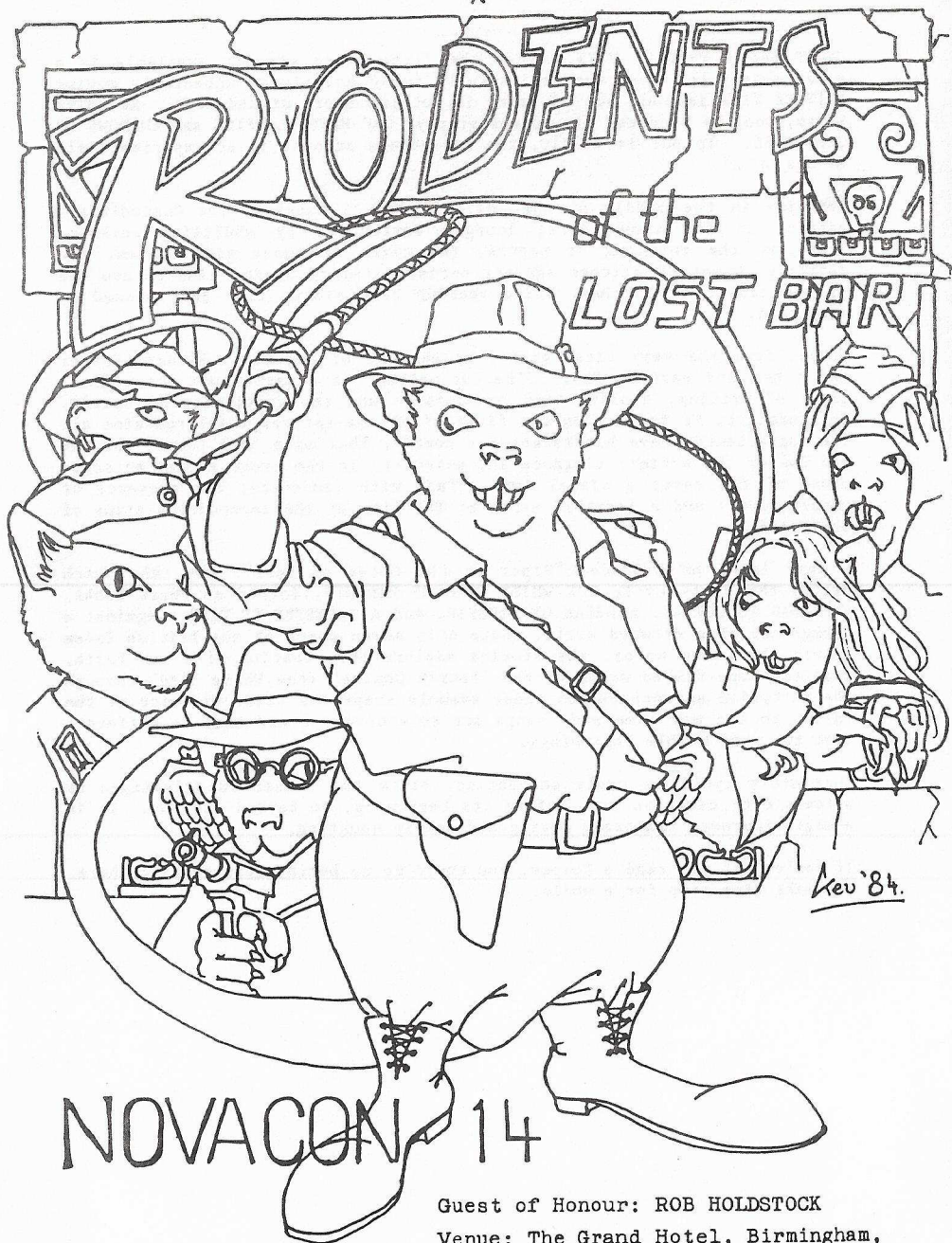
Hooked from the very first scene, by the end of the story Richard Cowper had a new and earnest fan. "The Custodians" is a marvellous and magical piece of writing, dealing with premonition and the continuity of spirit. In hindsight, it is perhaps the first of his narratives which contains all the ingredients, save his talent for comedy, that make both Cowper the Man and Cowper the Writer: elegance and authority in the prose style; an acute sense of the past; a visual love affair with landscape; the presence of occult power; and a terrible sense of futility at the impending wasting of the world.

A year later he produced "Piper at the Gates of Dawn", the tale which begins the story cycle THE WHITE BIRD OF KINSHIP, formed as three books, THE ROAD TO CORLAY, A DREAM OF KINSHIP, and A TAPESTRY OF TIME. Against a background of a drowned world, where only seven parts of the British Isles remain above the water, the stories explore the creation of a new Faith, from the hope-filled dream of the 'Fourth Coming' (the White Bird) through the martyrdom and oppression whose symbols shape the first practice of the faith, to the way time and change act to evolve a creed that is different from the more humble beginnings.

That story cycle is truly enchanting, since the reader is privileged to witness myth creation from before its beginning, to beyond its end. It is a magic journey, immensely moving and deeply haunting.

If you've not yet read a Cowper, you could do no better than to start here. And make time stop for a while.

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# PROGRAMME

## FRIDAY

- 12 noon.      REGISTRATION DESK OPENS  
Collect your badge and answer a few simple questions....
- 6.00 pm.      Film: SAVAGES
- 8.00 pm      OPENING CEREMONY  
Where the festivities commence and you get the chance  
to answer a few more questions.....
- 9.00 pm.      CAN YOU FEEL ANYTHING WHEN I DO THIS?  
A discussion on the relevance of SF criticism with JOHN  
CLUTE, COLIN GREENLAND,      CHRIS PRIEST, and RICHARD  
COWPER.
- 10.00 pm.      SITTING DUCKS  
A new concept in fan programming: the show where the  
panel interrogates the audience. Come prepared for  
scandal, revelations, and Instant Fame.
- 12 midnight.      Film: PINK FLAMINGOES

## SATURDAY

- 10.00 am. MURDERING YOUR DARLINGS  
What are writers' workshops and how are they organised? ROB HOLDSTOCK, GARY KILWORTH, and LISA TUTTLE reveal all
- 12 noon. FANHISTORY: SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT IT?  
In the 1930s Walter Gillings came down on a fiery chariot and British fandom was born. Rob Hansen and a team of eye-witnesses reveal the rest. Avedon Carol asks whether the current retrospective mood is quite what's needed.
- 12 noon. THE ULTRA QUIZ: Quarter-finals.
- 2.00 pm. READING BY ALASDAIR GRAY  
Excerpts from his new novel '1982, JANINE', recently published by Jonathan Cape.
- 3.00 pm. PRO V.FAN QUIZ  
Discover which group knows the most about SF. This also includes 'Famous SF Appendages'.
- 4.00 pm. IS THE BEST SF NOW BEING WRITTEN OUTSIDE SCIENCE FICTION?  
A debate chaired by PETER NICHOLLS and featuring JOHN CLUTE, RUSSELL HOBAN, and CHRIS PRIEST.
- 5.00 pm. Film: ALPHAVILLE
- 7.30 pm. THE ULTRA QUIZ: Semi-finals.



- 8.30 pm. OVERHEAD, WITHOUT ANY FUSS, THE STARS WERE GOING OUT  
MALCOLM EDWARDS, JUDITH HANNA, and ROZ KAVENEY give their views on whether SF has lost its inventiveness.
- 9.30 pm. Film: ATOMIC CAFE
- 11.00 pm. DISCO
- 

## SUNDAY

- 10.00 am. OTHER SCENES  
Is there anything in common between SF, Rock, literary and comics fanzines? PHIL PALMER and ANNE WARREN explain.
- 11.00 am. MY GOD, NOT ANOTHER ASIMOV REPRINT  
MALCOLM EDWARDS and RICHARD EVANS are put on the spot and asked to explain what factors determine a publisher's list.
- 12 noon. A TALK BY RICHARD COWPER
- 1.00 pm. Film: CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING
- 4.30 pm. THE RUSSELL HOBAN INTERVIEW  
PAUL KINCAID questions the author of RIDDLEY WALKER, PILGERMANN, and many other books about his work.
- 5.30 pm. THE ULTRA QUIZ: The grand final.
- 8.00 pm. Play: THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER
- 10.00 pm. IS SCIENCE FICTION LIKE ACNE?  
JOHN CLUTE, ROB HOLDSTOCK, DAVE LANGFORD, and RICHARD EVANS ponder the suggestion that SF is essentially an immature form of literature.

11.00 pm PRO SF FORTUNES

If you've seen TV's 'Family Fortunes' you'll have a good idea what's in store for the hapless professionals.

12 midnight PARTY (and Royal Tournament)

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## MONDAY

10.00 am. FANZINE CRITICISM: IS IT NECESSARY FOR A HEALTHY SCENE?

...and is it the critics fault if no fanzines come out?  
FROST, EDWARDS, OUNSLLEY, and BROWN find out.

11.00 am. I THOUGHT ANALOG WAS A DIGITAL WATCH

COLIN GREENLAND, GARY KILWORTH, and LISA TUTTLE, discuss the current relevance of SF magazines.

12 noon. Film: IT HAPPENED HERE

2.00 pm. CLOSING CEREMONY

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## HOTEL LAYOUT:

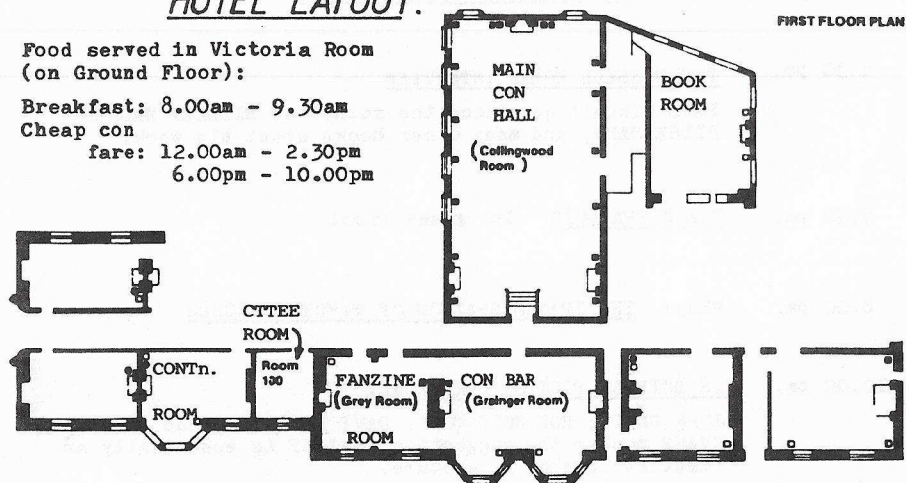
Food served in Victoria Room  
(on Ground Floor):

Breakfast: 8.00am - 9.30am

Cheap con

fare: 12.00am - 2.30pm

6.00pm - 10.00pm





# BEING DIFFERENT

ANNE WARREN

ABSTRACT//SUMMARY//ASSERTIONS MADE This piece contains the following assertions: elitism is central to the core of fandom: shallow end will never produce a true fan: science fiction is symptomatic of fandom and is not at its root: duplicated fanzines are intrinsically more acceptable than lithoed ones: west is a symbol: fans have no small talk: conventions are like toilets.

This article started when I was fifteen years old. It was the beginning of a new school year and my form had moved into a new classroom on the first floor. We'd been there about three weeks now and I was following my friends down the corridor after break. They turned into the room with scarcely a pause and the door swung shut. I came up to it and began, once again, to wrestle with the door handle. As I tugged at it I thought, WHY won't it ever turn for me? Why do I always try to turn it the wrong way first? What's wrong with me that I can't even learn to do a simple thing like opening a bloody door? Is it because the handles at home turn the other way? Is it because I'm trying to push it outwards, like going out of a room, and not inwards into the room? Maybe I have hands that are a funny shape. Maybe it's just because, somehow, I'm Different. As I forced the door open, it suddenly came to me that yes, I WAS different. Not because I have funny shaped hands or can't open a door, but because I couldn't imagine any of my schoolmates ever wondering WHY they couldn't open doors. Things like that were facts, you lived with them, you didn't waste time questioning them, what's the point after all?

The point, of course, is that there isn't any point - it's just fun, that's all. But I gradually grew to realise that indulging in this sort of fun was definitely odd, by normal standards. So in an attempt to disguise this abnormality while actually pursuing it, I decided to become a psychologist. I figured that this way I could spend my time trying to work out why some people couldn't open doors, go around measuring their hands and trying them out on different types of door knobs, all in the name of highbrow academic research, when of course it was really just me being a nosy parker.

Once I was started on the grim reality of waiting for indecisive rats to make up their minds whether to go into the black end or the white end of the maze (rats are smart, they know that the last time they did this they got shut in for quarter of an hour, with nothing to do but sniff around and get breathed on by four ignorant undergraduates, after all that was what happened last year. And the year before that. And the year before...), I

discovered that this move hadn't been quite as cunning as I'd thought it was. Psychologists are rather odd, too. It irritated me that once you confessed to studying psychology, people seemed to expect you to understand more about other people than ordinary folk do. They say, "I'll bet you're psychoanalysing me, I'll have to be careful what I say!", and you smile politely, pretending, like the rats, that you haven't been through all this before. The reason some psychologists are more perceptive than non-psychologists is not because they've learned some rule or theory out of a book and can apply it to learn All Your Secrets, but because people who become psychologists are often people who like watching other people and thinking about what they do. Psychology only provides the framework within which you try to see and understand. Any good novelist could tell you as much about what is going on in a group of people, and for the same reason.

At some point in my course, we all got processed through large batteries of tests, as this was what many of us had secretly come for (interview for a degree; "Why do you want to do Psychology?" Aspiring undergraduate; "Because I want to Know More About Myself and be able to Understand Other People Better." Interviewing Board; (restrained snicker). One very interesting result was that I came out as a loner, high on not being very tolerant of other people. "How can you be a psychologist and not like people?" asked someone. "Easy, I don't want to love them and help them, I want to put them under the microscope and do experiments on them and find out what all these people congregate at precisely the same place every first Thursday in the month, hahaha!" I really should have learned, by then, about not appearing to be odd.

I got used to being odd, after a while, after all it was rather noble to be the only one interested in twiddling with ideas and stretching concepts to see how far they would go. But thinking about things on your own isn't half as much fun as having a bang-up row with someone about Why War Is A Good Thing, which was something I rapidly learned not to do, after having achieved the reputation (with one group) of being a raving fascist and (with another group) of being a rabid communist. People kept taking me SERIOUSLY. Sadly I came to the conclusion that normal people like to know what they believe and not to have to reconsider it; they like their mind to be stable and placid and not shooting off in pretty coloured lights like a firework; they like conversations that cause ripples in their mind and not waves; and I learned that if I was ever going to Get On, I had better stop being Odd.

And so for about five years I sat like a ghost at the feast, or a chameleon hiding my true colours, and learned to apply my Social Skills like a good girl, while developing an ever stronger cynical detachment. I was a loner; I didn't like people much.

And then I discovered CUSFS and was introduced to fanzines and The Women's Periodical and went to Racon and got involved in fandom. And found that I belonged.

It has taken me a while to get used to this. It's not that I haven't had groups of friends before, of course I have. What is strange about fandom is the almost tribal feeling of being one of a group who all have something in common. It's knowing that I can walk into a con and meet people like



me, who'll have a common outlook and a common way of communicating, that I don't have to explain myself to before we can start talking. And these are not necessarily people that I've met. I don't know them, but I know they are there. It's this feeling of a pool of unknowns which I'm certain contains interesting people who I'll be able to explore things with, without the constraints imposed by society outside; as I said, it is a tribal feeling. It's open-ended, too - I probably won't meet everybody I'd like to know, and all the time, new people will be surfacing. Of course there are others who I don't like, but I'm prepared to tolerate them, because while they may not make a positive contribution towards this alternative society, they are at least not pushing against it. On the outside, it's hard work starting and maintaining the kind of discussion I like. Fandom spontaneously generates them. In fact, you have to watch it, sometimes you have to stop people having interesting conversations so you can go to the loo. And when you come back from buying drinks at the bar, it's often to a different conversation.

If you're reading this, none of this will be new to you. You've almost certainly been through it yourself. It's what Damon Knight called the "frog syndrome" - the one thing all SF fans have in common is that they were all frogs until kissed by SF. Nearly all fans seem to have felt themselves to be misfits in normal society; it wasn't until they joined fandom that they felt themselves to "fit in".

To me, the intriguing thing about the culture of fandom is that it doesn't see itself as a culture created around the needs and preferences of its members, but as a group of people who share a common interest in science fiction, and meet together to further that interest. Yet this is patently untrue. There are many fans who have read little or no SF since adolescence, others who came in via knowing fans and have never read any SF except the books they forced themselves to read because they thought it was some kind of passport to being a fan. The root of fandom doesn't lie in SF. It lies in the fact that we are all the same kind of people. These type of people are commonly attracted to SF early in life; this interest may or may not stick. However, it is perfectly possible for this kind of person to have never been interested in SF, perhaps because he or she didn't start to read it at the right psychological moment, and because later in life he or she rejected it for the same reasons many SF readers stop reading the genre after adolescence. What makes a fan is far more basic than special literary interests. It does have to do with interests, but also arises from character, personality, approach, method of communicating, ideals and underlying principles. In short, it is a culture. A symptom of this culture is an interest in ideas, and a concrete facet of this is a liking for science fiction, the "literature of ideas". This concrete aspect of fandom provides a focus for the culture, and provides venues in which it can develop and be engaged in. But it is noticeable that most conventions and group meetings are not primarily devoted to talking about science fiction.

Here I should perhaps elucidate what I'm referring to when I talk about fandom. I suppose that I am primarily talking about fannish fans, rather than the larger grouping which includes media fans, D&D fans, computer fans and costume fans, all of which can be found at the larger cons. I am not excluding non-fanzine-producing fans who go to 2 or more cons and maybe a

regular local meeting, however. This 'core' of fandom seems to me to have an identity, possibly derived from historical aspects of the development of fandom; from the early days when fandom was a much smaller and tighter group than today. I'll go into how the more modern elements of fandom fit in later on. Bear with me. At the moment I'm talking about this self-defined core of fandom.

So if fandom is a culture, what is that culture based upon? What do we have in common - what is the need that the culture fulfils?

First of all, fans don't like wasting time with people.

"I can't do small-talk," observed Steve Higgins at a recent Tun. "I don't see the point. My mother used to complain about me being rude to my aunts when they came to visit, because they used to say, Isn't it sunny, and I would say, Yes. Then after a while I'd go away. What did they expect me to say?"

They expected him to say, "Yes, and the weather forecast seems to think it will hold too, lovely isn't it? I hope it lasts for my holidays, I'm going in a week's time but with my luck it'll probably rain the whole time. Have you been on holiday yet? Where did you go?"

Dull, isn't it. I mean you're not interested in where I went on my holidays, are you. Especially you aren't interested in having me go into detail, I had dysentery you know, all those little red and green lumps and I swear I hadn't been eating peppers, oh but there was this really funny waiter, of course I can't do the accent properly, but, and the thing was, it was his MOTHER all along!

If you're going to find out about my holidays, you'd much rather I spent some time and effort on it, write it up as a fanzine article maybe. Then you can be sure that a) it won't take so long to read as to talk about, b) you don't have to listen if it's boring, and c) at least you can be reasonably sure that the punchline will come in the right place. You'll get the same information in half the time, better presented, no obligation to listen politely when you'd rather be doing other things, and if you haven't got anything to say, you needn't prolong the conversation. You needn't even send a postcard to say, How interesting, not if you don't want to.

Now when it comes to telling me about your own holiday, you probably can't be bothered. It'll be in the next fanzine, you can say, don't want to spoil it by telling you everything now. After all, fanzines are honoured more in the breach than in the observance, it probably won't be out for 9 months and you can shelve the holiday project with relief. And if you do do it, you'll want to spend a little time polishing the performance, teasing out the best bits and presenting them in the best light for communicating their essential meaning or humour.

Fanzine's are a fundamental and unique (almost unique) aspect of fandom, and the question of why they are so important is interesting. What is it about the culture that causes fans to generate fanzines, guard them



jealously, worry about the effect of things like apas, and discuss at length trends and the need for new blood?

O.K., I've said that fanzines streamline communication, that fans aren't interested in wasting time, in talking to people for the sake of talking to people, and that fanzines can be used as a way of reducing this. But this is hardly the point of fanzines. Articles on What I Did On My Holidays are tolerated in fanzines, they are not the prime attraction. The prime attraction of fanzines seems to me to be twofold. The first attraction is the ideas. The second attraction is getting to know people with ideas.

Surely the greatest thing fans have in common is an interest in ideas. We want to know What if? and Why? We want to analyse new thoughts and perceptions and dig out underlying truths, in almost any sphere. Fans really and passionately are interested in door handles. That's why they are attracted to science fiction, because it says, Yes, but what would happen if the sun only set once in every few thousand years? What if we discovered that the moon was a Hollywood canvas and girder fake? If the Japanese had won the Second World War, what kind of world would we be living in?

Many fans drop away from their old habits of reading large amounts of science fiction as they grow older. Perhaps this is to do with the development of SF. The early classics covered ideas in leaps and bounds; later works have dealt more subtly with ideas, some becoming very technical in search of fruitful concepts to play with. Unfortunately, perhaps because of the preoccupation with ideas, characterisation has often been neglected. As I grew up, I found startling new ideas to be thinner on the ground, and the characters in the books seemed sadly 2D. I began to switch to other types of reading matter, ones which offered insights into character and human reactions. But one thing didn't change. My method and aims of communication remained constant. I am and always will be interested in exploring new concepts and digging to the heart of the matter, and I am and always will be impatient of conversations that balk me in this, that they are shallow and superficial, that show no sign of making me rethink, or begin to analyse something I've previously taken for granted.

Fandom promotes argument, discussion of ideas in a wide range of fields, and the challenging of preconceptions. In the outside world, there are a range of cultures towards which one can gravitate. In almost every case, the rule that protects the culture is Don't rock the boat. In fandom, the only rule to protect the culture is that you must not refuse to argue the point. You can say, "Piss off, I don't want to go into that, it's so boring, and I've said it all before," but you can't just keep turning the subject, or say, "No, I think you're wrong, but I'm not going to discuss it with you." Refusing to discuss an apparently blind belief amounts to devaluing the common culture, where challenge and argument are seen as valuable. Turning away from frank and open argument disappoints people in you. You're allowed to do it because you can't be bothered, but not because you want to protect your irrational prejudices. Unless, of course, you're prepared to come straight out and say openly that you know it's irrational, and you don't care. Being honest and sticking to your guns is almost as good as being open-minded, in fandom.



Outside fandom, most people would regard this attitude as personally threatening. Fans find this directness a relief. You can talk about what you want when you want, and how you want, and your audience will hear the points you make, and not disapprove because you didn't preface them with all the other little social niceties you are meant to use when attacking other people's ideas. If you think something is rubbish, you can say "Rubbish!" without mortally offending your opponent, and establishing yourself as one of Them, unswervingly devoted to undermining all the principles that right thinking people adhere to. If you say "Rubbish!" outside, you've just blown any chance of changing the other person's mind.

In the real world, people match to other people according to the similarity of their world view, perceptions and ideas. In fandom, people match more strongly to those who communicate in the same way. Fans find people with different views, who are prepared to argue them, more congenial than people with the same or similar views, who refuse to discuss them critically. Fans seem like shifting sand to outsiders; don't they know what they think? And why do they argue such a lot?

In fandom you can observe how these people who have been penalised for their brutishness elsewhere are extremely tolerant of rudeness and swinging attacks in print of the KTF kind. Fans are reluctant to condemn others for speaking their minds, when this has been done to them on the outside. Being rude to others is made into a virtue, as an overreaction to having to guard your tongue in normal society. This happens to the point to which it becomes deleterious to maintaining the social group, to the point of chasing away the less talented and less emotionally robust members of the community. Fandom walks a fine line between being open and honest, and being rude and insensitive. It needs the former to communicate, but it must avoid the latter to remain viable as a social group.

Because fans are strong communicators, direct to the point of rudeness, and because they are only swayed by good arguments and ideas, they tend to be strong personalities. I don't mean this in the conventional sense of leaders in the group, since outside fandom they may have adopted camouflage. Knowing that their approach and ideas tend to alienate people, they drop out of discussion, sit on the sidelines and observe, appear very inverted. But when their opinions are engaged, when they do put forward a point of view, they are likely to be very stubborn. If you can't prove something to their satisfaction, they won't take your word for it. They tend to feel quite passionately a wish to establish the truth, and are unlikely to take the viewpoint "Oh well, it doesn't really matter, does it? We probably won't have a nuclear war, and anyway there's nothing we can really do about it." Fans are obstinate, independent and committedly anarchic. One of the most evidence features of fanish culture is this strong desire to do what I want to do, while being quite ready to admit your right to do the same. Fans are not primarily social, wanting the greatest good for the greatest number; they want instead the greatest freedom for individuals. They may want others to do as they wish, but they have no desire to TELL them to do it. The flip side of anarchy is the fear of responsibility; the fear of power. This is a trap many fans are caught in - they argue strongly and persuasively, and can only be happy doing this with others as committedly independent as themselves, since otherwise there

is always the fear that you might persuade somebody into something, and have to bear the responsibility for consequent events.

Fans not only dislike organising others, they also dislike being organised. A good example of this came with the Seacon bid at Albacon. A lot of hackles were raised by the way in which the committee tried to organise people, getting letters from authors, bringing in the hotel manager, concentrating on the extrinsic aspects of the con, on the appearance rather than the substance or content. This concentration on the packaging is entirely opposed to the culture I've been trying to define; one which is anarchic, and where what is said is important, rather than the way it is said. I was more convinced for 1984CON by the feeling of fur brushed backwards than by any amount of arguments raised on the platform; even at that early stage, I felt that the hyper-organised con which looked the best bet by outside standards, was not the best bet by fannish standards. I had a strong feeling that someone was intending to make sure I had a Good Time, and nothing makes me more determined to rebel. It's like when someone presses a book on you, you immediately don't want to read it. Whether Seacon will turn out to be a good con or not remains to be seen. In fannish terms, however, the organised approach was a psychological error.

So far I've argued that the things which draw fans together are a common interest in ideas, a common way of communicating which is very direct and careless of convention (and by outside standards inept), and an anarchic, highly independent attitude - a reluctance to accept that anyone else's opinion is per se better than one's own. To the outside world, this might be summed up as disturbing and antisocial. It certainly runs counter to most cultural norms. Most cultures require common beliefs, and those who question, refuse to cooperate with the majority, and refuse to participate in social and linguistic rituals are bad news; disruptive elements. They may stop the culture stagnating, but they aren't liked very much, and culture does not reward them as it does the more conformist sections of society. So we have a group of people equating to Socrates' gadfly, who bite the bum of society, yet aren't sufficiently of it to become organised and to use the accepted routes for change (politics and alternative movements, for example).

It's interesting to contemplate the culture which has arisen among these outsiders in the mainstream of society. Given that fans like ideas, don't like wasting time on the frills of conversation, on the small talk which in the outside world is the necessary preliminary for deeper conversations, dislike being organised and are strongly anarchic, what kind of a culture could result?

One very different to mainstream society.

Look at the extraordinary aspects and arrangements of this culture of ours. Firstly, how people meet each other. Meetings are infrequent, with cons occurring about once every month or two on average. Society meetings usually run on a monthly basis, although some may be as regular as once a week. These meetings last perhaps two or three hours. Here in the London area, it's possible to go to about 5 meetings in a month; but almost no one goes to all of them. While the meetings may not be frequent, they are of very high intensity. The incidence of involving and thought-provoking



discussions is very high; I've never yet come away without something to think about. Conversations get very animated and forceful, too - meetings are rarely relaxing, always stimulating. The intensity of the conversation rapidly satisfies my need for communication; I can quite happily wait until the next meeting for more of the same.

Cons are rarer, but even more hectic. Larger numbers of people this time, many of whom you may only see once or twice a year. The conversations begin at the bar and carry on at room parties into the early hours, and anyone who goes to bed before 4 has to be an anomaly.

The really unusual part about all this compared to other cultures is the way it is organised to provide plenty of get-outs. Fans are geographically scattered, so some kind of organisation is needed to come together. Fans are anarchic, and hate being organised or feeling responsible. Solution: set up a regular venue to which anyone can come, but to which no one is expected. If you're feeling antisocial, you can cop out, knowing that things will go on much the same without you. If you want to drop out for months or even years, that's OK. You aren't seen as betraying the culture or even failing to support it. There is actually a word for it, as an expected behaviour "gafiate". Notice how, typically, the fannish culture creates its own internal jargon by using initials to shorten the phrase Get away from it all, for more direct communication. The significance of a concept like gafiation is quite outstanding. Can you have another society having a word which treats as acceptable - even inevitable - the concept "I'm dropping out because I can no longer tolerate all this ingroupiness/camaraderie/self-absorbition, I don't want to be part of it at least until I've had a breathing space." The crux of it is that this behaviour is seen as normal, not reprehensible. It should be a strike at the roots of the culture, but it isn't, because the other members have felt something of the same feeling at other times. It happens at cons, on a smaller scale. Someone can be in the bar all night fiercely arguing and debating, then disappear until 8.00 the following evening. "I went window shopping, it all got too much for me, I couldn't take any more people."

The way in which fannish culture copes with anarchy is by saying, well - we'll tell you where we are; come if you want, but nobody's expecting you. In mainstream society, this would make individual members of the group feel threatened, since group solidarity is important. In fandom, its the freedom which is more important. No one is relying on you, you can do what you want. No more that sinking feeling, "We said we'd go to Janet's tonight, but I don't want to go to Janet's right now." Nobody is pressing a book on you - you belong to a library.

Another curious aspect of fandom is the production of fanzines. Given the small and scattered nature of early fandom, this might be held to be a tradition, a legacy of the times when it was rare to meet your fellow fans. While an economic method of trading ideas with others was undoubtedly a major attraction of fanzines, and still is, fanzines today perform another useful function. I suggested earlier that fanzines were a way of getting to know people with ideas. Fanzines, in fact, are a dateline service, an introductory network whereby you can get to know someone without obligation, a means of sidestepping that small-talk introduction. If you've read someone's fanzine, you can go to a con, walk up to a stranger



and say, "AH HA, you're Dave Bridges, I want to talk to you about this idea of a plastic chip that focuses your brain. And how on earth do you think you can possibly hope to classify people using only 4 axes?"

Obviously the root of fanzines lies in letters; equally obviously, given fans' dislike of wasting time, and lack of interest in social niceties, this would rapidly transform into a duplicated letter to several other fans (so you don't need to go through all that tedium of repeating yourself slightly differently to each reader, commenting on his letter and enquiring after his health. He's a fan; he'll understand that nothing could be more natural. But have you ever tried suggesting to people who are off to the other side of the world that they xerox their letters home and send you a copy with just a brief note on it? They'd honestly rather not write if they can't write you your own letter. They think it is insulting.) Fanzines also allow you to put together a line of argument without irritating interruptions from other people - you know, always wanting to put their own ideas in and develop yours in directions that you almost certainly didn't want it to go. By the time you've finished explaining what it isn't you probably can't remember what it IS.

So fanzines let you get into conversation with others without bothering with personal trivia. They are primarily for carrying ideas. This may be why fanzines which publish fiction are suspect - they are perverting fanzines from their "proper" use. Similarly, fanzines which contain purely anecdotal material or diaryzine will be less well-thought-of than those which carry more provocative material. The interest in fanzines, as in conversation, lies in the new thoughts and concepts it conveys, the stimulation it provides. This is another example of the fannish emphasis on content over appearance, and may explain why glossy productions with lithoed artwork are also treated with a little suspicion. Not because this in itself is bad, but because there is felt to be an implication that presentation is important, which is undeniably true in the outside world and violently rejected by fandom. Too many of us have been rebuffed because our ideas and ourselves didn't come in acceptable packaging. Fannish culture will feel easier with traditional white or green quarto stencilled fanzines with few or no illustrations; the more "professional" the appearance, the more critically will the interior be examined. This is easy to mock, and is mocked, fans being what they are; but the feeling persists because there is a real cultural principle underlying it.

Which brings me to elitism. The accusation of elitism and cliquishness seems to be a big bugbear in fandom at the moment, with one lobby accusing another and tentative moves being made towards making fandom more accessible. People who don't think they are IN complain about it, whereas people who are seen to be IN say For Christ's sake, I come here to talk to my friends, why should I be expected to be a one-man public relations act? Why should people expect to be able to butt in on my conversations?

Fans like deep conversation. They don't stay in the shallow end for long, but slide rapidly into discussions of some importance. Getting to know people, in the mainstream manner, requires the maintenance of a shallow end for people joining the group. Only once you have become one of the group will you sometimes get into deeper water. In fandom you get into the group by showing that you can swim. Those who want to make fandom more

accessible try to encourage a gentle gradient to get new people in. The point that they are missing is that by doing this they are encouraging the WRONG people. People who are naturally fannish, who are used to being considered socially inept, will dispense with the small talk with relief, hang around on the outskirts for a while, then use a remark or a programme item for a hook to break into a conversation, and they're away. And because the conversation is so intense at cons, and often at group meetings, a couple of brief bursts will satisfy quite a lot of your social needs. That is, if you're naturally fannish, and don't expect much from other people anyway.

The people who complain, the people who feel they are being excluded, are those who are not naturally or exclusively fannish. They expect the social niceties. They think that because they are nice people, quite attractive, and work hard on the committee (organising things), they should be accepted. What's wrong with them? Nothing - so it must be a conspiracy. But in fandom, what you look like, how you talk, whether you have the social graces, are completely irrelevant. The rewards of small talk, being accepted, being part of the group just aren't there. They only seem to be there to the people who are looking for them, who see small groups with their backs turned outwards. A true fan would get a word here or there, be rapidly recognised, and soon be arguing with the best of them. The things that are attractive in fandom are very different from outside, the interest is in the matter, not the art. The hunchback of Notre Dame, if he had an incisive wit, or good ideas or perception, would be welcomed with glee. But if you can't cut it with ideas you are disruptive to the group, you don't contribute, and you force the conversation back up into the shallow end with every comment. I've been in on these conversations and it's frustrating: there's a brief pause and then everyone goes back to what they were really talking about. You keep wishing the person would go away. They are excluded for no personal reason, but because they don't fit. Elitism is only the outer appearance of community, group solidarity. Take away elitism and you destroy the culture. Elitism leaves open the door to the best, to those who have most in common, most to offer the culture; and resists dilution. It is also extremely fair. No one gets IN purely because of their connections.

Like all cultures, fandom has its own language, traditions and symbols. The preferred format of fanzine is one, incomprehensible to the outside, but with its roots in something deeper, a rejection of glossy packaging. When I first came across this idea of a 'right' type of fanzine, I thought it was ludicrous and it engendered in me a desire to challenge it, produce a fanzine as unlike the approved kind as possible. It wasn't until I'd been in fandom a little while longer that I realised that it was constantly being challenged, that it wasn't a rule so much as a preference. I was applying the right attitude, but to the wrong thing. Fandom is quite capable of challenging its own institutions, and does. Other things that define fandom and appear unnecessary and exclusive to outsiders are the jargon words, usually based on abbreviations - GAFIATE, FIAWOL, APA, KTF, CON, LOCCOL, MUNDANE - which are essentially new words created to represent commonly occurring concepts in fandom, and to aid rapid and effective communication. All cultures have some words for which there is no exact equivalent in other cultures, and these words are generally useful in understanding the concerns which are of importance only to the culture in



question. If you want to look at fannish culture in more depth, look at its words. Why do we need them? Use of this language not only speeds communication, it signals your familiarity with common concepts and your membership of the culture. You pick it up on your way in, and at least at first, use it with a self-conscious, childish glee as incantations to signal your membership. Once within the core of fandom, this becomes routine and is not done for its own sake; it becomes unconscious.

Other symbols are also manipulated by the outer circle, and sometimes the inner. The nearer you are to the centre, the less need to stress your difference from outsiders. Conversely, those who are not naturally fannish, don't recognise fans as a coherent group of their kind of people, or who don't find fandom very important, will think the language silly or pretentious. So you will get a situation where jargon is minimal on the fringes, becomes more important as you progress towards the centre, and then tails off as you reach the secure or established group.

The manipulation of symbols follows a similar pattern. The best example of a symbol I've come across in fandom is D West. There are two D Wests in fandom. One is a person who is known and talked to. The other is the symbol or archetype, and is referenced by people who don't know him well. An example of the symbolic use of D West is the "D West groupies" reference in the comic strip in THIS NEVER HAPPENS. If you listen to people talking about him, the symbolic use can be clearly distinguished from the reference to the real person by the way in which his name is used. The real person is D or Don, as in "Have you invited D yet?". The symbol is always "D West" or "Famous Dave", as in "We'll hang full length silhouettes of D West". For many people, "D West for Taff" has a symbolic rather than personal value: by supporting him, they support the symbol of D, not the person - what "D West" stands for. At this point I should say that I don't know D, my conversation with him has been limited to a couple of sentences. So I am more familiar with the archetype, the way that he and others perpetuate the myth. You might wonder why a fan who never gets involved in organisations (let alone organising) - when inveigled into Frank's apa, his contribution turned into a diatribe against apas, so he decided to withdraw and publish it elsewhere - who is reported as talking and acting in an antisocial and extremely blunt way, has no small talk, but occasionally writes long and perceptive pieces about things fannish, full of new ideas and perceptions, should be a symbol in fandom. On the other hand, by now, you might not.

If fandom is a culture adapted for people who like to dispense with politenesses, who like tackling hard ideas and issues, who have few social graces and hate being organised, how does it perpetuate itself? This seemed at one point to be a major concern, with a drop-off in fanzine publishing rightly or wrongly ascribed to KTF reviewing, and a perceived need for "new blood". Laying aside for the moment the question of whether there actually was a drop-off in fanzine publishing, or whether the decline was only part of a cycle in which things stagnate, causing newcomers to think "I could do better than that"; how could fandom encourage new blood? Two approaches are currently being argued, those of SHALLOW END and apas. Having been a newcomer at around the time SHALLOW END and THE WOMEN'S PERIODICAL came into being, I have some relevant experience of these.



Of the two, SHALLOW END is undoubtedly the least likely to succeed. Give a newcomer a helpful fanzine which offers criticism and advice on how best to write for fandom, and what will happen? Any self-respecting, people-hating, anarchic, talented fan will react by saying, "Rules? What rules? Right - how many of them can I break?" Only non-fannish newcomers would be encouraged by such an approach; such are unlikely to survive and thrive in the unprotected climate of real fandom. To my knowledge, SHALLOW END has produced no major new fan. The editors admit that they themselves probably got more out of the exercise than the contributors. They do point to a number of fanzines produced by people who wrote in to SHALLOW END as a measure of success, however. My own feeling about this is that either the people concerned would have produced a fanzine anyway; or that if they needed the sort of encouragement the genzine offered, they are unlikely to become core members of fandom. Perhaps the final proof of the pudding lies in the fact that after a couple of issues which relied quite heavily on contributions from well-known fans, SHALLOW END is to fold. It was a nice try, but a think a mistaken one.

What about apas? In the past, apas have generally culled their membership from among existing fans, thus being accused of elitism for drawing their talents away from general circulation. THE WOMEN'S PERIODICAL was an exception in that it actively sought new members among recent recruits to fandom, often spreading its net outside fandom, and bringing in friends of fans. Here I have to admit to finding myself in something of a quandary about whether the effects of TWP were primarily beneficial or not. On the one hand, TWP definitely helped me to become integrated into fandom, and it cut across local and historical barriers so that it was some time before I even knew these existed - I tend to assume all the people I'd met knew each other as well or better than I knew them. TWP allowed me to get to know people without the social preliminaries, through getting into conversation with them in print, and reading what they'd written. I've always said that fanzines perform this function; TWP did it better because there was more communication via mailing comments (fanzines were very off-putting - you wrote to the editor, and heard absolutely nothing until the next issue, if there was one); and the evangelical nature of TWP in its first year meant that it contacted me early; I didn't have to suffer unenjoyable cons to get fanzines, I was already contributing by the time I went to my first con. Against this is the undeniable fact that had I not joined the apa I would sooner or later have produced a fanzine, as the person who lent me the apa also lent me her fanzines. I would probably have got involved anyway, because I'm a fannish type of person; I find the culture sits easy on me, I feel relaxed in it.

Other apas formed since then have not been evangelical to any great extent, and what impetus they have in this direction is rapidly exhausted as the places fill up. Some, like apa-B, have a geographical basis and seem to reinforce a local group rather than extend it; others, like Frank's, are filled at the whim of the administrator, who with plenty of known good writers to present the idea to, is unlikely to seek for new talent in the fringes of fandom. Overall, it seems to me that apas are doing no better a job than fanzines have traditionally done. They have some advantages (mailing comments guarantee some response) and some disadvantages (restricted circulation - a problem that is likely to become more severe as the apa continues with a regular membership, rather than seeking new

members). Fanzines could do a better job if they were more evangelical - the Mexican idea of having a "library" of a wide range of recent fanzines available for reading during the con seems the best move in this direction for a long time. Apas could do a better job if they were constructed in such a way as to have a less static membership - for example, if people on the waiting list were given priority over older members at the beginning of every apa year. This would also encourage existing members who suddenly found themselves on the waiting list to compensate by producing their own fanzine, to stay in the communication network. However, something so organised is very unlikely to be acceptable to fans in the apa, who would be bound to come up with very good reasons as to why it wouldn't work...

Another approach to recruiting seems to be to recruit from the ranks of media fans, costume fans and D&D fans. Underlying this is the assumption that because people are interested in another aspect of science fiction, they are more likely to be fannish than the general population. Trekkies and Blakies and all the other special interest groups to be found at cons may contain fannish people, but I doubt very much if there are more of them there than anywhere else. These groups come to conventions to participate in their own culture, which may in some respects resemble fannish culture, but in many other important ways will be quite unique. Someone who fits well and squarely into such an interest group is probably LESS likely to be a potential recruit to fandom than someone with no connections at all; they have found their niche and are already reaping the satisfactions of that culture. Better to look for the person who hasn't found their niche yet. Some people will have things in common with both groups and be able to and interested in mixing with both groups; but they are unlikely to be central to both. Drives to break down the barriers between the groups and encourage free and easy intercourse are probably mistaken. It doesn't bother me, because I don't think they will succeed. If the cultures were sufficiently alike, they would already be mingling freely. Cultures are not things that you manipulate to fit your principles, they are things you live inside, taking the advantages with the disadvantages. This is not to say that I think fannish fans should have separate cons, or try to get rid of the special interest groups, feeling that they are beginning to take over. The more people at a con, the cheaper the rates and the greater the facilities. Cons are only like toilets - they provide a setting for a function. Different groups of people can coexist quite happily, all using the same toilets. More people just means you need more toilets, not a separate room. Interaction between groups in a natural and unforced way at cons could also resemble that which takes place in toilets; namely you mostly talk to the people you know, but you could get into conversation with someone about the facilities which would cause you to recognise that person again later, and perhaps lead to a more worthwhile conversation, if you have sufficient in common.

The final way of trying to perpetuate fandom which seems to be taking hold is by having babies. Suffice it to say that this seems to me to be at best a long-term solution, and moreover one which is likely to reduce the enjoyable heterogeneity currently present in fandom.

It isn't coincidence that fanzines, local groups and cons have become the standard ways of attracting new blood into fandom. Efforts to make these more accessible - but accessible to the right kind of people, who will

(continued on page 49.....)



# The fan programme

KEVIN WILLIAMS

A whole social world of activity has grown up around those people who have been brought together by means of a mutual interest in Science Fiction. This body of people is called Fandom. Other genres also have their "Fandoms", but none of them matches the age, extent (both content and geographical) and activity of Science Fiction Fandom. No other professionals in any other literary sphere have as much contact with their readers as do SF authors. No other genre runs so many conventions (approximately 50 are planned) across the world, but largely in the USA - during 1983) varying in size from fifty to six thousand attendees. No other readers have as much influence on what is written and published as do SF readers (this is not necessarily a good thing!). No other readers actually decide which stories or novels should win the major prize of the year - and thereby significantly boost sales (the HUGO Award is voted for by attendees of the Annual World SF convention).

All the above is presented as essential background, for our primary concern at Tynecon II is with the creative product of Fandom, namely Fanzines. These are amateur publications, frequently of professional standard, but more often cheap and cheerful (and usually all the more vibrant for it). These come in a variety of different types: serious critical/review magazines of SF & amateur SF writings but the most lively form are the general interest Fanzines which are more a medium for personal light writing, anecdotes, personal experience and general comment on the world around, very often totally unrelated to anything whatsoever to do with Science Fiction. Fanzines have been around since the 1930's and span three continents (music fans only think they invented Fanzines in the last fifteen years). There is a whole Fanzine distribution network based on trade, and a growing mythology about many of its aspects - the great writers of their time; the artists and illustrators; ongoing feuds and debates; how to achieve good production standards at low cost... and so on. Indeed, Fandom has produced very many good writers, particularly comic writers a number of whom have gone on to full time professional careers, eg: Michael Moorcock, Bob Shaw, Robert Silverberg, Frederick Pohl, James White, David Langford, Chris Priest and Robert Holdstock. At Tynecon II we will have many Fanzines on display, will feature programme items discussing their merits, and workshops for those who want to try their hand.

Furthermore, each convention member will receive a free copy of a special anthology of the best of British Fanwriting of the 1980's. We are assembling this as a showcase of the standards that can be achieved. It



will feature contributions from names that will be more familiar as successful professional writers in their own right.

We also plan to invite the authors and editors of other Fanzine genres (music, comics and poetry) for a lively discussion of the similarities and differences aims and ambitions of and between the different types.

WARREN continued.....

contribute, enjoy and add something to the culture - are likely to be a more profitable course than the attempts to socialise fans into being kind to newcomers. I found it a relief to be ignored until I had something to say, and then listened to properly, and I can't be the only one. I like getting to know people through what they write and how they argue, rather than through small talk. If someone had chatted to me at my first con, I'd probably have felt as uneasy as they would. But arguing with them, now...

Making fandom accessible isn't what it's all about. The culture exists for those of us inside it. Barriers are necessary and natural; for a thriving culture they should be of the kind that makes it difficult for non-fannish people to enter, but comparatively easy for fannish people to penetrate. We should get out of this habit of thinking fandom is a religion to be spread to the unenlightened. Most of the unenlightened wouldn't want it anyway. If the culture doesn't fill the needs of enough people, it will stagnate and die, as all cultures do eventually. Trying to manipulate it, make it different, is unlikely to succeed. Instead we should be trying to work within it, trying to build those routes past the barriers that only fannish people will find easy. Or better still, we should probably leave it alone.

Fandom isn't hard to get into, if you're a Fan.

# From page to stage

GEOFF RYMAN

Why a play? Why THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER?

For a long time, I've thought that fandom had untapped potential for some kind of performing art. You have a ready-made audience and a ready-made cast - and the two are interchangeable. I kept wanting the people in fancy dress to play the characters they were supposed to be - why not the dialogue, as well as the sword-fights? I thought of doing Gollum - but who wanted dramatic readings in a fancy-dress parade? There was some talk of a fannish version of THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, but that petered out in dreams of excess. I couldn't imagine what form a fannish drama would take.

It's difficult to play science fiction live for anything other than laughs. The swords clank. The costumes, makeup, special effects aren't quite good enough for anything other than satire. So, a fan drama could be a sort of pantomime, good-hearted, with well-known fans taking the mickey out of themselves. That wasn't what I wanted to do. Judith Hanna said that Australian fans had put on a production of LORD OF THE RINGS. It was done, she said, as a kind of medieval passion play, very simple, like a ritual. That sounded more like it - but still a minefield of unintentional humour.

For a while, I wanted to do a videotape version of DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP. It would have been a sort of samizdat reply to BLADE RUNNER. I wrote a rough script with locations, for a half-hour version. I know who I wanted to cast. I got all the way to costing the thing before admitting that not only was the whole idea unrealistic, but more than a bit likely to end up with me in court.

Then I read TIMOTHY ARCHER. Somewhere, about the second chapter, I went back and began to write notes in the margin about how it could be a play.

It wouldn't need makeup or costumes. It could be done with a table and four chairs and some household props. The cast would be small, so with casual choosing, you could find enough fans with the time and experience to do a creditable job. From the start I thought that Kim Campbell might play Angel Archer.

Then Linda Pickersgill gave me a pink piece of paper about a science fiction convention that actually seemed to have a focus and reason for being. I sent her and Greg, and Chris Evans copies of the adaptation. To

my relieved surprise they and the other committee members said yes. The play had a venue.

What have we left out of the book? Some of Timothy Archer's intellectualising, some of Angel Archer's most heartfelt lines. There simply wasn't time. The music stayed. The music stands in for many of the things that have been left out. What had to stay was the emotion, and the basic story.

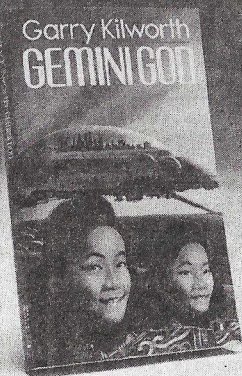
What's it about? It's partly about Berkeley, and living there in the 70s and 80s. It's about three people who died, and why they died, and how they seem to keep coming back. They're interesting people, and the woman who tells the story loved them very much. It's about her too, and how extremely fed up she is with death and being alone, and how, in the end, she is saved from death herself. Like all of Philip K. Dick's stories, it's full of feeling and concern for the characters. It's also very funny.

We have, incidentally, the approval for this adaptation and permission for this performance from the author's agent and literary estate.

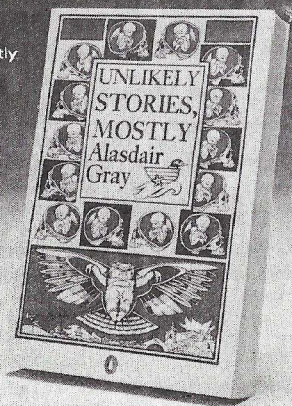
Thanks to the convention committee for taking the risk.

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# FILMS

JOHN JARROLD

## ALPHAVILLE 98 mins.

This 1965 film, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, is a classic of Science Fiction. Set in a Paris of the future, whose inhabitants lives are controlled by a computer, it features Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine), a secret agent who arrives to rescue a girl (Anna Karina), and is the cause of much violence and chaos as he does so. The cinematographer, Raoul Coutard, also worked with Godard on "A Bout De Souffle", but this is possibly his finest film. "Alphaville" is sometimes baffling, but never less than fascinating.

## PINK FLAMINGOES 95 mins.

One of the funniest films in existence, from John Waters, the director of "Mondo Trasho". Bad taste and nihilism rule supreme in Waters' ideology, and this film exhibits both in abundance. Certainly not a film for the fainthearted, since it uses just about every expletive known to man in the opening sequence, and carries on from there. Another of Waters' films, "Female Trouble", received this accolade from Time Out: "Hilarious moments pockmark the movie like a bad case of acne." You get the idea.

## THE ATOMIC CAFE 89 mins.

The loss of 15% of the population is quite acceptable. That's one of the suggestions made during this compilation of snippets from official films, broadcasts and songs directed at the American public in the Cold War period. Utterly funny, yet leaving a cold feeling in the pit of your stomach. Did YOU know that close proximity to an atomic blast is not necessarily fatal? Wow, really interesting, eh? I guess we're all worrying about nothing. Incidentally, there's some superb music on the soundtrack.

## SAVAGES 105 mins.

Taking a rest from Indian films such as "Shakespeare Wallah" and "Heat And Dust", director James Ivory produced this in 1972. It "...contrives to mingle Bunuel with "Quest For Fire"", as one review said. Basically, it concerns a tribe of jungle "mud people", who discover an elegant country house and turn into socialite party-goers, discussing all manner of civilised fripperies before the facade crumbles. A fascinating piece,

wholly unlike Ivory's other work. A study of culture clash, an allegory, or what?

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING 128 mins.

John Huston originally intended to make this film several decades ago, using Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable. As with some of his other projects, it was put off. Anyway, the final casting of Michael Caine and Sean Connery as the two ex-Army sergeants works perfectly. Set in the 1880s, the two adventurers tell Rudyard Kipling (Christopher Plummer) of their plans to venture into the unknown territory of Kafirstan, and there make their fortune. This they do, only to be thwarted at the last moment, in a horrific manner. Connery and Caine make a splendid team, facing victory and defeat with the sort of aplomb which could have led Kipling to write "If...". A marvellous movie.

IT HAPPENED HERE 95 mins.

A much-used supposition in SF is "What If...?". In this case, the musing involved is a German victory in the Second World War, and director Kevin Brownlow paints a dark picture. This film featured several fans in minor roles, and one of them, Jim Linwood, has written about his involvement elsewhere in the Programme Book. Look out for Sebastian Shaw, more recently seen as the face of Darth Vader in "Return of the Jedi".

CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING

A brilliant and rarely seen surreal French film directed by Jaques Rivette. Two girls, one endowed with some undefined power come across an old house wherein they see a murder constantly re-enacted and try to intervene. But it is unclear which is the true reality, that which Celine and Julie are part of...or that going on inside the house? This film is one of the centrepieces of Tynecon II and represents for us the filmic interpretation of much of the best of recent Science Fiction, particularly that of Philip K. Dick and more recently, Christopher Priest, whose work has explored the nature of reality.

Recent convention films have often had little to do with the programme as such. They've been run at times when people might be eating or still waking up, and have suffered from this misuse. Also, reading some programme books one might be excused for wondering whether the person who chose the films actually LIKED any of them; lukewarm reviews seem to have been in the ascendancy.

Well, there's no such problems here. The idea behind MEXICON is to have one continuous programme, each item being given equal prominence, and the films have been chosen not only to fit into a general SF atmosphere, but also to explore one of the central questions we'll be posing over the weekend: "Is the best SF now coming from outside the genre?" Representing the literary side of this question, we have Alasdair Gray and Russell Hoban, who you'll be reading about elsewhere in this book. On the film



side, we're featuring the work of directors such as James Ivory, well-known for his films set in India; Jean-Luc Godard, a leading light of the French "New Wave"; John Huston, rogue elephant of the American film industry, who has won both box-office and critical acclaim. These people come to speculative material fresh, with none of the preconceived notions which apply within the hothouse atmosphere of the genre itself. In point of fact, none of the MEXICON films are made by specialists in the field of SF and Fantasy. No George Lucas, no George Pal (is this the answer, all SF film-makers are called George?), and none of them deal with the prophetic side of SF. Speculating upon the future was always more interesting than prophesying it, and of course the future isn't the only ground for speculation: in IT HAPPENED HERE, Kevin Brownlow says "What if" the Germans had won World War II, and paints a fascinating picture of Britain under occupation. In THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING, two British Army sergeants in 19th Century India search out the fabled land of Kafirstan, with its treasures and dangers. The nearest approach to a normal Science Fiction film on the programme is ALPHAVILLE, which features a computer-run Paris of the future; would anyone other than Goddard have thought of mixing in the character of Lemmy Caution, though? Peter Cheyney's agent-cum-private eye, straight out of the Forties, isn't the most obvious person to find in that background. Godard uses his love of FILM NOIR - and his great talent as a director - to distance this film from run of the mill futuristic fantasies.

Nihilism has been around in SF for over twenty years, and is celebrated in John Waters' PINK FLAMINGOES, an ultimate in bad taste movies. Waters tries hard to offend anyone he can think of, and often succeeds. Leave all feelings of prejudice, anti-prejudice and outrage behind when you go to see this one, or you'll come out steaming at the ears. If Waters DOES believe in anything, it's hard to see what it is. I suppose you'd have to stretch credulity to the limit in order to call PINK FLAMINGOES Speculative Cinema, but the crossover points are there to be seen.

If the foregoing points have seemed slightly heavy, that doesn't mean that the films aren't entertaining. Hell, I'm looking forward to seeing them myself! Some of the clips in ATOMIC CAFE will make you laugh out loud, whilst THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING is, in my opinion, one of the best two or three adventure films made since the War.

It's interesting to consider WHY there is so little visual material available to SF conventions which is both within the genre and intelligently presented. Obviously, Science Fiction Cinema has had a renaissance over the last ten years, what with the Star Wars saga, ALIEN and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. These films are all entertaining, but none would be called great cinema in the way that THE THIRD MAN, RASHOMON or LA GRANDE ILLUSION would, since in all of them special effects and action outweigh characterisation. It's doubtful that any of them were meant to be looked on in that light, and as films of their type they are very near the top of the tree, but there are not many SF movies of a more thoughtful type to weigh against them, which must be wrong. Alfred Bester proved in the Fifties that Space Opera extravagances could be combined with rounded characters, but Science Fiction cinema lags behind thirty years later. 95% of SF films are slam-bang space epics, whose directors need to know more about colour-overlay techniques and special cameras than they do about human relationships. As with all forms of art which have been



commercialised down to the lowest common denominator, there are, thankfully, a few exceptions: DARK STAR, SILENT RUNNING, THE DAY OF THE DOLPHIN. Of the three, only DARK STAR achieved its aims, possibly because they weren't as overblown as those of the other two productions. SILENT RUNNING became sentimental to the point of being maudlin, thereby defusing much of the impact made during the first half of the film. It also used Bruce Dern as its hero; well, Dern is an eccentric actor, which made some of his actions laughable rather than noble. Possibly someone more down to earth, Roy Scheider or Gene Hackman, for example, would have made the character more believable. DAY OF THE DOLPHIN gradually turned into a spy thriller, which focused attention away from the fascinating (for me, at least) scenes in the dolphin research establishment. George C. Scott, keeping his acting excesses under control, was superb. Returning to DARK STAR for a moment, its director, John Carpenter, has gone on to Hollywood success with such films as HALLOWEEN, ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13, and THE FOG. Some of his quirks and foibles seem to have gone missing as he becomes more entrenched in the Dream Factory, though, and he is in danger of becoming a competent, middle-range director. I hope not. Mega-buck budgets can end up as more of a curse than a blessing. Has Spielberg ever made a better film than DUEL or JAWS? And talking about money, we've come to the major reason behind the lack of well-thought-out, intelligent SF movies. STAR WARS will always make more money at the box-office than an equally well-made but more thoughtful movie. Behind this truism is the fact that in the case of the latter, you have to think about it while you're in the cinema, and most audiences feel that this is asking too much. To validate this viewpoint, one only has to check the TV viewing figures in any given week: CORONATION STREET, DALLAS, gameshows. All premixed pap, ready to be swallowed without chewing. Something like Le Carre's TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY, despite great reviews, can never come near cracking the hold that mindless rubbish has on the ratings. Personally, I wouldn't call STAR WARS "mindless rubbish". I've found all three films in the series entertaining, but if you transfer the TV mentality to bums on seats in cinemas, where monetary returns are all, you can see why Lucas, Spielberg and the like continue to be patted on the head for being good boys, and given another forty million dollars for their next epic.

It seems to me that as long as money is the be all and end all of film-making, most SF movies will be the visual equivalent of strawberry mousse: initially very tasty, but quickly gone and forgotten. Myself, I prefer a good steak. And speculative movies which equate to that steak, movies which stretch intelligence, consciousness and basic concepts will be very much in the minority under these conditions. As a corollary, you and I will get much of our scientific pleasure in the cinema from films made by directors like Godard, wandering into the genre and using the parts which suit him, or Carpenter, young, experimental, iconoclastic. All of which just about brings us full circle. Enjoy the movies.

"So how would you like  
to join the **SS** next Sunday?"

JIM LINWOOD

The question was put to me by Pat Kearney during a party at the Kingdon Road Slan-Shack in December, 1962. 5 Kingdon Road, West Hampstead, was a large terraced Edwardian house that accommodated, and played host to, some of the less conservative elements in Angliefandom in the early sixties, including, at one time or another, Dave Hale, Mike Moorcock, Pat Kearney, George Locke, Rog Peyton, and assorted girlfriends. The only fanatic of any note published at Kingdon Road was Bruce's personalzine, SIZAR, which Ethel Lindsay once banned from an OMPA mailing because it contained an accurate, but unflattering, word portrait of Ella Parker - a first manifestation of the fannish generation gap. The most significant event - although we did not realise this at the time - occurred one evening when a breathless Mike Moorcock crashed into the communal kitchen announcing: "I've got NEW WORLDS." The card school paused for a moment and then resumed play, not knowing then how those four words would change forever both the fannish world we knew and SF almost beyond recognition.

Pat was small, well dressed, with a Jimmy Cagney baby-face and knew everything about the cinema and film. When he wasn't tracking down the latest elusive Roger Corman Z-movie in the flea-pit cinemas around Victoria he was busy attending demonstrations; filming police brutality with a multiplicity of cameras. A self-styled Anarchist who adored the writings of ultra-conservative Lovecraft, he had an obsessive interest in violence and pornography which took him on regular visits to Paris to smuggle back the then banned works of de Sade, Henry Miller and William Burroughs. His extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for the cinema was matched only by the number of mediocre jobs he held down. He finally half realised both his ambitions and darker interests by working in a Praed Street backroom processing blue-movies.

The position he was offering me was that of an extra in the amateur alternative-world film IT HAPPENED HERE; an ambitious project that postulated a successful German invasion of Britain in 1940, and the subsequent collaboration of the populace in helping the Nazis establish the New Order. The project had begun as a hobby on 16m in 1956 by an eighteen year old trainee film cutter, Kevin Brownlow and a student and militaria collector, Andrew Mollo, aged sixteen. The initial abortive efforts had been a schoolboy's impression of Nazism; full of blood and thunder which would culminate in the destruction of northern England in an American

atomic attack. After teaming up with Andrew, Kevin scrapped his original footage and recommenced the project, dogmatic that it should be 100% authentic with histrionics replaced by detached political analysis. What emerged was a stark, bleak film based on the premise that most of the British population would either quietly acquiesce to, or openly collaborate with, the German invaders - as did most citizens of occupied countries during the war. Kevin launched a recruitment drive for actors, extras and technicians who would give their services free and, although this produced some oddballs like genuine English fascists and ex-SAS men who wished to relive their past glory, the cast and production team was comprised almost entirely of enthusiastic amateurs. When a particular type of face for a scene was not available from amongst the extras Kevin often cajoled an innocent bystander into donning a German uniform and leering into the camera. Pat and several other London fens supported the film almost since its conception; an in-group joke about Pat's enthusiasm and the shoestring budget is the battle scene in which Pat the German soldier shoots Pat the Partisan. Pat's long devotion was finally rewarded by his name appearing on the credit titles.

Kevin's attitude to the project was tough and uncompromising: "We made no concessions to the fact that everyone was working for nothing. When someone came on a session, we expected him to give his heart to the picture, regardless of personal comfort. IT HAPPENED HERE was a labour of love, made by people who liked each other, and who understood each other. It was carried to completion by enthusiasm." The amateur had become a hard-boiled demanding director.

After Andrew pointed out that the uniforms Kevin was originally using were a costumier's invention, a request for authentic militaria brought forth on loan from private collectors sufficient uniforms, weapons and vehicles to equip a regiment - quite terrifying in retrospect. Dogged by men from the Ministry of Works, the uniforms and regalia were used to startling effect in marches down Whitehall, mass rallies in Trafalgar Square and an eerie Nazi funeral rite. The police were only too eager to turn a blind eye to such carryings-on by an apparently professional company; expecting the usual 'consideration' at the end of a day's shooting. Sometimes things didn't go according to plan, however. What was to be a spectacular shot of a Jagd-Panther tearing up the Wiltshire countryside had to be abandoned at the last minute when a man from the Ministry of Defence appeared from nowhere saying: "You can't do that there here." Not content to show an immobile panzer, Kevin faked its movement by filming it from a mobile ancient wooden dolly at an angle to exclude the road - the final result, with added sound, was quite realistic.

The picture's most effective images are those of blitzed, occupied London with propaganda posters on every wall urging support for the war effort. German soldiers being photographed besides familiar landmarks, pub-brawls between collaborators and ex-servicemen and the brilliantly conceived newsreel with Frank Phillips, the wartime newsreader, providing the commentary. All of which created an atmosphere of totalitarianism far more evocative than the television or cinema adaptations of NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR.



By 1962 the funds on the pocket-money production were virtually exhausted, and it was feared that the six year old project would have to be shelved; however, an angel in the form of Tony Richardson of Woodfall Films appeared who, seeing the commercial possibilities, agreed to subsidise the film. After being assured that the existing footage could be blown-up for the commercial cinema screen, Kevin and Andrew went on to complete the picture on 35mm with reel ends from DR STRANGELOVE kindly donated by Stanley Kubrick - years of almost insane enthusiasm had finally paid off.

In the course of making the film Kevin and Andrew deliberately adopted a documentary style, thinking that it was unnecessary to underline the horrors of Nazism; instead leaving the audience to draw its own conclusions - a decision that was to cause problems when production was completed. The simple plot - such as it is - sees the German occupation through the eyes of a District Nurse, Pauline Murray (both the name of the actress and the character she portrays) who, blaming partisans for provoking a LIDICE type retaliation massacre by the Germans in Wiltshire, moves to London to continue her profession, believing that "collaboration" is the only way of restoring law and order. Her enrolment in the Immediate Action Organisation brings her into conflict with her friends and civilians, who associate her uniform with the terror of the New Order. After helping her friends shelter a wounded partisan she falls under suspicion and is posted to a "nursing home" in Wales. Pauline is told that the home is a rest centre for Russian and Polish workers suffering from tuberculosis; only when she finds a ward empty of the men, women and children she had "inoculated" the previous night does she realise its true purpose. She finally resists and is arrested. During her return under escort to London she falls into the hands of the partisans and American liberators, and is spared execution because the Army of Liberation urgently require medical aid. The film's final scene is its bleakest; English collaborators are rounded-up and machine gunned down, as were the Wiltshire villagers at the beginning of the story. A clear reflection of a remark made earlier by Pauline's doctor friend: "The most appalling thing about Fascism is that it takes Fascist methods to get rid of it."

It didn't take much persuading to make me seek my fame and fortune in the movies; this was, after all, the beginning of the swinging sixties with its rise of the working-class hero. If Albert Finney and Tom Courtney could make it, so could I. Sunday morning; and Pat and I reported for duty at a Territorial Army drill hall in a Camden Town redevelopment area. The drill hall, which was the IAO recruitment centre in the film, was the only building left intact in the half demolished area; what the Luftwaffe had failed to achieve twenty years previously had been accomplished by George Wimpey and Sons. Pat sought out Kevin Brownlow amongst the confusion of arc-lights, cameras and cables to introduce me as the latest recruit. Kevin, who was busily taping distances for focus, was a studious looking intellectual with an Oxbridge accent. He launched into a vivid running commentary of his clash on location the previous week with a professional film company: "There was Howard Keel running through Regent's Park chased by these fellows dressed up as Triffids, trying to look terrified, but looking as if he was about to burst into song at any moment. Then our German marching band passed in front of the Triffids and the cameras playing the Horst Wessel. The director flung his megaphone on the ground shouting "Get those Nazi bums outa here! cut.Cut.Cut!"

Kevin directed us to the changing room where we were to be kitted out with our uniforms, and returned to his focusing problems. I was sized up by the casting-and-costume girl and handed a shirt, trousers and a pair of jackboots - all in black. Pat scowled when handed his usual brown outfit.

"I've been coming here for three years and I'm still a private," said Pat with hurt pride. "Your first time, and they make you an officer!"

"It's the blue eyes and the blond hair, you Irish Communist degenerate," I replied after affixing the double lightning-flash insignias to my epaulets.

I should have kept my mouth shut about typecasting until I'd put the uniform on; from the size of the trousers I dropped my skinny legs into I deduced they were once worn by Hermann Goering, and the shirt - which just reached my navel - was probably Goebbels'. Both gentlemen were not overly keen on personal hygiene judging from the BO that emanated from the garments. The jackboots showed no signs of the mystique given to them in lurid metaphors - just a pair of shrunken wellies - which, after I'd shaken them to ensure that no escaped Nazi war criminals were lurking within, I painfully pushed my legs into. Looking at my transformation in a mirror I decided that I wasn't quite master-race material.

Pat's hurt look of disappointment suddenly vanished from his face as he noticed a stocky, middle-aged man enter the changing room.

"Look," he said with excitement. "it's Frank Bennett."

Frank Bennett was one of the real Nazis in the cast; a member of Colin Jordan's British National Socialist Movement. Andrew and Kevin had met him at a party at which Bennett had become immediately enthusiastic about the film.

"I shall play Hitler," he had proclaimed.

Although he did affect a black moustache and hair brushed down one side of his face, he bore a closer resemblance to the young W.C. Fields before drink ravaged his face than the Fuehrer. Pat introduced me and I began an un-subtle line of anti-semite baiting.

"I know a Jew called Bennett, any relation?"

"If I had one drop of Jewish blood in me," thundered Frank, "I would cut my throat to let it out!"

He then went on to explain - as most racists will - that it wasn't any individual Jews he disliked but the entire race; not realising, of course, that there is no such thing as the "Jewish Race" any more than an "Aryan Race". To prove his point he told me of an incident that occurred when the unit was filming on location near a remote Surrey village. Bennett went down to the local pub in the evening to celebrate Hitler's birthday. Upon discovering that the man who had just bought him a drink was Jewish, Frank emptied his pint onto the floor explaining: "I never accept drinks from Jews, but to show this is nothing personal let me buy you a drink. What will you have?"

"A double whiskey," said the Jew.

Pat later told me that Frank had turned up for shooting the next morning with a black eye and badly bruised face. He was immediately cast as a SS casualty which gave him the sudden inspiration: "I have this idea for the final scene of the film. Pauline can prostrate herself with grief over my body, and you can end with a close-up of her tears falling onto my face."

Frank left us to preen before the mirror and place a suitably arrogant look on his face whilst we moved on to take up our positions for the morning's first take. My career in the movies was about to begin.

The take we were to participate in is the scene in which Pauline collects her work permit from the IAO building - seconds in the finished picture which represented a whole morning's work. The office, which was crowded with SS men and collaborators, was to be filmed through the doorway; as Pauline entered I was to leave a moment later. Although the extras in this scene were little more than props, Kevin gave each one of us our "motivation". I was to stand in front of Pat, who was seated behind a desk, and chide him for his inefficiency, threatening him with a transfer to the Russian front. Everyone was happy with their roles, except for one girl extra, who burst into tears crying: "But I can't feel the part, I just can't feel it." She only had to give Pauline her papers. We went into rehearsal and I started doing my shtick with back to the camera - poor Pat out of frame. Within seconds he was badly over-acting; trembling and fidgeting, his eyes bulging with fear, trying to cringe beneath his desk. Only when Kevin shouted: "Ok, that's fine," and Pat continued his Oscar-winning performance did I realise that it was I who had been doing the over-acting; smashing my fists down on the desk and shouting with a precognitive Basil Fawlty impersonation. Pat was genuinely terrified. The scene was then shot for real, the microphone, luckily, not picking up my rantings; after shouting "Cut" Kevin pranced around saying: "Marvellous. Bloody Marvellous." This was, I gathered, one of the few occasions when a first take had been entirely successful. When viewing my exit from that office, years later, I wondered how anyone with such a large nose could have been chosen as a member of Hitler's Elite.

As we awaited further directorial instruction Pat and I chatted with the film's superstar, Pauline Murray, who had begun as an extra and was chosen for the lead because of her perfect Forties face. She was a pleasant, unassuming person, always eager to talk with anyone connected with the production and give encouragement to nervous newcomers. It wasn't until the film was completed that Kevin discovered that she suffered from frequent attacks of migraine - often going through scenes in intense agony.

The take was so successful that Kevin told everyone to get lost for two hours whilst the equipment was set up for the afternoon's shooting. Pat, and several other members of the cast, suggested that we find the nearest pub and give the locals a scare by swaggering up to the bar in our SS clobber. I tagged along, nervously expecting to be arrested under the Public Order Act, which had been introduced in the thirties to prevent Mosley's bully-boys aping the Brownshirts; or worse, attacked by the lunch-time boozers. However, as Camden Town had a large Irish population I hoped we might escape serious injury by being mistaken for a local IRA



outing. As we entered the chosen pub and faced the incredulous stares my heart sank into my left jackboot, flipped over a couple of times, and resurfaced palpitating at three times its normal rate.

We were greeted with utter, amazed silence.

The ersatz SS ordered a round of ale, deciding that demanding Schnapps would be taking the masquerade too far. The tension was finally broken when a cockney voice called out: "Ere, do you lot think Hitler's still alive then?" Everyone in the bar convulsed with laughter, and we explained that we were not what we seemed; merely extras on a film. Pat, ever willing to expound his political views, told of a recent encounter at an anti-fascist rally, during which his expensive Pentax camera was smashed by Jordan's thugs, or the police - Pat always confused the two. Everyone started recalling their wartime adventures; with taking pill-boxes single-handed a firm favourite, and screwing frauleins running second. We left the pub, slightly drunk, to the strains of an unbowdlerized version of COLONEY BOGEY.

The scene shot in the afternoon was to be the background to Pauline leaving the IAO building; a flurry of Teutonic efficiency with extras rushing around trying not to bump into each other. Kevin took me to one side and briefed me for my role: "You're an arrogant Nazi beast, see. Your sergeant has asked you to come to the parade-ground to discipline a slovenly private..." Overhearing this, Pat winced, remembering his previous ordeal. I was told to take up a position at the top of a flight of stairs and descend furiously when the action started; Kevin gave me a large key telling me to beat the metal handrail rhythmically with it as I came down - an idea shamelessly lifted from Losey's prison movie, THE CRIMINAL.

As we went through several rehearsals it became apparent Kevin wasn't satisfied with the performance, particularly mine. "Your friend has a curious, schizophrenic way of walking," he told Pat. Nevertheless, he went for a take, and then another one before calming down. Unlike the morning session this scene, because it was in long-shot, was filmed silent. So we did the whole thing over again for post-synchronised sound; dodging amongst the microphones, trying to make as big a din as possible. All this effort, I later discovered, was wasted; the scene never appeared in the completed film - my schizophrenic walk ended up on a cutting-room floor.

When we left the drill hall after the day's shooting, Pat became his wild, excitable Irish self again; urging me to join the crew on location in Dorset the following weekend.

"It's the big battle scene with the Americans; we've got this crate full of Schmeissers and..."

"No thanks," I said, looking forward to a less strenuous weekend, "Start the liberation without me."

Pat managed to secure on loan the celebrated newsreel sequence from IT HAPPENED HERE for a sneak preview at the following year's convention at

Peterborough. Ron Bennett sportingly offered to introduce it saying, with tongue firmly in cheek: "Any fans present who are of the Jewish persuasion may find certain scenes in our next item offensive..." The newsreel was a close facsimile of actual Nazi propaganda films made for occupied countries; showing that despite the machinations of "certain international financiers" which resulted in two world wars, Englishmen and Germans are brothers. The "natural camaraderie" of the two countries being demonstrated by a film-within-a-film of the Flanders truce of Christmas, 1914 and the football match in no-man's land; the actual truce was never filmed, but Kevin's cleverly faked, sepia tinted sequence, shot with a 1922 hand-cranked Kodak, effectively captured the atmosphere and irony of the event. The clip was generally well received; but a few fans berated Pat for associating himself with such a disgraceful film as "Every Englishman would die fighting rather than submit to Alien rule." No mention was made of what Englishwomen might have done.

The film was finally completed in May 1964 - eight years after its conception - and the search for a distributor was begun by hawking the finished product at the Cork Film Festival, around Wardour Street and several press shows. The British newspaper critics' appraisals were the usual pompous, smart-ass remarks made by that band of licensed poseurs - critics who had previously panned such classics as PSYCHO and THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE - only Alexander Walker of the EVENING STANDARD saw what the makers' intentions were and the technical difficulties they had encountered. The foreign critics were mostly politically motivated in their reactions: the Russians liked the film but considered it "uncommercial", whilst the Germans disliked it intensely because it came uncomfortably close to the truth; however, individual Europeans who had firsthand experience of German occupation said it was like reliving the whole thing over again. A major obstacle was erected by The Board of Deputies of British Jews who, whilst applauding the film's motives, thought that the improvised scene in which the real Nazis propounded their views to Pauline might influence immature minds. In fact in this scene the fascists' opinions were so self-condemning and ludicrous that at the Odeon Leicester Square showing the audience burst into derisive laughter, drowning out Frank Bennett and his cronies who had come along to applaud. One of the least of Kevin and Andrew's worries was a bill for £360 from a German music publisher who had the copyright on the Horst Wessel Song. United Artists finally offered to promote and distribute the film on condition the offending three minutes were censored; under protest, but sick of all the harassment, Kevin and Andrew accepted - they no longer had any say in how their baby was packaged and marketed.

IT HAPPENED HERE had its first commercial run at the London Pavilion - a West End cinema specialising in lurid movies - in May, 1966 following THUNDERBALL; it was an enormous success, running for six weeks before being transferred to the Gala Royal and then disappearing - almost without a trace - into the art-house circuit and television. The substantial profits made by United Artists were swallowed up in promotion costs - or so they said - Kevin, Andrew and all others involved in the production got nothing.

For the directors the film became a foot in the door of the movie industry; Andrew became technical advisor to almost every historical and war movie made since 1966; you name it and he was there making sure the swastikas

pointed the right way. Kevin retained his independence and went on to direct small budget films like WINSTANLEY (again with Andrew as his co-director) and write several books on the history of the cinema. As for the fen involved; when IT HAPPENED HERE occasionally resurfaces at the National Film Theatre, or on television, they nudge their wives and offspring and say "Hey. That's me, that was."

The End

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## AFTERWORD...

This article was written in 1976 during Jim Linwood's brief return to fandom, for a fanzine I then edited called STOP BREAKING DOWN. He vanished again almost immediately, and for no adequate reason the piece has languished unused in my files ever since. The time has come, though, for it to provide an informative and entertaining accompaniment to one of the best and most individual films you're likely to see at an SF convention. Described by TIME OUT magazine as a "...Borges newsreel... though the event never happened a film of it perhaps exists, from which only these scraps of footage survive..." it is perhaps the best examination of "What If..." in cinema terms thus far, and I urge you to take the opportunity to see it.

...GREG PICKERSGILL



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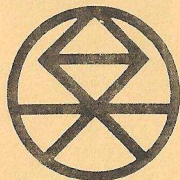
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